

Hebrews 1:5-14 Jesus Is Superior to the Angels (part 1)

In Eph. 1, Paul speaks of the great name of the Son, saying that God “**raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come**” (Eph. 1:20-21). In Phil. 2:9 he says very much the same: “**Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name . . .**” Today, we read very much the same words in Heb. 1:3-4. “**He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name has inherited is more excellent than theirs.**” In the first part of v. 4 he says, “as much superior.” It is the word for “better” or “greater” or “superior,” and is used 13 times in the Book of Hebrews to show the superiority of Christ and the new covenant. He is superior to prophets; He is superior to Moses; He is superior to Joshua; He is superior to Aaron; As a sacrifice He is superior to the old system; He is superior to all the OT saints. And because the Son is superior, EVERYTHING about the new covenant is better. In 7:19 we have a better hope. In 7:22, a better covenant. In 8:6 our hope is based on better promises. In 9:23 better sacrifices. In 10:34 we have a better possession. In 11:16 a better country. In 11:35 a better “resurrection.” In 11:40 we read that in Christ, God has something “better” for us.

In our text today, the author, through the Holy Spirit, continues the theme of the supremacy of the Son, as he turns his attention to the angels, saying, “**his name is more excellent than theirs,**” He is “better,” superior to the angels. Over the next 2 sermons, I have 3 ways from our text to show the superiority of the Son over the angels (1 for today).

But, before considering our truth this morning, we need to understand why he compares Jesus to angels. Now, for us, this is a no brainer. Of course! Jesus is superior to the angels! But, we must remember that Hebrews was primarily written for Jews. And, for the most part (minus the Sadducees), angels were given a great position in their religious worldview. In the OT, angels played a role in revelation and redemption. Throughout their history God would send angels to reveal certain things about God’s plans. Often, angels were sent to give help to God’s people. It was also believed that the Law of Moses came through the mediation of angels (Gal. 3:19). But, as we’ve seen from vv. 1-2, God’s final revelation has come to us, not by angels, but by the Son, who is infinitely superior to them. Our 3 truths correspond with 3 sets of 2 OT quotations as the author compares the Son with the angels. By using two separate quotations to prove the same truth, the author is using a rule very familiar to Hebrew theologians. To use TWO quotations makes the truth even more SURE.

1. The Son is superior because of his unique relationship with the Father. Look at v. 5. “**For to which of the angels did God ever say, You are my Son, today I have begotten you? Or again, I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?**” Here we see the relationship of Father and Son. Now, one of the great benefits of preaching the Book of Hebrews for me is that the author backs all his truths with the Scriptures of the OT. He is saying to the Jews (and to us), “*Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. All the Scriptures point to Him!*” So, when we preach Hebrews, it is as if we are preaching the OT. I love it! And to show Jesus’ unique relationship with the Father, one that the angels cannot approach.

His first quotation is from Ps. 2:7 (turn with me). **“I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”** The original context is the rebellion of the nations. And the son, here is David. And by using the word “Son” He is emphasizing his special relationship with God. And through him, God will carry out his purpose.

The 2nd quotation is from 2 Sam. 7:14. Here, we see the prophet Nathan announcing to David that his “son” would build his “house” (temple). Starting in v. 12: **“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”** The immediate context is Solomon. God will be to him a father. And God will establish his rule. And if we continue through the passage we see that Solomon will sin (as a son), but God will discipline him and uphold him with his steadfast love. There is a special relationship!

Now, when we come to Heb. 1:5, the author knows that both of these passages are understood to speak of the Messiah to come. So, He is appealing to the Jews to see their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, who is the SON of God. And as the Son of God, his relationship is unique, different from the angels . . . and different from all of God’s creation. **“To which of the angels did God ever say, *You are my Son, today I have begotten you.*”** It is true that angels are sometimes called the “sons of God” (Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6, 2:1; 38:7). And great honor and responsibility are given to angels. Angels are the highest of God’s creatures because “heaven” is their home (Matt. 24:36). They excel in strength (Ps. 103:20). They are God’s “ministers” (Ps. 104:4). They are “holy” ((Matt. 25:31). Their appearance is like “lightning” and their clothing is as white as snow (Matt. 28:3). They surround God’s throne (Rev. 5:11). Consider Michael, the greatest and arch angel, who is given the greatest of tasks. But, NEVER do the angels address God as *“Father.”* Nor, does God say to the angels, *“You are my son.”*

(For a moment, let me give a parenthesis. Notice the words, **“Today I have begotten you.”** The word “begotten” is a word we don’t use in our language. The literal meaning is to “bear” or “beget.” I’ve never heard a mother introduce their child as, *“This is my begotten little girl/boy.”* The meaning is fuller than to merely give birth. I found the word as we have it here, “begotten,” 6 times in the Bible. And in all these there is reference to a father. Examples from the Bible: Job 38:28: **“Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew.”** Is. 45:10: **“Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ or to a woman, ‘With what are you in labor . . .”** In all these cases, the emphasis is upon the special relationship between the “begotten one” and a father. And the prime example is from Ps. 2:7 speaking of God, who is the Father, and a son, whether it be an earthly king (such as David or Solomon), or Jesus who is the SON.

Now, I must say, there is more meaning here than I am communicating. But, I want to be careful not to say something the text does not say, which is dangerous. Some, as we’ve seen, like Arius

from the 4th century, sees in this word “begotten” the meaning of “created,” which can be the meaning in certain contexts. But, this would mean that the SON has a beginning. We know this is not true. Think back to v. 2 “through whom also he created the world.” And v. 3: He is the **“radiance of the glory of God”** and the **“exact imprint of his nature”** and **“he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”**

I must also point out that the original Greek is “*genao*” which sounds a lot like the word “generate.” Many theologians believe v. 5 here refers to the fact that the SON is eternally “generated” from the Father which is certainly true. The Son is eternally generated from the Father. There are others who believe that this “begotten” in the context of Hebrews 1 refers to Jesus’ virgin birth (A.W. Pink). After all, when we consider God, who takes on flesh, this did happen in time. As Gal. 4:4 says, **“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman . . .”** And this may correspond with the word “TODAY, I have begotten you.” Still others take this expression to refer to the day of his birth. Luke 1:35 says: **“And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”** Some believe this refers to the day of his baptism. Matt. 3:17 says, **“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased . . .”** Others believe he is referring to his resurrection. In Rom. 1:4, Paul says: He **“was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead . . .”**

I realize there is great mystery here. In these first 5 verses of Hebrews, we see both the divinity of Jesus and the humanity of Jesus. Sometimes the meaning is clearly the essence of the Son. In other words, who HE is as GOD. At other times we see the Son as mediator. From one perspective, Jesus is not the mediator unless he comes and takes on flesh and lays down his life as a sacrifice. For example, look at 2:9-10: **“But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”** And, though we see both of these truths, the author always speaks of Christ as one person. This is why it is so difficult sometimes in distinguishing. And, because of this truth, if we overemphasize one truth over the other, we can go too far as Arias did. Jesus is both God and man, in one person.

In the end, “YES” Jesus is eternally generated from the Father. But, the context of the “begotten Son,” in our verse is still Jesus’ humiliation and exaltation. Yes, He is the Son from eternity. His relationship with the Father is eternal. But, for our sake God . . . “gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Verse. 3: **“After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.”** And, only as our mediator is he given the name above all names! Again this is such a mystery! But, the more I read, the more I pray, the more I study, the more I look by faith to the Son, the more I understand. And, the more I say, “*How can this be?*” Yet, at the same time, I say, “*How can it be otherwise?*” **“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has**

given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:33-36).

So, let me try and bring us back to our truth. Here, we see that Jesus has a special relationship with the Father that the angels do not have. This is true because of his essence. This is true because of his humiliation and work as mediator.

So, what does this truth mean for us?

Application: We worship God in his infinite wisdom and most beautiful plan seen in the gospel of Christ. Yes, He is the Son from eternity. Right before going to the cross, Jesus prays: **“Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed”** (John 17:5). But, this exaltation in glory does not come until after his life on this earth and his work on the cross. And, his declaration of the Son of God in power does not come until after his resurrection (Rom. 1:4). And now He sits at the right hand of the majesty on high. What a most excellent plan! And, all of this to save sinners! (US).

Application: In Christ, we call God “Father.” Because Jesus is the Son from all eternity, and because He is declared to be the Son in his work as mediator, we also call God “Father.” Rom. 8:14-15 says: **“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”** The difference between us and him is that He was not adopted. He was always the Son. But we did not know him as the SON until his incarnation. But because of God “sending” the Son, by the Holy Spirit, we are united to Christ, adopted as God’s children. And now we also call him “Father.” . . . which is why Jesus instructs us to pray, “Our Father who is in heaven.”