

## The Superiority of the Son

Ever since I started preaching the gospel, I've made a point of trying to honor the sermon requests that people make. A few weeks ago, I got one such request from Cindy Coleman. She asked me if I'd be willing to preach a sermon on Jesus.

It's a rare gospel preacher who could refuse a request like that! Last week, as I was trying to decide what to say about Jesus, my mind turned to the book of Hebrews. Hebrews was my dad's favorite book of the Bible, and it also says many things about Jesus that are not found anywhere else. As a result, I decided it would be profitable to all of us if we looked at the Hebrews writer's opening arguments about Jesus. Let's consider, then, what he tells us about the superiority of the Son.

### A GREAT LAWGIVER

First, the writer makes the argument that Jesus is a great lawgiver. He begins by describing Jesus as THE HEIR OF ALL THINGS. Here, let's read together from Hebrews 1:1-3. This text is making two main points. First, rather than speaking to us through intermediaries, God now speaks to us through Jesus His Son. We're now getting it straight from the source.

Second, it's clear that Jesus is spectacularly overqualified for the task of delivering God's word to us. The Lord is no mere mouthpiece. Instead, He is the instrument God used to create the world, exactly like God in every respect, and, most impressively to me, He upholds the universe by the word of His power. In other words, the physical world around us isn't self-sustaining. Instead, it is sustained by Jesus continually exerting His will to sustain it. If Jesus stopped upholding everything, all of this around us would cease to exist. That's how powerful and important He is!

What's more, God used Him to achieve purification of sins, and having done that, Jesus now sits at the right hand of the throne of God. You can't get any more preeminent than Jesus. Because He is so important, we can be sure that what God says to us through Him is equally important.

In addition to these other qualities, Jesus is SUPERIOR TO ANGELS. The writer advances this argument in Hebrews 1:4-14. In some ways, this is difficult to understand. I think the key lies in grasping the ambiguity of the word "angel". When we think of angels, we think of heavenly beings. However, the Greek word *angelos*, which is translated here as "angel", merely means "messenger", and can apply to human beings as well as to angels. I think, then, that what the Hebrews writer is doing is comparing Jesus to all of God's messengers in the Old Testament, up to and including those magnificent heavenly beings who brought the word of God to His people on occasion.

It doesn't matter whether we consider human messengers like Moses and Elijah, or whether we also include those heavenly entities. The writer wants us to understand that Jesus is superior to all of them. God calls Jesus His Son. He urges the angels to worship Jesus. He calls Jesus God. He describes Him as having an eternal nature. Finally, God urges Jesus to sit at His right hand. None of these things are true of angels.

As Tony noted last Wednesday night, there are religious groups out there who argue that Jesus is not fully God, that in fact He is nothing more than an angel. As this text makes clear, such claims are ludicrous. Jesus is on a higher plane of existence than any angel. We don't honor Him because He is a heavenly being. We honor Him because He is God and the Son of God.

Because Jesus is so great, we must be careful to PAY MUCH CLOSER ATTENTION. Look at the writer's warning in Hebrews 2:1-4. Probably all of us have heard somebody argue that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. The reasoning goes that in the Old Testament, God was vengeful and wrathful, but in the New Testament, He is merciful, loving, and ooshy-gooshy.

Friends, that's every bit as much a distortion of the truth as claiming that Jesus is an angel. Instead, we need to pay attention to what God's word actually says. Here's the writer's argument. He points out that under the old covenant, God gave His word through these various messengers, and when His people disobeyed, He was sure to punish them.

What the writer wants us to ask ourselves, though, is that if God did that to people who violated the word given through angels, if we violate the word given through His Son, what is He going to do to us? This is a sobering thought. We have every reason to believe and to follow. If we choose to drift away instead, we can rest assured that the wrath that God pours out on us will be terrible.

## A GREAT SAVIOR

However, Jesus isn't merely a great lawgiver. He is also a great Savior. He reveals His love for us in His willingness to become LOWER THAN THE ANGELS. Let's read from Hebrews 2:5-9. The Hebrews writer loves to advance arguments by switching between different meanings of ambiguous words, and he's up to his usual tricks here.

He begins with a quotation from Psalm 8. In context, this quotation is about human beings—the sons of men. However, the writer reveals that it has another meaning. It is also about the capital-S Son of Man, Jesus. It's true that not all of Jesus' enemies have been subjected to Him. Death, the last enemy, still remains on the battlefield.

However, Jesus was made lower than the angels for a little while. He came to earth and lived, suffered, and died like a human being. However, His death was not in

vain. After His death, God crowned Him with glory and honor. He put Him in a position where His death could count for all of us. How amazing it is, friends, that the One who upholds the world by the word of His power should come to that world to suffer and die for the sins of others!

The writer notes, though, that God's goal for Jesus was always BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY. Consider Hebrews 2:10-15. God always knew that the only way to rescue us was through Jesus, after He had been adapted to the task by His suffering. What's more, the text tells us why God wanted to rescue us. The writer uses several passages from the Old Testament to prove that as great as Jesus is, we still share a kinship with Him. Because we are from the same source, because we are created in the image and likeness of God, we were worth rescuing.

As a result, Jesus took on flesh so that He could defeat the devil and free us from slavery to sin. Think about it. If none of us had any hope of heaven, wouldn't we all give our lives over to sin? Wouldn't we all eat, drink, and be merry, because tomorrow we die?

However, because Jesus died, we do have hope. We do have something greater to live for, and because we do, we no longer have any reason to bow the knee to sin. It makes no sense for any of us to live in sin when, through Jesus, we have the promise of something immeasurably better. Because of Jesus, the sinful life is a wasted life.

We can trust in Jesus like this because God has prepared Him to be A FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST. Let's read here from Hebrews 2:16-18. Notice that Jesus was fitted for His work by becoming like the people God intended Him to save. God had no interest in saving fallen angels. He did, however, want to save fallen man, so Jesus became a man.

While living in human flesh, He experienced trial and temptation like we do. Indeed, He experienced trial like none of us have ever experienced! How many of us have ever had God ask us to suffer and die an exquisitely painful death, even though we had all the power we needed to save ourselves? Jesus had every reason to sin, but He overcame.

However, because He was tempted, He is now somebody who has walked a mile in our shoes. Even though He never gave in to sin, He understands perfectly well why we might. As a result, He is willing to help us. He is willing to serve as our high priest. When we sin and need somebody to intercede with God for us, He will be that intercessor.

The seriousness of Jesus' law is sobering. We should be very afraid if we are in sin and don't have Him to help us. We must remember, though, that the seriousness of sin is outweighed by the greatness of His grace.

Sometimes, if somebody asks a Christian if they're going to heaven, they'll reply, "I hope so." Friends, there's no room in the gospel for that kind of uncertainty! Either

we are outside of Christ, and we have no hope, or we are in Christ, and our hope is certain and secure. I'll tell you right now that if I die tonight, I believe I'm heaven bound, and that's not because I'm boasting in myself. It's because I'm boasting in the greatness of Jesus Christ my Savior!

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