

Hebrews: The Superiority of Jesus (Hebrews 1:1–2:4)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (9/11/16)

Introduction

1. There are truths in Scripture that run much deeper than mere surface reading exposes. Therefore, we must seek God's face for wisdom to understand the whole problem and the purpose of God to fix it. The first-century readers understood much of what we do not and cannot because we have been intentionally *dumbed down* by the enemy.
2. "*Dumbing down*" involves two areas: (a) most are ignorant of the true history of the human race and how that history affects the purpose of God in salvation and restoration; (b) most are ignorant of the theological framework that defines salvation in Christ: His incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation
3. These facts will become apparent as we take the first verses of Hebrews 1 apart.

I. His Superiority Explained

1. In light of John 14:28, 1 Cor. 15:28, and the text before us, we are led to ask, Is the Son inferior to the Father?
 - a. First, we must understand that these texts do not refer to the *essential being* of the Son but His *office*.
 - b. The book of Hebrews primarily presents the Son as the Christ or Messiah (*the sent one*).
 - c. It is in this sense that Hebrews regards Him—the incarnate *man*, Christ Jesus—*superior* to prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, and Aaron.
2. The Son as God is not at issue here.
 - a. The reference to His being *begotten* (v. 5) is confusing. Psalm 2:7 ("You are my Son, today I have begotten you") is *not* about His coming into *existence*. "*Begotten*" refers to the decree—"I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill" (Psa. 2:6). The one who is begotten is already "*my Son*." In other words, my Son exists *apart* from His being begotten. Note also the time reference, "*this day*." The begetting has to do with the Son's *qualification* for His kingly rule—the Son must first become a *human being* (Heb. 2:14–18; 5:5; Acts 13:26–33).
 - b. In this begetting, the Father also *appointed* Him "*heir of all things*" (v. 2), having a *name* or *reputation* (v. 4b)—(1) as the agent of the creation of all things; (2) as projecting the image of the Father in His person; (3) as upholding the universe by the word (*rhema*) of His power
 - c. This appointment of the Son requires something that He must accomplish regarding the purpose for which the Father begot Him (v. 3b, 4; 2:9, 10). Jesus *earned* His superiority—"having become as much superior . . . as the name inherited." Beware of the error of Philo who only saw Jesus as the *Logos*—a *reflection* or *effulgence* of the Father. The response of Jesus to Philip's question (John 14:9) had to do with His *essence* not His *office*.
3. The comparison of the "*begotten*" Son to prophets and angels is worthy of note. Both prophets and angels function in a similar way—they are *servants* (ministers). The Son is *King* and Lord of all (vv. 8–13).

II. His Superiority in Purpose

1. Seven direct quotes from the OT demonstrate the superiority of Christ over the angels (Psa. 2:7; 89:26, 27; 97:7; 104:4; 45:6, 7; 102:25–27; 110:1).

- a. These seven psalms illustrate how all the prophets point to Jesus as God’s solution to cosmic rebellion.
 - b. Christ is the final revelation of God’s truth, both spoken and realized, underscoring the truth that Jesus is the name above all names.
2. These quotes show the relationship of the Son in four areas.
- a. The relationship of the Son to the Father (v. 5)
 - b. The relationship of the Son to the angels (vv. 6, 7)
 - c. The relationship of the Son to cosmos (vv. 8–12)
 - d. The relationship of the Son to His enemies (v. 13)
 - e. Verse 14 caps the comparison: Christ is Lord, while angels “*serve for the sake of*” the saints in Christ.
3. These quotes challenge the wavering Hebrew reader to realign his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- a. There is no uncertainty of God’s planned outcome.
 - b. Indeed, the whole of Scripture affirms that the Lord’s Christ is victorious and all His enemies will be utterly vanquished.
 - c. The saints will also share Christ’s victory, which they experience through their endurance by faith.
4. The focus on the superiority of the Son over the angels is also intended to assure the reader that the angelic rebellion will end in the final judgment.
- a. Lucifer’s craft and deception cannot thwart the power of the Almighty.
 - b. His work through the kings of the earth will be no match for enthroned Lamb and His triumphant church.

III. His Superiority in Judgment

1. The emphasis on Christ’s superiority highlights the first warning (2:1–4).
 - a. The saint’s neglect of the final message of the superior Son is contrasted to Israel’s disobedience to the angel’s message on Sinai. (Nowhere in Exodus do we read that angels delivered the law to Moses, but that notion is supported by several NT texts (Heb. 2:2; Acts 7:38, 53; Gal 3:19) and by Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.136.)
 - b. The consequences for Israel’s neglect and disobedience was a just retribution. The multiplied jeopardy awaiting those who turn away from the Son, while left to the imagination, must certainly be avoided.
2. The message declared by angels proved reliable as evidenced in the judgment that followed. The message declared by Jesus was confirmed by the witness of those who heard Him, God Himself supporting their testimony by signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts from the Holy Spirit.
3. The serious nature of Christ’s final words calls for every reader to “*pay much closer attention to what we heard*”—the universal declaration of the certainty of Christ’s conquest (2:1).
 - a. Negatively, we must not allow ourselves to “*drift away from it*” through neglect.
 - b. Active participation is required, for the alternative is “*just retribution.*” Drifters are traitors and turncoats.