

A Unique Son

- ¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
- ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
- 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. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
- ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.
- 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"?
- ⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him.""

Hebrews 1:1-6

Father and Son

FATHERS AND SONS. Sometimes their relationships are dysfunctionally loving, like in *The Godfather* when Marlon Brando's Vito Corleone has that uncomfortable heart to heart with his son, Al Pacino's Michael character, about life, family, and the Mafia. Sometimes the relationship shocks us, like when Luke discovered on that windy platform in the sky city that Darth Vader is his father. Sometimes they cause us to yearn for days gone by like when Kevin Costner's Ray Kinsella builds a baseball field in a corn patch and eventually comes to terms with his estrangement from his dead father John. But no matter how the stories goes, one thing is certain. The father-son relationship is always special.

Why is Jesus special? There is more than one answer to this question of course, but I think that one of those answers is the necessary starting point of all the others. It is among the most central tenants of orthodox Christianity to say that **Jesus is God**. The **Nicene Creed** hammered out the doctrine that **Arianism** is not Christian; that is, to believe that Jesus is not God is not Christian. Thus we confess that Jesus is “**very God of very God.**”

It is interesting how few times we see direct statements

in the NT about this. I think there are a few, though many come with controversy, even in English translations. **Titus 2:13** says that we are, “**Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**”¹ **Romans 9:5** says, “**To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.**”²

What is much more common is to see **indirect statements**. These make the same theological claim, but not in so many words.³ Though I’m not entirely sure why this is, perhaps a reason stems from the fact that the NT never wants to give the impression that it is making this all up, as if this were a brand new religion. This is something few Christians today even consider. Since there is no place in the OT that says in so many words, “Jesus is God” (mainly because Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh at that time), the NT reverts to using OT language to prove the same

¹ Though the Greek is pretty clear, early English translations are more ambiguous such as, “**Looking for that blessed hope, and appearing of that glorie of that mightie God, and of our Saujour Iesus Christ.**” (Geneva Bible).

² The Greek here is slightly more ambiguous. Thus again, other English translations take a different route such as, “**To them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen**” (Revised Standard Version). For the ESV, see the discussion in Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 565–568.

³ For example, see the list Matt Slick, “Bible Verses That Show Jesus is Divine,” *CARM*, <https://carm.org/bible-verses-show-jesus-divine>, last accessed 10-19-2015.

thing.

This may be no truer than the first few verses of Hebrews. One of the reasons Hebrews was written is to teach us the many ways in which Jesus is better and greater than people, places, and things in the old covenant. But before doing this, or better *while* doing it, the preacher believes that it is imperative to teach you that the reason for this is Christ's deity. This chapter actually has one of those pretty blatant statements about Jesus being God. It is found in vs. 8. It is a quote from Psalm 45:6. But notice how he prefaces it. The author (we will go with Luke makes) interprets it through the lens of "the Son." "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.'" Next week, I plan on helping us understand how Hebrews is using OT Scripture.

For now, I want you to see how this is the climax of a whole series of statements about Jesus as Son. "Son" brackets several verses together starting with Heb 1:2 and ending around vs. 12. Besides "Son," he uses several words to describe our Lord. They are in the order they come to us: The glory (3), the word (3), the power (3), the right hand (3), the angel (4), the name (4), and the firstborn (6). In their own

ways, each of these ideas are OT ideas, and each of them are tied directly to Yahweh in the Old Testament. Yet, not to the “God” in general, nor even to the Father. But to the Son.

Christ the Son

Since we have only talked about it, but have not investigated, let us begin by trying to get a handle on the origin and meaning of “Son” as it is used of Jesus in the OT. Literally **Hebrews 1:2** reads that Jesus is “**Son,⁴ whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.**” “Son” is a word that appears 18 times in Hebrews. Of those, the majority deal with quotes or passages from the OT. Two of those deal with saints like Abraham and Moses (**11:17, 24**), three deal with Christians (**12:5, 6, 7**), and five are directly applied to Jesus (**1:5x2, 8; 2:6; 5:5**). That is 10 of the 18 appearances. The rest all deal with Jesus, but are not quotes. Half of those call him the “son of God” (**4:14, 6:6, 7:3, 10:29**). The others refer to his sonship in relation to His Temple obedience (**3:6, 5:8; 7:28**). Hebrews 1:2 starts them all off.

⁴ Not “The” Son or “His” Son. In the Greek it is simply, “Son...” Yes, Christ is “The” Son and yes he is “His” [the Father’s] Son. But the indefinite noun is ambiguous on purpose, in order to draw us into a discussion of just what this particular Son is like.

Why is he called a son? Sonship is **familial language** and in this case, the Son's Father is God. Thus, he is the "Son of God." "Son of God" is one of two similar but different titles that Jesus has in the Gospels. The other is the "son of man." "Son of man" refers to his humanity. He is a son of Adam (Matt 1, Luke 3), born of a virgin human woman. "Son of God" is a title that refers to his divine status. Perhaps this explains why a favorite title for Jesus among Satan and the demons is "Son of God" (cf. **Matt 4:3, 6; 8:29; Luke 4:41**). They know who he is. **And yet, do they?**

Why would I ask such a question? Of course they do! Otherwise they would not call him the Son of God. Not so fast.

There is more than one way to be considered someone's son. Christians are considered sons of God, as was Israel in the OT. This sonship exists because of **adoption** (and the closely associated term, **election**; **Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5**). The other way you can be a son is **intrinsically**. There is some basic natural relationship that you have with your father. So also, sons of God have some kind of intrinsic relationship to their heavenly Father. For example, Adam is called God's son (**Luke 3:38**), and this is not referring to his adoption as a believer into the church.

Rather, it seems to refer to his being **made in the image of God**. Somehow, image bearing and sonship are tied together. Curiously, “mage of God” language comes up in the very next verse of Hebrews (1:3) regarding Jesus.

The only other group that are called sons of God in the Bible are a group of heavenly beings. These beings were there at creation singing with joy at God’s creation (**Job 38:7**). Clearly, they are not humans, since Adam had not been created, and yet they are there singing. Their sonship seems similar to that of Adam’s. In some capacity they bear the image of God, and in my understanding this principally means that they share with God the divine right of **ruling over creation**. To be the son of a king is to be a prince, and Satan and the sons of God are called princes (**Dan 10:13, 20; 12:1 archons - John 12:31; Eph 2:2**, etc.). They were to rule the heavenly realms; man was to rule the earthly realm. That is the way it was set up at the beginning.

Now, Jesus is God’s Chosen One (**Luke 9:35**). However, his sonship **is not by adoption**. And yet, his sonship is also **more than that which exists in the creation** among human beings and certain angelic beings. He and the Father are One (**John 10:30**). I’m not certain that the heavenly beings knew this, or else they would never have thought they could beat

him in a game of chess for the souls of the elect. But rather than use the Gospel of John's language, Hebrews wants to take advantage of other OT ideas that set the Son apart from all other sons.

Heir of All Things

First, after telling us about this Son, Hebrews wants us to know that he was **appointed the heir of all things**. This may seem like a strange place to begin explaining to us what it means to be the Son, until you realize that it is perhaps the chief promise given to the Him in the OT. Psalm 2 has the Father in heaven speaking. **He says, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your possession/heritage/inheritance (*nachalah*)" (Ps 2:8)**. This verse is very important, because we know the author of Hebrews is thinking about this very passage right here. Just three verses later, he quotes the verse right before this. This verse links the inheritance to the Son making him the heir. **"You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (also quoting 1 Chron 17:13, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son")**.

Something to tuck away is that there is a parallel Psalm that says the same thing. There is also a previous promise

upon which both Psalms are based. Neither, however, refers to him directly as “the Son.” One calls him “God” (*elohim*). **Psalm 82:8** says, “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit (*nachal*) all the nations!” This is related to sonship, because just a couple of verses earlier it said, “I said, ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you’” (**Ps 82:6**). This is a verse that Jesus himself went to in order to prove his sonship to the Pharisees. Yet, rather than the traditional interpretation which sees Jesus as calling them sons of God and himself sons of God, as if he was somehow trying to get himself off the hook for blasphemy because they are all equal sons of God, his citation actually enrages them even more. Why? Because it is clear that the God who inherits all the nations is one of those sons of God. That means Jesus is claiming to be The Elohim who inherits all things.

The root passage of Psalm 2 and 82 is the seed form of these promises. **Deuteronomy 32:9** has Yahweh inheriting the **nation of Israel**. “But the LORD's portion is his people, **Jacob his allotted heritage (*nachalah*).**” Yet, in this passage as well, you have the sons of God. In the previous verse, God gives 70 sons of God⁵ an inheritance of 70 nations (see Gen

⁵ “Sons of God” (as opposed to the “sons of Israel;” NAS) is the original wording as found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Seventy is the number found in the Targum, and was the standard number of the sons of God in Jewish and Canaanite literature.

10). The LXX calls them “angels of God.” So angels (“sons of God;” created *elohim*) were set over the nations and given the nations as an inheritance. But Yahweh inherits his own nation, a nation that is not part of the 70. This Yahweh isn’t the Father, obviously. The idea is that Yahweh who is inheriting Israel is himself a son of God, an angel called “the Angel of the LORD.”

Of course, Hebrews 1-2 is consumed with proving to us that the Son is superior to angels. Why would this be? Now you know the answer. It is because the OT equates Yahweh who inherits Israel with the Son who inherits the nations, with God who inherits the nations and all of these are linked to the sons of God, heavenly beings, who for a time inherit their own nations.⁶

Jesus Christ moves then in the promises from inheriting Israel, to inheriting the nations, to now inheriting “all things” (Heb 1:2). Hebrews literally has the word “all.”⁷ What does this mean, “all?” The Apostle Paul was fond of saying things like, “in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all

⁶ Hebrews 2:6 quotes yet another Psalm (8), and it refers to God making man lower than the angels. He is quoting the LXX here, which translates “gods” (*elohim*) as “angels.” These angels are the OT “sons of God,” which are in this Psalm simply “gods” (*Elohim*). Psalm 8 is a hugely important Psalm in the argument that Hebrews develops. We will get to this in due time.

⁷ *Pas* or in its genitive form, *panton*.

things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19-20). “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth ... to the glory of God the Father” (Php 2:10-11). “Making known to us the mystery of his will ... which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance” (Eph 1:9-11). Peter said that “angels, authorities, and powers hav[e] been subjected to him” (1 Pet 3:22). Jesus himself gave a parable of tenants who saw the Son and said that he was the heir, so they had to kill him so that they could take his inheritance (Matt 21:38). Little did they know that in killing him, he would rise from the dead and in this way himself inherit all things.

The implications for this are already profound for our theology and worship. What kind of a Son is this? He is one that is ruling as The King. People have no idea who it is that they mock when they mock Christ. They mock The King of kings and Lord of lords! “God has put all things in subjection under his feet” (1 Cor 15:27) and given him as head over all things to the church (Eph 1:22). Profoundly, this means that in Christ, we become heirs with him

according to the promises. “If children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). So the implication already is that we worship the Son and that God rewards us with all of the spiritual blessings that our ours in Christ as fellow brothers adopted into his family. Because he is a unique Son, not like any others.

Creator of the World

To further impress this uniqueness upon you, he moves to a second point about the Son. “Through [him]also [God] created the world” (Heb 1:2). **Jesus as Creator** would certainly do something to teach us that he is a unique son. Curiously, this idea again appears in some of the other places that we just quoted regarding the inheritance. They are often found together. He that is reconciling all things to himself (Col 1:20), “by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorizes—all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). John, who also calls him a unique son (John 1:14, 18, etc.) likewise says, “All things were made through him, and without him was not an

thing made that was made” (John 1:3). (At this point in John, we only know the “him” as “the Word;” John 1:1). Again in the context of the heavenly beings (1 Cor 8:5), the same thing comes up, “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (6).

Why would Christ as Son and Christ as Creator be linked together in so many NT texts? Because the OT does. At the end of the series of quotes that teach us about the Son, Hebrews quotes Psalm 102:25-27 from the LXX. There it tells us, “But of the Son he says ... ‘You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end’” (Heb 1:10-12). Clearly, the Psalm is talking about Creation. The word it uses instead of “Son” is “Lord” (*kurios*). But *kurios* and “Son” were titles that went together in Israel’s Messianic thought. The crowds used to cry out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” (Matt 20:31). Martha said, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God” (John

11:27). Jesus quotes yet another Psalm that will be vital in Hebrews, **Psalm 110:1**. “If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” (**Matt 22:45**). Therefore, the OT refers to the Son as Creator.

But the Psalm may itself get this idea from Genesis 1:1. We are familiar with the normal translation, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” But we also know that John 1:1 somehow applies the Word (*logos*) to creation and seems to get it from Genesis. John wasn’t alone here, as Targum Neofiti says, “From the beginning with wisdom the Memra of the Lord created and perfected the heavens and the earth.” However, another version of this same Targum says, “From the beginning with wisdom the Son of our Lord created...” How strange. These people weren’t even Christians! Why would Jews who don’t believe as Christians do and who hold the biblical text so sacred do something like this? For that matter, why would Christians?

It has to do with the word “beginning” (*reshith* in Hebrew, *arche* in Greek to which *archon* above is related). The Hebrew word has more than one meaning. It can mean “beginning” or it can also mean “**first**.” Amelek was the *reshith* (first) among the nations (**Num 24:20**). Leviathan is

the *reshith* (first) of the works of God (Job 40:19). Here, it isn't talking about time, but prominence or greatness. The word "firstborn" is closely related as well. "Reuben, you are my first-born (*bekor*); My might and the beginning (*reshith*) of my strength" (Gen 49:3). The firstborn is the beginning. Thus, lying just below the surface of this amazing verse is the idea that has been around in both Jewish and Christian circles for a long, long time, that the Son or the Word or the Firstborn created the heavens and the earth. In fact, Fathers like Tertullian knew of translations like the Targum that said, "By means of the Son God created heaven and earth."⁸ Certainly, the NT sees the same thing, including Hebrews 1.

Again, it is without question how important this is. If he created all things, then he is himself uncreated and is therefore God. Neither Hebrews nor the rest of the Bible

⁸ "In the beginning, God became a Son" (a citation of Jerome from the lost work, of Aristo of Pella, in *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*. "In the beginning, God made for himself a Son" (cited by Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 5.1). Also Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 2.10; Irenaeus, *Demonstratio* 43; Origen, *Comm. In Job* 1.16-18; Methodius, *On Created Beings* 11; Gregory of Tours, *Historia* 1.1 (35:6); Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem* 19-20); Serapion of Thmuis cited in Petit, *La Chaine*, 7. Hilary of Poitiers (*Tractatus in Ps 2:2*) lists three meanings of *bereshith*: "in the beginning," "in or by means of the head," and "in or by means of the Son." The Greek word is equally as interesting. The word it uses for "beginning" is *arche*. From this we get the *archons* (translated as "rulers" or "princes") of the heavenly realms in the Bible and later perverted in Gnosticism. Origen (Comm. In Job I.90-I24) says that God created the world by means of *arche*. The the discussion in C. T. R. Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Question on Genesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 100-02. (see also n. 1, p. 100 including C. F. Burney, "Christ as the ARXH of the Creation," *JTS* 27 (1926), 175-76).

will permit any view less than this. Jesus is not a created Son. He is the Creator-Son. He is eternal. It is almost impossible to wrap one's mind around this, given that our Lord came in human flesh. "That man created the world?" No, he was not yet a man when he created. That *Son* created the world and later become a man. This is the repeated claim. This Son created all things and is now himself heir of all things. He is Lord and must be obeyed and worshiped. You must bow down to him today, while it is the day of salvation, because you will be forced to on the day of judgment. Will you?

Image of God

After this, we move into several terms that are closely identified with the Son *in the OT*. After talking about the Son as heir and creator, it then tells us about how he stands in relation to the **image of God**. We have already brought this topic up, and saw how it is closely related to the former thought in other places. Of course, it is in Genesis 1 as well.

Let's think about the image in Genesis 1. First it says, "Let us make man in our own image" (1:26). The "us" here is difficult and Christians disagree on what is meant. One view is that this refers to the Father talking to the other Two

Persons of the Trinity. The other view is that it refers to God speaking to the sons of God in the Divine Council. I believe the latter is the better option, and I have already suggested that the sons of God in heaven are image bearers. That's part and parcel of what it means to be a son. They didn't create here though. No, they are not our creators as the pagans perversely all thought, because the next verse clearly says that God created in *his* image (1:27). It is singular.

In these verses, it is clear that image bearing means dominion. “Let them rule,” it says. People often think of things like intellect, speech, will, a soul, organization, morality, and many other “things” as the image. Because animals seem to possess all of these things on one level or another (even souls, as we both share *nephesh*/soul in the Hebrew), I rather think that these are things that help us carry out the image.⁹

But something happened to us as imagers at the fall. In one way or another, our ability to be and carry out the image was severely broken. The Scripture reaffirms that we are **still image bearers** (Gen 9:6), but we are image bearers that ruin

⁹ It is also possible to take the Hebrew “in” the image as “as” the image. We are created *as* imagers of God. That is our God-given right, no matter how much intellect or physical capacities that we carry with us. We are the representatives of God to creation. We are imagers, even the tiniest human in the womb.

rather than restore, that sin rather than sanctify. The same is also true of the heavenly beings like Satan who fell into sin. Basically, the entire created order became subjected to futility. Why? So that the “sons of God” might be revealed (**Rom 8:19**). How curious.

And yet, even if we had never fallen, there is something about the Son. “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, an the upholds the universe by the word of his power” (**Heb 1:3**). Let’s notice a few things. First, notice how upholding the universe and being the heir and creator sandwich this idea of the image. It is because everywhere you turn in the Bible, the image and ruling are not far apart.¹⁰

The Glory

Second, notice several words that are used here. The **first** is the word “**Glory**.” The word could be a sermon all by itself, but we will try to distill it down to just the most relevant points here. Glory is the “weightiness” of God and it is perceived in the OT by God’s works (**Num 14:21-22**; **Ps 8:5**; **Isa 6:3**). In the Exodus, the Glory is associated with the Pillar of Cloud and Fire. The Glory is “in” the cloud (**Ex**

¹⁰ This would include the context of **Ephesians 4:24** and **Colossians 3:10** where we are renewed after the image as we are letting the peace of Christ “rule” in us (cf. **Col 3:15**).

16:10; Num 16:42) and “in” the fire (Deut 5:24) in the same way that that Angel of the LORD is in them (Ex 3:2; 14:19).

It will then not be shocking to learn that the Glory is sometimes seen as having a human form in the OT. Moses asks to see God’s Glory (Ex 33:19 LXX). God shows him the form of someone’s back (33:23). Ezekiel sees someone resembling a human man (Ezek 1:26), but then concludes that it is “the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of Yahweh” (28). Listen to how he describes it a few chapters later, “Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist. And the LORD said to him ...” (Ezek 9:3-4). In Numbers 12:8 it says that Moses spoke mouth to mouth to the LORD, not in riddles, and he beheld the “form” (*temunah*) of Yahweh. The LXX translates this as the *doxa* or Glory. In the OT, all flesh will see the glory (Hab 2:14). In the NT, all flesh will see the Son coming in glory (Luke 21:27).

What is the point? Hebrews is using a concept that in the OT was associated with a Person—Glory. It was associated with a Person who took on a human-like form (an Angel). Now it is saying that the Son is the radiance of the Glory of

God. “Radiance” (*apaugasma*) is found only here in all of the Bible (except for one place in the Apocrypha where it talks about “wisdom” in much the same way that Proverbs does. “For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness” (**Wis 7:26**). Wisdom in Proverbs 8 is how the Son is described there, as he is the Creator beside God (and the word appeared in the Targum of Genesis 1:1 as well).

But what does “glory” mean? The second part of the sentence explains it. “The exact representation of His nature.” This is the image of God language. But when we say that the Son is the image of God, we mean that he is the exact representation of God to creation. It is perfect, one-to-one. The Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son (**John 14:10-11**). You and I are imperfect reflections, like a mirror that has been shattered. Adam was also an imperfect reflection, simply because he was created. The creature is not the Creator. But in being the exact representation, the Son of God is a **perfect reflection**, because the Son is not created.

The Apostle Paul says, “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of

Christ, who is the image of God” (2Co 4:4). He is not “in” the image of God. He is not “as” the image of God (see note #9 above). He “is” (*estin*) the image of God. In Colossians Paul said, “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation” (Col 1:15). So now the firstborn idea that we saw in Genesis 1 comes into view again. Do you see how all of these things revolve around one another, like the moons around Jupiter?

The Word

Let’s look three more together. The second word he uses is “word.” The third he uses is “power.” “He upholds all things by the word of his power.” Now, the Greek here is not *Logos*, as it is in John 1:1. Yet, the concept of the “word” is familiar. In fact, the Greek uses this term to describe, you guessed it, the Son. In Genesis 15:1 it says, “The Word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision.” The LXX uses this word: *rhema*. But it is clear that the “word” here is seen with the eyes. Later it becomes clear that it is a Person who is called Yahweh and who then covenants with Abram and walks between the pieces of the covenant sacrifice.

The Power

So we might say that the Word upholds the universe by

the word of his power. His is the **power**. He has the power. He is the power. *Dunamis* is the word, and from it we get dynamite. It is a term that can refer to heavenly beings in the NT: **Rom 8:39**; **Eph 6:12**; **1 Pet 3:22**. The Rabbis used it to refer to the Angel/Word as the “second Power” in heaven. Again, going back to Colossians 1, it is by power (**1:11**) that the “image of God” and “first-born” (**1:15**) created all things (**16**) and holds them together (**17**).

The Right Hand

Still in verse three, a fourth word arises. This is the “**right-hand**.” “**When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...**” (**Heb 1:3**). Hands are the end of arms. God says, “**To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?**” (**Isa 53:1**). This is how the Messiah is introduced in Isaiah. He is called the Arm. “Right hand” was a way of describing the position or seat of great authority and power (that word again) in the ancient world. **Captains** or generals are the right arms of the king. Curiously, the Angel of the LORD comes to Joshua, and a similar exchange occurs that happened many years earlier with Moses and the Angel. Joshua is told to take off his sandals, because the ground he was standing on was holy

(compare **Josh 5:15**; **Ex 3:5**). But here, he is not called the Angel. He is called the “**Captain of the Armies of Yahweh**” (**Josh 5:14**): Lord Sabaoth his name. He is called a “man of war” (**Ex 15:3**) by Moses.

In the Psalms, God’s “mighty arm” and “right hand” is strong to save (**Ps 89:13**). It refers to military power (**Deut 4:34**; **Isa 30:30**), the power of creation (**Isa 51:9**; **Ps 89:11, 14**), and to God as judge (**Isa 51:5**). All are said to be true of Jesus.

You may be wondering, why bring the sacrifice of Jesus when he made purification of sins into all of this discussion right here? It is because it is intimately related with the point he is trying to make. The death, resurrection, and ascension are really three stages of one great event where **Christ conquers sin, death, and the devil**. It is his greatest military victory. This is why the Suffering Servant and the atonement he will make is introduced by this phrase “right arm” in Isaiah. **John 12:37-38** tells us that this unquestionably refers to Jesus, even before his death. The King of kings, when he ascended to heaven, is said to have ascended to the “**right hand**” of God in heavenly places (**Eph 1:20-21**). This is yet another passage that we have seen before this morning. What is the significance of this? At the

cross he “disarmed” and “triumphed” over the rulers, authorities, powers, and dominions of both heaven and earth (**Col 2:15**), having made them subject to him (**1 Pet 3:22**). And thus, four words in one verse (glory, word, power, right-hand) are used to convey something about the Son, something that is deeply rooted in the OT teaching about the same Son. These words teach you about how unique this Son is among all others.

Better than Angels

But notice, it is at just this point that the rather extended discussion about **angels** comes up. Why? Now we should understand clearly. It is because, knowing exactly what our preacher is doing with the OT, this is the most natural question of all to ask. If Jesus was the Angel of the LORD, if he has conquered powers and rulers (*archons*), and heavenly beings, then just what are we to make of him now? And why wasn't he able to do this in the OT, if that is what the claim actually is?

The Name

When he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high he “**became as much superior than angels as the name**

he has inherited is more excellent than theirs” (Heb 1:4). Here I want to talk about yet another term found in the OT that refers not only to the Son in the OT, but to most of the other words we have talked about thus far. It is the word “Name.” Notice that he is heir of all things, and this includes a great name. It is a name that no one truly knows but himself (Rev 19:12). And yet we know the Name: Immanuel. Joshua. Jesus. God with Us. Savior. And many others. We can know it, but only he *knows* it, because only he is God and can understand it personally.

Let’s learn about this term “name.” First, like rulers, principalities, powers, etc., it can refer to heavenly beings. Eph 1:21 refers to the “names that are named.” Second, The Name takes on an almost identify of its own in some places. “Behold, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke; his lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire” (Isa 30:27).

Next, notice how the word appears with many of the terms we have already looked at thus far. “The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD” (Ex 34:5). This was God’s glory (33:22). “The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his Name” (Ex 15:3). “Where is he who put in the

midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting Name” (Isa 63:11). The arm and the name. “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might” (Dan 2:20). And since he is talking about angels, let’s look at the Angel. In Exodus 23:20-21 it says that God is sending an angel before the people to guard them and bring them to Canaan. “Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.”

The First-Born

After citing Psalm 2 and 1 Chron 17 (Heb 1:5), another quote comes in vs. 6. “Let all God’s angels worship him.” The quote is perhaps from Ps 97, though it is better to see it as coming from Deut 32, where we were at earlier in the sermon. We will look at all of these next week, but for now I want to point out the last term we will look at this morning. Who are the angels worshiping? “The firstborn.” This title may be taken from still another Psalm (89), where it becomes a messianic title. We have seen this term several times already. We know that it is associated with the

beginning, with the word, and with the son. We've seen it in Colossians 1 several times. And it comes up here too.

In Colossians, the firstborn creates the world. Here, the Son creates the world, but he is called the firstborn who is “**brought into**” the world. But when is he brought into the world? The sources of the quotation seem to have the angels worshiping the firstborn prior to the incarnation. Certainly we know that the Son was in the world prior to the incarnation. And we also know that when people like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and others met him, they worshiped him. Most people would see this as a reference to the incarnation, or perhaps to the ascension (when he enters into the “heavenly” world). But then again, few have really stopped to think about how this entire passage is rooted in OT teachings about the Son as he was in the Old Testament, so they really aren't thinking about this question.

Whenever it is (and perhaps it is whenever the Father brings the firstborn into the world), the point is clearly that the **angels are commanded to bow down** and worship him. We see this in places like **Isaiah 6** and **Revelation 4-5** where the angels do this very thing to the Son of God. Therefore, he is unlike the angels, for he is the firstborn, the Son of preeminence, the Son of creation, the Image of God, the

Glory, the Word, the Power, the Name, the Wisdom, the Right-Hand, who is superior even to angels, because he is God.

Beloved, what I want to impress upon you is that this is no new religion. **The Son has always been.** He is, was, and always shall be. He is unchanging and forever. He is God, and he was with God in the beginning. This is the uniform teaching of the Old Testament. Even Jews who never heard of Christ understood this as Philo tells us, “**He is called, the authority, and the name of God, and the Word [logos], and man according to God’s image...**” (Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 146). It is through the Old Testament that the preacher of Hebrews proves these things to you.

These were made clear, however, in the coming of the Son into the world as a human being. For it is here that he manifests these things to the world of men in front of them, with no hiding, no visions, no dreams, but the flesh and blood that he took upon himself in becoming man. He proved these things to the Apostles and to the many disciples and to the whole world when he rose again from the dead.

This is Jesus. This is our God. This is God’s Son. Let no one steal away your hope in him. Let no one trick you into any lesser belief about him. Let the word ring loudly in the

church and on the lips of his people that this is God's Unique Son, begotten of the Father before all ages, begotten not made, light of light, very God of very God, of one substance as the Father. Let all God's people, let all the angels, let all the world worship Him.