

“David’s Greater Son”—Hebrews 1:5; 2 Samuel 7

Brandon Holiski

Southern Oaks Baptist Church

December 24, 2017

[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Merry Christmas Eve! Take your Bible and let’s meet together in Hebrews 1...

I can hear it now: “Hebrews 1? It’s Christmas Eve, shouldn’t we be talking Christmas?” What a great idea. I wish I had thought of that. Actually, rest assured, this text feeds right into the Christmas story and right into your life, if God would grant us eyes to see and ears to hear this morning...

If you are guest with us, we recently started a series through the book of Hebrews. We are still in chapter 1, so you haven’t missed too much and you can catch up online. You should consider joining us next week and beyond because this is a remarkable book that really helps us understand who Jesus is and why we need Him. The first chapter begins with an argument that Christ is better than angels. The author shows us how the Bible attests to this reality by working through seven Old Testament quotations. We looked at a couple of those last week. Today I want us to look at one more, found in verse 5. It’s the second quotation in that verse. By way of reminder though, let’s go ahead and read the verses leading up to it. You can follow along as I read. This is God’s Word...

“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’?” (Hebrews 1:1-5)

Now over the past month we have considered all of these verses and we covered the first half of verse 5, which contains a quote from Psalm 2, last week. But let’s focus our minds on the second half of that verse, which draws on 2 Samuel 7. He writes, *“For to which of the angels did God ever say... ‘I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son’?”* I reminded you last week that when New Testament writers quote the Old Testament they are assuming that it would bring to mind the context of the passage that they are quoting from. So a lot can be implied in a short citation. Each one can really pack a punch.

The problem for us is that most people today are not nearly as familiar with these Old Testament passages as were the original readers of Hebrews, predominantly Jewish Christians. So we often don’t have in mind what the author wants us to and by consequence we can miss the full force of what he was intending to communicate. To avoid this, modern readers have to chase down these Old Testament citations and try to understand them in their original context. If we can do this, it will help us understand what the New Testament writer is doing when he quotes from that other text.

So then, as it relates to Hebrews 1:5, all we know is that the writer of Hebrews is saying that the passage in the Old Testament that says, *“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”* was fulfilled in God’s

Son. So what on earth did that passage have to do with? I'm glad you asked. Let's go find out. Since he's drawing from 2 Samuel 7, let's turn there together (page _____ in the pew Bibles).

When you get there, you'll notice immediately that this story comes from the life of David, Israel's great king, a man after God's own heart. So let's take a look at the scene, starting in verse 1...

"Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, ² the king said to Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.' ³ And Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.'" (2 Samuel 7:1-3)

So what just happened? Basically David has a heavy conscience. He's sitting there in his royal palace during peacetime and it dawns on him that while he has a nice house to enjoy, the Ark of the Covenant, a box containing some sacred items from Israel's past that was associated with the presence of God, was sitting in a mere tent, known as the tabernacle. So David thinks, "I need to build God a house. Yeah, that's it! I'll build God a temple." So David pours his heart out to the prophet Nathan and the prophet likes where David's head is at and encourages him to move forward with construction plans. Yet despite the noble motives and intentions of the king, this was not God's plan. So God steps in and gets everyone to pump the breaks a bit. Look at verse 4 and following...

"But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, ⁵ 'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? ⁶ I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. ⁷ In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"'" (2 Samuel 7:4-7)

Translation: "Thanks, but no thanks, David. I don't need you to build me a house. I never asked for you to build me a house. I don't need a house. You're not going to build me a house." Verse 8...

"Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. ⁹ And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.'" (2 Samuel 7:8-11)

Pause. Wordplay alert. God just turned the tables on David. "You're not going to build me a house [i.e., a temple], but I'm going to build you a house [i.e., a dynasty]." So they are both using "house" language to convey two different ideas. And this leads us to one of the most famous and significant portions of the Old Testament. God is making a promise to David, a covenant, related to some things He is going to do for David and David's descendants. This is usually referred to as the "Davidic Covenant." So what did it entail? Let's find out. Look at verse 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. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of

men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ *but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul [i.e., Israel's first king], whom I put away from before you.* ¹⁶ *And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'* ¹⁷ *In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.*" (2 Samuel 7:12-17)

Now, did you notice that tucked right in the center of those promises was that statement we found in Hebrews 1? God said, concerning David's offspring, "*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*" So the author of Hebrews has the Davidic Covenant in mind, so we need to know something about it in order to understand what he's saying about Jesus.

But before we even get to that we are pressed with another question—could that verse really refer to Jesus? After all what does the very next part of the verse say in 2 Samuel? It says of this one who will be to God as a son that "*When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men*". Surely *that* cannot refer to Jesus because Jesus was without any sin, as even the author of Hebrews will acknowledge (Hebrews 4:15). So what does that part refer to? The sinfulness of David's other descendants that will serve as kings over Israel.

In other words, this prophecy, like so many of the prophecies in the Old Testament has more than one fulfillment. There is a more immediate fulfillment seen in some of the Davidic kings to follow, like Solomon who would build the temple and receive the Lord's fatherly affection, but also fail and experience discipline.¹ And then there is an ultimate fulfillment that reaches further down the historical line to Jesus Christ, David's greater Son. Some of the details of the covenant relate to the near fulfillment and some relate to the ultimate fulfillment. It is this ultimate fulfillment that the writer of Hebrews is drawing on. But we will get to that in a moment.

It's important for us to see that God's words for David were tapping into the heart of David's insecurity. Look again at what God says next, in verse 15. Even though David's descendants will be disciplined for their sins, God reassures him, "*but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.*" Who was Saul? Saul was Israel's first king. He was not related to David, though they knew each other. Saul sinned terribly against the Lord and the consequences were devastating. God removed him as king and gave his throne to David. So David is seated there on the throne, sitting pretty, but in the back of his mind he knows that he will sin and so will his descendants, the future kings, and so things could change pretty rapidly. Saul's dynasty ended with him, if you can even call it a dynasty when it doesn't even reach a second generation. Who is to say that the same won't become of David? Well...God.

God reassures him. "Yes, you and your descendants will sin and yes they will be disciplined, but, unlike with Saul, I will not removed my steadfast love from them." What amazing grace God is promising to David and his offspring. And it gets even better. Look at verse 16. "*And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.*" Whoa! That's a huge statement. That can't be fulfilled in David's son, Solomon, the future king. That is something that stretches well beyond him. So how on earth could such a promise be fulfilled?

There are really only two possibilities. One is that David will have a son who will be king, and that son will have another son who will be king, and his son another son to be king, and on and on forever and ever. That's one possibility. The other possibility is that some greater descendent will come along that will himself reign forever and ever, without end, in a way that no mere man ever could. The people of God were certainly expecting the first option because the second option would have seemed like an impossibility. But

this passage doesn't specify does it? But it doesn't take too long for other biblical writers to start clarifying God's ultimate purposes for this promise to David.²

Let me give you one example. We don't have enough time to do this text justice, but a couple centuries after David, the prophet Isaiah was relaying God's Word to King Ahaz and he utters some words that are frequently on people's lips this time of year...

"And he said, 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.'" (Isaiah 7:13-14)

A bit later we read,

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone....For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore...." (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7)

So Isaiah prophesies about someone sitting on the throne forever, just like the Davidic Covenant, only now it seems to explicitly center on an individual instead of a line. And this individual is even called "*Mighty God*" and don't miss the virgin birth text and the name "*Immanuel*," which means "God with us."

Then you get to prophets, like Ezekiel, a couple centuries later, and we find that some of these same ideas related to sweeping scope of the reign and rule, but tied explicitly to the Lord God Himself in places like Ezekiel 34. As D. A. Carson writes, "the vision of who this great David's greater son will be is ratcheted up and ratcheted up in expectation in the later Prophets."³ So the Davidic Covenant is being clarified throughout the prophets, yet this clarification seems to be introducing new questions. Sometimes it seems like it will be fulfilled in a descendent of David and other places it seems to be fulfilled in God Himself. So what gives? Which is it? Son of David or Son of God?

Both actually. But they didn't know that. There was just mystery. A whole lot of mystery about how these promises would be fulfilled. And then we get to the New Testament. We discover that "*when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son...*" (Galatians 4:4). But how is He introduced in the very first verse of the New Testament? "*Jesus Christ, the son of David*". And now that mysterious fulfillment starts to come into view. We discover that we don't have to choose between a descendent of David and God Himself as the one brings the covenant to fruition and establishes an everlasting reign. Why? Because the Son of David the covenant pointed to was none other than God in the flesh!

As you reflect on the Christmas story today and tomorrow, hopefully reading it yourself and joining us tonight as we place it before our hearts and minds, you may be surprised how much of the story is told in a way to emphasize that Jesus was the long awaited king, the much anticipated son of David, and the one who fulfills the hope of the Davidic Covenant. The Christmas story is a celebratory story for this very reason. The King has finally come. It's His advent.

So after introducing us on page one of the New Testament to Jesus as "*the son of David*," Matthew then shows us a genealogy that has David at its center and works its way to David's greater son, Jesus Christ. And that genealogy, we discover, is arranged in three sets of fourteen generations because the Hebrew

word for David adds up to fourteen in a Jewish numbering practice called gematria. That list of names subtly cries out to us, “David! David! David!” The long awaited Davidic King has come.

Then the angel appears to Mary, the virgin, and says,

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:30-33)

That’s the Davidic Covenant! He will sit on *“the throne of his father David, and reign over the house of Jacob [i.e., Israel] forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”* But what else is this one of David’s throne called? He is none other than *“the Son of the Most High”!* Son of David. Son of God. One person. The fulfillment of the mystery is taking shape when God took on flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

And then one day the angel appears to Joseph, a descendant of David, and tells him not to be alarmed because the child Mary will give birth to was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that all these things *“took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us)”* (Matthew 1:22-23). That’s Isaiah 7, which you remember relates to the Davidic Covenant.

And one day Caesar Augustus decreed that everyone should be registered in the city of their ancestry. This meant that Joseph was required to take his beloved Mary, pregnant with child, to Bethlehem, which was the city of David and Joseph was *“of the house and lineage of David”* (Luke 2:4). And the angel appeared before the shepherds and announced, *“good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:10-11). David. David. David. The King has come.

So if the King has finally arrived, then how should we respond? The answer is *not* like Herod. Do you remember how he responded to the magi? Matthew tells us that *“wise men from the east came to Jerusalem”* and encountered *“Herod the king”* (Matthew 2:1). That’s interesting. The story is about Jesus the King, but they encounter one who fashions himself as king. The wise men ask Herod, *“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?”* (Matthew 2:2). They make it clear that they intend to worship this one born King. So how does Herod respond? The text says, *“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled”* (Matthew 2:3). That distress eventually gives way to fury when Herod hatches a plan to have Jesus killed. He orders for all the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding area to be killed.

But why was he so troubled to hear about the birth of the King of the Jews? Because he fancied himself to be king. And you know what? We are more like him than we realize. Timothy Keller explains this so well in a book called *Hidden Christmas*, so let me read you an extended quote.

“King Herod’s reaction to Christ is, in this sense, a picture of us all. If you want to be king, and someone else comes along saying he is the king, then one of you has to give in. Only one person can sit on an absolute throne...Jesus came to us claiming to be God, the King. He said, ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brother and sister—yes, even his own life—such a person cannot be my disciple’ (Luke 14:26). This is not a command to literally become hateful toward one’s family. He is calling, rather, for an allegiance to him so supreme that it makes all other commitments look weak by comparison. It is a claim of absolute authority, a

summons to unconditional loyalty, and it inevitably triggers deep resistance within the human heart....

According to the Bible, the evil of the world ultimately stems from the self-centeredness, self-righteousness, and self-absorption of every human heart. Each of us wants the world to orbit around us and our needs and desires. We do not want to serve God or our neighbor—we want them to serve us. In every heart, then, there is a ‘little King Herod’ that wants to rule and that is threatened by anything that may compromise its omnipotence and sovereignty...

This dark episode of King Herod’s violent lust for power points to our natural resistance to, even hatred of, the claims of God on our lives. We create Gods of our liking to mask our own hostility to the real God, who reveals himself as our absolute King. And if the Lord born at Christmas is the true God, then no one will seek for him unless our hearts are supernaturally changed to want and seek....

‘Where’s the true King?’ That question is the most disturbing question possible to a human heart, since we want at all costs to remain on the throne of our own lives. We may use religion to stay on that throne, trying to put God in the position of having to do our bidding because we are so righteous, rather than serving him unconditionally. Or we may flee from religion, becoming atheist, and loudly claim that there is no God. Either way, we are expressing our natural hostility to the lordship of the true King....

So no one is really neutral about whether Christmas is true. If the Son of God was really born in a manger, then we have lost the right to be in charge of our lives.”⁴

This may sound like bad news, friends, but it really is the best of news. Why? Because Jesus came to save rebels like us. He came to save sinners who have spent their lives fighting against His Lordship like little Herods defending their turf. He came to lay down His life for enemies and outcasts. And for this God had to become man. He took on our humanity in the incarnation and that incarnation is at the heart of Christmas and essential to our salvation. God became man that He might die in the place of sinful humanity. Our King “ascended not a throne but a cross” and “He did this so that, if we believe, we can be reconciled to him, so when he comes as King the second time he can end all evil without ending us.”⁵ And so the angel told Joseph, “*you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21).

And this brings us to the table this morning, where we remember what the God-man has done for sinners like us. He allowed His body to be broken like bread on a cross, when He took upon Himself our sin. And like a leaky wineskin His body shed blood to pay for our sins. That is what we remember in the Lord’s Supper. What He endured so we wouldn’t have to. What He endured so that everyone who would turn from their sin in repentance and trust in Him in faith would be forgiven and brought from death to life. And I do mean *everyone* whose faith rests in Him. Even you this morning, if you would acknowledge your sin and your need for the salvation He offers. The Christmas story is part of this larger story that can change you forever. So don’t respond like Herod. Come to your King in the worship of faith and the surrender of repentance and He will save you. Even you. As Keller confesses,

“I don’t care who you are; I don’t care what you have done; I don’t care if you’ve been on the paid staff of Hell. I don’t care what your background is; I don’t care what deep, dark secrets are in your past. I don’t care how badly you have messed up. If you repent and come to God through Jesus, not only *will* God accept you and work in your life, but he *delights* to work through people like you. He’s been doing it through all of world history.”⁶

So will you die to self this morning? Will you ask God to put to death the Herod within so that you can bow before the King? Then this Christmas Eve can be the turning point in your entire life.

Let’s pray...

¹ Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews* (REC; Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006), 30.

² D. A. Carson, "As the Son, He Eclipses the Angels," in *D. A. Carson Sermon Library* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife).

³ *Ibid.* Carson, likewise, traces this same trajectory from the Davidic Covenant, through Isaiah and Ezekiel, and to Christ in his sermon.

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ* (New York: Viking, 2016), 67-68, 70-71.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶ *Ibid.*