

HOW TO RIGHT-SIZE JESUS (Hebrews 1:4-14)

Have you ever known anyone who was underestimated? This happens in the world of sports with some regularity. For instance, in the 2000 NFL draft, there was a certain QB that wasn't drafted until near the end of the 6th round. He was the 199th player chosen that year. Such picks rarely have long careers in the NFL even if they end up making a team, which is a long shot. In this draft, six QB's had already been taken, but the New England Patriots decided to take a shot on a player named Tom Brady.

Today, at the age of 44, Tom Terrific is still playing, still starting, and still winning. He has played in 10 Super Bowls and won 7 of them. He is, hands-down, the most successful QB to play the game, but few would have bet a paycheck on his future success. He was underestimated.

What may be even more amazing is the story of Kurt Warner. Right now, a movie about his life is being played on the big screen in movie theaters throughout the country. It is called, *American Underdog*. He spent 12 years in the NFL as a QB and led two different teams to the Super Bowl a total of three times. In 2017, Warner was inducted into the National Football League Hall of Fame. What is amazing is that after a standout year as a senior in 1994, not a single football team drafted him. He didn't make an NFL roster until 1998. That year he was a 3rd string QB. In 1999 he was named the starter for the St. Louis Rams. He threw three TD passes in each of his first three games as a starter. In his fourth game, he threw five TD passes. *Sports Illustrated* featured him on a cover that year with the caption, "Who Is This Guy?" He won the NFL MVP honor that year and had a stellar career.

Being underestimated is not confined to sports. A teacher can misjudge the aptitude of a student. An employer can fail to recognize the talents of an employee. A church can overlook the spiritual gifts of a church member. A parent can even miss noticing the hidden abilities of a child.

Have you ever been underestimated? Has anyone in your life ever mistakenly thought you weren't old enough, or big enough, or strong enough, or smart enough, or good enough. It hurts to be written off, rejected, passed over because you were underestimated.

I can think of something that is far worse. It is far more tragic because it results in even greater heartache. It happens when we underestimate Jesus.

Do people ever really underestimate Jesus? Sure, they do. When a person says, "Jesus could never save or love a person like me," he underestimates Jesus. Whenever a person says, "Jesus could never use a person like me," she underestimates Jesus. When you say, "Jesus won't do this for me; Jesus can't do that through me," you are underestimating the love, the power, the strength, and the goodness of Jesus.

I am sure that you have seen optical illusions in which there is an object in the foreground that appears big, and there is something in the background that seems small. When viewed from a different vantage point, it is clear that the closer object is actually small, the object in the distance is really quite large.

This happens with our spiritual sight. We are very close to our problems, our

inadequacies, our struggles, and when we look at them, they seem insurmountable. They loom large. What is worse is that we have allowed ourselves to drift from Jesus. We haven't lost sight of Him, but we have relegated Him to the background. As a result, He appears inadequate, small, not enough. We need to right-size Him in our heart and mind. We need to see Him for who He really is.

That is what the author of Hebrews does for us. He shows us that Jesus is superior, that Jesus is supreme, that Jesus is bigger than we ever dare to imagine. Jesus is every bit as big as God is because we read last Sunday that Jesus is the exact imprint of God's nature and that Jesus holds up the universe by the word of His power. If you were to look up *God* in the dictionary, you just might find a picture of Jesus.

Our text is Hebrews 1:4-11. We are going to look at how to right-size Jesus. Before I read the text, let me simply say, the author makes a statement in v. 4, and then in verses 5-14 he backs up and seeks to prove the accuracy of his claim in v. 4. In effect, vv. 5-14 are a sermon on v. 4.

We Can Right-Size Jesus by Knowing What God Says About His Son

The claim of v. 4 is that Jesus is superior to angels. Then, over the next 10 verses, the author attempts to prove the truth of that claim.

You may wonder, "Why does the author feel compelled to address this subject?" In his day, many people had begun to worship angels. We find evidence of this in the writings of Paul. In Colossians 2:18, Paul wrote, and I'm quoting the NLT, "Don't let anyone say you must worship angels, even though they say they have had visions about this."

Apparently, this was a problem in Colossae and likely other places that people had resorted to worshiping angels. Why would they do that? It is almost the reverse of shooting the messenger. You don't like the message the messenger has brought; so, you shoot the messenger. In this case, you like the message that the messengers have brought; so, you worship the messengers. Of course, it is a little bit more sophisticated than that.

Angels were big in the Jewish faith. The OT directly refers to angels 108 times. The NT refers to angels 165 times. They were viewed as being the highest created order. Their home is in heaven. They surround God's throne. Later, the author of Hebrews is going to assert that Jesus is greater than Moses, the great Law-Giver, but the Scriptures and their tradition taught that God used angels to give the Law to Moses (Acts 7:53). The Law is big in the Jewish faith, and it was the angels who delivered the Law; so, angels are a big deal to the Jewish people.

Satan often takes what is good, twists it, and makes it ultimate, a rival god. Whether it is sex, food, money, health, recreation, angels, or anything else, Satan can fool us and induce us to worship the created rather than the Creator.

The author is telling us, "As honorable as the angels are, they can't hold a candle to Jesus." Jesus is superior. His name is superior. What is the name to which he referring? His name is *Son*. Look at v. 5. There is no single angel that is ever referred to as the Son of God. Jesus stands in a singular relationship with God because He is God.

We need to be careful with v. 5. Do not mistake the word “begotten” as meaning “created.” There was no particular day on which Jesus was created. Jesus is co-eternal with the Father. Jesus is eternal. He has always been. There is a sense, however, in which Jesus became God’s Son at the time of His incarnation. *Son* is an incarnational title of Christ.

The reason I point that out is that someday a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon is going to knock on your door. They are going to try to get you to believe that Jesus isn’t co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. They are going to read a passage about Jesus becoming a Son as if He was just a good man who lived a good life and got a good promotion. Jesus did become a Son, but He has always been God.

Let’s look at another thing God says about His Son. Look at v. 6. Whenever angels show up on the scene, they always seem to open with the same line—*Don’t be afraid*. Why do you suppose they consistently say this? I think it is because when they appear on the scene, they are fear-inducing creatures. They are big, powerful, endowed with a blazing radiance. They are not always pictured that way in movies. In the classic movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, George Bailey played by Jimmy Stewart, meets his guardian angel named Clarence. Clarence doesn’t show up and say, “Fear not.” It would be more appropriate for him to say, “Laugh not.” There was nothing scary about his appearance.

Personally, I am going to be really disappointed when I get to heaven and meet my guardian angel if he looks anything like Clarence. I want the angel assigned to me to look like Dwayne Johnson, the Rock or John Cena. I want him to be imposing, large and in charge.

While the response to angels might be fear, the response Jesus gets is better. He gets worship. The ones who were wrongly being worshiped are going to be told to worship Jesus. When will they do this? The answer to that question, hinges on where you insert one word in v. 6, the word *again*. Translating Greek is a bit difficult, because unlike in English, word order does matter all that much.

Translators are divided over where to insert the word *again* of v. 6. It could be like v. 5 where *again* simply indicates that here is another quotation from the OT. It could be that, but others are convinced that *again* is meant to indicate when God is going to bring Jesus into the world. In other words, “When God brings Jesus into the world again,” that’s when all the angels are to erupt in the worship Jesus, the returning King. That is the translation I favor.

When Jesus returns, routes the army of Satan and gathers His people to Himself, the angels will do the wave; they will jump in the air, and they will shout praises to the Lord. That’s what we will do, too.

Let’s look at another thing God says about His Son. Look at vv. 8-9. Here, we find a quotation of Psalm 45:6-7. I ask you to turn to Psalm 45:6-7. This passage is about the coming Messiah. According to this passage, when He takes His place on His throne, He will reign forever.

Every kingdom that has ever existed on this Earth has remained in power for a time, but then each kingdom has been replaced. If the Lord tarries, the same will be true of America. That may happen sooner than anyone expected, but one day our form of

government will be replaced. Some nations are overtaken from the outside, and some fall from the inside. Only time will tell how and when the United States ceases to be.

The reign of God's anointed will never cease. It will never be overtaken, and it will never fall from within.

Look at the latter half of v. 7: "Therefore God, your God has anointed you." This may be the clearest expression of the deity of the Messiah. He is called *God*, and He is anointed by God. Unless your Jesus is fully God, you have seriously underestimated who Jesus is. He is God.

The final thing God says to His Son that appears in our passage is found in v. 13. This is a quotation from Psalm 110:1. This quotation from the OT is found on Jesus' lips toward the end of Matthew 22. Jesus had been fielding question from the Sadducees and Pharisees. Finally, Jesus decided it was time for Him to ask some questions. He questioned them concerning the identity of the Messiah. He asked, "Whose son is he?" They answered, "The son of David." Jesus had a follow up, "OK. If the Messiah is the son of David, why does David call Him, Lord?" Then, He quoted from Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said to my Lord . . ."

The point Jesus is making is that the Messiah isn't David's son; He is David's Lord. I love the way Matthew 22 ends. Matthew writes, "And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask Him any more questions," which is saying politely, "Jesus shut them up."

I want you to notice what God said to David's Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?"

Do you remember what happened when American troops entered Bagdad? I remember watching as the people of Iraq pulled down a large statue of Saddam Hussein. Then, Iraqi men took off their shoes and struck the image of Hussein with the sole of their shoe.

In that culture, it is offensive and insulting if someone ever shows you the sole of their shoe. Hussein was being disrespected by His own people because they viewed him as an enemy.

Everyone who resists Jesus is an enemy. One day, God will make Jesus' enemies His footstool. One day, "Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

In a message from Hebrews, Ray Stedman told a personal story. He said:

When I was a boy in Montana, I was invited to visit a well-known, wealthy ranch, by one of the hired men. As we came up to an imposing ranch house, he did not take me into the house: instead, he took me to the bunkhouse out in back. I asked him what it was like in the ranch house, and he said, "Well, I can't take you in there; that belongs to the family."

I saw a beautiful palomino horse in the pasture, and I told him how I would love to ride on that horse. And he said, "I'm sorry, you can't; that belongs to the family." All day long, I was frustrated, because everything I wanted to do, he could not let me do, because he was only a hired man.

But later on, I got to know the son of that family, a boy of my own age, and do you know what we did? We rode that palomino horse all over the place, and we went into the house, and we even went into the kitchen and helped ourselves to food in the refrigerator—anything we wanted—and we made ourselves perfectly at home. A son has greater liberty than a servant.

The application of Stedman's story is: Angels are just servants, but Jesus is God's Son. When you and He are friends, you have access to everything He has.

We can right-size Jesus by knowing what God says about His Son. There are some other things we can do.

We Can Right-Size Jesus by Searching What the Scriptures Can Teach Us

There are seven quotations from the OT that the author of Hebrews packs into the 10 verses of Hebrews 1:5-14. If you want to know who Jesus is, go to the Scriptures.

I have said before that if I had a time-machine and I could go back and witness any event of history, I know where I would go. If you were a baseball fan, you might want to go back to World Series game. If you were a military historian, you might want to go to a famous battle. I know where I would want to go. The scene is described in the last chapter of Luke's gospel. Luke presents us with two followers of Jesus who are making their way to the town of Emmaus that is said to be seven miles from Jerusalem. Jesus had been crucified on Friday. Now, it is Sunday. They had heard unconfirmed reports that Jesus was alive. It doesn't seem they put much stock in those rumors. Jesus joins them as they walk, but they don't recognize Him. He engages them in conversation. When they tell Him about the things they had heard, we read first the words of Jesus and then the words of Luke.

Jesus said, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" Then, Luke tells us: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

That is what I would want to witness—Jesus opening up the Scriptures and showing what they say about Himself.

If we want to right-size Jesus, we have to go to the Word of God and let His Spirit show us who Jesus really is.

We Can Right-Size Jesus by Comparing Him to Anything Else

Last week, in Hebrews 1:1-3, we saw that Jesus is better than the prophets. The prophets spoke the word of God, but Jesus is the word of God. Today's text shows us that Jesus is better than the angels. The angels minister before the throne, but Jesus sits on the throne.

In chapter 3, the author shows that Jesus is superior to Moses. Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant, but Jesus is faithful over God's house as a Son.

This book teaches that Jesus is Superior to all other High Priests because he enacts a

better covenant that is based on better promises (8:6). His blood was a better sacrifice than the blood of animals (9:23). The word *better* shows up a dozen times in Hebrews.

In everything that Jesus is compared to, He is shown to be better, to be superior.

In the Christian life, you never want to compare yourself to anyone else. Either way you lose. If you compare yourself to someone who in your estimation is not living up to God's standards, you may puff yourself up with pride. If you compare yourself to someone who is walking more closely to God, you may become dejected and feel that you just don't measure up. Comparing yourself with anyone else is a foolish thing to do. Don't do it.

Feel free, however, to compare Jesus with anything and everything. Compare what the world has to offer with what Jesus has to offer. The world's riches are temporal, but His are eternal.

Compare living your life for self and living your life for Jesus. When you live life for yourself, on your own power, you will be frustrated. You will never get what you think you should have. But if you will live your life for Him relying on His strength, you will find peace and purpose.

In a comparison test, Jesus always wins—always!

I believe there is one more thing we must do to right-size Jesus, and I will be honest—I don't find it specifically in our text, but I want to add it because I think it is essential.

We Can Right-Size Jesus by Letting Him Live His Life Through Ours

There is a spiritual principle that you and I need to put into practice. It is called the exchanged life. It simply means that we are to give God our life, and in return, Jesus will give His life to us. You can't find or beat a bargain like that. Another way of putting it is, we die to self so that Christ can live in and through us.

The scriptural basis for this principle is Galatians 2:20 which reads in the NLT:

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

If we really want to see and experience how big Jesus is, we must let Him live His life through ours. It is in that way that we will learn that Jesus is bigger than our fears, bigger than our temptations, bigger than our sin, bigger than our failures, bigger than bad attitudes. We will also discover that He is bigger than our plans, bigger than our dreams, bigger than our hopes and joys.

I close with this story. Years ago, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie was the chaplain to the United States Senate. Before then, he had been a longtime pastor at the Hollywood Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, California. He told about a time when a woman in his church, took his hand, looked piercingly into his eyes, and said, "I pray your life will be as wonderful as it was in the mind of God when He created you."

After that encounter, Dr. Ogilvie went back to his study. He got on his knees, and he earnestly asked God, "What did you have in mind when you created me?"

He fell silent, and in that silence, his mind heard a single word of reply, “Jesus.”

God’s goal for you is that you be like Jesus. There is only one way that will happen, and that is to let Jesus come in and take control, to let Jesus come in and live His life through yours.

My prayer for you, this church, and for myself is that we would right-size Jesus in 2022. Let’s be done with underestimating Him knowing that is impossible to overestimate Jesus.