

## Was Jesus Taught By Angels?

A number of years ago I read the book *Messianic Christology*, which was written by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. One of the statements he made (if I remember this correctly) was that when Jesus was a child He was taught by angels. I had never heard anyone mention that before and I thought that was very interesting.

Today someone asked me about that very same subject. Since I no longer have that book (I have no idea what happened to it) and since I had forgotten where that verse was, I did a quick search for it online – and I found absolutely nothing. Apparently Dr. Fruchtenbaum had shared a very obscure piece of knowledge. It took quite a bit of digging to turn up the passage that he had referred to.

Before I talk about it, though, I need to set some things up. The book of Isaiah spends a lot of time talking about the Messiah who was to come. One of the passages that talk about the Messiah is Isaiah 50:

**Isaiah 50:2:** “Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. . .

5 The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

7 For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”

Verses 2 and 3 make it clear that this passage is talking about God. The Lord is the one who dries up the sea with a rebuke; He is the one who clothes the heavens with blackness. No one else has that kind of power. Verse 6 goes a bit further and makes it clear that this passage is talking about Jesus. He is the only person of the Godhead who gave His back to the smiters. He is the only one who suffered and died for us. There is no one else who has Godlike power and who suffered like that; Jesus is the only one. Therefore, this passage is talking about Jesus.

That brings us to verse 4, which I deliberately omitted. This is what it says:

**Isaiah 50:4:** “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”

Here we are told that the Messiah was awoken each morning so that He might learn. Now, this is obviously not talking about Jesus before the incarnation; the only time He would have ever needed to learn anything was after He became a man and was born in Bethlehem. One of the things the Bible tells us about Jesus is that He never had any formal schooling. This was a source of amazement to the Jews because they could not figure out where Jesus obtained His wisdom. Jesus told them that He got it straight from God Himself:

**John 7:14:** “Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.  
15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?  
16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”

The passage in Isaiah tells us how God gave Jesus that knowledge: each morning God woke Him up and taught Him. It seems strange to think that Jesus had to learn, but that's exactly what the Bible says. This is how the book of Luke puts it:

**Luke 2:52:** “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Notice how the passage clearly says that Jesus *increased* in wisdom. This can only mean that there was a time in Jesus' childhood when He had less wisdom, and as He grew older He learned and gained more wisdom. (That is, after all, what the word “increase” means.) Before the incarnation Jesus knew all things, but when He became a man He had to go through the same childhood and learning process that all men go through. He had to grow up and He had to learn. He remained fully God and fully part of the Trinity, but becoming a man meant going through childhood and all that entails.

The fact that Jesus was fully man and yet still fully God is one of the great mysteries of theology. Theologians refer to this as the “hypostatic union”. There is a great deal that can be said about this, but my purpose today is not to plumb the depths of that mystery. My only point is that when Jesus was a child He had to learn, and the way that he learned was that God Himself taught him. Jesus Himself testified that His doctrine came from God, and that agrees with Isaiah 50:4.

So where do the angels fit into all of this? Well, during Christ's ministry there were a number of times when angels ministered to him. For example, after Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days and was tempted by Satan, angels came and ministered to Him:

**Matthew 4:11:** “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, about to be taken away and crucified, an angel came and ministered to Him:

**Luke 22:41:** “And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,  
42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.  
43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.”

The passage from Isaiah seems to be saying that someone came to Jesus, woke Him up each morning, and taught Him. It seems unlikely that God the Father did this in person. The Bible says that God is a spirit and that no one has ever seen Him, and there is no evidence that the Father has ever taken a physical form and visited Earth. The same can be said for the Holy Spirit. If God taught Jesus but did not come and teach Him in person, then that implies that He used messengers – and angels fit the bill perfectly.

Now, one could argue that God just spoke audibly to Jesus. It's true that God did that a number

of times during Christ's ministry, but on each occasion there were other people present. As Jesus explained, the reason God spoke audibly was not for Christ's benefit but was for the benefit of others:

**John 12:28:** "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."

Another possibility is that God just spoke to Jesus' heart and taught Him that way. While it is true that God could have done this, it should be pointed out that God could also have done that in the Garden of Gethsemane – but instead God decided to send an angel. God could have personally ministered to Jesus after He was tempted by Satan, but instead God chose to send an angel. It is not unreasonable to think that when God taught Jesus each morning He did so by sending an angel. It does fit the pattern of how God interacted with Christ. After all, angels are messengers; is it really that unreasonable to think that God used them to relay messages to His Son?

To recap: we know that when Jesus was a child He had to learn, and we know that over time He increased in wisdom. We know that Jesus got His wisdom from God, and we know that God woke Him up and taught Him each morning. However, the Bible doesn't tell us how God actually communicated this wisdom to Jesus. Since it is unlikely that God the Father assumed physical form and paid Jesus a personal visit each morning, that leaves the angels as a prime candidate. I cannot guarantee that it's right, but I think it's a good guess.

What you make of this is up to you. I think it's at least plausible to say that God used angels to teach His Son, but I'm not going to be dogmatic about it. Unless some new bit of evidence turns up it's likely that this will remain one of those questions that can never be definitively answered.