

Hebrews Study #1: Hebrews 1-2

Jesus Is Superior to the Prophets and the Angels

Overview

Content: A “word of exhortation” (13:22) sent in letter form, encouraging faithful perseverance in light of the superlative final word God has spoken in Christ.

Author: Unknown; a second-generation believer (2:3), who was a skilled preacher and interpreter of Scripture, with an excellent command of Greek (it came into the canon among Paul’s letters, but definitely not by him).

Date: Unknown; guesses range from A.D. 50 to 90; probably before 70 (since the author gives no hint that the Jewish temple has been destroyed).

Recipients: An unknown but specific group of (predominantly) Jewish Christians; perhaps a house church in Rome (13:24) that is opting out of relationships with the larger Christian community (10:25; 13:7, 17).

Occasion: The community is discouraged because of suffering (10:35–39) and perhaps from doubts about whether Jesus really took care of sin; the author writes to convince them to “not throw away your confidence” (10:35; cf. 2:1; 4:14).

Purpose of Writing: Many of the early Jewish believers were slipping back into the rites and rituals of Judaism in order to escape the mounting persecution. This letter, then, is an exhortation for those persecuted believers to continue in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Primary Concern: The possibility that some believers under present distress will let go of Christ and thus lose out on the Son’s saving work and high priestly intercession, and thus their own experience of God’s presence.

Theme: The absolute supremacy of Christ.

Intro: People have different opinions about who Jesus is. What are some of the common ideas about the identity of Jesus that you’ve heard?

Christ is seen as superior to the Old Testament prophets (1:1-4) in that they were mere servants or spokesmen (1:1). On the contrast, the quality of the mediator of God’s revelation has now stepped up to the level of sonship (1:2-4). God has fully and completely expressed Himself in Christ. The remainder of the first two chapters focus on showing that Christ is superior to angels (1:5-2:18).

Read Hebrews 1:1-14

Question #1: How does God’s treatment of the angels differ from His treatment of the Son?

Question #2: Why do you think they are contrasted in this way?

The author then inserts his first warning passage (2:1-4).

Read Hebrews 2:1-4

Question #3: What pressures tempt you to abandon Christ and go back to the world?

The argument about Christ's superiority over angels is resumed in 2:5-18. Christ is seen as superior to the angels by His humanity. This is demonstrated by His exaltation over the angels (2:5-9) and it is even shown by the necessity of His suffering (2:10-18).

Read Hebrews 2:5-18

Question #4: What was Jesus' purpose on earth? Why did He have to be human?

Question #5: How is Jesus able to help you when you are tempted? Has this been your experience?

Application:

In which areas of your life do you need to recognize that Christ is far better than everyone and everything else you might put your faith and trust in?