

Hebrews 1

Intro:

--Who wrote the book of Hebrews?

--We don't know, and God meant to have it that way!

*Boreham (New Testament Essays): *"I do not know who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. Nobody knows. But I like him, whoever he was. I like a man who, sitting down to write a letter, begins with God. . . The man who puts God first in his letter is likely to put God first in his life."**

--God made sure that the message of Hebrews was not eclipsed by the messenger. The resurrected Jesus Christ is first and foremost throughout the letter. We are not to lose sight of Him! In that vein, the term **better** is used 13 times to describe Christ or the work of Christ: **1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24.**

--We are exhorted to **consider Him (12:3).**

--Who was this letter written to?

--First, a local church was in view. The author refers to a local body of believers he had a history with and had their own leadership for some time (**5:12; 10:32-34; 13:7, 17, 24**).

--Second, to those who were primarily Hebrews—Jews who professed to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

--It was written to show these believing Jews that Christ was in heaven as their Highest Priest after the order of Melchizedek. And to help them understand that their rightful place was with Jesus, as rejected and outside the camp (**13:13-14**)!

--It is a word of doctrine and exhortation (**13:22**). 13 times the author writes **Let us. . .**

--Understanding the time the letter was written is important. The Holy Spirit inspires this Epistle at a breaking point in Jewish history. It is written just before 70AD.

--The church has been gathering long enough to have mature leadership and believers (**5:12; 13:7+17**).

--Jesus had prophesied the destruction of the temple (**Lk. 21:6**), but at present the temple services were still happening (**10:11** is in the present tense). The early Jews were still involved in the OT ceremonial worship.

--The storm clouds of war were gathering over Jerusalem—maybe Roman soldiers already surrounded the city? The writer warns that the old way of Jewish worship was **becoming obsolete and growing old** and **ready to vanish away (8:13)**.

--I don't think we can imagine how hard it was for those early Jewish believers to go from thousands of years of beauty, gold, culture, pomp, circumstance, blood, priests, sacrifices, altars, feasts, and the temple to now worshiping God in homes and caves, fields and catacombs, rejected and threatened, persecuted, imprisoned, and killed by their own people.

--There was a titanic social, cultural, financial, and practical pull to let go of this so-called "Messiah" from Nazareth and turn back to the shadows of ceremonial Judaism despite the fact that they were fading before their very eyes.

--It is then that the Holy Spirit inspires a man to write to these beleaguered Hebrews and explain how:

- 1) Jesus is greater than all the prophets who spoke God's Word.
- 2) Jesus is greater than all the angels who serve and worship God.
- 3) Jesus is the greatest of all High Priests.
- 4) More faithful than Moses, more royal than David, with a greater rest to offer than Joshua.
- 5) Jesus is an eternal High Priest from a better priesthood, better heavenly temple, better altar, better sacrifice, and better covenant.
- 6) Then he writes about how every elder, all the faithful fathers who made up their godly Israelite heritage, had to express faith through horribly difficult circumstances in each of their own days and ages.
- 7) Finally, he exhorts them to be heavenly companions with Jesus Christ and join Him outside the camp in His time of rejection.

--All the while, peppering his letter with stern warnings not to turn away from Christ and turn back to their lifeless Judaism. To leave the substance for the shadow would leave them Godless and hopeless.

--It is a book that points those with weary hearts and hanging hands to Jesus and warns and exhorts us to trust and follow Him.

--The book of Hebrews is a bright and shining beacon of light spoken by God in the darkest of times. *F.W. Boreham's story about Alan Gibson, the widower, and the differences in his experience at his wife's graveside in the summer (good place) and winter (she isn't there).*

Verses 1-2a: God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,

--The writer begins with God—the God of the Bible, the God of the Jews, the God who sent prophets to the people of Israel, the one and only true God.

--That God, **at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets**. . . The God of creation and of Israel spoke in the times of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the way to John the Baptist through His servants the prophets.

--The message the Jews were always familiar with, the oracles of God that were given to them (**Rom. 3:1-2**), which had to come to pass because they were the Word of God (**Acts 3:21**), were now a mode of communication from **time past**.

--Things have changed **in these last days**. There was a pre-Son type of speech and a post-Son type of speech. We must not overlook how powerful a statement this was!

--The God who spoke in the past, in and through prophets, has spoken again in these last days, in and through His Son. The voice of the OT God could now be heard in Christ.

--God, as Son, is speaking. The Son is not a servant who has His Word. The Son is one who is His Word. The Son is a Person who is equal with Him, who shares all His thoughts, purpose, glory, and love.

Matthew 11:27: All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (What Jesus says next in Matthew is so beautiful when you consider things in our current context!)

--The Hebrew Christians were not turning their back on the faith of their fathers and prophets by following the commandments of Jesus Christ. They were following the same voice that had spoken through the prophets in the past. Servants were no longer necessary when they had the Son. One who alone has the same nature as the Father.

John 1:1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

--God's final word to us has been spoken in a Person. Who is that Person?

Verses 2b-3: whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

--Now the writer gives a sevenfold description of the Son. The difference in our dispensation and previous dispensations is the greatness of our Messenger!

1) **Whom He appointed heir of all things:** Jesus Christ is the Lord of God's inheritance—**all things**. The origin, purpose, goal, meaning, and destiny of all life are found only in proper relation to Him.

2) **Through whom also He made the worlds:** Jesus is the fitting Heir because He was also the Creator (**1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9**).

John 1:3: All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

--The words of Jesus Christ, like the Father, are executive and not just legislative. They have power and define all reality. He is The Truth.

3) **Who being the brightness of His glory:** This is hard to explain, but the majesty of God is seen in Christ Jesus (**Jn. 1:14**). Without Christ, the Father is darkness by reason of brightness.

2 Corinthians 4:6: For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

--God could have made a million worlds more beautiful than this one, but He could not give a greater Son.

4) ***And the express image of His person:*** It was always the Father's purpose to be seen, known, heard, and worshiped in Jesus Christ. ***John 14:7-11***

5) ***And upholding all things by the word of His power:*** He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He alone will carry all things to their appointed ends.

****Colossians 1:15-17: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things and in Him all things consist.****

--Jesus Christ didn't create the world and then let it go. He is not distant from His creation. In fact, if He did not maintain us in every moment, we would simply disappear into the nothingness we were spoken from. ***And yet, He who easily made and maintains all of creation had to cry, agonize, and suffer to deal with our sin!***

6) ***When He had by Himself purged our sins:*** He alone purged our sins. Not any of the Jewish ceremonial worship, priests, altars, or sacrifices! He alone did what none of their Judaism could do.

****Colossians 1:19-20: And it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.****

7) ***Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high:*** Jesus claimed to be the Son who would return to the right hand of glory (**Lk. 20:41-44; 22:67-70**). His work is finished.

--Having a body, the very first resurrected and glorified body, He has to be seated somewhere. Where is that? In heaven. In glory. Proving His exalted place above all others in heaven or on earth (**Rom. 1:4**).

Verse 4: having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

--Not only is Jesus Christ greater than all the prophets who spoke God's Word, but He is also greater than all the angels involved in God's work throughout the Old Testament (**Gen. 16; 22; 31; Ex. 3; Judges 6: 13; Dan. 10; Gal. 3:19**).

--As the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ was always better than the angels, but as the Son of Man, ***He has obtained a more excellent name than they.*** Each of the following quotes proves this point (Though studied in their original context, each reference has its own specific slant).

--The multiplication of references gives emphasis, as in other places like **Romans 3:9-20 + 10:14-21**.

Verse 5: For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”?

And again: “I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”?

--The writer quotes **Ps. 2:7**, which is repeated in reference to Christ (**Acts 4:25-27; 13:32-33; Heb. 5:5**), and also **2 Sam. 4:25-27** (Or possibly **1 Chron. 17:13**).

--The point being that Jesus alone can claim the Fatherhood of God. The angels are called the “sons of God” as a group (**Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7**) in reference to God as their Creator, but no angel is ever recognized as an individual son of God.

Verse 6: But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

--Now the writer quotes **Deut. 32:43** or **Ps. 97:7**.

--God is going to bring the **firstborn (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15+18)** back into this present world. And when He does, Jesus Christ will be the object of angelic worship—heaven’s praise!

Verse 7: And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.”

--Here is a reference to **Ps. 104:4**. The angels are swift and unseen like the wind and strong, pure, and glorious like fire. Yet, they serve Jesus. They are His ministers.

Saphir (The Epistle to the Hebrews, pg. 110-111): “God does not move and rule the world merely by laws and principles, by unconscious and inanimate powers, but by living beings full of light and love. . . Now, glorious as the angels are, they are in subjection to Jesus as man; for in His human nature God has enthroned Him above all things. Their relation to Jesus fixes also their relation to us.”

Verses 8-9: But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

--This is a reference to **Ps. 45:6-7**. Jesus Christ has an eternal throne and scepter.

--Also, if anointed by God, how is He God? Plus, how does He have companions? Only Jesus Christ could fulfill these prophecies.

Verses 10-12: And: “You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.”

--The next reference is from **Ps. 102:25-27**. The writer contrasts eternity with the brief age of this present creation, emphasizing that Jesus as Creator is eternal and immutable.

--When creation was made, He was there. When it perishes, He will be there. Unlike any angel, He sits on an unmade throne.

Verse 13: *But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?*

--Finally, the writer quotes **Ps. 110:1**. This is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament (**Mt. 22:41-46; Acts 2:34-36; 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Heb. 10:13**). This makes sense, as it was one of Jesus' most powerful references to His Messianic character.

--Jesus alone is at the Father's right hand as the One who will one day rule over all.

Verse 14: *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

--It is wonderful to think about angels as ministering spirits (Think of how many times they ministered to God's people and Jesus Christ Himself!), but that is not the point here. The point is not *what* they do, but *Who* they listen to!

--Jesus Christ is the One seated on the throne they bow before, worship, and serve. The Son of Man and Son of God directs all angelic ministry to the sons and daughters of God the Father.