

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 18TH–19TH, 2025 // HEBREWS

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS WHO WERE THE HEBREWS?

Hebrews is obviously written to people who have a significant amount of knowledge of the Old Testament.

- This book was most likely written to a Jewish community who had converted to Christianity.
- These Jewish Believers had faced persecution, abuse, imprisonment, and loss of property for their faith in Jesus (Hebrews 10:32–39; 12:4).

## WHO WROTE HEBREWS?

The writer of Hebrews is unknown. There is no mention of the author anywhere in the book.

- Some have suggested Paul (but this book reads very differently from Paul's other letters), Luke, Apollos (Acts 18:24), Barnabas, Priscilla, or Aquila.
- The human author remains unknown, but the Holy Spirit was the true inspiration for this writing.

## BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL SETTING OF HEBREWS

The author of Hebrews speaks of sacrificial rituals (Hebrews 9:6–9) in a way that suggests that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing (this had to have been written before 70 A.D.).

- We are not sure where the original audience lived, but some have suggested Jerusalem, Alexandria, or Rome.
- For these Jewish Believers, their faith in Jesus had been costly. They had been ostracized, shunned, and rejected by their own people.
- Many were falling away from their commitment to Christ (Hebrews 5:11–6:12). Some were neglecting to gather with other Believers (Hebrews 10:2–25), and the temptation to return to Judaism to avoid hardship was strong.

## WHAT IS HEBREWS ABOUT?

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage these Christians to keep following Jesus.

- Some of them felt tired, scared, or tempted to go back to their old ways of following the Jewish law and traditions.
  - The writer wanted to remind them Jesus is better than anything else and He is worth following no matter how hard life gets.
1. Jesus is better: Christ is superior, above all things. Jesus is better than angels, Moses, priests, and the sacrifices of Judaism.
  2. Faith and Perseverance: We are called to trust Jesus and live by faith. We cannot give up! Real saving faith continues following Jesus, even when it's hard.
  3. God's Covenant Promises: The Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices were inadequate in themselves, but Jesus offered Himself up for us once and for all. God keeps His promises, and Jesus proves that.
  4. Jesus as our Great High Priest: Christ is the ultimate mediator between God and humanity.

## WHY STUDY HEBREWS?

It's tempting to get distracted from Jesus by obsessing over peripheral doctrines (angels, eschatology, miracles, or fringe O.T. teachings)—We do well to be reminded that Jesus Christ is the main point!

- Saving faith is faith that endures. Hebrews reminds us to keep pursuing Jesus and not to let complacency or compromise set in.
- The Old Testament is often misunderstood. We either ignore it, throw it out, or misunderstand the point of the law and O.T. covenants. In Hebrews, we see Jesus is the fulfillment of the O.T. promises of God!
- We must see Jesus for who He truly is—not one path of many, not just a good teacher, but our Savior, mediator, and Lord of all.

## THE SON OF GOD (HEBREWS 1:1–4)

### THE GOD WHO SPEAKS (V. 1)

Many people believe in a higher power but are reluctant to speak of that divine being in concrete, definite terms.

- The God of the Bible is a God who has revealed Himself to us in willful disclosure—God desires for His creatures to know Him and to know about Him! “God is there, and God is not silent” (Francis Schaeffer).
- How did God speak in the beginning? He revealed Himself to the Jewish fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and to the Jewish prophets (Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Hosea, Amos).
- God spoke at different times, and He spoke in different ways.
- There was nothing uniform or robotic about God's revelation of Himself to His people.

### GOD HAS SPOKEN BY HIS SON (V. 2)

In these “last days” (the time between the first advent of Christ and His second coming), God has spoken to us by His Son Jesus.

- Jesus is the “heir of all things” (He is preeminent above all creation), and He is the maker of all things (John 1:1–3).
- God revealed Himself more fully to us through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

### WHO IS JESUS AS GOD'S SON? (V. 3)

“The radiance of God's glory”: The shekinah was a shining, visible glory that demonstrated the majesty of God, as in the exodus (Exodus 13; 40) and at the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8).

- “The exact expression of His nature”: As a stamp or seal has the likeness of a ruler on it, so Jesus represents God to us.
- “Sustaining all things”: Jesus wasn't just active at creation, He actively preserves all things.
- “After making purification for sins”: Jesus is our priest who purged the guilt and shame of our sins through His own blood.
- “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”: Jesus is seated above all creation in a place of majesty, honor, and of finished work.

### JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO ANGELIC BEINGS (V. 4)

Because of these things, Jesus is far better than angels! Why jump right into talking about angels?

- Literature from this period in Judaism suggests a fascination and obsession with angels.

- There was an obsession with guardian angels (Acts 12:15) and the thought that the Kingdom would be inaugurated by an angelic army.
- The most offensive, scandalous, and vehemently opposed trait of Jesus' identity is His divinity.
- The Jewish leaders plotted to kill Jesus because He claimed to be God (John 10:33).
- Many cult groups try to adopt the forms and language of Christianity by twisting and altering Jesus' identity, claiming He was sent from God, but He was not God.
- Was Jesus just an angel Himself? Was Jesus a servant of the angels? How does Jesus fit with this understanding of angels?
- Jesus isn't an angel. He is superior to angels as creator, sustainer, redeemer, ruler, and Lord of all. Jesus' name is far more excellent than the name of any angel.
- Jesus is better than anyone or anything in our lives.

## EVIDENCE (HEBREWS 1:5–14)

### SUPERIOR WORSHIP (VS. 5–6)

Three O.T. passages are quoted here: Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14, and Deuteronomy 32:43.

- The main idea is this: God never would call any of the angels His son!
- This sonship of God cannot refer to an angel, because God has never done that, and angels do not worship other angels (v. 6).

### THE SUPERIOR THRONE OF GOD'S SON (VS. 7–12)

The O.T. quotation in v. 7 comes from Psalm 104:4 and it refers to the angels of God as God's messengers and servants.

- There's a difference between how the O.T. passages describe the Messiah and angels. Vs. 8–9 are a quotation from Psalm 45:6–7.
- Angels may surround the throne of God, but God's Son (the anointed one) occupies the throne.
- Vs. 10–12 come from Psalm 102:25–27. In this passage, the Son is not only called God, but also the LORD (Yahweh).
- Jesus the Son established the earth and the heavens and is eternal and everlasting.
- Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is immutable (unchanging).
- This can never refer to an angel!

### THE SUPERIOR REIGN OF GOD'S SON (V. 13)

The last O.T. citation is from Psalm 110:1.

- In this Psalm, Yahweh promises the Messiah utter dominion over the entire world and to sit at God's right hand.
- To which of the angels has God ever promised this? Angels do not sit in the presence of God; they stand at full attention ready to serve Him!

### WHO ARE ANGELS AND WHAT DO THEY DO? (V. 14)

Angels are spirits. They are spiritual beings without physical bodies, meaning they cannot become flesh and die on a cross like Jesus did.

- Angels are servants (ministers). They do not govern or rule like the Messiah is described as ruling over all the earth in the O.T.
- Angels are given the responsibility of serving God and carrying out God's directives.
- Angels are sent out to serve and minister to God as they care for and minister to God's people.
- We do not worship or develop an unhealthy obsession with angels. But we are aware that Scripture says angels are, in some way, involved in and aware of human affairs as ministers of God.
- Perhaps most angelic encounters or interactions are unknown to us at the time (Hebrews 13:2).

## THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

“If God were just to speak to me audibly, then I'd believe and know He loved me...”

- God has not shrouded Himself in mystery and He's not silent.
- God has revealed Himself to us in creation (Psalm 19:1–6; Romans 1:19–20).
- God revealed Himself to us through the O.T. fathers and prophets.
- God has revealed Himself to us in a profound way through Jesus. His life, teachings, and interactions with children/sinners/outcasts, His disdain of hypocritical religion, His death on the cross, and His resurrection show us God's heart, character, and what God is like.
- God has spoken, and that Word is alive, active, and continuously speaking to all who are listening (Hebrews 4:12).
- When we turn from our sins and turn in faith to Jesus the Son of God, we experience a revelation of God through the Holy Spirit.
- We do not just know about Him; we know Him intimately and personally.
- If God has spoken and is still speaking, are we listening? Or have we dug in our heels in pride and stubbornness?
- Is the Jesus we're placing our faith in the Jesus of the Bible, or a distortion that was made up?
- Is Jesus more important, more valuable and more beautiful to us than anything else in our lives?