

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 19TH, 2025 // HEBREWS

INTRODUCTION (HEBREWS)

THE AUTHORSHIP IS UNKNOWN

There are many opinions on who the author of Hebrews is, but we really do not know. One belief is that Paul wrote it because of his many contributions to the NT and his relationship with Timothy. But the writing style and reference to Timothy as “brother” rather than “my true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2) make it doubtful.

THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR

There are other possibilities of authorship. It could have been Priscilla, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Clement of Rome, Peter, or Arision.

- Ultimately, knowing who wrote Hebrews is not as important as knowing the One whom the author was writing about. We can differ on who the author is, but there can be no confusion on who Jesus is.

FAMILIARITY WITH THE AUDIENCE

Whoever the author was, they knew the recipients of this letter very well.

- The author never identified himself but referred to himself as a second-generation Christian (a known disciple of a disciple), asked for prayers that he/she might be able to visit them, and expressed a hope that Timothy would come with him.

WHO WAS THIS LETTER FOR?

This letter is not addressed to a specific church or region but to the “Hebrews.” The recipients would have been Jewish Believers who would not have been eyewitnesses to Jesus but would have learned about Him from those who were.

- The letter to the Hebrews has 82 OT references, which shows that the readers were familiar with OT laws, rituals, and practices.

EXACT DATE OF WRITING IS NOT KNOWN

We can narrow down a time frame by looking at the setting, demographic, and circumstances around the writing.

- Timothy is mentioned, so we know it was written in his lifetime. The Temple seems to still be standing, which puts us before 70 AD, and the mention of persecution but not martyrdom puts us right before Nero's reign in 64 AD.

PURPOSE OF WRITING TO THE HEBREWS

The author's purpose in writing was to exalt Jesus Christ and urge the readers not to walk away from the faith in the face of persecution.

- Throughout Hebrews, the Greek word *kreitton* is used, which means “more excellent,” “superior,” or “better,” to communicate that Jesus is superior to the Old Covenant (law and sacrifices), prophets, and angels...everything!

SUPERIOR TO PROPHETS (HEBREWS 1:1-3)

“LONG AGO...”

Though the author and destination for this letter are unclear, the message is exceptionally clear: God has spoken to humanity through the prophets, choosing to reveal Himself at different times and in different ways.

- The fragmented revelation of God took place throughout history in various ways: through angels, visions, events, and people.

THE WORD IS SUPERIOR TO A WORD

The prophets gave warnings, correction, and edification to people on behalf of God, but through Jesus, we shifted from “a word” from God to *the Word* (Jesus), who is God, dwelling with us (John 1:1-14).

- If what the prophets spoke was important, **how much more should we listen when Jesus speaks?**

“IN THESE LAST DAYS...”

Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension ushered in a new “phase” of God's redemptive plan, and we are living in the last phase of that plan.

- The previous ways that God spoke to humanity were important, but what was communicated to us by His Son is far superior. Vs. 2-3 are packed full of seven majestic phrases that describe the superiority of Jesus.

SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST

The first two phrases show the unique relationship of the Son to all of creation.

- Jesus is the **heir to all things** and **the universe was created through Him**. Jesus is superior because He is the One who created all of time and space (Colossians 1:16) and ultimately has control over all of creation (Hebrews 2:8).
- The next two phrases show Jesus' superiority because of His relationship to the Father.
- Verse 3 says Jesus is the “**radiance of God's glory**,” meaning He reflects God's spotless purity and is the true light that shines and transforms hearts (John 1:9). Jesus being the “**exact expression**” of the nature of God simply means Jesus is God!
- The fifth phrase shows Jesus' superiority through what He is actively doing in the world.
- Jesus is **sustaining all things** and as the sustainer of the world, the Son will carry God's plan to its completion. With Jesus' active hand holding the world, we have assurance that the world will not fall into utter chaos and God's plans will triumph.
- The sixth and seventh phrases focus on the redemptive work of Jesus.
- Jesus is superior because He did something no one else could do for us, including ourselves. His

death, through the grace of God, **removed the stain of sin**, if we accept it. Then **he assumed a position of majesty, honor, glory, and of a completed work**.

SUPERIOR TO ANGELS (HEBREWS 1:4-14)

WHY MAKE THE COMPARISON?

Though some things are better understood in contrast to other things, it's possible that the readers of the letter had fallen into the dangerous tendency to worship angels like others in the early church (Colossians 2:18; Galatians 1:8).

- It's also possible they had subscribed to the heretical idea that Jesus Himself was an angel.

“THE NAME HE INHERITED IS MORE EXCELLENT”

To clear up any misconceptions, the author will use many OT quotes to show that Jesus has a superior name and role to angels.

- V. 5 contains quotes from Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 to show that Jesus is superior to angels because He is the Son of God. The angels do not have the same close, personal relationship with the Father.

HE IS SUPERIOR IN HONOR AND DIGNITY

Jesus is superior to the angels because angels bow down in worship and serve Jesus, who is their God.

- Vs. 6-7 blend Psalm 104:4 and Deuteronomy 32:43 to show how the angels worshiped Jesus at his birth (Luke 2:8-15). Angels fill an important but inferior role, as they do God's will and go where He sends them.

HIS ROLE IS SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS

Vs. 8-9 are pulled from Psalm 45:6-7 and tell us three important facts about Jesus' role.

- First, **He is the ruler on the throne**. Second, **His throne is eternal**; it will last forever and ever and will never be in jeopardy. Third, **Jesus loves righteousness**, and nothing pleases him more than us loving righteousness.

HE IS CONSTANT AND UNCHANGING

Vs. 10-12 are the longest of the seven quotes. They come from Psalm 102:25-27 and are repeated in 2 Peter 3:11-13.

- Only God can create everything and undo everything. He is the only source of constant stability and security. **He is an immovable rock. If we are tethered to Him, we can experience stability and security.**

HE HAS POWER AND AUTHORITY

The final quote is from Psalm 110:1 and shows that **Christ has ascended to a place of power and authority at the right hand of the Father**.

- Jesus claimed the Psalmist was talking about Him in Mark 12:36. Although the promise of Christ's enemies being His footstool has not been fulfilled, we trust the NT promises of His inevitable victory (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

THE ANGELS CARRY OUT HIS DIRECTIVES

The final point the author makes about the superiority of Christ is that the angels' primary duties are to care for and deliver Believers (Psalm 34:7; Acts 12:7-10).

- Jesus is superior because He offers salvation to humanity while angels are ministering spirits who are sent out to aid those who “inherit salvation.”

THE SON IS...

- The **Prophet** through whom God spoke the final word to humanity.
- The **Priest** who has removed sin, shame, and guilt if we choose to follow Him.
- The **King** in the highest place of honor.
- The eternal incomprehensible **God**.

HE IS SUPERIOR TO EVERYTHING!

- His thoughts and ways are superior to ours (Isaiah 55:9). We must abandon the thought that inferior ways will bring about fulfillment and contentment.
- He possesses all power, authority, answers, and eternity. Have we forsaken our way of doing things for His superior way?