

The Book of Hebrews
Churchwide Bible Study – Fall 2019
Introduction and Ch. 1-2 – Week 1

→ **Introduction to the book of Hebrews...**

- Hebrews was originally a letter, an epistle.

***Hebrews 13:22** - I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.*

- Who (under the inspiration of God's Spirit) wrote this letter?
 - The author does not identify himself so it's impossible to be absolutely certain.
 - Paul has certainly been the most popular candidate for authorship throughout church history.
 - Other candidates have included Barnabas, Apollos, and even Luke.
- Who was the intended audience of this letter?
 - 1st century Jewish Christians (hence the title "Letter to the Hebrews")
 - Most likely living in Jerusalem or the surrounding areas.
- When was this first letter written?
 - Certainly *before* the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, of the Temple and of its ministries in 70 AD.
 - Most scholars assume the date for Hebrews to be around 62-64 AD.
- What was the occasion for this letter? (Why was it needed by its audience?)
 - Jewish Christians were enduring some intensifying persecution from those around them (most likely fellow Jews).
 - (Intensifying persecution was something Jesus had said would signify that Jerusalem's and the temple's destruction were eminent – Matt 24, Luke 21, Mark 13)
 - The persecution was leading at least some of these Jewish Christians to consider returning to the religion of Judaism, particularly to resuming their participation in the ceremonies of the temple system (sacrifices, offerings, etc.).

- Hebrews' author was exhorting his readers to not turn back to Judaism for three main reasons:
 - The ceremonies of the Mosaic laws were only meant to be temporary and they were about to come to a violent end (culminating in 70 AD).
 - His readers would be caught up in God's judgment of their fellow Jews if they failed to endure and turned away from Christ and back to 1st century Judaism.
 - Turning away would be most heinous because Jesus is superior to the Mosaic system, both because of who He *is* and because of what He *has* done.
- Similarities between their situation and ours...
 - We too are called to endure to the end...
 - We too are often tempted to take easier roads...to compromise the faith in some way...
 - We too sometimes fail to appreciate the superior person and work of Jesus Christ...
 - We too need Christ's mercy and grace in our current times of need...particularly when we are tempted to turn to an easier way...

→ Outline of Hebrews:

- I. Christ is Superior to the Angels (warning against turning away) – Heb. 1-2
- II. Christ is Superior to Moses (warning against turning away) – Heb. 3-4
- III. Christ is the Superior High Priest and Sacrifice (warning against turning away) – Heb. 5-10
- IV. An Enduring Faith (warning against turning away) – Heb. 11-12
- V. The Life of Enduring Faith – Heb. 13

→ Chapter One (Christ is Superior to the Angels)

- The Jews in the 1st century believed the Mosaic Law was given by God but delivered to Moses by angels (gave it a heavenly character).

Ex. 19:16 - So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder (voices, angelic voices) and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

- In chapter 1, the author's point is that the age brought about by Christ is superior to the Mosaic age delivered by angels *because* Christ Himself is superior to angels!

- 1:1-4 -

- “Last days” doesn’t mean “time just before the end of the world”...
 - Rather the “latter days”
 - The final and culminating age of human history...
- The revelation of Jesus (delivered through His apostles) is God’s final word to us.
- Because Jesus is the full expression of God himself and has been given rule over all things, He (and His work) is superior to angels.

- 1:5-14 –

- The angels are servants of God...
- The Son is addressed by God (the Father) throughout the Old Testament as a God.
 - The Son is praised as the Creator and the Eternal One
 - **Note** – In vs. 10, Hebrews’ author says that Psalm 102 is addressed to Christ...
 - Ps. 102 is addressed to Yahweh (LORD, Jehovah)!
 - The author of Hebrews is claiming that Jesus *is* Yahweh.
- The last point made in chapter 1, is that The Father has given Jesus, in His humanity, rule over all things...

- He is at God's right hand now having His enemies put under His feet...
- This kind of rule of Earth was of course never given to angels.

→ Chapter Two (Christ is Superior to the Angels)

- 2:1-4 – The first warning...
 - Those who rejected commandments given through angels were punished...
 - What should those who turn away from the salvation made possible by Christ, who is superior to the angels, expect...
 - Is the author saying that his Christian readers might turn away from Christ and lose their salvation? No, but...
- 2:5-9 – Jesus rules the “age to come,” not angels...
 - V. 5ff – The angels will not rule the world to come either – the final new heavens and new earth...
 - God, according to Ps. 8, has always meant that for mankind...
 - Obviously we don't see that yet.
 - Vs. 9 – But we do see Jesus, the Ultimate Man, already reigning over all things.
 - His reign guarantees our own reign of all things in the future.
 - This proves yet again His superiority to angels, even in His human nature.
- 2:10-18 – The best Older Brother anyone can have...
 - God the Son became a human like us for two main reasons...
 - That He might die for our sins...
 - That He might helps us when we're tempted, as He was tempted in the same way...
 - Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters.
 - Jesus stands ready to help us, particularly when we're tempted to give up.