

Bible Study – Hebrews chapter 1 The Supremacy of God's Son

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage the early Christians, especially those who were facing persecution or a crisis of faith. The writer starts off by succinctly showing why the central figure of their faith, Jesus Christ, is superior to all other forms of religion and starts off with his comparison to angels.

Read Hebrews 1:1-4

The writer summarizes how God spoke to the people of Israel, first through the prophets and in these days, through his Son, Jesus Christ. He goes on to describe the nature of Jesus and his power. Then he goes on to say how he has been exalted to the right hand of God, making him much more superior to angels.

Q. (v.1-2a) In what ways did God speak to his prophets, who spoke the message to the Old Testament believers (e.g. fathers) (cf. Numbers 12:6-8)? How was God revealed through the prophets (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)? What is the writer implying when he writes “... these last days he has spoken to us by His Son”? How is Jesus superior to all the prophets of old?

- The ‘means’ include types, symbols, commandments, precepts, warnings, exhortations, visions, dreams, signs, parables, events, and face-to-face-visitations
- The way God revealed himself was through supernatural interventions as well as natural phenomena such as storms, plagues, and other historical events
- **2 Timothy 3:16** – All Scripture is God breathed, meaning that all prophecy comes from him alone, to be given to his agents, the prophets, to speak to the people
- **2 Peter 1:21** – All prophecy came from God, through the Holy Spirit, and given to men to speak. It is not man’s own will or doing.
- The writer may be implying that all the earlier revelations through the prophets are complete through Jesus Christ and his earthly ministry
- His statement establishes the fact of progressive revelation and strongly suggests the cessation of revelation in the apostolic age
- God’s final revelation came through Jesus earthly ministry first, and then through the apostles
- God has also taken the initiative to reveal himself to man, when man has not taken that initiative
- Jesus, the Son of God, not only declares unto us the message of the Father, but He himself is the message of the Father. All that God has to say unto us is Jesus. All the thoughts and gifts and promises and counsels of God are embodied in Jesus.
- **Leader’s notes** – The earlier revelations were the preparation for later ones and were distinguished in four particular ways – In time, in the recipients, in the agents, and in the manner

Q. (v.2b-3) There are seven (7) facts in these verses that stress the Son’s unique greatness and the culminating character of His revelation. Expound on the following and write down its significance to support his greatness or superior character.

1. Heir of all things (cf. Philippians 2:9-11)
2. The Son made the world (cf. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16)
3. The radiance of God’s glory (cf. Matthew 17:1-2)
4. The exact representation of God’s character (cf. John 14:9)
5. Upholds all things by the word of His Power (cf. Colossians 1:17; Genesis 1:3)
6. Made purifications of sins (cf. Mark 1:44; 2 Peter 1:9)
7. Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (cf. Ephesians 4:10; Philippians 2:9; Luke 22:69)

Q. (v.4) What was the name given to angels in the Old Testament? (cf. Job 2:1; 38:7) What is the name given to Jesus and what connotation comes with it? (cf. Matthew 17:5; Isaiah 7:14) What do you think the term 'more excellent' (or better) implies and what is the implication of that?

- Angels are known as "sons of God" (cf. Job 2:1; 38:7) which is pluralistic.
- Jesus Christ is referred to as "Son", which is singular (cf. Matthew 17:5)
- Immanuel, meaning "God with us", rings ever so true, as Christ, being a reflection of God, dwells among men
- God the Son carried out the will of the God the Father in a way that corresponds to the way in which sons in biblical culture carried out the wills of their father
- The use of the term 'more excellent' or 'better' implies that whatever came before Jesus Christ may have been good, but not as great as Jesus Christ.
- This would include the way the God was revealed through the prophets and the way He lived on this earth compared to all that preceded and followed Him (e.g. true and full obedience to the word of God)

Leaders Notes – The writer introduces several concepts in the prologue that he later develops more fully, which includes: the distinctive quality of the Son's revelation, the superiority of His sacrifice, His sovereignty, and His greatness compared with the angels.

Read Hebrews 1:5-14

The writer, having established his basis for why Jesus Christ is supreme amongst creation, now compares Jesus with the angels, created beings that are highly intelligent and moral and may have been viewed as supreme creatures.

Q. (v.5, 13) What is the writer trying to show with these verses regarding angels and Jesus Christ in relation to God the Father? (quotes cf. Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14 or 1 Chronicles 17:13; Psalm 110:1) In v.13, what does it mean to 'sit at my right hand' and why is this a sign of superiority (cf. Romans 8:34; 1 Peter 3:22)?

- The Old Testament writers referred to angels collectively as the "sons of God" to emphasize their greatness, but does not use the 'singular' title of "The Son of God" (cf. Job 1:6, 2:1; 38:7, Psalm 29:1)
- The title "Son of God" is a title referred to the Davidic kings (2 Samuel 7:14) and specifically Jesus Christ (Mark 1:11; Luke 1:32)
- Not only is Jesus the Son of God, but he is also the promised Son of David (Luke 1:32-33, 68-69; Romans 1:3)
- Even though Jesus Christ was always God's eternal Son (in eternity past), in human history He became the Son prophesied to rule over David's house. He received permission to rule the whole earth after His ascension.
- The title "Son" refers to Jesus in three separate respects:
 - He was always the pre-existent Son (v. 3a-b; cf 5:8)
 - He became the incarnate Son at his birth (v. 2a)
 - He became the exalted Son when He returned to heaven
- To 'sit at the right hand' is a term of kingship or having ruling authority
- The reason why this shows a sign of superiority is because angels stand and serve, while the Son sits and rules (Romans 8:34; 1 Peter 3:22)
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Q. (v.6-7, 14) What are the roles of angels within these quotes (quotes – cf. Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 104:4)? What does the title “firstborn” mean in this context? (cf. Psalm 89:27; 1 Chronicles 3:1-5)

- Angels are servants by nature
- They also worship the Son, which by the very nature of that act, shows Christ’s superiority over the angels
- Angels are ministering spirits sent by God
- They are to assist (render service for) human beings toward reaching their final deliverance over their spiritual enemies, which includes bringing us to conversion
- This also involves protecting and strengthen believers so they may one day receive their full inheritance with Jesus Christ in glory
- The ministry of service is inferior to the ministry of ruling, which belong to Christ
- The title “firstborn” reflects the sovereignty, uniqueness, and superiority of the Messiah (Psalm 89:27)
- The title doesn’t not always mean ‘chronological birth’, as seen in the example of Solomon, who exercised the sovereignty of the Davidic house as Israel’s king, even though he was the tenth son of David (1 Chronicles 3:1-5)

Q. (v.8-9) What is the writer illustrating regarding Christ’s rule with this quote from Psalm 45:6-7? What did the prophet’s prophecy about the Messiah that would earn Him the right to rule? (cf. John 8:45-47)

- The Son is addressed as both God and as Lord, which shows that the Son exercises royal power
- This is a reference to the throne of God, at which Jesus sits at the right hand (cf. Hebrews 12:2)
- His ‘throne’ is both eternal (without end) and immutable (unchanging)
- This quote describes the final triumph of David’s Son, the Messiah, who is also God
- The Son is also superior to angels because He is God
- The prophets predicted that Messiah would be ‘righteous’
- Jesus Christ demonstrated this quality perfectly during his earthly ministry (cf. John 8:45-47)
- It is his love of righteousness, manifested in his earthly life, that entitles him to sovereignty
- **Leaders Note 1:** The anointing of the Son is not to be thought of in connection with coronation rites, but as symbolizing the joy of festival occasions, when the practice of anointing was followed
- **Leader’s Note 2:** The companions mentioned here probably included all other righteous beings, angelic and human, including faithful Christians (cf. Hebrews 2:10-11; 3:1, 14; 12:8). The term also implies an intimate association with Christ (cf. Luke 5:7). The term ‘partakers’ can be substituted.

Q. (v.10-12) What is the writer showing about Christ with the quote from Psalm 102:25-27? When looking back at the previous passage set, what is the overarching theme related to Jesus (v. 8, 12)? Why is this important?

- The Son is also Creator (cf. v.2), which is looking to the past
- Leader’s note 1: “Lord” means Master, and refers to God in the quoted passage from Psalm
- The writer is illustrating the immutability (unchanging nature) of the Son
- Many in that time, specifically in the Greco-Roman world (e.g. the geographical region that is influenced by the ancient Greeks and Romans), believed that the world and universe were indestructible
- When the present heaven and earth is ‘burned’ up and the new heaven and earth are created, this shows different ‘phases’ of the Messiah’s endless earthly rule
- The Son’s rule will continue eternally, along with His joy
- The overarching theme is the Son’s eternal nature
- This is important as it shows that He will always be here while other things come and go

- The attribute of permanence in the Creator corresponds to the durability of his throne and serves to reinforce the contrast between the mutability (changes) of the angels and the stable, abiding character of the Son

The writer of Hebrews shows his readers, in convincing fashion, the superiority of Jesus Christ over the angels in the following seven (7) aspects: 1.) He is the Son of God (v.5a), 2.) He is the promised son of David (v.5b), 3.) He is the supreme authority whom angels worship as Yahweh (v.6), 4.) His ministry is not that of a temporary servant like the angels (v.7), 5.) His ministry is that of the eternal Ruler and King (vv. 8-9), 6.) He is the immutable (unchanging) Creator (vv.10-12), and 7.) He is the supreme authority who will rule over as Victor over all His enemies (v.13).

The writer is setting the basis for the rest of the epistle that by showing the superiority of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of our lives, that all else that came before or anything that tries to measure up to Him follows terribly short.