



# HEBREWS

Jesus is GREATER THAN...SO STAND FIRM

## JESUS IS GREATER THAN... ANGELIC BEINGS—CHAPTER 1

### **FACILITATOR'S NOTE**

Chapter 1 of Hebrews starts off like no other letter in the New Testament. Instead of your traditional salutation and blessing, the author begins with a deeply theological and rhetorically eloquent opening. Right out of the gates, the author speaks his thesis to us, "Christ is God's final Word to us which makes Him superior to all!" And this Word from God brings us hope and salvation and continues to speak through us (His disciples) today.

There is a lot to talk about in the first 4 verses of this book. So, we encourage you to camp out there for a bit and not rush that discussion as it sets up the rest of the book of Hebrews. Verses 5-14 will bring in several OT passages to demonstrate Christ's supremacy over angelic beings. These references begin to demonstrate how God's plan for humankind through His Son Jesus was evident through His Word in the days of old and fulfilled in His Son, His final Word. How magnificent it is to know that Jesus, God's final Word now lives through His Spirit in our hearts. We are, therefore, God's Word continuing to be spoken for all humanity to hear as Christ lives, and moves, and has His being in and through us.

**There is so much to unpack in the first chapter (especially the first four verses) that you have two weeks to cover this lesson. You will need to decide where you want to break it based on discussion and/or time.**

**IMPORTANT:** As always, we encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by committing the class and the teaching to God in prayer. After this, we encourage you to dig into not only the specific chapter in Hebrews for this week (Chapter 1), but also the book of Hebrews as a whole and the Scriptures at large. As you move through your readings, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is **ONLY AFTER DOING THESE THINGS** that you should approach this lesson plan and perhaps use it as a guide. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

## PRAYER

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Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word. Give praise to God for His plan of salvation and praise to Christ for being His exact representation to us.

## FOCUS

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- Jesus Christ is God's final Word to us.
- Jesus is the glory of God and His exact representation.
- Jesus is therefore superior to the angels in heaven.
- Recognize that **JESUS IS GREATER THAN** and so we should stand firm in our faith.

## LESSON

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### Discussion Starters (OPTIONAL)

- When the ancient church father John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, was summoned by Emperor Arcadius and threatened with banishment, he responded, "You cannot banish me, for the whole world is my Father's kingdom." "Then I will take away your life," said the emperor. "You cannot," answered Chrysostom, "for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away your treasure," roared the emperor. "You can't," replied Chrysostom, "for my treasure is in heaven, where my heart is." "Then I will drive you away from all your friends," the emperor said. "You cannot, for I have one friend from whom you can never separate me. I defy you," said Chrysostom, "because you can do me no harm."
- This sort of commitment comes from knowing who Jesus Christ really is. This first chapter of Hebrews will get you started on the race (Hebrews 12:1-2) with a look at the glory, power, and majesty of Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Do you believe in Jesus with this sort of conviction? Why or why not?
- When considering the power, glory, and majesty of Jesus, does it move you or do you feel indifferent to it? Explain.

### FROM GOD'S WORD

- 1:1-4
  - Key Points
    - The first four verses of Hebrews constitutes the author's thesis and essentially the summary of everything he will be writing.
    - The Hebrew writer wants to let his audience know that God once spoke to them through the prophets, but now He speaks His definitive and final word to us through His WORD, Jesus Christ.

- The point here is the God has not been silent, but has always taken the initiative and revealed Himself to us through His Word.
  - Interestingly, the author is saying that both the OT and NT passages are not only God's Word, but also His continued story of Salvation that was a part of His plan from before time began (See Ephesians 1:3-14).
  - "Last days" refers to the kingdom of God that was inaugurated by Jesus and will be fulfilled through Jesus when He comes again. We are in the "last days."
- The next few verses provides and outline of the supremacy of Christ by using eight affirmations:
    1. ***The Son is The Messiah***
      - a. Jesus is "the heir of all things." This alludes to Psalm 2:8 that addresses the Lord's anointed who is spoken of as God's Son.
      - b. See also Matthew 21:38 & 28:18
      - c. Remember, in Genesis 17:5 Abram as the heir was given a new name (Abraham) and was the father of many nations. Yet, Jesus is not only the heir of many nations, but He is the heir of ALL THINGS. He's a bigger deal than Abraham!
      - d. This point will be discussed and amplified more in Hebrews 2:5-9.
    2. ***The Son is The Agent***
      - a. Jesus is the agent through which God "created the world/universe." Here, the author is saying that it was through Jesus that God created all time and space.
      - b. See also Hebrews 1:10; John 1:3; Col. 1:16
      - c. This statement demonstrates Christ's preexistence, authority, power, and full deity.
    3. ***The Son is The Radiance***
      - a. Jesus IS the Glory of God! A lot of time could be spent here if you were to go back to Moses in Exodus (specifically chap. 34) when he could not gaze at the face of God and see His full glory without dying. But more importantly, when Moses was in the presence of God he shone/shimmered with the glory of God. So much so that the Israelites had Moses veil his face for FEAR of the Glory of God.
      - b. Paul addresses God's Glory by considering Moses and relating it to Christ and Christians in 2 Cor. 3:7-4:6. Paul notes that the glory of God would fade from Moses until he returned to God's presence, but Jesus is the full glory of God that will not fade and lives within us. When one

becomes a child of God, the Spirit of the Lord (Christ's Spirit) dwells within us and we reveal the glory of God as we are being transformed into the image of Christ (See 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 4:4-6).

- i. So, as Christ is the radiance of the glory of God, we are the radiance of the glory of Christ. Not us, but CHRIST!

c. See also John 1:14

#### **4. *The Son is The Representation***

- a. The Greek term used here for "exact representation/imprint" occurs only here in the NT and refers to a mark or impression placed on an object, especially on coins, and came to signify a 'representation' or 'reproduction' of the image being copied. So, Jesus is the "the very stamp of ... [God's] nature" (RSV).
- b. This is a much more emphatic statement than *eikōn*, which is used in 2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15 to refer to Christ as "the image of God".
- c. Jesus is the essence of God. He is the embodiment of God, as he really is. God's very being is made manifest in Christ. So, to see Jesus is to see God!

#### **5. *The Son is The Sustainer***

- a. Jesus, being who He is, sustains ALL THINGS. He is not the god of deists who created everything and then stood back to let it run on its own. Instead, He is personally involved in sustaining it toward the ultimate goal and will of God the Father.
- b. Most interesting here is the "how" He sustains it. Jesus sustains the universe "by the word of his power" or "by His word." This demonstrates the Jesus' Word is divine. So, the creative "word" of God the Father that brought all into existence (Gen. 1:1) is also the sustaining "word" of Christ that upholds all things (Heb. 1:3).
- c. This all is further evidenced in John 1:1-3.

#### **6. *The Son is The Savior***

- a. Jesus, as agent and sustainer, also is the agent of our purification and sustainer of our life. Jesus is the superior offering for our sin under the new covenant once and for all.
- b. Jesus purified us from our sins in a way that no other could. His forgiveness is permanent! No priest or sacrifice could accomplish this for us.

- c. By this purification of sin, Christ has torn down the barrier that separated us from God and brought us into the Father's presence. No other could accomplish so great a task!!!

### **7. *The Son is The King***

- a. Jesus, having accomplished His task, is now enthroned at the right hand of God as king. This is a clear allusion to Psalm 110:1 and Jesus speaks this Psalm of Himself when standing before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:64; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:41-44).
- b. Being seated at the Lord's right hand in the OT is a position of favour (Ps. 80:18; Jer. 22:24), victory (Ps. 20:6; 44:3; Isa. 41:10), and power (Exod. 15:6; Ps. 89:13; Isa. 48:13). This shows that Jesus, being seated at God's right hand, is sharing the Father's throne (Rev. 3:21).
- c. This demonstrates his divine and unparalleled authority.
- d. The fact that He "sat down" indicated that His work is done. This is in contrast to Aaronic priests who had to remain standing during their work because it symbolized that their sacrificial service was never done. This indicates a fulfillment of divine purposes and promises.

### **8. *The Son is The Superior***

- a. Jesus is not equal to, but GREATER THAN the angels. Remember, the prophets brought the word to the people. But it was believed that the word was mediated through angels (Exo. 3:2; Isa. 63:9; Acts 7:38-39; Gal. 3:19). Instead, Christ is superior to them in bringing the final Word from God.
- b. There is also the contrast here in that Jesus was human which is a little lower than the angels. There is thought that the author was trying to demonstrate that Jesus, though human, was still greater than the angels as He was not only human but became so for the salvation of the humankind.
  - i. As Richard Baukam states, "The first two chapters of Hebrews depict the divine identity of Jesus in distinction from angels and his identity with humanity in distinction from the angels. As the Son of God his affinity with the Father distinguishes him from the angels, placing him far above them, while his temporary humiliation below the angels is so that, as the Son, he can establish his affinity with

his human brothers and sisters." (R. Bauckham, *Monotheism and Christology*, 172-173.)

- For Discussion
  - How do verses 1-3 reveal the essential truth of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency?
  - Based on what we learn in verses 2-3, how would you answer the question "Who is Jesus Christ?"
  - Do you believe that we understand and respect the supremacy of Christ today? Explain.
  - In what ways can we become more aware of the power, glory, and majesty of Christ?
- 1:5-14
  - Key Points
    - Jesus is GREATER THAN the angels...PERIOD!
    - The author goes on to demonstrate this point by using several passages found in the OT.
    - What are five ways that Jesus is superior to the angels in verse 4-14?
      - He is the "Son", angels are not
      - He is "the firstborn" who receives worship from angels
      - He is "God" enthroned and anointed, angels are merely servants
      - He is "LORD" (Yahweh) who is the eternal Creator
      - He is "sovereign" seated at the right hand of God, angels are ministering spirits
  - For Discussion
    - What do you learn about angels from these verses?
    - Based on what you have observed in verses 5-14, how would you expand your answer to the question "Who is Christ?"
    - How do you feel knowing that you have angels ministering to you?

## **REFLECTION**

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- The author of Hebrews summarizes his conclusion very well in the first four verses of chapter 1. Do you see Jesus any differently based on our discussion today? Why or why not?
- Understanding that Jesus is GREATER THAN and SUPERIOR TO, how does this change your perspective on Christ and your relationship with Him?
- Knowing WHO Jesus is changes how we approach Him and worship Him. How does knowing these characteristics of Jesus address needs in your life?
- What kind of life should you be living knowing the true Jesus?

## **PRAYER**

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**LESSON OUTLINE** – Here are the lessons we will be studying the weeks to come.

- INTRODUCTION (January 5)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 12)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 19)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...But Still Human–Chapter 2 (January 26)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Moses–Chapter 3 (February 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 4 (February 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 5 (February 16)
- THEREFORE, Don't Fall Away–Chapter 6 (February 23)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Melchizedek–Chapter 7 (March 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Law–Chapter 8 (March 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Tabernacle –Chapter 9 (March 16)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Sacrifices–Chapter 10 (March 23)
- THEREFORE, Have Faith–Chapter 11 (March 30)
- THEREFORE, Stand Firm–Chapter 12 (April 6)
- THEREFORE, Offer Acceptable Sacrifices–Chapter 13 (April 13)
- CONCLUSION (April 27)