

JESUS IS BETTER

An In-Depth Study of Hebrews

Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Hebrews 1:1-4	Introduction to Hebrews, God's Final Word in His Son
2	Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4	Jesus is Greater Than the Angels
3	Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6	Jesus' Sonship is Greater than Moses' Servanthood
4	Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13	Jesus' Rest is Better than Joshua's Rest
5	Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10	Jesus, Our Great Appointed High Priest
6	Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20	Exhortation to Persevere in Light of God's Promises
7	Hebrews 7:1-28	Jesus, The Better High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek
8	Hebrews 8:1-13	Jesus, The Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
9	Hebrews 9:1-28	Jesus' Sacrifice is Greater than the Temple's
10	Hebrews 10:1-39	Persevere On In Light of Jesus' Sacrifice
11	Hebrews 11:1-40	The Faith of the Ancients in Action
12	Hebrews 12:1-29	Running the Race with Perseverance
13	Hebrews 13:1-25	Concluding Words

Recap from Session 1

Introduction to Hebrews

- Authorship – the pastor
- Recipients
- Genre – sermon/homily (Hebrews 13:22 – word of exhortation)
- Purpose

Hebrews 1:1-4

- God has spoken to us in his Son
- The Son is God's appointed King who rules over the universe (Psalm 2)
- This Son is also priest who provided purification of sins (Psalm 110)

Homework

Read Hebrews 1:1 – 4:16. As you read, highlight and mark any imperatives (commands) in the text. What patterns can you see?

Which sections are primarily indicative (truth, statement, declaration) and which are primarily imperatives?

What is the connection between them?

Where else can you see this pattern in the Scriptures?

Jesus is Greater Than the Angels

After his introduction, the pastor moves on to talk about why the Son is superior to the angels. He quotes a series of Old Testament passages designed to show how much more superior the Son is compared to angels. Here he demonstrates a deep and principled reading of the Old Testament. Let us explore how the pastor reads and interprets the Old Testament.

Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son;
today I have become your Father”?

Or again,

“I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son”?

⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,

“Let all God’s angels worship him.” ^s

⁷ In speaking of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels spirits,
and his servants flames of fire.” ^t

⁸ But about the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;

a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.” ^x

¹⁰ He also says,

“In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

¹¹ They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.

¹² You will roll them up like a robe;
like a garment they will be changed.

But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.” ^b

¹³ To which of the angels did God ever say,

“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet”?

¹⁴ Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. ² For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³ how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴ God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. ¹

Class Work

Divide our passage today into as many sections as you see fit. Give each section a title.

What is the pastor trying to accomplish in this passage?

¹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 1:5–2:4.

Preliminary Remarks

Hebrews 1:4ff – “So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. **For** to which of the angels did God ever say...”

Hebrews 1:5 – “For to which of the angels did God ever say...”

Hebrews 1:13 – “To which of the angels did God every say...”

Inclusio – It is a literary “bracket” that marks the beginning and end of a section/literary unit, oftentimes signalling to the reader what that section is about.

Examples: Genesis 39:2-3, 39:23, Matthew 4:23, 9:35

This passage is about what God has said about the Son that he does not say about the angels.

The Pastor’s Use of Psalm 2:7

The Issue

Psalm 2:7 is used in three passages in the New Testament – Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5.

The Language of “Sonship”

It is not merely biological. For example, Exodus 4:22, Job 1:6, Matthew 5:9

The Davidic Covenant – 2 Samuel 7:1-17

The Davidic king henceforth is known as the “son of God” and is given more and more prominence throughout the prophets, e.g. Isaiah 9:6-7, Ezekiel 37:24-28

Psalm 2:7 – Coronation Psalm

When does the king become the son of God?

Jesus as Son of God

With that in mind, it means that when we come to read about Jesus being the son of God, the author is not referring to the fact that Jesus is divine (though he is!) in many cases in the New Testament. Depending on the context, the author is actually referring to Jesus as the promised Davidic king 2 Samuel 7. A great example of this is found in John 1:49.

When was Jesus crowned as king? In other words, when was Jesus crowned as the “Son of God”?

Romans 1:1-4, Matthew 28:18-20

When did Jesus become the high priest?

Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5 are not haphazard applications of the Old Testament. The pastor uses a redemptive-historical method of reading and interpreting the Old Testament. When we read the Old Testament, we need to remember that it is an incomplete book. Because of that, we should read the Old Testament *eschatologically*. That is, we read the Old Testament with a view of looking forwards to the end. The end has come in Christ. In other words, we read the Old Testament with a view to Christ. The authors of the New Testament do that, including the pastor here in Hebrews. That is why they can apply Psalm 2:7 in the way that they did.

Jesus' Superiority (1:5-14)

Old Testament Passage	Old Testament Context	Application to God's Son
Psalm 2:7		
2 Samuel 7:14 1 Chronicles 17:13		
Deuteronomy 32:43		
Psalm 104:4		
Psalm 45:6-7		
Psalm 102:25-27		
Psalm 110:1		

What conclusions can we draw about the status and nature of the Son?

Why Angels?

Angels were believed to have an important role in the Old Covenant made with Israel.

“Many believed that angels stood in God’s heavenly presence worshipping around his throne and serving as his attendants awaiting his bidding. To them was committed the governing of the nations, and through them God directed the forces of nature. Some thought angels had authority over the world to come. Furthermore, angels were

believed to have been present as intermediaries on Mount Sinai. Thus it was natural to contrast the Son who embodies God’s final revelation with those angelic mediators of his earlier disclosure.”²

God was said to have given his law through angels – Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19. That is why some elevated the role angels. However, this Son is far superior to any angels and God has spoken to us in his Son. In fact, the pastor goes on to say that angels are ministering spirits to serve those who will inherit salvation! (Heb 1:14)

Hebrews 2:1 – “We must pay the most careful attention, **therefore**, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”

The Pastor’s Exhortation (2:1-4)

The pastor uses the less-to-greater argumentation throughout Hebrews.

“This less-to-greater argumentation was common in both rabbinic and Hellenistic circles and is fundamental to the pastor’s strategy for moving his hearers to faithful obedience.”³

The Greater Messenger

Punishment for disobedience

This message was “heard” and first “announced” by the Lord. The message of salvation is verbal first and foremost.

The Purpose of Miracles

The Supremacy of the Son

The comparison that the pastor makes between angels and God’s Son serves to demonstrate that the Son is far superior to any other angels. He uses a number of Old Testament quotations to prove his point that far greater things have been said about the Son by God compared to angels. The Son is God’s appointed Davidic king. His throne and kingdom will last forever. The Son is the one who laid the

² Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012), 101.

³ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 117.

foundations of the earth and his years will never end. He is eternal and that means that he is God because only God is eternal. The same cannot be said of any angels or anything else in all of creation.

That is why we must pay most careful attention to the salvation that this Son has brought. If the message the angels brought in the Old Testament has punishment for its disobedience, how much more severe are the consequences of rejecting this greater salvation brought by the Son? This is why the pastor's heart is for his listeners to fix their eyes on the Son, and not to drift away. They were tempted to elevate the role of angels in their lives because of how they perceived angels to be great and important.

In the same way, there are many things in our lives and in our society where we perceive them to be great and important. We elevate money, thinking that it is going to solve all our problems. We elevate our health, thinking that it is the key to a joyful life. We elevate marriage, thinking that it is going to solve all our relationship issues. We elevate education or intelligence, thinking that it is key to our identity. Christians are not immune to this. We elevate certain styles of worship music, thinking that it is going to bring us closer to God. We elevate certain preachers, thinking that they have a particular insight to God that no others have. It is not to say that those things are bad. Notice how the pastor never denigrates the angels. However, none of those things (including angels) can compare to the majesty, exalted, eternal, glorious, and sovereign king in Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us therefore, pay our most careful attention to the Son, who loved us and gave himself for us.

Homework

Read Hebrews 1:1 – 4:16. Read Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6 again after that.

Which passage does the pastor quote in v6-8?

Who is the pastor referring to by "them" in v8? (Read the footnotes in your Bibles for an alternative translation for v6-8)

- What difference would it make to the meaning of the passage if the passage is "them" or "him"?
- Which meaning is more likely? Try to justify your answer based on the passage.

Bibliography

Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eerdmans, 2012.