

# 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
<b>3</b>	<b>Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6</b>	<b>Jesus' Sonship is Greater than Moses' Servanthood</b>
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 2

### Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4

- God has spoken to us in his Son who is superior to the angels.
- The pastor quotes a list of Old Testament passages, particularly from the Psalms, to show that God's Son is superior to the angels.
- The pastor reads the Old Testament with a view towards Christ.
- We must not elevate good things in our world like how the Hebrews elevated the role of angels in their lives. Christ is superior to all of them.

## Structure of Hebrews

- **Hebrews 1:1-4 – God has Spoken to Us in a Son Who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 1:5 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Greater Sonship**
  - Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4 – Jesus is Greater than the Angels
  - Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6 – Jesus’ Sonship is Greater than Moses’ Servanthood (This session)
  - Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Rest is Better than Joshua’s Rest
- **Transition Passage - Hebrews 4:14-16 – Jesus, the Son of God who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 5:1 – 10:39 – Jesus’ Greater Priesthood**
  - Hebrews 5:1 – 6:20 – Exhortation to Persevere in light of Jesus’ Priesthood
  - Hebrews 7:1-28 – Jesus is the Better High Priest in the order of Melchizedek
  - Hebrews 8:1-13 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
  - Hebrews 9:1-28 – Jesus’ Sacrifice is Greater than the Temple’s
  - Hebrews 10:1-39 – Persevere in light of Jesus’ Sacrifice
- **Hebrews 11 – Perseverance by Faith of the Ancients**
- **Hebrews 12:1-3 – Fix our Eyes Upon Jesus**
  - Hebrews 12:4-17 – Endure God’s Discipline as Sons
  - Hebrews 12:18-28 – We Have Come to a Better Mountain
- **Hebrews 13:1-25 – Concluding Exhortations**

## Jesus’ Sonship is Greater

The pastor has just spent a chapter talking about how the Son is greater than the angels. Because of that, the message that has been brought to us by God’s Son is all the more important. We should pay even more closer attention to the greater salvation that he has accomplished for us. If the message that the angels brought has punishment for its disobedience, surely the consequences of rejecting the message of the Son and the Son himself will be far more severe.

This is a message that has been confirmed to the pastor by those who heard the Son. However, what is this message? What is this greater salvation? The rest of Hebrews 2 gives us the beginning of the answer. The pastor goes on to talk more about this Son in the coming chapter, but he no longer compares the Son to angels. Instead, he focuses on the fact that this Son was made incarnate and the significance behind that.

## Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6

<sup>5</sup> It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.

<sup>6</sup> But there is a place where someone has testified:

“What is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
a son of man that you care for him?

<sup>7</sup> You made them a little lower than the angels;  
you crowned them with glory and honor

<sup>8</sup> and put everything under their feet.”<sup>u</sup>

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. <sup>9</sup> But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup> In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. <sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. <sup>c</sup> <sup>12</sup> He says,

“I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the assembly I will sing your praises.”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>13</sup> And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”<sup>e</sup>

And again he says,

“Here am I, and the children God has given me.”<sup>f</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. <sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like them, <sup>m</sup> fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

**3** Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. <sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house. <sup>3</sup> Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

<sup>5</sup>“Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,” <sup>a</sup> bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. <sup>6</sup> But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory. <sup>1</sup>

## Smooth Transitions

The pastor is particularly good with smooth transitions from one subject to another. He often talks about one subject and then introduce another connected subject towards the end, which he will go on to explain. Sometimes he will briefly mention a theme that he will only explain much later on. For example,

1:3-4 – “...he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven [**current subject**]. So he became as much superior to the angels [**introduction of new subject**] as the name...”. He goes on to talk about angels.

2:4-5 – “God also testified to it by signs...it is not to angels [**current subject**] that he has subjected the world to come [**introduction of new subject**], about which we are speaking.” He goes on to talk about the world to come.

2:17 – “in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest [**new theme**]...” He has not been talking about high priest at all and he doesn’t explain it after this. He only starts expanding on the theme of priesthood in Hebrews 5. He does the same in 3:1.

4:14 – “Therefore, since we have a great high priest [**introduction of new subject**] who has ascended into heaven...” Previously, he has only been talking about entering into God’s rest.

## The World to Come

God has not subjected the world to come to angels. Angels are not rulers of the new creation.

Verse 5 is, in fact, a deduction from 1:13-14. First premise: the Son is seated at God’s right hand (1:13). Second premise: the angels have been sent out to assist “those about to inherit salvation” (1:14). Conclusion: the angels, therefore, most definitely, are not the ones to whom this “coming world” of salvation “has been subjected.”<sup>2</sup>

2:5 – “...about which we are speaking.”

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<sup>1</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 2:5–3:6.

<sup>2</sup> Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012), 126–27.

## “them” vs “him”

If God did not subject the world to come to angels, who has God subjected the world to come? Here the pastor quotes Psalm 8:4-6 to make his point. There are two alternate translations here in Hebrews 2:6-8 and also in Psalm 8 (check the footnotes in your Bibles) – “them” vs “him” – What difference will that make to the meaning of the text?

**2:6-8** –<sup>6</sup> But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is mankind (ἄνθρωπος) that you are mindful of them, a son of man (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) that you care for him? <sup>7</sup> You made them (αὐτὸν) a little lower than the angels; you crowned them (αὐτὸν) with glory and honor <sup>8</sup> and put everything under their (αὐτοῦ) feet.” In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.

ἄνθρωπος – This can mean either a singular adult man or mankind in general. It is similar to the English word “man”.

- The context of Psalm 8
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- “What is mankind that you are mindful of them...”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- “What is man that you are mindful of him...”

Which is more likely? What do you think?

Some recent interpreters have therefore concluded that ‘son of man’ was understood as a messianic title in Hebrews 2:6. However, while it might seem natural for the author to develop the title ‘Son of Man’ messianically, in fact he does not explicitly do this here or elsewhere in Hebrews. He cites the psalm in order to make a different point. The opening question in v. 6 refers to mankind in general, and it is only in v. 9 that he specifically identifies the one made lower than the angels with Jesus. It is better, therefore, to regard the entire quotation in vv. 6-8a as referring to mankind generally, with the author’s interpretation beginning in v. 8b and specifically referring to Jesus at v. 9.<sup>3</sup>

By beginning his quotation with Ps 8:4, “What is man that you remember him, or the son of man that you visit him?” the pastor intentionally injects an element of dissonance or ambiguity in order to stimulate the curiosity of his hearers. The resumption of the contrast with angels implies that this future world will be subjected to the eternal, now exalted Son of 1:5-14. To whom could this world be in subjection other than the divinely designated “heir of all things” (1:2) now seated at God’s right (1:3d, 13)? Yet by beginning with Ps 8:4 the pastor calls the one in charge of the future world “man” and “son of man”.<sup>4</sup>

**2:9** – <sup>9</sup>But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. <sup>5</sup>

“...now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death...”

“...so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

**2:10-13** – “...should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.”

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<sup>3</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 95–96.

<sup>4</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128.

<sup>5</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 2:9.

Christ's suffering was neither a logical necessity forced upon God nor a mere decision of his will, but an appropriate expression of the divine character. Thus his incarnate suffering was integral to the Son's person as the ultimate revelation of God's nature. The pastor would persuade his hearers by enabling them to see and feel the way in which the suffering of the Savior was most appropriate to God's character in light of their need.<sup>6</sup>

By his "perfection" the Son attained the ultimate goal, for he is seated at the right hand of the throne of God as the representative and fully adequate Savoir of those who "draw near to God through him" (7:25). He did not reach this goal through a normal process of moral development, but through assuming human nature and living a life of complete obedience unto death despite suffering (5:5-10). This obedience unto death was a willing self-offering that did away with sin (9:11-14; 10:5-10) and thus consecrated him as the heavenly High Priest who alone can bring the faithful into God's presence (10:11-15). Thus the Son's vocation as Pioneer is fulfilled only through his high priesthood announced in 2:17-18...There is no contradiction between Christ's eternal perfection as Son and his "being made perfect" in his vocation as the "Pioneer of our salvation." Every part of the NT declares that the Son's incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension have equipped him to save.<sup>7</sup>

"Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters."

"...I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."

"And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

**2:14-18** – "...so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil..."

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<sup>6</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 137.

<sup>7</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 139–40.

“...free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

“...he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”

“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

Verses 17-18 bring this opening section of the pastor’s sermon to a fitting conclusion. God’s Son with whom the pastor began in 1:1-4 fulfills his role as the ultimate revelation of God by becoming the all-sufficient High Priest described in these verses. Through his obedience despite suffering this High Priest has provided the “great salvation” of 2:3. By so doing he not only underscores the seriousness of the warning in 2:1-4 but provides the means for obedient perseverance. This announcement of the Son’s high priesthood builds anticipation and whets the hearers’ appetite for the fuller exposition of Christ’s sufficiency to come.<sup>8</sup>

**3:1-6** – “Therefore...fix your thoughts on Jesus...”

Try to draw to the best of your abilities the different illustrations that the pastor gives in 3:2-6. What comparison does the pastor draw between Moses and Jesus in their roles over the house of God?

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<sup>8</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 152.

## The Greater Son Who Freed Us

All through our lives, we have been held in slavery by our fear of death. This is true whether we are aware of it or not. Deep down, we know that after death comes judgement from God. Without the priesthood work of the Son, we are all surely and rightly condemned to eternal torment. However, praise God that we do have a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, making atonement for the sins of the people! This high priest can only make atonement if he is fully human who tasted death for everyone. So, this exalted Son of God who is enthroned as the Davidic king and who will be ruling over the new world that is to come, he suffered and died for us.

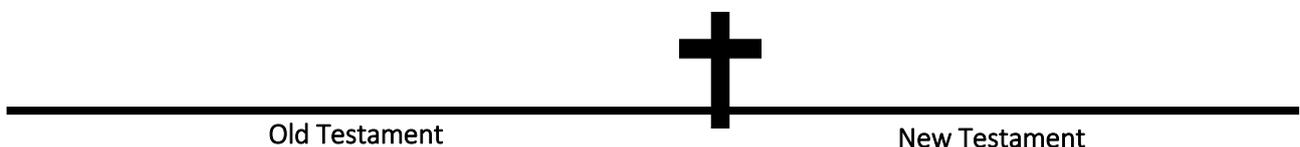
That is how he breaks the power of the devil and frees his people from their slavery to fear of death. After all, atonement has been made for us, we have nothing to be fearful about. What is even more amazing is that it is not angels that Jesus helps, but rather he helps Abraham's descendants. Moses was a faithful servant to God's household (i.e. God's people), but Christ himself is the faithful Son over God's house. God himself is the builder of the house. Therefore, given that this high priest has done this great work for us, let us fix our thoughts on Jesus – our apostle and high priest (3:1). He is the faithful Son over God's house – those who hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory? (3:6)

## Homework

Read Hebrews 1:1 – 4:16. Read Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 again after that. What passage does the pastor quote in 3:7?

According to the pastor, who wrote that psalm? Which part of Israel's history do you think this psalm was written?

Use the following historical timeline (or you can draw your own) and indicate the location of each of the following events on the timeline. (Heb 3:7 – 4:13, Psalm 95, Wilderness Years)



## Bibliography

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

O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010.