



**HEBREWS: Week 1**

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## **HEBREWS**

### **WEEK 1: Jesus is Greater**

**BOTTOM LINE:** Because Jesus is above all, He can save all.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hebrews is a unique book of the New Testament.

Unlike the letters before and after (Philemon and James), Hebrews has no introduction naming its author and indicating its specific audience.

Of course, the title “Hebrews” tells us that this book is written broadly toward Jewish Christians.

But whereas Ephesians was written for the Church of Ephesus and 1 and 2 Corinthians were written for the Church of Corinth, we simply don’t have a specific audience named.

Some scholars believe that, because the author mentions Christians being mistreated and suffering in prison, he must be writing to an audience who is dealing with great persecution, possibly in Italy or specifically Rome.

Either way, the author mentions passing on greetings from Italy, so it is fair to say that he is either writing from or to Italy or that he was accompanied by Italians who wanted to send their greetings through this letter.

The Book of Hebrews was most likely written in the first century before 70 AD.

Scholars believe this because of the mentioning of Timothy, who was known to be an active Christian at that time and is likely the same Timothy who ministered with Paul.

Another interesting fact about the author: it seems that he was NOT an eyewitness of Jesus and must have written this book after Jesus’ ascension into Heaven.

We can assume this because, in Hebrews 2:3, he includes himself in the group of people who were told of Christ’s salvation by others.

Nevertheless, Hebrews is a book that covers some important truths that all Christians should know.

### **LESSON**

The common themes of this book include the supremacy of Christ and faith in action.

As in the Book of James, the author of Hebrews wants the audience to understand that, when we don't act on our faith, it isn't really faith at all.

When we are saved from our sins, we are compelled (that means "urged") to do good works.

Does that mean that our works determine whether or not we'll spend eternity in Heaven?

Absolutely not.

And praise God that they don't.

Why?

Because you and I cannot DO anything to earn our way into Heaven.

And if our salvation was based on works, then you and I would be in great trouble.

So, then, why is faith in action such a big deal?

Our actions show the world where our hearts are and are a reflection of our faith.

And if we are in Christ, we can't help but tell the world of the undeserved and glorious gift of salvation.

Our good works—our actions—reveal what we value and point people to Who we value: Jesus.

**Discussion questions:**

1. What do the words "faith in action" mean to you?

Can you give an example of someone acting out his or her faith?

2. What do good works have to do with faith?

How does one affect the other?

3. In what ways should a Christian "appear different" or be set apart from the world?

## **Read Hebrews 1.**

**1** Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. **2** And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. **3** The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. **4** This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

**5** For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus: "You are my Son. Today I have become your Father." God also said, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son." **6** And when he brought his supreme Son into the world, God said, "Let all of God's angels worship him." **7** Regarding the angels, he says, "He sends his angels like the winds, his servants like flames of fire." **8** But to the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. You rule with a scepter of justice. **9** You love justice and hate evil. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else."

**10** He also says to the Son, "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. **11** They will perish, but you remain forever. They will wear out like old clothing. **12** You will fold them up like a cloak and discard them like old clothing but you are always the same; you will live forever." **13** And God never said to any of the angels, "Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet."

**14** Therefore, angels are only servants—spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.

Before we start our discussion, let's go through this chapter and try to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

In other words, if He is named or described in any way, I want you to call it out.

*(Provide time for students to search the chapter for descriptions of Jesus and call them out as they find them)*

These verses are interesting because they allow us to note the difference between the Jesus of the Bible (the Jesus of Christianity) and the Jesus of false religions.

You may have heard before that Jesus was just a man—a man who stands out in history with shocking teachings about loving your neighbor and blessing those who curse you.

You may have also heard that Jesus was a prophet—a prophet whom God spoke directly to and through, like Samuel or Moses.

But both of these descriptions fall glaringly short in defining who Jesus really is.

He cannot be compared to a mere man.

In fact, in many of your Bibles, you may see that the title of this chapter is “The Supremacy of God’s Son” or something similar.

According to Google, supremacy is “the state or condition of being superior to all others in authority, power, or status.”

This means that He is above ALL—men, prophets, everything, and everyone.

In verse 6 (NIV), the author uses the word “firstborn.”

It's important to note here that this word does not indicate being literally "born," and it does not mean that Jesus is a created being.

Rather, it denotes Jesus’ position—his status—in the world.

In the Jewish culture, the firstborn received the inheritance of the father, including all rights, ownership, and authority.

In the case of Jesus, He receives the inheritance of God the Father.

Later in the same verse, it says, “Let all God’s angels worship Him.”

So, let’s ask ourselves...

Who is worthy of worship?

The answer is this: God and God alone.

So, if Jesus is being worshipped by the angels, then this scripture is confirming the full deity of Christ.

In other words, Christ IS God.

We must grasp this vital truth.

Christ, although He came and dwelled on Earth as a man, is fully God.

He is supreme over all things, powers, and people.

He has always been and will always be (v. 8).

## **Read Hebrews 2.**

**1** So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. **2** For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. **3** So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? **4** And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose. **5** And furthermore, it is not angels who will control the future world we are talking about.

**6** For in one place the Scriptures say, “What are mere mortals that you should think about them, or a son of man that you should care for him? **7** Yet for a little while, you made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. **8** You gave them authority over all things.”

Now when it says “all things,” it means nothing is left out. But we have not yet seen all things put under their authority. **9** What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position “a little lower than the angels”; and because he suffered death for us, he is now “crowned with glory and honor.” Yes, by God’s grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. **10** God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation. **11** So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.

**12** For he said to God, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among your assembled people.”

**13** He also said, “I will put my trust in him,” that is, “I and the children God has given me.”

**14** Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. **15** Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

*16 We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. 17 Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. 18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.*

This chapter reminds us that Jesus became a humble man to save US from OUR sins.

This is a shocking act of love.

If you or I were God, wouldn't we revel in our riches? Our glory?

Wouldn't we relax in the comfort and beauty of Heaven?

Then, why would God go out of His way to bring salvation to our doorstep?

One answer is that God is love.

He shows and embodies a kind of love that you and I struggle to return, and that's sacrificial love.

Jesus humbled Himself to live as a man.

He was rejected, mocked, and abused.

He walked willingly to the cross to be murdered so that He could satisfy the wrath of God against sin.

He did all of this so that you and I could walk in His righteousness.

And the crazy part?

He did not have to do anything at all.

When we break it down to these simple truths, we should be empowered to stand firm in our faith, just as verse 18 says.

When we are tested, who better to lean on than Jesus?

Who knows the path of trials and temptations better than He does?

This God of sacrificial love is our model and our friend.

Let's follow His lead instead of giving in.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What trials or temptations have weakened your resolve to stand firm in your faith?

How did you end up responding to these challenges?

2. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges that teenagers in the US face?

What about Christian teenagers?

3. Why do you think it's so difficult to stand firm in your faith?

What obstacles seem to get in the way?

### **Read Hebrews 3.**

*1 And so, dear brothers and sisters who belong to God and are partners with those called to heaven, think carefully about this Jesus whom we declare to be God's messenger and High Priest. 2 For he was faithful to God, who appointed him, just as Moses served faithfully when he was entrusted with God's entire house.*

*3 But Jesus deserves far more glory than Moses, just as a person who builds a house deserves more praise than the house itself. 4 For every house has a builder, but the one who built everything is God.*

*5 Moses was certainly faithful in God's house as a servant. His work was an illustration of the truths God would reveal later. 6 But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ.*

*7 That is why the Holy Spirit says, "Today when you hear his voice,*

*8 don't harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled, when they tested me in the wilderness.*

*9 There your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw my miracles for forty years.*

*10 So I was angry with them, and I said, 'Their hearts always turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.'*

*11 So in my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest.'"*

**12** Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. **13** You must warn each other every day, while it is still “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. **14** For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ. **15** Remember what it says:

“Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled.”

**16** And who was it who rebelled against God, even though they heard his voice? Wasn’t it the people Moses led out of Egypt? **17** And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn’t it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness? **18** And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn’t it the people who disobeyed him? **19** So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest. The word “faithfulness” means “dutiful, loyal, or steadfast in allegiance.”

What about “faith”?

This word means “belief or trust” in God.

In our language, these two words have their own distinct definitions, with faithfulness having to do with action, and faith having to do with belief.

However, in the original Greek, these words are the same.

The Greek word “pistis” is used in scripture for both “faith” and “faithfulness.”

So, why is this important?

Let’s take a look back at the chapter we just read.

We need to understand that, when this passage talks about the faithfulness of Moses, it’s not just saying that he was “a good boy.”

This interpretation would fall very short of the mark.

Instead, the word “pistis” indicates that Moses’ *actions* were spurred by *belief*.

The fact that the words faith and faithfulness are translated to the very same Greek word should tell us that one is not possible without the other.

In other words, faith produces faithfulness.

Our faith, or belief, is the driver for our actions.

And we CANNOT be faithful to God without the foundation of faith (belief).

You might think that this sounds too simple.

But do we really have an understanding of the power of our faith?

Do we really understand why Moses was considered faithful?

If we focus on his works, we miss the point.

Moses—like Abraham—believed God, and *that* was credited to him as righteousness (read **Romans 4**).

Don't get caught up in obedience for obedience's sake.

Remember that the posture of your heart—your faith—is what motivates your faithfulness.

A good work without faith is dead.

**Discussion questions:**

1. What is the motivation for your good works?

Are you ever motivated by things like reputation or judgment, instead of by belief?

2. What is the greatest example of God's faithfulness?

3. Why is faith such a difficult concept to live out?

What obstacles stand in the way of faith?