

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

Hebrews 1

Background

The author of this book is unknown but there is a reference to Timothy in Chapter 13, verse 23 that some scholars believe supports Paul as the author. It was written before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. The purpose of this book is to show that Old Testament Judaism had come to an end by the sacrifice of Jesus, which fulfilled the requirements of the Jewish laws. It also warns against changing the gospel to include keeping Jewish laws as requirements for salvation. This book contrasts the superior grace that comes from faith in the person and works of Jesus with Jewish laws.

Introduction (1:1-3)

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

1. The Old Testament prophets received messages from God through various methods such as laws, dreams, visions and symbols. These messages were fragmentary and revealed progressive truths about God's commands and plans. These revelations were completed by the presence of God himself through the life and teachings of Jesus. It is far better to have the author of the world explain his work than to listen to a series of others, to whom the author has explained parts of it.
2. The author clearly stresses that Jesus is God by saying that he is exactly the same. Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit spoke the universe into being and they sustain it through their power. (Gen 1:1, 26; Col 1:15-17)
3. Jesus not only is the creator and sustainer, he is also the redeemer of his creation. His sacrifice on the cross for sins provided a path for reconciliation and purification of his creation. This could only be accomplished by God himself. (Jn 3:16-18, 14:6-7)

4. Jesus will perfect those who put their faith in him, at the final resurrection and redemption of creation. (1 Jn 3:1-3; Rev 21:1-8)
5. Jesus ascended to heaven, and he returned to his throne as God Almighty. (Jn 3:13-15; Eph 4:9-13; Phil 2:5-11)

Jesus is Superior to Angels (1:4-14)

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, “You are my Son: today I have become your Father?” Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son?” And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says: “Let all God’s angels worship him.” In speaking of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.” But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.” He also says, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. 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.” To which of the angels did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?” Are not all angels ministering spirits to serve those who will inherit salvation?

1. The Jewish people held angels in high regard. They were messengers who gave the Jewish laws to Moses (Dt 33:1-4; Acts 7:52-53; Gal 3:19-20)
2. Jesus is superior to the angels because he is called the Son of God. Angels were called sons of God but this relationship, like born-again Christians, is inferior to being the one and only begotten son of God. Angels and born-again Christians are companions and children of God. They are creatures and not the Creator. (Job 1:6, 2:1; Hos 1:8-11; Mt 5:9; Lk 1:35)
3. The angels worship Jesus and are his servants. He is the creator of the heavens and earth. He is eternal and does not change. (Ps 45:6-7, 102:25-27, 104:1-5)
4. Humans are fascinated with angels. People try to contact them, pray to them and even worship them. *Why is there a tendency for humans to relate to angels rather than directly to God? How is this like the doctrines of some Christian churches that promote prayers to the saints?*
5. *What are some popular ideas about angels that are not found in the Bible? How*

do movies influence people's ideas about angels?