

HEBREWS

Lesson 1: Introduction w/Answers

Hebrews Chapters 1-2

Hebrews is a great book that will speak to our hearts about the priestly nature of Christ and his constant intercession for us.

As we examine Hebrews, I find myself wondering how many of us have been dealing with—or in the past dealt with—a feeling of drifting along? Perhaps there is a condition in our lives for which we lack direction, focus, purpose, and we have a sense that perhaps God has overlooked us. Or perhaps it seems that all that we hold dear has been taken from us, and hope is a distant reality.

I must confess that there have been times like these in my life, and I suspect the same is true in yours. It is during times like these that we sometimes realize that all the things that we have put our trust in, or were secure in, prove to be of only fleeting value. Maybe it was a career that is now over, or a friend that has moved away or died, or a life that for whatever reason has changed dramatically. Perhaps we have discovered, as Solomon pointed out, that material possessions and fulfilled desires don't actually bring peace or fulfillment; and, instead, a void fills our heart.

I think that it is times like these that test our faith the most. And it is times like these that can lead to a condition known as apostasy or back-sliding. This is the condition that the writer of Hebrews is addressing. You may ask why, and how, are the conditions above tied to apostasy or back-sliding. The answer is because, during our times of uncertainty and sojourns in the spiritual desert, Satan tests our faith and attempts to lead us astray with faulty doctrine or outright lies. Simply consider Christ's journey in the wilderness or Elijah's hiding in the cave; and you will readily see that Satan tried to use both of those events to pervert God's truth and to lead these men astray.

It was the same during the years following Christ's death and resurrection. Those who followed Christ were subjected to great persecution by the Roman government, and those of the Jewish faith who converted to Christianity also suffered at the hands of the Jews. There were tremendous pressures on their faith, severe testing of doctrine, and a fear among many Christians based on faulty doctrine. So great was the false teaching and persecution that many were tempted to revert back to their old ways, i.e., to back-slide. Many more were tempted to alter God's doctrine to fit within the Jewish and Gentile ways of the day, i.e., apostasy (meaning to fall away, to stray; to teach a lie for the truth).

The writer of Hebrews addresses some of these issues of bad doctrine; e.g., that angels are more significant than Christ, for example; and he sets the record straight on the significance of Christ's role as the High Priest—something the Jews would have definitely understood. For us today, we can learn a great deal about the Savior who loves us so much that he was willing to die for us, and even today is interceding for us. In the course of our study, we will learn about the power of God's Word; and the power of Christ and the difference that his presence makes in our lives each and every day.

I encourage all of you to be diligent with your study of this book, and be diligent as well in prayer. We are entering a time in human history of great uncertainty. As such, we need to be armed with God's Word, and on guard that our adversary, Satan, doesn't take advantage of these uncertain times to mislead us into believing lies for truth. Don't let him make you think for one moment that Christ has forgotten you, or that your life has no purpose or direction, or that faulty doctrine which is pleasing to our ears is the answer. He has a plan for each of us, and His word tells us. We need to be faithful in searching out and waiting for that plan according to his timetable. I hope that you will enjoy studying this book as much I have. It's a book that is full of the promise of hope for each of us.

Read Hebrews Chapters 1 and 2; then consider the following:

1. Can you think of a time in your life when life seemed out of focus, or when you were tempted to re-think your faith?
 - a. ANSWER: I'm certain that everyone has, and I suspect more so during the days of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we experienced life in a dramatically different way. No matter our age or gender, we need focus, we need purpose, and we were created for doing. If you have ever lost that focus, you know how important it is to get it back and have it focused on things of value—meaningful things, and not the things of this world. We will see this demonstrated in today's lesson.
2. Do you recall a time when Satan tried to bend the truth in a way that you almost believed?
 - a. ANSWER: This occurred for me more in my youth, as I struggled to understand the world around me and my purpose in it. I was attracted to false teachings that appealed to me, my desires, my personality, and my character. It is easy to follow false teachings that appeal to our interests. Many fall prey to Satan's compromised gospel—a "gospel" which teaches that the world is centered on you, and that seeking happiness and avoiding pain is what God intends for you. We will discuss this further as we study Hebrews, but for sure, Satan is a clever liar who wants to keep you from God and his son Jesus; and he will bend the truth anyway that he has to in order to appeal to you and the world around you.
3. Do you think that it is easy today for people to be misled about the truth, given the society that we live in? Would this have been as true during the days of the early church?
 - a. ANSWER: It was certainly as true then as it is now. In fact, we can go all the way back to the Garden of Eden and see how Satan appealed to Adam and Eve's desires, bending the Word of God to suit the situation so that their desires appeared to fit God's truth. Today as well, untold millions gravitate towards man's teachings—false teachings about how to live a fulfilled life, relying on teachings about food, angels, evil spirits, witchcraft, horoscopes, and the like. Churches that teach distorted truths and lies for the truth are more popular than ever. False teaching abounds, making it difficult for the Gospel to be heard, but the Gospel is unchanging and still the only true path to salvation. It is still the only true "Good News."
4. In the days prior to Christ, and for a time afterward, the Jews actually worshipped angels. At a minimum, they lifted angels up as being extremely noteworthy, given their presence at the giving of the Law and various visits throughout the Old Testament. Do we see anything like that today? In those days some Christians were tempted to follow them in that worship. Do we see that today?
 - a. ANSWER: We certainly do, and it occurs in several ways. One way is by Christians who keep images of angels, statues, figurines, jewelry and so on that are for protection. These are superstitious people who call themselves Christians. In other cases, there are those who believe that when we die, we become beautiful angels. There are other related false teachings, including New Age faith practices that elevate angels in many different ways.
5. Look up the following verses. (I know that there are a lot of them, but it will teach you a lot as well.) Jot down what each tells you about angels:
 - a. Hebrews 1:6
 - i. ANSWER: This verse indicates that Angels are to worship Christ, just as we are to worship him.
 - b. Hebrews 1:14
 - i. ANSWER: Angels were created to be ministering spirits, sent to serve "those who will inherit salvation."
 - c. Matthew 22:30
 - i. ANSWER: Angels do not marry, nor are they given in marriage.
 - d. Psalm 103:20
 - i. ANSWER: Angels are mighty; they obey God and do his bidding.
 - e. 2 Thessalonians 1:7
 - i. ANSWER: Angels will be coming back with Jesus, and they are powerful.
 - f. 2 Samuel 14:20
 - i. ANSWER: Angels also have wisdom.
 - g. 2 Kings 6:17
 - i. ANSWER: Angels surround us. Even though we do not see them unless God opens our eyes for that purpose, they are there.
 - h. Luke 24:4
 - i. ANSWER: Angels can be present in physical form.
 - i. Daniel 6:22
 - i. ANSWER: Angels can be sent to protect us from all forms of evil, including both spiritual and physical.
 - j. Psalm 91:11-12
 - i. ANSWER: Angels protect us as well as guard us, and they are able to lead us so that we do not stumble.
 - k. Daniel 10:13
 - i. ANSWER: Angels fight for us; sometimes it takes more than one to do this, as they fight against the schemes of the devil.
 - l. Acts 8:26
 - i. ANSWER: Angels give us direction to keep us on the right path.
 - m. 1 Timothy 5:21
 - i. ANSWER: Angels fall into two categories: (1) fallen angels who follow Satan, and (2) the Elect who serve God and Christ.

6. In Hebrews 2:1 the writer warns of the possibility of letting the truth slip away. What does he recommend in Hebrews 2:3 in order to prevent this?
- a. ANSWER: In all situations, we must keep our focus on Jesus—as both the Only Son of God and as our Redeemer. All false doctrines will attack or compromise one or both of these beliefs; saying, for example, that Jesus is not the only son of God, or they will stress man’s belief that somehow you can earn or work your way to eternal life; neither of these assertions is true. There are other perverse variations, for example, God—being a God of love—will, in the end, forgive everyone; or he would never condemn anyone to Hell or the Lake of Fire; or that there is no Hell; or that it is possible to save someone who has already died through prayer; and so on. Do not fall for any of these lies. Keep your eye on the Cross and on Christ, and stay grounded in the Bible—and the Bible only. In this way, you will always remember that you have eternal life through Christ—you have been forgiven of your sins; they have been washed away by the blood of Christ, and you are now an adopted child of God with an eternal inheritance through His only son Jesus.
7. Finally, as described in Hebrews 2:6-8, who and what is man when compared to God? Also Read Psalm 8. Have you ever seen the greatness of God’s creation and wondered about our significance? What does John 3:16 tell us about God’s creation and His love for us?
- a. ANSWER: Many times I find myself in total awe and wonder of God, His creation, and my place in it—how insignificant am I in light of all of His creation and His eternal plan. Yet His Word tells us that He values us highly. After all, He made His creation for us; and even more so, He loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to be a sacrifice for us so that we may spend an eternity with Him. How wonderful is that?! So, at any moment when you feel insignificant, remember that you are not insignificant to God. He created you to be with Him eternally, He cares greatly about you, and He desires fellowship with you. The old hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" says it all; what a friend indeed

As we will see in our next lesson, God loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus, who died on the cross and was resurrected to pay the price of our salvation. Moreover, he has been tempted as we are, and today sits at God’s right hand, interceding and caring for all of us.

Praise God for his great grace and mercy. I pray that he will bless you as he has me in this study of His Holy Word.

In Christ,

Wes