



Sunday School Lesson Summary for December 10, 2006
Released on Wednesday, December 6, 2006

“What God Said About Jesus”

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 1:1—9.
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1
READ: Hebrews 1:1—14.
PRINTED TEXT: Hebrews 1:1—14.
DEVOTIONAL READING: Luke 1:46—55

TIME: A.D. 67
PLACE: unknown

GOLDEN TEXT: “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*” (Hebrews 1:1—2a).

HOW TO SAY IT

Deuteronomy. Due-ter-AHN-uh-me.
Galatians. Guh-LAY-shunz.
Hebrews. HEE-breus.
Messiah. Meh-SIGH-uh.
Moses. MO-zes or MO-zez.
Origen. OR-uh-jen.
Pharaoh. FAIR-o or FAY-roe.
Septuagint. Sep-TOO-ih-jent.
Solomon. SOL-o-mun.
synagogue. SIN-uh-gog.
Theophanos (Greek). The-AH-fan-us.

LESSON TEXT

Hebrews 1:1-14

God’s Supreme Revelation

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself^[a] purged our^[b] sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

The Son Exalted Above Angels

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say:

*“ You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You ”*^[c]

And again:

*“ I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son ”*^[d]

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:

“ Let all the angels of God worship Him.”^[a]

7 And of the angels He says:

*“ Who makes His angels spirits
And His ministers a flame of fire.”^[f]*

8 But to the Son He says:

*“ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”^[g]*

10 And:

*“ You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
11 They will perish, but You remain;
And they will all grow old like a garment;
12 Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail.”^[h]*

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said:

*“ Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool?”^[i]*

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Footnotes:

- a. [Hebrews 1:3](#)
- b. [Hebrews 1:3](#)
- c. [Hebrews 1:5](#) Psalm 2:7
- d. [Hebrews 1:5](#) 2 Samuel 7:14
- e. [Hebrews 1:6](#) Deuteronomy 32:43 (Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls); Psalm 97:7
- f. [Hebrews 1:7](#) Psalm 104:4
- g. [Hebrews 1:9](#) Psalm 45:6, 7
- h. [Hebrews 1:12](#) Psalm 102:25—27
- i. [Hebrews 1:13](#) Psalm 110:1

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LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Exploit or make use of Hebrew 1:1—9, which sets forth Christ as God’s ultimate revelation of Himself.
2. Establish the divine identity of Jesus Christ.
3. Have a deeper and richer appreciation of who Jesus Christ is.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. JESUS’ IDENTITY AND DEEDS—Hebrews 1:1—3
- II. JESUS’ SUPERIORITY TO THE ANGELS—Hebrews 1:4—9

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been part of a “secret sisters” program (or the men’s counterpart)? In this type of program, each participating member is assigned secretly the name of another woman. The secret sister then sends notes and gifts to her counterpart during a set period of time. When time is up a party is held in which the secret sisters are revealed. It can be a fun way to get to know another person and to practice spiritual disciplines such as generosity and encouragement.

Revelation is based on the idea that something hidden has been uncovered and can now be known. In the case of God, we should remember that we know nothing about him except that which he has chosen to reveal to us. God is sovereign even with regard to our knowledge about him. There is much about God that we do not know but might like to know. We can speculate on such things, but we know with certainty only what God has graciously chosen to reveal to us.

Reliable knowledge about God is not discovered by accident or chance. It has come to humanity through the process of revelation. We know about God because he is the God who reveals himself. Our knowledge of God is not due to our brilliance or our worthiness.

In this sense human knowledge about God is *progressive*. This means that God reveals himself in stages. There are some striking examples of this in the Old Testament. In his experience with the near-sacrifice of his son, Abraham learned that God is both demanding of faithful obedience and ultimately merciful (Genesis 22). At the burning bush God revealed to Moses that his name is I Am. This places God outside human existence controlled by time (Exodus 3). In his vision of God on his throne in Heaven, Isaiah learned that God seeks those who will speak for him, delivering even difficult messages (Isaiah 6). In his sufferings Job learned that God is great and that he (Job) had no right to challenge God’s actions (Job 38). Through his experience of adultery and the death of a son, David learned that only God can truly cleanse a person’s heart and renew the human spirit (Psalm 51).

To speak of revelation as *progressive* or *ongoing* has certain dangers, however. Christians who are faithful to the Bible need not look to modern “prophets” to reveal more and more about God. Historically the church has believed that the Old Testament serves to prepare for God’s ultimate revelation in Jesus. The New Testament is the testimony of this revelation in Christ.

Today’s Scripture text teaches us that God has revealed himself in his Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, God has told us everything about himself that we need to know for our earthly existence. We can assume that we will understand God even more fully when we join him in Heaven. But for now we have no need to know more than that which has been revealed in the Old and New Testaments.

LESSON BACKGROUND

While there is some early tradition that concludes that the book of Hebrews was written by the apostle Paul, many scholars today do not accept this conclusion. The book does not begin with Paul’s personal name, as all his other letters do. Furthermore, the author of the book seems to place himself in the second generation of Christian believers, not as an apostle (see Hebrews 2:3). It is doubtful that Paul would do this, since elsewhere he defends his apostleship vigorously. For these reasons and others, the great scholar Origen (A.D. 185–254) concluded, “Who wrote Hebrews, only God knows.”

The anonymous nature of this book in no way lessens its importance or authority as a major source for our understanding of Christ. The author appears to have been writing to a community of Jewish Christians who were in danger of abandoning their faith in Jesus in order to return to the community of the Jewish synagogue. The author addresses this potential apostasy by carefully laying out the roles of Jesus in relationship to the Old Testament Scriptures. Hebrews is a uniquely significant New Testament book, for it delves into explanations about Jesus that are not found anywhere else in the Bible.

Hebrews has two primary functions overall. First, it defends the church’s teachings about Jesus from outside attacks. Hebrews in particular shows that Jesus is superior to the older system of the Jews. Second, Hebrews shows that Jesus and the Old Testament system are not in conflict with each other. Rather, the Christian system grows out of and is a fulfillment of the Jewish system. Hebrews does this by using many Old Testament texts and allusions to show that Christians should understand themselves as heirs to a faith that began long before the first century ad.

QUESTIONS

I. JESUS' IDENTITY AND DEEDS—Hebrews 1:1—3

1. How did God speak to His people in the past, and how does that differ from how He speaks now? (Heb. 1:1—2)

The author of Hebrews began by saying that prior to his time, God had spoken through His prophets many times and in various ways. In contrast to that, God had now spoken through His Son. The writer divided time into “before Christ” and “since Christ.”

In the Old Testament God's Word was given through the prophets, but in the New Testament and including this very present time God's Word was “spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things.”

2. What is the significance of “Son” (Heb. 1:2) as it appears in the original wording?

The Greek text in this verse's original wording has no definite article before the word “Son.” The absence of an article puts direct emphasis on the noun itself. The focus then is on Jesus Christ being God's primary means of communication now.

3. What is included in the fact that Christ created the “worlds”? (Heb. 1:2b)

Jesus is ultimately going to be the one in control of all creation. Second, it was through Jesus that God created the universe. The Greek word for “worlds” (1:2) also means “ages.” Jesus has made and managed everything in creation throughout history.

4. What is meant by the fact that Jesus is “the brightness of [God's] glory”? (Heb. 1:3)

“Brightness” in this verse means radiance or God's glory. The Greek word is *apaugasma tes doxes*. In the last word you can see where we get our word “doxology” from—which is a short expression of praise to God. *Doxa* means “glory,” and it refers to the brilliant radiance that emanates from God. The word *apaugasma* is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It describes a beaming or flashing forth.

5. What is meant that Jesus is “the express image of [God's] person”? (Heb. 1:3)

Jesus is described as being “the express image of [God's] person.” This phrase is not found anywhere else in the New Testament, and it means to be an exact representation of God—similar to the imprint of an object made by a die or seal. It is more clearly understood that Jesus is the *visible* expression of God's *invisible* being.

II. JESUS' SUPERIORITY TO THE ANGELS—Hebrews 1:4—9

6. What did Jesus do after completing payment for our sins? (Heb. 1:3—4)

After Jesus “purged our sins,” Titus 2:14 says that He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” It was His substitutionary death that accomplished this redemption.

After this payment, Jesus “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” because the work of redemption was done. He was our great High Priest. Unlike the Levitical priests, whose work was never done, Jesus Christ could sit down in the place of honor and authority.

Jesus was immediately made much better or higher than the angels. This does not mean that prior to being a man Christ was at a lesser status and thus closer to the angels. Jesus was always superior to the angels throughout eternity past. The inference is that for a time He had been made lower than the angels, as explained in Hebrews 2:7, 9. After completing His work on earth, He resumed His previous exalted position.

7. Why was it important for the first-century readers of Hebrews to understand Jesus' superiority over angels? (Heb. 1:4)

In some of the early churches, there were those who taught that God was to be approached through angels. In some circles even, Jesus was considered to be nothing more than the highest of the angels. Apparently the Jews generally thought so highly of angels that one sect in *Qumran* went so far as to believe that Michael the archangel rivaled the Messiah in His authority. The writer of Hebrews was correcting these false ideas. [QUMRAN. Koom-rah-n. Region along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, including some caves in which were found ancient biblical manuscripts now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.]

8. What name proves His superiority, and how do the angels compare with what this name tells us? (Heb. 1:5)

From eternity past, Jesus obtained a name higher than the angels, and He continues to hold the name with all its implications.

The name Jesus has is “Son,” which cannot be said of any angel. Jesus alone is the Son of God. Angels are God's ministers who do His bidding, but they have never been and never will be exalted to the position of Son. When Jesus paid for our redemption by His death and then came back to life again and ascended to heaven to sit down at God's right hand, He proved once and for all that He was, and always has been, the Son of God.

9. How is Jesus' kingdom described? (Heb. 1:8)

Psalm 45 is both a royal and a messianic psalm. In it the future glorious reign of Christ is portrayed. By quoting from that psalm, the author of Hebrews applied everything in it to the Messiah, who is going to have an eternal throne from which He will reign. Reference to a throne that will last forever and ever indicates that His kingdom will be a never-ending one. No angel will ever have either a throne or a kingdom.

10. What other things are said about Jesus that prove His superiority? (Heb. 1:8)

It is extremely significant that in the quote from Psalm 45:6—7, Jesus is addressed as "God." It is an indication of His status and rank, for this address is an indication of His deity. As deity, He is far above human beings as well as angels, who, along with us, are created beings. Psalm 148:5 says, "Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created." The context reveals that the angels were created along with the sun, moon, and stars.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is God's *perfect self-revelation*. God has indeed spoken through His Son. The Son—who shares the divine attributes of the Father, reveals the invisible God in visible form. Jesus is the visible representation of the invisible God.

This week's lesson has reaffirmed the deity—or divinity or holiness—of Christ and has demonstrated Him to be far superior to all His creation, including the angels, and of course including the intellectual human species.

The realization of who Christ Jesus actually is should cause us to humble ourselves before Him in sincere worship and praise.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We should not expect God to speak to us the same way He did to people in biblical times (Hebrews 1:1).
2. Never accept any teaching if it disagrees with what Jesus taught (vss. 2—4).
3. Never put any man or even an angel above Christ (Heb. 1:5; reference Gal. 1:8).
4. Our worship must be directed to the three Persons of the Trinity *alone* (Heb. 1:5).
5. It is never enough that we respect Jesus as a great man. The Father has commanded even the angels to worship Him (vss. 6—8).
6. Like our Lord, we should love righteousness and hate iniquity (vs. 9).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Jesus is God's ultimate revelation and is *far* superior to the angels.

PRAYER

Holy Father, thank you for sending your Son to help us understand you better. Because of his death, we need never doubt your love for us. He has revealed your heart to us, and we rejoice in that revelation. We pray in his name, the name far above any angel's, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

In preparation for next week's lesson, you should study 1 John 1:1—2:6. The time is about A.D. 90—95, and the place is probably from Ephesus. The Golden Text is 1 John 1:5, and the subject is "**Light that Conquers.**" Do we have to wonder about who that *light* is? *Good studying!*

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

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