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THE LOOKOUT

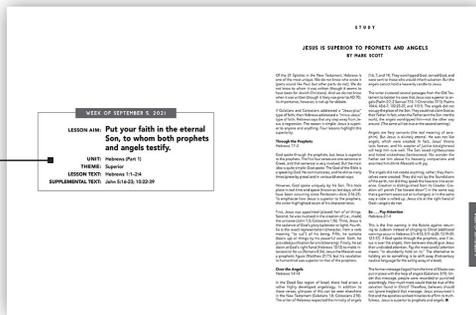
SEPTEMBER 2021

Unit: HEBREWS (Part 1)
Theme: SUPERIOR

Overview: Not everything that is new is improved. But when it comes to the salvation history of the Bible, Jesus is superior to everything in the Old Testament. In the first of three months of study from the Epistle to the Hebrews, students will learn of Jesus’ superiority over the prophets, the angels, and Moses. They will also learn of the superior sacrifice Jesus makes and the superior covenant he brings. Students will learn to embrace God’s wisdom, pray earnestly for revival, witness God’s miracles, and avoid the heartache of disobedience.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tab indicates the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 5, 2021

LESSON AIM: **Put your faith in the eternal Son, to whom both prophets and angels testify.**

UNIT: Hebrews (Part 1)

THEME: Superior

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 1:1–2:4

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: John 5:16-23; 10:22-39

JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO PROPHETS AND ANGELS

BY MARK SCOTT

Of the 21 Epistles in the New Testament, Hebrews is one of the most unique. We do not know who wrote it (parts sound like Paul, but other parts do not). We do not know to whom it was written (though it seems to have been for Jewish Christians). And we do not know when it was written (though it likely was prior to AD 70). Its importance, however, is not up for debate.

If Galatians and Colossians addressed a “Jesus-plus” type of faith, then Hebrews addressed a “minus-Jesus” type of faith. Hebrews says that any step away from Jesus is regression. The reason is simple: Jesus is superior to anyone and anything. Four lessons highlight this superiority.

Through the Prophets

Hebrews 1:1-3

God spoke through the prophets, but Jesus is superior to the prophets. The first four verses are one sentence in Greek, and that sentence is very involved. But the main idea is quite simple: *God spoke*. The God of the Bible is a speaking God. He communicates, and he did so *many times* (piece by piece) and in *various* (diverse) ways.

However, God spoke uniquely *by his Son*. This took place in real time and space (known as *last days*, which have been occurring since Pentecost—Acts 2:16-21). To emphasize how Jesus is superior to the prophets, the writer highlighted seven of his characteristics.

First, Jesus was *appointed* (placed) *heir of all things*. Second, he was involved in the creation of (i.e., *made*) *the universe* (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Third, Jesus is the *radiance of God’s glory* (splendor or light). Fourth, he is the *exact representation* (character, from a verb meaning “to cut”) *of his being*. Fifth, he sustains (bears up) all things by his powerful word. Sixth, he *provided purification for sins* (cleansing). Finally, *he sat down at God’s right hand* (Hebrews 10:12) to make intercession for us (Romans 8:34). Jesus the Messiah was a prophetic figure (Matthew 21:11), but his revelation to humankind was superior to that of the prophets.

Over the Angels

Hebrews 1:4-14

In the Dead Sea region of Israel, there had arisen a rather highly developed angelology. In addition to these verses, glimpses of this can be seen elsewhere in the New Testament (Galatians 1:8; Colossians 2:18). The writer of Hebrews respected the ministry of angels

(1:6, 7, and 14). They worshipped God, served God, and were sent to those who would *inherit salvation*. But the angels cannot hold a heavenly candle to Jesus.

The writer clustered several passages from the Old Testament to bolster his case that Jesus was superior to angels (Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13; Psalms 104:4; 45:6-7; 102:25-27; and 110:1). The angels did not occupy the place of the *Son*. They could not claim God as their *Father*. In fact, when the Father sent the Son into the world, the angels worshipped him—not the other way around. (The same will be true at the second coming.)

Angels are fiery servants (the real meaning of *seraphim*). But Jesus is divinely eternal. He was not like angels, which were created. In fact, Jesus’ throne lasts forever, and his *scepter of justice* (straightness) will help him rule well. The Son *loved righteousness and hated wickedness* (lawlessness). No wonder the Father set him above his heavenly companions and anointed him (think *Messiah*) with joy.

The angels did not create anything; rather, they themselves were created. They did not lay the *foundations of the earth*, nor did they speak the heavens into existence. Creation is distinguished from its Creator. Creation will *perish* (“be loosed down”) in the same way that a garment wears out or is changed, or in the same way a robe is rolled up. Jesus sits at the *right hand of God*—angels do not.

So . . . Pay Attention

Hebrews 2:1-4

This is the first warning in the Epistle against returning to Judaism instead of clinging to Christ (additional warnings occur in Hebrews 3:1–4:13; 5:11–6:20; 10:19–39; 12:1–17). If God spoke through the prophets, and if Jesus is over the angels, then believers should give Jesus their undivided attention. *Pay the most careful attention* means “to abundantly hold on to.” The alternative to holding on to something is to *drift away* (first-century nautical language for the sailing away of a boat).

The former *message* (logos) from the time of Moses was put in place with the help of angels (Galatians 3:19). Under that message, people were rewarded or punished accordingly. How much more would that be true of the salvation found in Christ? Therefore, believers should not *ignore* (neglect) that message. Jesus announced it first and the apostles worked miracles to affirm its truthfulness. Jesus is superior to prophets and angels. ■

APPLICATION

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

BY DAVID FAUST

What made the young carpenter from Nazareth think he could get away with saying such things? His critics wondered, *Who do you think you are?*

They viewed him the way we might see a rookie quarterback comparing himself to Peyton Manning, a Little Leaguer claiming to be better than Babe Ruth, or an aspiring musician claiming to be greater than Beethoven. They shook their heads in disbelief. To the skeptics, this upstart rabbi was making wild boasts—or worse, he was committing blasphemy.

His Identity

When Jesus announced, “Something greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42), imagine what his opponents thought. *Really? You’re greater than King Solomon? He slept in a palace and ruled from a golden throne. You grew up in a hick town and camp out with your disciples. Solomon raked in tax money, dined with royalty at his banquet table, and collected chariots in his garage. You travel on foot, and your dinner companions have scandalous reputations.*

When Jesus said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me” (John 5:46), the doubters didn’t realize that in Genesis, he is the promised seed of the woman. In Exodus, he is the Passover lamb. In Leviticus, he is the high priest who mediates for the people. In Numbers, he is the bronze snake on a pole that heals the sick. In Deuteronomy, he is the ultimate prophet who would succeed and surpass Moses.

When Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for a drink and offered her “living water,” she asked, “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us [this] well?” (John 4:12). Another time Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56), and his adversaries challenged him. “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said, “and you have seen Abraham!” (v. 57). But

Jesus didn’t back down. He asserted, “Before Abraham was born, I am!” Recognizing his unmistakable claim to deity, the hostile crowd grabbed stones, wanting to kill him as a blasphemer (vv. 58-59).

If someone claims to be greater than Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Solomon—or even more, he claims to be equal with God—what are the options? Either he is deliberately misleading others (a liar); he is mentally unstable (a lunatic); or he is telling the truth (he is the Lord). Jesus’ accusers told Governor Pilate, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God” (John 19:7). Others, though, investigated Jesus’ sinless life, unparalleled teachings, undeniable miracles, and fulfilled prophecies, and concluded he was (and is) exactly who he claimed to be.

Our Identity

Many wanted to know, “Jesus, who do you think you are?” However, he turned the question around and asked, “Who do you say I am?” Some compared him to prophets like Elijah or Jeremiah, but Peter gave the most logical answer: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:15-16).

Ironically, by realizing who he is, we better understand who we are. Jesus says, “Follow me.” Not join a club. Not devote yourself to religious traditions, political platforms, or the latest agendas for social reform. “Follow me.” If you hunger for knowledge, he will feed your mind. If you are exhausted, he will give you rest. And when it’s time to die, he will give you hope.

Who do you think you are? Follow Jesus, and he will let you know: You are a child of the most high God.

Personal Challenge: Write out your answer to this question: *Who do I think Jesus is?* Then write your answer to this question: *Who does Jesus say I am?* **L**

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. What opportunities to do good to others did you have over the past week? What happened?
2. How were you strengthened by another believer last week in such a way that it kept you from becoming weary in doing good and helped you reap a harvest?

Ask two people to read aloud **Hebrews 1:1–2:4** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to summarize the passage briefly and simply. .

3. As you listened to this passage being read and then summarized, what jumped out to you the most?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - What comparisons and contrasts do you see in this passage?
 - How does the author identify who Jesus really is?
 - What do the Old Testament passages that are cited teach you about angels?
 - What do they teach you about Jesus?
 - What application did the author provide for his teaching about Jesus and angels? (In other words, why does all that matter to us?)
 - How would you use this passage to talk with someone who practices angelolatry (a person who worships or gives excessive honor to angels)?
5. What do you learn overall about Jesus from this passage?
6. What do you learn about yourself?
7. Why is it important for us to pay careful attention to God's Word and act on it?
8. Consider someone you know who believes Jesus was a good person but was neither divine nor our Savior. How will you use this passage, especially, and our discussion, to talk with this person about Jesus' identity?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenges do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Hebrews 3:1-6** as we continue studying the book of Hebrews and the theme, "Superior." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■