



D-Group Material for January 17, 2024

Hebrews 1:1-14

(special focus on verses 1-4)

As a reminder, take some time to read and reread the passage. Make note of any questions you have and watch out for major themes and ideas as well as anything that stands out to you as useful.

As we saw last week, the overall theme of Hebrews is that *Jesus is Better*, and these introductory verses hit this theme right off the bat by declaring that Jesus is the superior revelation, the greatest Word.

Take some time and reflect on these verses and write down all that you see them declare about Jesus' identity and about how he is better than any alternatives.

Hebrews begins where we all need to start: with Jesus on the throne. These first four verses of Hebrews pack a wallop, but I think we sometimes miss how staggering these verses really are. Their language reminds us that we live in a privileged time and should give us a sense of urgency; these are the last days and Christ is the better and the final word. This is the culmination of thousands of years of waiting for the Hebrew people. Sometimes we tend to feel removed from the Old Testament and we tend to view it as removed from the New Testament, as unimportant, or at least *less* important. But the OT is a single coherent story that ended on a cliffhanger. It's a story that needed an ending. God *spoke* to his people from the very beginning; he slowly revealed his identity and his character and covenantal love. And the cliffhanger was his promise to send a redeemer to save his people. When Jesus enters the picture and ultimately with Jesus on the throne: God resolves the cliffhanger; He finishes the story. So, it's important to remember that the NT and the story of Jesus is not a *new* story, but the *completion* of an old one. Jesus is the climax of God's communication.

In these verses we see that Jesus is the King, the Son of God, the radiance of God's glory. He's God's heir. He's the creator *and* the sustainer of that creation. He's a better prophet. The role of a prophet was to reveal God: his intentions, his character, and his commands. So, Jesus is the better prophet because in these verses we find that He is God in flesh revealing Himself. He's also a better priest. The role of a priest was a never-ending role of making animal sacrifice and atoning for the sins of the people, mediating between them and God. Jesus made sacrifices too, but it wasn't the blood of bulls that he spilled. He offers real, full, and final forgiveness for sins. His sacrifice was better and complete; atonement has been made once for all. In these verses we're reminded that Jesus is the King we offended with our sin as well as the priest who made atonement for those sins. The offended King saved us from our sin by standing in for us. And then He sat down. He finished the work. The wrath of God is satisfied; payment has been made. The work is done.

List some of the ways that God communicated to His people throughout the Old Testament. Considering some of the miraculous ways God spoke to the patriarchs and prophets in the OT, what do you think the author of Hebrews is attempting to demonstrate by contrasting how God previously spoke and how God, through Jesus, has now definitively spoken to his people?

Focus in on verse 3 (maybe even take time to memorize it). ***What does the phrase, "radiates God's glory" bring to mind for you?*** You may want to look at the following verses: Exodus 24:10 and 17; Ezekiel 1:4, Daniel 7:9, Exodus 34:29-35, Matthew 17:1-8, Acts 9:3-8, Revelation 1:12-18.

Many have noted that the moon reflects light whereas the sun radiates light because it is its source. What does this tell us about Jesus as the radiance of God and our role as reflectors of God's glory?

Jesus radiates God's glory, and He is also the exact representation or *imprint* of his image. This was a word used to describe the stamp on a coin. What the author of Hebrews is saying is that if you have seen Jesus, you have seen God, they are the same. **What do we learn to be true about God from looking at the life and words of Jesus?**

The author of Hebrews moves from these staggering opening verses to showing that Jesus is also better than angels (vv.5-14). In the context in which this letter was written, its Jewish audiences were finding themselves more impressed by angels than they were with Jesus and so the author takes a moment to remind them that Jesus is greater even than the angels. Remember that angels aren't the sweet little precious cherubs that we tend to think of; they are amazing and glorious creatures of God. They are his attendants and special servants and serve as his messengers. Angels also invoke fear and awe. The first word from the mouth of an angel in scripture is usually "don't be afraid!" because fear is the inevitable response to seeing them. Angels are easy to be impressed with, but the author wants us to see that nothing in all of creation is more impressive than Jesus. Don't be so easily impressed with the things of the world, things that are created, because once you see Jesus in his glory, those things pale in comparison. Jesus is all we need.

We're probably not tempted to give too much authority to prophets or angels in place of Jesus, as first readers of Hebrews may have been, but what things do we give too much authority in our world in the place of Jesus? What are we too impressed with?

Here are some questions to think on and possibly discuss with your group:

What picture first comes to mind when you think about Jesus? What does he look like? What is he doing? Why do you suppose that this is how you picture him?

To what other places do you sometimes turn to hear God "speak" besides Jesus and the prophets?

What characteristics of Jesus stood out to you from this passage? How did those encourage you?

How should Jesus' position of power and exaltation affect your everyday life?

Are you too easily impressed with things other than Jesus? What are some of those things and how does this passage help you correct your thinking about them?

How can Jesus' identity as the King of the universe help you work through challenges in your life today? How might this change your worship?

How do these verses help us to understand, as Christians, our relationship with the Old Testament?

Spend some time in prayer praising Jesus for who He is as revealed in Hebrews.