

Episode: Other Letters Series No. 02

Narrator: Apollos

Primary Scriptures: Hebrews 1-6

Story Summary: Overview of the first six chapters of *Hebrews*.

Location: Roman Empire

Time: 60-70 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Hebrews 1:3, 1:14; 2:1, 2:18; 3:13-14; 4:12-13, 4:14-16; 6:4-6

The letter known as *Hebrews* is written anonymously to an undeclared audience. The letter is saturated with references to the Old Testament, so the author was probably highly trained and educated like Luke, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, or Apollos. Although the audience is not declared, it was likely written to Jewish Christians who spoke Greek (note: Jews were also called Hebrews).

It seems likely that some in the target audience were being tempted to revert to Judaism with its magnificent Temple and ceremonies. The author demonstrates repeatedly that Jesus and his teachings are the full completion of Judaism. The author demonstrates that many aspects of Judaism are shadows, destined to disappear. In fact, this is exactly what happens in 70 AD when the Romans destroy the Temple and ravage Jerusalem.

The opening sentence indicates that the letter is written to people with a Jewish background. Hebrews 1:3 is a very powerful declaration that Jesus is the exact representation of God... He *is* God. This is a point the Jewish leadership continually dispute. By starting with this declaration, all the author's following points will be obvious.

Jesus is superior to the angels. Angels are merely ministering spirits according to Hebrews 1:14. They are created by God, and worship Him, but are clearly inferior to Christ. The Jews of that time seem to have been fascinated with angels and may have created a significant theology around them, so this was the author's first attack against false teachings.

Jesus is superior to Moses. Moses was the greatest of all prophets and was the lawgiver to the Jews. No person was greater than Moses. However, the author shows that, not only is Jesus greater than Moses, but He is also greater than the *laws* of Moses.

Jesus is the Great High Priest. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, and so did not qualify to be a priest. However, because He is the Son of God, Jesus is the perfect high priest, capable of being the perfect sacrifice for the people.

After showing that Jesus is the better choice for people to make, the author warns against falling away from Jesus. Hebrews 6:4-6 includes some of the harshest warnings in the Bible. However, the author demonstrates that God is just and will fulfill His promises to those who are faithful to Him. The author insists that the hope of Christians is based on God's unchangeable character.

Discussion Questions:

1. According to Hebrews 1:1-2, how did God change the way He communicated with humans?
2. According to Hebrews 1:3, explain the nature of Jesus.
3. How is everything sustained?
4. Why does the author of Hebrews compare Jesus to the angels?
5. Why does the author of Hebrews compare Jesus to Moses?
6. Why does the author of Hebrews compare Jesus to the high priest?
7. How does Jesus compare to everything?

1. God had communicated through prophets in various ways, but then He communicated through Jesus. 2. Jesus is the exact representation of God's being. 3. According to Hebrews 1:3, everything is sustained through the powerful word of Jesus. 4. It is likely that false teachers were teaching the importance of angels in the salvation process of mankind. 5. Moses was the great lawgiver to the Jews, and he led them out of slavery. To the Jews, there was nobody greater, and nobody else that needed to be obeyed. 6. The high priest was the intermediary between the Jews and God, and he gave sacrifices to God to cover the sins of the people. 7. Jesus is above all and is the better choice.

Application Questions:

1. Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus is the exact representation of God's being. How can you move toward being a more exact representation of Jesus?
2. In Hebrews 6:1, the writer instructs his readers to move beyond the "elementary teachings about Christ." Are there elementary teachings you haven't moved beyond? What types of things keep you from moving forward to more mature teachings? Do you have access to a teacher that can help you move forward?
3. Hebrews 3:13 says to encourage other Christians on a daily basis. How can you do that? According to that verse, why is it so important to encourage one another?
4. Hebrews 2:1 warns against "drifting away," while Hebrews 6:6 uses the term "fallen away." What do those terms mean?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Hebrews 1:14 indicates that all angels are spirits that minister and serve those who will inherit salvation. Does that description match what media portrays? Do you think an angel has ever helped you? Why or why not?
2. Hebrews 2:17-18 says Jesus was fully human in every way, and that He was tempted. Can you trust Jesus to understand your situation because He was tempted and suffered in the midst of that temptation?
3. Hebrews 3:12 gives stern warning about having a sinful, unbelieving heart. Do you have any friends or acquaintances who have that type of heart?