

LESSON ONE
*Don't Miss
God's Message
in His Son*

FOCAL TEXT

Hebrews 1:1–6, 14; 2:1–4

BACKGROUND

Hebrews 1:1–2:9

MAIN IDEA

Since Jesus is God's supreme revelation to us, far above prophets and angels, we must beware of failing to give him the allegiance he deserves.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

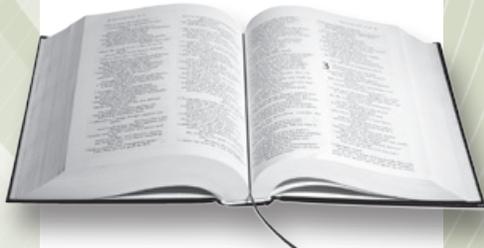
What place does Jesus really have in your life?

STUDY AIM

To evaluate the place Jesus really has in my life

QUICK READ

God reveals himself in various ways for people who want to know more of him and his will. The most complete and powerful way to know God is to know Jesus.



If you have a smart phone or a computer, most likely your home screen is filled with icons. These icons are symbols that represent documents, programs, websites, games, or any number of things. When you click on one of these icons, you are immediately transported to what that icon represents. Once at that location you can see the fullness of the program, website, or game.

The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus much like an icon. Once you *click on* or study Jesus, you are immediately transported to God. The reason Jesus is a complete revelation of God is because Jesus *is* God. He is not simply a symbol, clone, or picture of God; rather, Jesus *is* God. If you really want to see God, you must look at Jesus.

The Book of Hebrews focuses on the rigorous demands of accepting and living the gospel. Although it is not clear who wrote the letter or who first read the letter, the author definitely knew how to balance God's commands with God's grace. The readers apparently were struggling with remaining true to the gospel, although it is not clear why. The author was concerned with the lack of zeal and obvious laziness of the readers. The book is a call to discipleship, to a renewed commitment to follow Jesus. The focus of this study is on the challenges to faithfulness found in the letter as well as the warnings for those who chose not to remain faithful. For more on the introduction to Hebrews see the article, "Introducing *Hebrews: A Call for Rigorous Faithfulness*," in this *Study Guide*.¹

HEBREWS 1:1–6, 14

¹ In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. ⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son; today I have become your Father?"

Or again,

"I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."



¹⁴ Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

HEBREWS 2:1–4

¹ We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. ² For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³ how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴ God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Jesus Is the Word of God (1:1–3)

Hebrews points out that God spoke to people in the past using prophets and other people. The Old Testament shows that God is a creative God who uses wonders and miracles to get his message across. God also used angels, visions, and events to relay his will. It is also evident that God spoke in fragments in the past. He shared many messages about himself at different times, but he did not reveal the total picture of his identity. He revealed his expectations of his people through the law he gave to Moses. He revealed his beauty and majesty through the poems of his servant David. He described his love through the Song of Solomon, and he displayed his ability to save through the prophet Jonah. These messages give us glimpses into God's make-up, but none of them are the full expression of God. Jesus, though, fully reveals God with his words, his

life, and his power. Jesus is referred to as the “Son.” This title indicates an intimate relationship.

Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension indicated that the world was in a new phase of history. This is the phase the writer referred to as “these last days.” The “last days” do not represent a chronological approach to the end times but rather a theological approach. From the moment Jesus ascended to heaven until the time he returns, the world is in the “last days.”

How God spoke through Jesus reflected the way God spoke through the prophets. The message was important, clear, and highlighted with demonstrations of his power. What God spoke through Jesus was different in that it was definitive, climactic, and complete. God obviously wants people to listen to him and take his message seriously. Therefore, God sent his only Son. God knows the spiritual dangers people face and the importance of accepting his message in order to receive eternal life. Therefore, God sent the One who knows the Father best to deliver the message so people would listen to him. Jesus is the “heir of all things,” and through him God made the universe. Jesus is directly connected to nature; he created it. In the end, Jesus will rule over all of creation. He is not a created being, and therefore he is superior to all created things. He reveals more of the beauty and creativity of God than does the universe with all of its splendor and wonders. God not only gave Jesus all things before creation, but also God made all things by his hand.

Jesus Is Greater than the Angels (1:4–6; 14)

The writer argued in these verses that not only is Jesus greater than all the prophets, but he is also greater than the angels. In the Old Testament, God delivered his messages via angels as well as human beings. However, Jesus was much more than a created agent used to deliver messages for God. He is God’s Son. The Old Testament writings assign the name “Son” to the Messiah. Jesus inherited the title “Son” by God’s divine purpose. When Jesus took on human form, he was made lower than the angels. Jesus receiving the title of God’s “Son” meant that he was made superior to the angels.

The writer made this point by using seven references from the Old Testament writings in verses 5–13. All of these Scriptures exalt the

superiority of the Son. The first reference, in verse 5a, is from Psalm 2:7. The reference reveals the dignity and majesty of Jesus.

The second statement, in verse 5b, is from 2 Samuel 7:14 and 1 Chronicles 17:13. It reiterates Jesus' place as God's Son.

The third statement, in verse 6, is from Deuteronomy 32:43. It directs us back to the birth of Jesus and the angels who appeared to announce his arrival and worship him.

Further statements in verses 8–13 are from Psalm 104:4; 45:6, 7; 102:25–27; and 110:1. The emphasis of these statements is that Jesus holds an exalted position no angel ever held—"Son."

Hebrews 1:14 contrasts the angels to God's Son by highlighting the angels' role. They are servants of God. They go as God commands. Their primary duty is to care for people. They do this only as they are assigned and sent by God. The angels serve, but Jesus is the "Son" who is worthy of service (Hebrews 1:13), thus showing Jesus' superiority to the angels. Angels are God's servants appointed to minister to God's children, but Jesus is co-ruler with God.

Pay Attention to Jesus (2:1–4)

The readers of Hebrews were ready to reject Jesus and pursue a counterfeit. Outside pressures and persecution caused these believers to waver

JESUS—"THE RADIANCE OF GOD'S GLORY" AND "THE EXACT REPRESENTATION"

Hebrews 2:3 describes Jesus as "the radiance of God's glory." "God's glory" is the display of all of God's attributes at one time. "God's glory" is the light that accompanies him so that no human is able to see and live. Moses desired to see God's glory, but God knew he would not survive the viewing. Thus, God's glory was manifest in Jesus so that humans can see God and live to tell about it.

As "the exact representation" of God, Jesus has the divine substance of the Father. The Greek word used here—*charakter*—refers to an engraver who makes marks on seals or coins. The word meant the tool used to make the engraving or image. It was also used to describe an image impressed on a person or thing. It describes a person's features or character traits.

HOW TO BE ASSURED YOU ARE LETTING JESUS AFFECT YOUR DAILY LIFE

Following is a list of ways people can be assured they are letting the message of Jesus affect their daily lives.

1. Pray before making any life decision either big or small.
2. Search out Scripture that deals directly or indirectly with a specific life challenge.
3. Seek advice from trusted spiritual leaders, counselors, or friends.
4. Take time to be still and listen to God.
5. Trust God to give an answer before moving ahead with a decision.

in their commitment to Jesus and his church. The writer reminded the people they needed to listen to the truth of the gospel. It was a matter of spiritual life or death. He wanted them to hold fast to Jesus regardless of what they heard from other sources. They had committed themselves to the teachings and messages of the angels and prophets of the old covenant. Jesus, who was superior to the angels and prophets, brought a message to which they should cling even more earnestly than before. He painted the picture in their minds that if they did not listen to the message about Jesus they were in danger, like a ship sailing past warning signs depicting danger up ahead. An attitude of indifference toward this message would lead to future ruin.

The readers were completely aware of the real difficulties that could occur from ignoring or disobeying the laws of the Old Covenant. These difficulties were not imagined or hypothetical; they were real. They had heard the stories and perhaps even experienced firsthand what happens when a person disobeys the message of God. The writer of Hebrews received his understanding from this generation. Messengers of the Old Covenant were subordinate to Jesus; however, the laws were binding. God thus punished every violation of the law. The writer used this knowledge to emphasize the severity of the punishment that would occur if they rebelled against the law of the New Covenant. The writer made it clear that if they knew the importance of obedience to the words of subordinate messengers, how much more was obedience required to

the message delivered by God's own Son. Neglecting this message of salvation is even more dangerous. Anyone ignoring this message could expect severe punishment from God.

The writer identified Jesus as the "great salvation." Jesus himself saves people. His name means salvation. He not only offered to defeat the people's foes and death and also to bring earthly blessings, but he also offered them his Spirit, forgiveness of sins, and life in heaven. The angels and prophets proclaimed a message that looked forward to the Messiah. Jesus' message of salvation was final. His testament superseded the place of the Old Testament. Jesus stated this fact as he took the Passover meal with his disciples. He stated, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20) The writer of Hebrews, in an effort to convince his readers to hold on to Jesus' message, gave three pieces of evidence to its importance—(1) God proclaimed it originally; (2) those who heard it confirmed it; and (3) finally the miracles that accompanied it proved it was from God.

Hebrews 2:4 indicates that God himself joined his messengers in proclaiming salvation. God sent "signs, wonders and various miracles" to accompany the messengers. "Signs" can be understood as items or events, often miraculous, that point to God. Wonders were also miraculous in nature and so strange that they caused people to watch. Jesus performed many signs and wonders in front of the disciples. Many witnesses in addition to the disciples could give testimony to the power Jesus demonstrated through miracles. God used many methods to reveal the power of his Son and his message. Along with the signs, God sent his Holy Spirit to testify. The Spirit's demonstration of power at Pentecost in Acts 2 is one occasion. The Spirit caused the listeners to hear the Apostle Peter's message in their own language. In addition to the experience at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwelt in believers and inspired the writing of the Scriptures. God has proven to be creative in order to get people's attention. All of this evidence was presented to show the superiority of the gospel message. This evidence, when analyzed, gave proof that drifting away from Jesus' message was foolish.

Applying This Lesson to Life

Even in our world with all of its advancements in science, medicine, and technology, the best way to discover who God is and what God wants

