

# “Jesus is Better”

## Session 1 – Hebrews 1:1-14

### Week 1 Bible Study Method:

Author and Audience  
Genre and Purpose  
Historical Context



**Watch It:** (watch this video from the Bible Project for an overview of the structure of Hebrews and a little taste of where we are going.)

[Book of Hebrews Summary – A Complete Animated Overview](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fNWTZZwgbs)

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### Read It:

As we work through this new series in the Book of Hebrews, we will be modeling different tools and practices for studying the Bible. Today, we will consider the author and audience, the genre and purpose, and the historical context of the Book of Hebrews. Knowing these things changes the way we understand what we read and gives us a clearer picture of what the Bible actually means.

**Author and Audience:** The author of Hebrews is unknown. Scholars have suggested several options (Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, and Priscilla) but there is no consensus. In Chapter 2 verses 1-3, the author refers to being around the disciples saying:

*“Salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to **us** by those who heard Him.”*

By saying “us,” the author includes himself, so he must have interacted with the disciples personally. This message is clearly rooted in the teachings of Jesus.

**Genre and Purpose:** Hebrews is an Epistle, a letter written to encourage other Christ followers to remain faithful to Jesus despite their cultural influences and persecution. The author aims to show that Jesus is better than anything offered anywhere else.

**Historical Context:** Hebrews was written to 1<sup>st</sup> century Christ followers. The author assumes a deep knowledge of Jewish practices and concepts, so it is believed that this audience had once been Jewish but had come to know Christ. Unfortunately, most of the people surrounding them and the foundations of their culture remained Jewish and were persecuting them as “defectors.” (Some of their persecution is described in 10:32-35.) In that oppressive environment, these Christ followers were struggling and weary, tempted to give up on Jesus and go back to the Judaism they had known their whole lives.

In their world, Judaism made sense. Their whole world had been built upon it, and Christianity was just seen as this weird offshoot, a strange cult. As a marginalized people, these Christians were naturally wrestling with the idea of returning to Judaism where they could avoid persecution, be accepted in their community, and feel the security of community structures around them. If not outright abandonment of their faith, these Christ followers were also at risk of subtle “drift” back into the lifestyles and practices of the people and culture surrounding them.

We find ourselves in a similar situation. This is why this study is so timely for us. Our culture is screaming out against us. Our world is attacking the foundations of our faith, and we stand at a crossroads. Will we choose to follow the masses and allow our culture to lead us or will we choose Christ? How will the cultural drift around us affect us individually? How will it affect the church collectively? Do we really believe that He is better than what the world offers?

God offers us answers in the book of Hebrews.

## Read It:

- Hebrews 1:1-4

## Discuss It:

### Vs 1-3

- The author starts by contrasting how God spoke *"through the prophets at many times and in various ways"* versus *"by his Son."* What is the practical difference between hearing from lots of prophets in the Old Testament versus hearing the one King, Jesus?
- How does the phrase *"sustaining all things by his powerful word."* (1:3) challenge common ideas about how the universe works?
  - How does this challenge your thinking?
  - How does it encourage you?
- Verse 2 says, *"in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."* Why do you think God chose Jesus as His final word instead of allowing the prophets the last word?

### Vs 4

- The author is systematically placing Jesus over everything that their Jewish counterparts held in high regard by giving Him several honorable titles. Look at the titles given to Jesus in verses 3-4. Which of these titles might have been especially encouraging for these persecuted and weary Christ followers and why?
  - In your life, how have you seen these character traits in God?

- The author states Jesus "*sat down*" after making purification for sins. What does sitting down symbolize, and how does this give meaning and finality to your spiritual life?

### **Reflect on It:**

- Spend 2 minutes in silence reflecting on this question: Knowing that Jesus is superior to everything, where are my allegiances? Am I trusting in something inferior like money, reputation, talents/abilities, or fear?
- Fill in the blank: "Lord teach me to come to you instead of \_\_\_\_\_."

### **Read It:**

- Hebrews 1:5-14

### **Discuss It: Vs 5-14**

- In the Old Testament, angels often played a role in God's interactions with people. Why is it so important for the author to prove that Jesus is superior to them?
- In our culture, we aren't tempted to look to angels for help, but where do you turn for guidance and help? Is Jesus your reflex or do you seek help from friends, social media, or ChatGPT?
- Verses 11-12 say the earth will "*wear out like a garment*." Writing to these persecuted people, in a world that is in a constant state of change, why would the author choose to focus on Jesus' unchanging nature? Why is this encouraging to you?
- How does verse 14 describe angels? Ask your group to compare this to the description of Jesus in verses 8 and 13.

### **Do It:**

- Reread Hebrews 1:3 every morning this week and choose a different title of Jesus (e.g., "Sustainer," "Purifier") as a focus for your day.

- Do an authority inventory: Write down the top 3 voices that shape your decisions (Jesus, Bible, family, finances, allegiances, habits, etc.) and consider which voices represent the anchor in verse 12.
- Identify one “religious” or “practical” safety net you instinctively reach for when life feels unstable (control, routine, approval, productivity). Intentionally loosen your grip on it once this week and instead pray Hebrews 1:2–3.
- Before a decision this week (big or small), ask: *If Jesus really is better and supreme, what would trust look like here?* Act on that answer.