

Hebrews

Chapters 1-2

October 1, 2007

OPEN: In groups of three or four, share your name, what service you attend here at St. Andrew's, and one thing about yourself that the rest of the people in your small group don't know (but nothing embarrassing, folks – we'll be together for the next 8 weeks). Spouses may need to be in separate groups or risk being surprised (or having to search their minds for something to share).

STUDY: Review the Introductory Material.

Read Hebrews 1:1-4. How is God's communication with our ancestors different from the way he communicates with us? *He used to speak through the prophets; now he has spoken by his Son.*

What do we learn about Jesus from these verses? *He is the heir of all things. Through him God created the world. He is the reflection of God's glory, the imprint of God's very being, he sustains all things. He made purification for sins and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty. He is superior to angels.*

Talk for a few minutes about the Christology of these verses – how developed it is for the time. Jesus is identified with Wisdom (through creation), the word, and is seen as God.

Read Hebrews 1:5-14. These Old Testament quotes are used for what purpose? *To indicate that Jesus is higher in stature than the angels.*

Why would such a teaching be necessary? *Undoubtedly there were people who claimed that Jesus was not as special as the angels, that we should become as the angels (there was a sort of Gnosticism that claimed this). It is refuted in these verses.* These quotes come mostly from Psalms, many of which were used at the coronation of Kings (Psalm 110, 104, 2, 45). What does this tell us of the author's view of Jesus? *He is the righteous king that was promised by the Scriptures to rule God's people.*

Read Hebrews 2:1-4. What does the author warn against here? *Drifting away from faith in Christ. Here is the theme of the letter – Christ is the Son of God, trust him even in the midst of suffering for he will deliver you at the end.*

Who are the witnesses to the truth of this salvation, according to the author? *First the Lord (Jesus) himself, then those who were with him (the apostles), and also the Father and the Holy Spirit.*

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the Trinity and claim that the Bible contains no reference to the Trinity. While the word "Trinity" is not in this passage, what points to the Trinity in these verses? *Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit testify to the fact that Christ is Lord through signs and wonders and the word.*

Read Hebrews 2:5-9. How does the author interpret the verses from Psalm 8, that is, to whom do the verses refer? *They refer to Jesus. He takes the lower place for a time, lower than angels, but he is lifted up.*

Why is Jesus, who was for awhile lower than angels, now crowned with glory and honor? *Because he suffered and died. He did this so that all might receive the grace of God, and for that sake he was exalted.*

Read Hebrews 2:10-13. How did God make perfect the pioneer of our salvation?
Through suffering.

What does this mean for us when we encounter suffering? *We are to endure for the sake of him who suffered for us.*

What is our status with God, now that Christ has suffered for us? *We are God's children, and brothers and sisters of Christ.*

Read Hebrews 2:14-18. What do we share in common with Jesus? *Flesh and blood. Jesus took on ours in order to win salvation for us.*

What benefits do we have through Jesus' death? *We are delivered from the power of death (the devil) and are set free from slavery to sin.*

For whom did Jesus do this work? *The descendants of Abraham – which include all who believe in Jesus Christ (see Galatians 4).*

What did Jesus become for us? *A merciful and gracious high priest – Hebrews will return to this image of Christ in detail later in the book.*

In addition to forgiveness of sins, what do we receive from Jesus? *Strength. Christ knows our weaknesses and can help us when we are weak.*

REFLECT

If someone were to ask you to describe Jesus and what he does for people, what would you say?

What image is the primary one for you of Jesus? Christ as a high priest? Christ as the lamb of God who was sacrificed for our sins? Christ as a Good Shepherd? Which would you emphasize in this world, and why?

How do people drift away from Christ today? Will they be punished for drifting away? Why or why not?

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