

# Hebrews

## Introduction & Chapter 1:1-7

*June 11, 1995*

---

- **Introduction**

The Epistle to the Hebrews is probably one of the top three important books in the New Testament. That is not for the purpose of disparaging the others but rather to emphasize how instructive the letter is. There are numerous theological issues which are only explained or discussed in this letter. In order to fully understand this New Testament book, we will need to examine a great deal of the Old Testament. Although we will spend a number of weeks studying the book, we will certainly not discover all that it has to teach us.

There has probably been no other book that has had so much debate over it. One thing that hasn't had much debate is its inclusion in the canon. Virtually from the beginning, the church fathers have received the book as inspired.

- **Author**

- Certainly no other topic about this book has been more widely debated. Historically, at least three possible authors have been considered: Paul, Barnabas and Apollos. The debate is not a primary one in that if God had deemed it necessary that we know the author, He would have ensured that we know his identity. I believe that the strongest arguments, although completely speculation, point to Apollos.

- **Date**

- Given that there is no reference made to the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in 70 a.d., we can fairly safely assume that the book must have been written prior to this. We also know that there had been and currently was persecution of Christians. This probably was under the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, which would put the writing of the book to have taken place between 62 and 66 a.d.

- **Primary Theme**

- Clearly the primary purpose of the author was to methodically lay out for the readers how the old Levitical system of types and shadows was only just that, types and shadows. The reality had come in the form of Christ. A good question would be, why is this so important? Apparently the Jewish Christian readers of the letter were confused about the importance of keeping the ceremonial law. The author exhorts them to not abandon the things they have learned (the reality) and return to the old system (types and shadows).

### Hebrews 1:1-7

*1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,*

*2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

*3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

*4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

- God chose to reveal His mind to us through men called prophets. This was done in a progressive manner in that no one individual prophet received everything. But we see that God culminated His revelation by bringing forth His son. Christ is the fulfillment of the prophetic teaching. This is especially important to remember when dealing with some religions who claim to have a living prophet.
- The use of the term last is obviously problematic as we know that hundreds of years have passed since then. So the question is

does last refer to the end of the world or to the end of something in the day of the readers? This letter was written to warn these people about falling away to a system of worship (Judaism) that was to be judged. Therefore I believe that the last days were the days before the destruction of Jerusalem.

- Scripture says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). As Son, he will inherit as a gift all things. But note that the Son is also whom He created all things through. Remember the Trinity before the incarnation consisted of the Father, the Word and the Spirit. But the Son will inherit all things only to turn around and give the kingdom to the Father when all of His enemies have been put under His feet so that God may be all in all.
- The brightness of His glory refers to the loom of a light. You cannot separate these things from each other nor is the loom not part of the light. Christ is the exact representation of His being. We have here very strong language describing the deity of Christ. This is central to our religion because there are any number of religions out there who want to refute this very point.
- Christ became a man so that He could die for the purification of sins. He then ascended and was given the authority to rule the universe. As ruler, and based on His rule, we are called to make disciples of the nations. Either we proclaim the rule of Jesus or we are simply employing mental manipulation of the nations.
- We see a primary purpose of this first chapter is to state that Christ is superior to the angels.

***5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?***

- In this first chapter the Old Testament is quoted seven times. It is fascinating to go back and read these verses in context but we must remember the nature of prophecy. There are frequently different layers of understanding to many prophecies. There is the meaning that would have applied to the initial readers that would have been instructive and encouraging. Then there is the fulfillment of that prophecy. And finally, there is the New Testament commentary on those prophecies which have a second or third meaning.
- It is interesting that five of the seven quotations are from scriptures that deal with the submission of the nations to Christ. It describes the nature of the kingdom of God as a conquering kingdom and bringing the enemies of God under submission to Him.

***6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."***

- As Jesus has been described to be greater than angels the author backs up this claim with a quotation which commands that Jesus be worshipped. Angels were never to be worshipped but here we see that even the angels are to worship Christ. This is an excellent point to defend again the deity of Christ.

***7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." (NKJV)***

- This quotation from Psalm 104:4 seems to serve only to substantiate that they are servants of God, not deity. We are told to serve Christ, not angels.