

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS – PART ONE

Does the New Testament contradict the Old Testament? What should we as Christians do about the Law of Moses, the covenants of the Old Testament, temple worship and sacrifices, high priests and ordinary priests? What happens to Jews who become Christians? Should Christians behave like Jews? Are there good role models for us in the Old Testament or should we only look to the New Testament examples? What does it mean to live our Christian lives by faith? These and other important questions are answered in the book of Hebrews. This is a great book for those who think seriously about the origins of their faith.

Hebrews is the only book in the New Testament which does not claim a writer or have a strong tradition about who wrote it. Paul, Barnabas, Apollos and Priscilla have all had supporters as the possible writer but the simple answer is that we do not know because God did not tell us. It is not important because God was the author.(II Tim.3:16)

Notice how Hebrews is placed in the New Testament between the letters Paul claimed to write and those he definitely did not. There are some features of the letter which remind us of Paul's writing and some which seem to be quite different. Like the letter of James which follows, its audience would obviously be Jews first and then all Christians.

The first two chapters immediately address the most important question in the Christian faith. Who was Jesus? Chapter one provides one half of the answer and chapter two the other half. The rest of the book builds on this message and applies it to our lives.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Old Testament prophets were God's mouthpieces preparing the way for His one mouthpiece in the New Testament, Jesus. He is both the Creator and the absolute owner of creation. He shows the world exactly what God is like. He keeps the universe functioning. His death on the cross provides the only way by which sin can be cleansed. He is far above the angels of heaven in every sense.(1:1-4)

The rest of the chapter is a series of quotations from the Old Testament to expand and illustrate the writer's claim that not only was Jesus God but that this idea had been given to the Jews a thousand years before. Over and over again, the Old Testament made it clear Who was coming to earth and how He was so much more than another angel.

He was to be born into the world to enjoy the perfect Father/Son relationship.(Ps.2:7; II Sam7:14) At His birth He would be worshipped by the angels.(Ps.97:7; Lk.2:13,14) The angels would simply be messengers and instruments of God,(Ps.104:4) but the Son would be King for ever, uncompromisingly righteous.(Ps.45:6,7) He would be empowered by the Father for His ministry, not just anointed with oil like the Old Testament leaders, but with the Holy Spirit.(Isa.61:1,3) He created the universe, which will in time come to an end, but He will not. He will remain exactly the same throughout eternity.(Ps.102:25,26) After His time on earth He would be taken back to heaven to share power with the Father as the One God and as such all opposition would be crushed by Him.(Ps.110:1) He is

therefore both the supreme example of what a son should be as well as the unchanging, all-powerful, victorious God. We can safely trust our whole selves to Him.(1:5-13)

Angels by comparison are simply servants of those who trust such an awesome Saviour.(1:14)

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What does verse one tell us about the inspiration and character of the Old Testament? How according to verse two is the New Testament different from the Old and how is it the same?
2. Why is it important to know that Jesus Christ, not just God the Father, is the creator?(Jn.1:1-3; Col.1:16-18; I Cor.8:4-6) What does it lead us to expect in our relationship with Him? What difference would it make if the universe evolved by chance over billions of years rather than being created by Jesus Christ? What is the significance of Him also being the heir? Why is Rom.8:17 so exciting?
3. What else has Jesus done apart from create the world?(v.3) How did this show in the gospels?(Matt.17:2; Jn.14:9) What does this mean for us as 'fellow heirs'? How did He purify sins?(I Jn.1:7,9) Where is He now? Why is this important?
4. In what way was Jesus a good son, and the Father a good father?(v.5) This verse quotes from Ps.2 which was also used by the Christians to encourage one another in Acts 4:25,26 but why did the writer also quote II Sam.7:14?
5. How do verses 6 & 7 compare Jesus to the angels? Why does it matter that He was not just a high ranking angel?
6. Verses 8 & 9 are taken from Ps.45. Why was this Psalm such powerful evidence that even the Old Testament taught that both the Father and the Son were the one God? When and how was Jesus anointed by the Father?(Acts.10:38; Luke 3.22)
7. What important message about Jesus do verses 10-12 give us? What difference should knowing this make to daily life particularly when things are tough?
8. How does verse 13 help to explain verse 3? How again does this help when life is a struggle?
9. What is the purpose of angels? Should we expect them to affect daily life?(v.14)