

We are not told who wrote the book of Hebrews. Many think it is the apostle Paul because of the characteristic mention of Timothy (13:23) but the overall style differs from Paul's. Certainly nothing in the book disagrees with Paul's teaching.

We do know who received the letter – Jews who had been raised in the traditions of Israel and had now professed faith in Christ. The letter reaches them as many of them are wavering in their new faith under persecution and casting longing looks back at the familiar laws of Judaism. The letter seeks to persuade them of the superiority of Christ to all the doomed rituals of the temple.

Read a few verses to understand why the Jews clung to their ancestral religion:

- As God's chosen people they were accustomed to being His exclusive representatives: Rom. 9:4-5
- Strict observance of the law gave them a sense of righteousness and superiority: Phil.3:4-6
- The elaborate hierarchy of priests, scribes, and Pharisees allowed men to gain social prominence: Luke 11:43, 20:46
- The Jews were taught – rightly – to love the law. It would be hard for them to imagine anything better replacing it: Deut. 11:18-21

But we know that Scripture was written for our benefit. As we read this book we should listen for the messages it has for Christians today. To what traditions do I cling? Where am I faltering in my progress with the Lord? How do I fail to fully trust the reality of Christ? What of His splendor and glory can I still learn?

Questions:

1. The book of Hebrews skips over the customary introductions of the other epistles. What situation facing the readers might require such urgency in getting to the message?
2. What were some of the ways God had spoken to the fathers in the past? Did they listen?
3. In this chapter, the Son is shown to be better than _____. In what way?
4. What statements in this chapter support the divinity of Jesus?

5. Why does the book of Hebrews have so many Old Testament quotations compared to other epistles?

6. Verse 3 makes a powerful statement of the Son's relation to the Father. It is almost inexpressible in human terms. Read how some different translations render it:
 - the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person (KJV)
 - the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance (Darby)
 - the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature (ESV)
 - the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being (NIV)What does this say to *you* about the Lord Jesus? How does it connect to His being called the Word in John 1?

7. Verse 4 says that Jesus has become superior to the angels. When and how might he have acquired this superiority? (Hint: Rev. 5)

8. Verses 6 and 7 establish Jesus as God's own son, "begotten" in the first verse and "firstborn" in the second. What could these words mean if Jesus is eternal?

9. Angels are spirits like God, they are swift and powerful, and we do not read of any angel dying. How is Jesus superior to them?

10. What do verses 10-12 tell us about Christ?

11. How do angels minister to the heirs of salvation (v. 14)?

12. This chapter and others tell us many of the glories of Jesus Christ. Are they His because of what He *is*, or what He *has done*, or both?