

Saint Paul's Women's Bible Study
The Epistle to the Hebrews

Chapter 1

The ancient world did not have printing presses such as we do in the modern world, but it had equivalents, particularly for making coins. The emperor would employ an engraver who carved the royal portrait, and suitable words or abbreviations, on a stamp, or die, made of hard metal. The engraver used the stamp to make a coin, so that the coin gave the exact impression, indeed expression, of what was on the stamp. The writer of Hebrews begins the letter with this idea. It is as though the exact imprint of the Father's very nature and glory has been precisely reproduced in the soft metal of the Son's human nature.

OPEN

How do you see people in the surrounding culture trying to experience and expand their spirituality?

STUDY

Read Hebrews 1.

1. This chapter is a grand and formal opening to this letter to the Hebrews. What do we learn in particular about Jesus in verses 1-4?

2. How does the writer invite us in verses 1-4 to look at the whole sweep of biblical history and see it coming to a climax in Jesus?

3. In verse 5, two Old Testament passages are quoted: Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14. These two passages were frequently used by the early Christians when they were struggling to say what had to be said about Jesus. How do these quotes further explain who Jesus is?

4. The writer quotes from two psalms (97:7 and 104:4) in verses 6-7. How do these verses contrast Jesus and angels?

5. In verses 8-9, Psalm 45:6-7 is being quoted. The psalm addresses the king as if he can be called God, but the writer of Hebrews applies this psalm to Jesus, the Messiah. What will the reign of the Messiah be like according to this psalm?

6. When you think of the condition of the world today, where do you long to see the reign of Jesus?

7. Why might the writer of Hebrews have chosen to include the quotes from Psalm 102:25-27 in verses 10-12?

8. A third psalm is quoted in verse 13: Psalm 110. Once again, in verses 13-14 the writer contrasts Jesus with the angels, though in a different way. What is the role of the angels compared to that of the Messiah?

9. As mentioned in the introduction, many of the Jewish believers in the early church had family members who had not accepted that Jesus was the Messiah, and they regarded the Jewish believers as dangerously misguided and disloyal. Great pressure was exerted on the Jewish believers to turn back to the law, which according to Jewish tradition had been given to Moses by angels on Mount Sinai. In what ways do verses 5-14 help establish Jesus' superiority over the law?

10. Not many readers today, perhaps, will be tempted to abandon Christianity in favor of some form of Judaism—though it is important for us to understand why that was such an obvious pressure in the early days. But many today, including many in the churches, seem dissatisfied with what they have, and are eager to expand their spiritual horizons (as they might see it) to include angels, saints and other interesting distractions. What specific ways are you and your church or faith community tempted to expand your spiritual horizons?

11. The angels, the law and the prophets were all part of God's preparation, part of the brilliant and beautiful wrapping in which the ultimate present, God's gift of his own self in the person of the Son, would be contained. How can you pay closer attention to who Jesus is and to the role of worship and service to which he has called you, instead of playing with the "wrapping"?