



An ANCHOR for the soul

STUDIES FROM THE BOOK OF **HEBREWS**

STUDY 2

HEBREWS 1:5-2:9

Aim of Study: Help us to see the connection between wrong thinking on the status of the Son and the risk of drifting away. Heed the warning to pay closer attention to the Son.

Main Teaching Point: Jesus is vastly superior to the angels and we do well to heed the warnings against underestimating the place of the Son.

INTRODUCTION

The logic flow of the writer's argument in this section may seem strange to us. The point that he is making however is crystal clear: **Jesus is vastly superior to angels, therefore listen to Him.** The argument flows out of the last part of the section we studied last week, ie Hebrews 1:1-4.

..... After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ **having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.**

THE SON SUPERIOR TO ANGELS

It was commonly thought that angels were closely associated with the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. This probably resulted in angels being held in high regard (see Hebrews 2:2).

1. If you were asked by someone to argue the case for Jesus being superior to the angels what would you say?
2. How does the writer of the letter argue the case? What do you notice particularly about verses 5a and 13a?

Leaders' notes 1

The table below lists 7 Old Testament verses which are quoted in Hebrews 1. Notice that they are all things that God says either to or about the angels or to or about the Son. The first thing to notice here is the basis upon which the writer establishes his point, ie it is by what God **says** that we know that the superiority of Jesus over the angels to be true. The idea that angels were present at the giving of the law might make the hearers think that angels are of great importance and this understanding may lead to them to have a misplaced trust. Ultimately however it is the testimony of Scripture that clinches the argument. We have no business insisting on what might seem to be true on the basis, say, of events that took place in the past, compared with listening to what God says about the place of the Son. This error has clearly led the readers to underestimate the Son. The antidote to this error means putting things back into their right order and how to do this? By listening to what God says and not basing our understanding of what we think to be true on appearances.

This is not to say however that God simply saying that something is true somehow makes it true. It is that God in speaking of the Son in these terms actually expresses a reality that is already true (see Hebrews 1:3). It also expresses the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son which is categorically different from the relationship between God the and angels. The writer is also showing us that here that the law is fulfilled in the Son.

Section	Old Testament Quotation
Hebrews 1:5	Psalm 2:7
	2 Samuel 7:14
Hebrews 1:6	Deuteronomy 32:43
Hebrews 1:7	Psalm 104:4
Hebrews 1:8-12	Psalm 45:6-7
	Psalm 102:25-27
Hebrews 1:13	Psalm 110:1

- In our day we might not be at risk of overestimating the importance of angels. But we still may run the risk of underestimating the importance of the Jesus compared with other things that vie for our attention and may seem to be of greater importance. Can you think of some examples?

THE PROBLEM OF DRIFT

- In 2:1 the writer sums up his argument and applies it to his readers in the first of one of the many “Therefore.....” passages that are repeated throughout the letter. What is he calling us as readers to do? What is he warning them against? Presumably the drift that he warns them against is a direct consequence of underestimating the superiority of the Son with respect to the angels.
- What are the two “messages” he places in parallel in 2:1-4? What is similar about them? What is different?

Leaders' notes 2

Verse 3b gives us some insight into the reason why the letter to the Hebrews was included as one of the New Testament books. Since we don't know who is the letter's author there was some doubt as to whether it should be part of the New Testament canon. We know from this verse and from 13:23 that the writer was close to original eyewitnesses and to the apostolic band.

APPLICATION

- What might be the earliest signs that we can spot of drift? To what extent do you think that the risk of drift is potentially an individual problem and/or a collective problem? What can we do to redress it when we see it happening?

Leaders' notes 3 (optional notes especially for the NIV 2011 version)

The NIV 2011 translation of 2:5-9 consistently seeks to use inclusive language. In 2:6 the quote from Psalm 8 replaces “man” with “mankind”. The flow on from this change means that the “him” of verses 7 and 8 has been replaced by “them” and “their”. The same can be said of verse 6 which the NIV 2011 renders “the son of man” as “a son of man”. The original language is “the”. The result of such interpretative decisions is that we as readers are no longer able to tell when the author is speaking about “man” in general and when he is speaking about “the man”, Jesus. This becomes particularly important as we seek to interpret verse 8b.

