

## What is Your Plan? Hebrews 1-2

**INTRODUCTION:** The Preeminent Bible teacher **R.C. Sproul** - said that if he were thrown into prison and could only have one book of the bible with him it would be Hebrews. REASON - it is so rich, it covers the entire scope of the history of redemption as well as showing how Christ fulfills all of redemptive history.

Anytime we approach new study we typically spend the first sermon explaining **WHO** was the human author, **WHERE** was the author when he wrote the book, **WHO** was he writing to? **WHAT** were the circumstances that set the context for writing? *But when we comes to Hebrews we cannot be certain about the answer to any of those questions.*

We are forced to do some detective work and some educated guessing.

### **IN ORDER TO BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON 3 CRITERIA HAD TO BE MET:**

1. It had to be of **Apostolic Origin** - that is it was either penned by an Apostle or an Apostle signed off and granted permission for it to be penned. LUKE for example was not an Apostle but Luke worked closely with Paul and wrote under his Auspices.
2. It had to be **widely accepted** by the Christian community - So there were collections of letters and copies of letters in all of the various churches. The question that the early councils had to answer were - what letters have they ALL accepted as authoritative.
3. It had to **speak in concert** with previously accepted Christian truth.

HEBREWES - was included in the canon so it had to meet those criteria. While we don't know WHO wrote the book or their circumstances in writing it, we can be fairly certain of the group TO WHOM it was written.

**TO WHOM WAS HE WRITING?** When you consider the things he is dealing with in the book. There really is only one group that had these same issues they were dealing with.

In the Gospels - there were **two major groups** of Jews addressed.

- The **Pharisees** - They were the right wing of Judaism - they saw themselves as the defender of the OT.

- The **Sadducees** - They were the liberal of the Jewish community. They did not believe in supernatural, angels, resurrection, things like that. They were more interested in practical religion.

But there was another very prominent group in the first century Palestine that was not addressed at all in the Gospels - the **Essenes**. While the Pharisees saw themselves as the defenders of the law - the Essenes saw themselves as the preservers of revelation. It was the Essenes in the area of Qumran who preserved the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. Many believe that John the Baptist came out of the community of the Essenes.

**The Essenes believed God was going to send 2 Messiahs.** One a **priest** (religious leader), one a **King** (political leader). Then both messiah's would bow down to Michael the **Archangel**.

NOW - one argument that makes a lot of sense is that Hebrews is written to a group of Jews who had made some positive steps toward faith in Christ, but they were falling under the influence of this growing Essene community.

Hebrews is written to persuade them to go on with Christ as Lord rather than fall into this heretical understanding of the Essene community.

Whoever the human author is - it seems that he is schooled in Rhetoric and is a **POWERFUL** preacher.

Hebrews begin by employing a type of logical style of communication called an "**A fortiori Argument**". In Latin - "Argumentum a fortiori"

An A fortiori Argument is an argument that argues from the **lesser** to the **greater**.

**EXAMPLES:** Many Hebrews Rabbi's used the A Fortiori pattern in their teachings. Jesus frequently did so.

- **Matthew 6:26–29 (ESV)**

[<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?](#)

An A fortiori Argument

- [<sup>28</sup> And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.](#)

An A fortiori Argument

**Well Hebrews 1-2 is An A fortiori Argument.** And if you understand it - you will get the immense gravity of what the author is communicating.

**TEXT: Hebrews 1:1–2:4 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

“In these last days.” Think of God’s work in the world in 4 primary “acts”: Creation, Fall, Christ, Culmination. We are living in the final act. The last chapters of the book. What scripture calls the last days - they began at Pentecost and will end with New Heaven and New Earth. And in these last days, God’s final word to humanity is JESUS.

o This is going to be helpful when a Muslim or Mormon... Jesus was great, but the real message come from Joseph Smith or Mohammad. No, the last revelation period was Jesus—in these last days: the final act.

o What about Apostles, didn’t they write after Jesus? They were - “Witnesses,” not prophets. Not proclaiming further redemptive revelation - simply giving further clarity to who Jesus is and How he plans to save the world.

<sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> ***having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.***

Now keep in mind we said that it is a good possibility that this was written to combat the influence of the Essenes who believed that there would be two Messiahs (one political and one religious) who would both bow down to the ArcAngel Michael at the end of time.

Here the writer is saying - ***Jesus is far Superior to any Angel.*** Notice how he makes his case in verse 5 and following as he takes us on a tour of 7 OT passages that prove the superiority of Christ to Angels.

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?

This was a quote from Psalm 2 - Angels as a whole are called at times “sons” of God - in the sense that they are created by God. But no individual angel was ever

called THE Son of God.

Incidentally, Mormons believe that Jesus and Lucifer were brothers. But NEVER was Lucifer called God's Son, never Michael, never Gabriel - only Jesus was called the Son of God.

Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?

The quotation from **2 Samuel** where God is promising that a descendant (or son) of David will also be a SON of God.

<sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

This is a quote from **Psalm 97:7** - For the Jewish reader it was considered the greatest Blasphemy to worship someone other than God. Remember that is why Jesus was charged with Blasphemy and crucified because he claimed to be God. But here the writer says - *the Angels worship Jesus as God.*

<sup>7</sup> Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."

This is from **Psalm 104:4** - It is saying that Jesus actually created and empowered the Angels. So whoever Jesus is, he has the power to create this immensely powerful beings, angels, with his word.

<sup>8</sup> But of the Son he says, "Your throne, **O God**, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

This is from **Psalm 45** - It is an interesting statement - Both the **Subject** and the **Object** are identified as God. Your throne, O GOD is forever AND GOD has anointed you. How is that possible that God can anoint another person who is also GOD.

This is how the doctrine of the Trinity came into importance - the Bible never uses the word trinity. But it makes reference to three distinct personalities being GOD and it make it abundantly clear that there is ONLY ONE GOD. So the church at the council of Nicaea the early church defined the concept of Trinity with a series of affirmations and denials to clarify what was meant by the word.

<sup>10</sup> And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; <sup>11</sup> they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like

a garment, <sup>12</sup> like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

This is from **Psalm 102** - So the Angels have a beginning when they were created... but Christ is greater than the angels because he has no beginning or end.

<sup>13</sup> And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? <sup>14</sup> Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

This is from **Psalm 110** the most quoted psalm in the NT because it is all about the Deity of Christ.

So the Angels are great! We love the Angels... but they are partners with us as created beings like we are. They serve and worship Christ.

Now keep in mind in the Jewish understanding all of the words God spoke in the Old Testament were transmitted to prophets through Angels. The Angels were Heaven's postal service bringing messages to people from God.

**NOW - with all of that in mind look at verse 1 of chapter 2 -**

**Hebrews 2:** <sup>1</sup> Therefore

Because of this understanding Angels are awesome but Christ is infinitely more awesome...

<sup>1</sup> Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup> For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Occasionally, you will hear someone say - Boy I'm glad I don't live in the Old Testament times... back then God was so much tougher. Someone disobeys the Word of God the earth swallows them whole, the fire and brimstone falls from the sky... I'm glad we are in the New Testament time where God has really matured and settled down. Now God is more like a benevolent grandfather up in the sky....

Don't you see - the writer to the Hebrews is saying, "YOU'VE GOT IS ALL WRONG".

**This is his "A for-tiori Argument"**

He is saying, "if God dispensed Justice and Judgement to mankind when mankind failed to heed God's word as delivered through angels.... HOW MUCH MORE will God Judge a man who neglects his word as it came through His Son.

Verse 3 is perhaps the most important question you will ever have to answer - <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

**What is your plan?** Do you think that God will go easy on you?

**ILLUSTRATION:** If we see a small child pulling a worm to pieces we would say don't do that... it's cruel. But we wouldn't be appealed by it... you evil wicked little boy... we wouldn't lose sleep. If the child was torturing a cat would that not be worse? yes, In our scale of understanding a cat is a more noble animal. what if he was torturing a sibling?

**You see it is the dignity of the offended that determines the level of the crime.**

**ILLUSTRATION:** The issue is not **WHAT** sin you committed, but **WHO** you sinned against. Example: If I lie to my dog, that's bad and he may get frustrated.

- If I lie to my wife it's I may be sleeping in the dog house.
- If I lie to a Policeman I may get a ticket
- If I lie to a Judge I may go to jail
- If I lie to a Supreme Court Justice under oath – the penalty could be very, very severe.

**Why? It's not about WHAT sin you commit, it's about WHO you sin against.**

**Because of the GREATNESS of your SIN**

A Just and Holy God is Required by His Nature to Pour out a GREAT Judgement on you. The unmitigated wrath of God forever and ever and ever and ever and ever...

And it that from which Christ offers salvation - God saves you from God.

**God is your greatest threat, and God is your only hope.**

That is why salvation is so great - because sin was so great and judgement was so great... this is such a great salvation.

***NOW it has been offered and some of you are neglecting it... you haven't outright rejected it... but you haven't fully, completely, embraced it either.***

You comfortably have one foot in the church and another in the world and you are miserable. Enough Kingdom truth to make you miserable in the world... and enough worldliness to make you miserable in the church.

Hebrews raises the question to you this morning - **WHAT IS YOUR PLAN?** How do you plan to escape?

If God judged people who failed to heed His word through Angels.... how do you plan to escape his wrath if you neglect his Son?

The bible speaks of a day when earth and heaven will flee from the presence of the Lamb, but not a place was found for them... where will you hide? How will you escape? What is your plan?

**May I suggest a better plan - Psalm 2:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Pay homage to the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Stop neglecting this great salvation - embrace the son in this day of grace. He offers a treaty of peace written in blood - but he will not offer it forever.

The opportunity of a lifetime only exists in the lifetime of that opportunity - are you saved?