

When God Seems Distant (Hebrews 1)

What do you do when life is hard and God seems distant? When opposition is strong and pressure to walk away from faith is more attractive than ever? With artistic beauty and spiritual depth, Hebrews 1 announces that Jesus is everything God wants to say to us in human form. A voice to turn to and a portrait to carry with us – no matter what comes our way.

1. A voice to turn to (Hebrews 1:1-4)

The author (pastor) is concerned. He knows the church is under severe pressure and distress – and because of what they're experiencing, they're tempted to let go of Christ (abandon their faith).

VV1-4 highlights the superiority of what God has said/*IS still saying* through his Son Jesus.

- Jesus is the heir of all things.
- Jesus is the Artist/Architect of all things. (Creator) John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:16-17
- Jesus is the reflection of God's glory.
- Jesus is the exact imprint of God's nature. (He is God)
- Jesus upholds all things by his word. (Sustainer)
- Jesus has made purification for our sins. (Redeemer; once-for-all sacrifice)
- Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Majesty. (enthroned)

2. A portrait to carry with us (Hebrews 1:5-14)

Jewish tradition said angels delivered the Word of God (Torah) to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Deuteronomy 33:2

We're given a list of Old Testament passages proclaiming Jesus' superiority over angels. Imagine each passage as a "brushstroke" eventually leaving us with a portrait of Jesus:

V5 The first "brushstroke" is rooted in Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14.

V6 The second is rooted in Psalm 97:7 and Deuteronomy 32:43.

VV7-8 The third is in Psalm 45:6-7 where Jesus is called "God" and his kingdom will never end.

VV9-12 The fourth is in Psalm 102:25-27.

V13 A final "brushstroke" from Psalm 110:1 celebrates Jesus' "enthronement."

The point? Jesus is *far* superior to angels so don't shrink back, don't try to find answers to your hurt and pain by returning to inferior things (whatever they might be).

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Hebrews 1:1-4. "Hebrews" was written to a group of followers of Jesus tempted to "shrink back" and abandon their faith. What are some things you have been tempted to believe about God in your own suffering or trials?
2. The first verse claims that God has spoken. What does that tell us about God? How has he spoken "long ago and in many ways"? How is he speaking "in these last days"?
3. What are seven facts given about Jesus in VV2-4? What does each fact highlight about Jesus?
4. In times of suffering or difficulty, we can find ourselves listening to *other* voices; looking to inferior things to pacify the pain or distract us from the hurt. How does Hebrews 1:1-4 help us?
5. Read Hebrews 1:5-14. We're given a list of passages proclaiming Jesus' superiority over angels. We were encouraged to imagine each passage as a "brushstroke"; eventually leaving us with a portrait of Jesus. Describe what some of the "brushstrokes" say about Jesus.
6. What is the whole point of this list of Old Testament passages? What kind of "portrait" of Jesus does it leave us with and what are we supposed to do with it?
7. How did the Spirit use Hebrews 1 to encourage, guide or even correct you?

Pray for anyone in your House Group experiencing a time of suffering, doubt or trial of any kind.

Pray the "voice" and "portrait" found in Hebrews 1 will comfort them in ways no one else can – pray what God has spoken in Jesus will keep them from turning to inferior things to pacify their pain or distract them from the hurt. Spend time celebrating who Jesus is and what he's done.