

Group Study Outline

LAUNCHING

When you think about Jesus, what do you actually think ...? For example, during quiet moments in a communion service, what do you try to think about?

INTRO: *The big application of all we've seen so far in Hebrews comes in 3:1. In tonight's study, we want to think practically about how to 'consider Jesus'.*

QUESTIONS

In **2:5-9**, we think about the rule of Jesus over everything.

Does Jesus rule over everything? Where does it say that in these verses?

Does it look as if Jesus currently rules over everything? What looks as if it still has power in this world, despite the rule of Jesus?

What did Jesus do in this world that means he is qualified to rule over all?

If I say 'think about this Jesus who rules', what things from this passage could fill out our praise of Jesus?

Why would I be daft not to throw in my lot with this Jesus who'll rule over all?

In **2:10-18**, we think about Jesus made man (ie 'a little lower than angels').

On a large sheet of paper make a list of things that Jesus the Man does for us ... and in each case, ask what that phrase means (*cf p2-3 of these notes*)

Why is it so important for us that Jesus was 'made a little lower than angels'?

We don't often praise Jesus for his humanness: what things from this passage could we include to enlarge our understanding, and praise, of Jesus?

In **3:1-6**, we see how Jesus is both like, and unlike, Moses.

READ Numbers 12:1-9

What was the complaint of Aaron and Miriam?

What is God's reply to them?

How does Hebrews 3:1-6 use the central idea of 'faithful in all my house'?

So, in what ways is Jesus like Moses?

But we're also told that Jesus is not like Moses: how, according to 3:1-6?

Put these thoughts together: what does 3:1-6 tell us about Jesus?

Why is this Jesus/Moses comparison important for the first readers of *Hebrews*?

What might be a similar implication for us from this Jesus/Moses comparison?

In what ways do Christians today downplay God speaking to us through Jesus?

CONCLUSION

So, for those first readers of *Hebrews*, what would it mean to 'consider Jesus'? What are possible applications of that same point for us today so we don't drift?

Part of the remedy for not drifting from Jesus (2:1) will be filling our minds with these truths about Jesus. In our prayer time now, turn some of these great statements about Jesus into praise to him ... and in this way 'consider him'!

Hebrews 2:5-3:6



Theme of *Hebrews*

Hebrews is written because of an urgent problem: the readers are on the verge of apostasy. Apostasy is the opposite of conversion; it is 'falling away from' or 'throwing away' Christ (3:12; 4:11; 5:6; 10:35). That is the 'sin' in Hebrews, and the 'temptation' they face is 'drift' (2:1). But their drifting is surprisingly not into irreligion, but back into the Jewish faith from which they had converted.

The main argument (to warn them against this drift) is that in Jesus God has spoken his **final word** (chs 1-4) and completed a **finished work** (chs 5-9/10): why go back to the 'shadow' (cf 10:1)? All of *Hebrews*' dense theology is included to serve the main application of this 'word of exhortation' (13:22).

Theme Sentence for 2:5-3:6

Consider Jesus the Man who secures our future and is exalted to reign over all.

How this passage fits in

1:1-3:6 is one section with a single theme, summarised in 1:1-2. The previous ways in which God spoke to us have been superseded by the way he has spoken to us now by his Son. The 'at many times and in many ways ... by the prophets' is referring to the old covenant which was thought to have been delivered by angels to Moses at Mount Sinai ... so to establish (in ch 1-4) that what God has spoken to us through Jesus is 'superior', he must show how the Son is 'superior' to angels and to Moses.

The application throughout is 'pay closer attention to what we have heard' (2:1). What is it that we have heard? It is Jesus. (We're not talking about the verbal words Jesus spoke during his earthly ministry ... it is everything that he is that is God's word to us.) This is why the author keeps slipping from 'the word' to 'the work' of Jesus, for the message Jesus brings is God's work of salvation for us. 'The word' is all about 'the work' which is why 'the word' must be final if 'the work' is finished: what more is there that God would say to us since he has completed everything necessary to bring many sons to glory? To drift from what we have heard is to 'neglect such a great salvation' (2:1-3).

So the entire section leads up to the application in 3:1 'consider Jesus'. He is our 'apostle' (sent from God to bring God's **word** to us) and our 'high priest' (whose sacrificial **work** will take us to God). Consider him!

Application

- Consider Jesus!
- ... and then consider him some more!

Commentary

2:5-9

JESUS THE MAN WILL RULE OVER EVERYTHING IN THE FUTURE

The comparison between Jesus and angels (that began in 1:4) is still the main theme; it's almost as if 2:1-4 was a 'passing application' that interrupted that main point. The reference to 'the world to come' (2:5) links back to Psalm 110:1 quoted in 1:13. The world to come will be subjected to Jesus, not to angels. (And of course, the writer's overall topic 'of which we are speaking' [5], is that future world ... since we are 'in the last days' [1:2] and Jesus appeared 'at the end of the ages' [9:26] to 'bring many sons to glory' [2:10].)

The quotation from Psalm 8 emphasises:

- **Jesus as ruler** (2:7-8)

Jesus 'made a little lower than the angels' (7, 9) in his incarnation is now 'crowned with glory and honour' (7, 9) in his resurrection and ascension. He is exalted at the Father's right hand (1:3, 13) and the world to come is subject to him (2:5). BUT ... we still don't see all things subject to him (8). We believe that this is his position now, despite the fact that what we see, obviously, is that death still operates successfully in our world, even against Jesus' 'brothers' (11). The 'until' (1:13) refers to the delay between Jesus finishing his work/sitting down and the final revelation of his universal rule when his enemies will be made 'a footstall' (1:13; 2:8).

Nevertheless, Jesus' position, though not yet universally acknowledged, really is now one of supreme glory and honour. He has attained it because he was obedient unto death so that all peoples might be saved (9).

- **Jesus the man** (2:7, 9)

The comparison with angels now has a new emphasis: there is also a way in which Jesus is made lower than angels. The incarnation is an aspect of Jesus' obedient suffering. Psalm 8 in its original context refers to humankind in a pre-Fall state. Here in Hebrews, it's used to emphasise Jesus' full humanity. The writer will go on to show why the Son had to become man (10-18), which included the very-significant suffering death (9) to secure our salvation (3). So this bridges into verses 10-18 ...

2:10-18

JESUS THE MAN SECURES OUR FUTURE

The implications of Jesus' humanity are:

- **He was our Pioneer** (10)

The word 'founder' ('pioneer' NIV) means initiator and achiever. He is our leader who goes before his people leading them to heaven. He delivers God's sons.

- **He was qualified to save us** (10)

'Perfected' is an important, and technical, word in Hebrews. It's not referring to any moral or ethical improvement. Rather the idea is 'qualified'. Becoming a man, Jesus trod the path of obedient suffering all the way to the cross and then to glory, and so he is uniquely qualified to achieve his people's salvation.

- **He destroyed the devil** (14)

Jesus had to become 'flesh and blood' to destroy the devil. Why? Because of the promise of God in Gen 3:15 that it was an offspring of Eve who would destroy the serpent. Jesus, the ideal man of Psalm 8, is the representative Adam who can reverse the curses that were the consequence of the Fall.

- **He frees us from the fear of death** (15)

Jesus has tasted death for everyone (9). He has destroyed the devil who held the power of death. Because he is the great pioneer who leads the way, we need no longer be trapped by a fear of the future. We can be confident rather than fearful (- an important theme cf 3:1, 6; 4:14-16; 10:19-22; 12:18-24).

- **He is our priest** (17)

There is now explicit mention of the theme about which there will be much more to say (in ch 5-10). The important thing here is that to be our high priest, and so to make propitiation for our sins, Christ had to be fully human.

- **He is our help in temptation** (18)

The temptation Jesus faced was to give up (in Gethsemane cf 5:7-10), and resisting that temptation meant suffering (which is hinted at through the quotation from Psalm 22 in 2:12). That is why he can identify with his brothers who are also tempted to give up (10:32-39). But as our high priest bringing salvation (10) he is also able to help us so that we don't give up (4:14).

3:1-6

... SO, CONSIDER JESUS

It was widely thought that the Jewish law was delivered to Moses via angels (eg Acts 7:38, 53). So talking now about Moses is not a different subject from Jesus being superior to angels (1:4-2:9). This is still the comparison of 1:1-3 ... God speaking now through the Son is his completely sufficient final word.

Numbers 12:1-9 is an essential cross-reference (- *so look it up!*). Miriam and Aaron have challenged Moses about where it is that God speaks to his people. God's answer to them is that there is something qualitatively superior in his revelation through Moses compared to that through other means/prophets. (And, of course, all of this is strikingly similar to Hebrews 1:1-3.) Why does God reveal himself differently to Moses? because 'he is faithful in all my house'.

That is the phrase now repeated in Hebrews 3:2, 5. The point is that Jesus is ...

- like Moses: he too is 'faithful over God's house' (6). So we should trust God speaking to us through Jesus as much as we would trust God speaking through Moses (and superior to other ways in which God has spoken);
- unlike Moses: he is a 'Son' and not just a 'servant' (5-6). So we should give even more weight and attention to God speaking to us through Jesus (3).

The application is simple (for this passage, as for the whole section 1:1-3:6): 'consider Jesus' (1). And 'consider' (or 'fix your thoughts on' [NIV]) is another way of saying 'listen to' what God 'has spoken to us by his Son' (1:2; 2:1). Do not seek for other words from God (not even those he himself spoke in the old covenant), for God has spoken a superior and all-sufficient word in his Son.

The next question is: what does it mean to listen? And 3:7ff will now explain ...