Hebrews Study Notes Section 1: Introduction

Passage: Hebrews 1:1-4

Question 1: Are there any important background items to consider?

- **The audience:** Jewish Christians, who were facing intense hardship because they had publicly identified with Christ.
  - **They lived during the time of the apostles: Hebrews 2:3-4**
  - **They were very familiar with the sacrificial system:**
    - **He talks about the priesthood with the assumption of prior knowledge: Hebrews 7:5**
    - **He talks about the sacrificial system with the assumption of prior knowledge: Hebrews 9:13-14**
    - **He talks about the tabernacle with the assumption of prior knowledge: Hebrews 9:2-5**
  - **They experienced persecution:**
    - **Hebrews 13:3**
    - **Hebrews 10:32-34**
- **The timing of this epistle:** Written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
  - **The Priesthood seemed to be active:**
    - **Hebrews 8:4-5**
    - **Hebrews 10:3**
    - **Hebrews 10:11**
  - **Judgment on that system seemed immanent:**
    - **Hebrews 8:13**
    - **Hebrews 10:25**
    - **Hebrews 10:27**
    - **Hebrews 10:37**
    - **Hebrews 13:13-14**
    - **Luke 23:28**
    - **Acts 2:40**
  - **The church seemed to be well established with second generation Christians present:**
    - **They heard the gospel from the apostles: Hebrews 2:3-4**
    - **They were second or third generation Christians who were under pastoral care: Hebrews 13:17**
    - **They had been Christians long enough that they should have been capable of teaching and becoming church leaders: Hebrews 5:12**
  - **The individuals mentioned in the book by name were prominent figures during that pre-70 AD period:**
    - **Hebrews 13:23**

        - **Hebrews 13:24**
- **The circumstances prompting the letter:** Some Jewish Christians under these intense pressures were becoming weary and considered turning back to Judaism as a pragmatic resolution to their difficult circumstances.
    - **Don't slip: Hebrews 2:1**
    - **Don't become hardened: Hebrews 3:12-13**
    - **Don't become dull of hearing: Hebrews 5:11-14**
    - **Don't be slothful: Hebrews 6:11-12**
    - **Don't forsake the church: Hebrews 10:25**
    - **Don't cast away your confidence: Hebrews 10:35**
    - **Don't become wearied: Hebrews 12:3**
    - **Don't become bitter: Hebrews 12:12-15**
- **The basic thrust of the letter:** Because Christ is the highest and final revelation of the Father and His priesthood and sacrifice provide the only sufficient basis for salvation, abandoning Him would be spiritually disastrous and unthinkable. We must willingly endure hardship and hold fast to our public profession no matter what it might cost us.

Question 2: Where does this section fit into the flow of the argument of the book?

- **The basic arrangement of the book:**
    - **Section 1: Christ the Son: God's final revelation in Christ is superior to former effective forms of revelation: 1:1-4:13**
    - **Section 2: Christ the High Priest: Christ's priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood: 4:14-10:18**
    - **Section 3: Christ the King: Since these principles are true, you must endure difficulty and live as a faithful Christian: 10:19-13:25**
- **The specific flow of this section:**
    - **Section 1: Christ the Son: God's final revelation in Christ is superior to former effective forms of revelation: 1:1-4:13**
        - **Superior to the prophets: 1:1-4**
        - **Superior to the angels: 1:5-2:18**
        - **Superior to Moses: 3:1-6**
        - **Warning: Do not be like the wilderness generation: 3:7-4:11**
        - **Fact: God's word exposes the heart: 4:12-13**
- **Where this text fits in the immediate context:**
    - **Our text introduces the first section:** God's revelation through Christ is superior to His revelation through the prophets of the past.

Question 3: What is the structure of this section?

- **The supremacy of the Son's revelatory function in history: 1:1-2a** "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son…"
- **The supremacy of the Son's inherent eternal nature: 1:2b-3a** "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power…"
- **The supremacy of the Son's redemptive work: 1:3b-4** "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they…"

Question 4: Are there any significant terms or phrases to investigate?

- **Interesting note:** This section is one sentence in the Greek text.
  - **"At sundry times and in divers manners"**
  - **"Spake in times past" vs. "Spoken in these last days"**
  - **"Appointed heir of all things"**
  - **"By whom also he made the worlds"**
  - **"Being the brightness of his glory"**
  - **"The express image of his person"**
  - **"Upholding all things by the word of his power…"**
  - **"By himself purged our sins"**
  - **"Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"**
  - **"Being made so much better than the angels…by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they"**

Question 5: What is the basic argument the writer is making to his audience?

- Christ is inherently greater than all the prophets and the angels.

Question 6: What argument should I make to my audience?

- Since Christ is inherently greater that all the prophets and the angels, we need to understand who He is, and worship Him as God.

Question 7: How do these arguments relate to the gospel?

- It is impossible to have salvation without the miracle of the incarnation.
- Christ must be the eternal God to accomplish our salvation.
- Christ must take on full humanity to accomplish our salvation.

- He is the eternal God who took on human flesh and through His once and for all sacrifice, we can have redemption.
- That work is done and all creation rightly belongs to Him.

Question 8: How will I present this passage?

- **The supremacy of the Son's revelatory function in history: 1:1-2a** "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son…"
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