

Life Application Notes

JESUS > – 1st October 2017

Speaker: Pete Clayton

Scripture: Hebrews 1

Introduction

This Sunday was the first in this season's sermon series preaching through the Letter to the Hebrews. This series is going to focus on the many things that Jesus is greater than, and Pete eruditely began with the message that Jesus is great, very great, and the greatest.

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Start by asking: Who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews?

Whilst it's unclear who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews, it has traditionally been associated with the apostle Paul, though both ancient and modern scholarship suggests it was more likely written by one of Paul's close followers, such as Apollos.

Ask: Why do we think this epistle was written?

As Pete said on Sunday, this epistle was written at a time (ca. 63 AD) when the Church was under a great deal of persecution at the hands of Nero. In the same way that the Israelites had pined for the watered valleys of Egypt when wandering the desert, first century converts from Judaism to Christianity were beginning to wonder if it was really worth it – non-Christian Jews weren't experiencing the same level of persecution, and these Christians wondered whether they could avoid this suffering if they stopped loudly proclaiming that Jesus is Lord. *Brief aside: Are we ever tempted to water down the Gospel to make our lives easier?* Judging from the text, it also appears that many of the Christians this was written to had started to worship angels, or possibly thought that Jesus was merely an angel. The author of this letter wanted these Christians not to fall into any of these three traps. He wanted them to understand the importance of Jesus, and only Jesus, to the Gospel – without Jesus, there is no hope for mankind; with him, who can stand against us? As we'll see over the coming months, the theme of this letter, perhaps more than any other, is the centrality of Christ and the unique roles he should play in Christian life.

*Terms like supremacy and sovereignty are likely to come up again and again during this series. What do we mean by the supremacy and sovereignty of God? Is Jesus supreme and sovereign? Can anybody think of Bible verses that demonstrate that? (If you get stuck: **Hebrews 1**; Romans 8:31-39; Colossians 1:15-20; **2:9** Revelation 1:12-18; **19:11-16**)*

Greatness: In God's own words — Job 38-42

Depending on your group, you may need to provide more context about the book of Job. The book of Job is often used as a demonstration of the sovereignty and greatness of God; in particular, in the last five chapters God turns up and speaks to Job and his unhelpful friends from inside of a whirlwind. Don't worry, I'm not going to make you read all five chapters, although they're well worth it if you still need a reason to worship God later! However, it might be helpful to hear a powerful illustration of God's greatness in his own words:

Read together Job 38:1-21

On Sunday Pete spoke about the sheer magnitude and power of the stars in the sky as one example of the greatness of God. God himself uses this same example later in the chapter (vv. 31-33). Similarly, many of the pictures in these chapters are often used in worship songs we might sing on Sundays. (In particular, *Indescribable* by Chris Tomlin.)

What does this passage tell us about our position relative to God, and our relationship with him (ignoring the role of Jesus, for now)? What does the fact that God even deigns to give Job a response tell us about God?

In the passage we just read, God was making it clear that Job lacked any sort of wisdom necessary to question God or his actions. After this, God then rebukes Job a second time, but in this case he questions Job's mighty power.

Read together Job 40:6-14

Verse 14 is particularly interesting. What is the implication of this verse? If Job, who is described as "blameless and upright" in Chapter 1 cannot save himself, what hope do we have?

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This, conveniently, brings us back to Chapter 1 of the Letter to the Hebrews. Verse 3: "After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high".

Same question: If we are not mighty enough to save ourselves, what hope do we have?

Pete, in particular, noted the tense of this sentence. *What does the tense tell us?* This is why the greatness and might of Jesus matter so much to us; this is why so many of our worship songs talk about it. Verse 8: "But of the Son he says,

'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever.

the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom.'"

What does the supremacy and sovereignty of Jesus that we spoke about earlier guarantee us as Christians?

On Sunday, we ended the service with worship. This seems like a natural response.

Worship Jesus!