

The Book of Hebrews, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 1: God Has Spoken by His Son

Hebrews 1:1-14

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This opening lesson sets the foundation for the entire letter, and the doctrine at stake is the deity and supremacy of Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews stacks claim upon claim and quotation upon quotation to establish one truth: the Son is fully God, eternal, the Creator and sustainer of all things, worshiped by angels, and seated at the Father's right hand. This matters because every error about Jesus begins by making Him smaller than He is. Arius in the fourth century taught that the Son was a created being, the first and highest of God's works but not truly God. The modern Jehovah's Witnesses teach a similar idea, identifying Jesus with the archangel Michael, a created spirit. Hebrews 1 dismantles that error directly, especially in verses 6, 8, and 10, where the Son is worshiped, addressed as God, and named as the Creator who laid the foundation of the earth. Help your class see that these are not abstract arguments. They are the difference between worshiping the true Christ and a counterfeit.

At the same time, this passage was never meant only to settle a debate. It was written to steady the hearts of weary believers who were tempted to drift. The writer knows that people do not endure for a Savior they think is small. So he lifts their eyes. The same Son who upholds the universe by the word of His power is the one who made purification for their sins and now reigns for them. Sound doctrine here is meant to produce courage, worship, and perseverance.

So aim at both targets this week. Send your students home able to defend the deity of Christ from the text itself, and send them home moved, marveling that this glorious Son stooped to cleanse them and now intercedes for them at the Father's right hand. The goal is not merely that they know Jesus is great, but that they love and trust the Jesus who is this great.

Question 1

Student Question:

In verses 2 and 3, the writer makes several claims about the Son: He is heir of all things, the one through whom God made the world, the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of His nature, the one who upholds the universe, and the one who made purification for sins. What do these descriptions together teach you about who Jesus actually is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin by slowing the class down so they feel the weight of each phrase. The writer is not being poetic for its own sake. He is making a series of deliberate claims that, taken together, can only describe one who is fully divine. Heir of all things places the Son as the rightful owner of everything that exists. The one through whom God made the world identifies Him as the agent of creation, echoing John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16.

The phrase radiance of God's glory pictures the Son as light that streams from light, of the same essence as its source, not a separate or lesser thing. The phrase exact imprint of His nature uses the image of a seal pressed into wax, leaving a perfect and complete impression. The point is that the Son is the precise expression of God's own being. To see Him is to see the Father, as Jesus Himself said in John 14:9.

Then notice the movement in verse 3. The cosmic Son who upholds the universe by the word of His power is the same Son who made purification for sins. The writer joins the largest possible claim to the most personal possible gift. The one who sustains every atom also dealt with your guilt. Help the class feel that these are not competing truths but one glorious truth.

Finally, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In the old tabernacle there were no chairs, because the priest's work was never finished. The Son sits because His work of purification is complete and because He now reigns. This single verse moves from creation to cross to throne, and every step of it assumes that the Son is God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The full deity of Christ, taught through His role as Creator, sustainer, and exact imprint of God's nature.
- The eternal Sonship of Christ, distinct in person from the Father yet sharing the divine nature.
- The finished work of purification for sins, pictured by the Son sitting down.
- The unity of Christ's cosmic majesty and His personal saving love.
- The deity of Christ as the foundation on which the rest of Hebrews stands.

Discussion Prompts

- Which of these descriptions of the Son is most difficult for you to truly believe when life is hard, and why?
- How does it change your prayer life to know that the One who upholds the universe also dealt personally with your sin?
- If a friend said Jesus was simply a great teacher, how would you use verse 3 to respond?

Question 2

Student Question:

The Son is described as the radiance of God's glory and the exact imprint of His nature, which means that when you look at Jesus you are seeing the very character of God. What is one way your picture of God's character would change if you let Jesus, and not your fears or your past, define it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the first of the self-examining questions, and the goal is gentle honesty, not guilt. Many people carry a distorted image of God, often shaped by a harsh parent, a painful church experience, or their own shame. They picture God as distant, impatient, or hard to please. This question invites them to let the face of Jesus correct that picture.

Lead the class to the logic of the text. If the Son is the exact imprint of God's nature, then the tenderness Jesus showed to sinners, the patience He showed to the slow, and the welcome He gave to the outsider are not exceptions to God's character. They are the revelation of it. God is not different behind Jesus' back. Jesus is what God has always been like.

Be ready to name the gap many feel between the God they fear and the Jesus they read about in the Gospels. Encourage students to bring one specific fear into the light and ask whether the Jesus of Scripture confirms it or contradicts it. The aim is for them to leave with a truer and warmer vision of God grounded in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The knowability of God through Jesus Christ, who reveals the Father.
- The danger of letting fear, shame, or past wounds define our picture of God instead of Christ.
- The pastoral comfort that God's character is fully and faithfully expressed in Jesus.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific belief about God that you would need to revise if you took Jesus as the true picture of His heart?
- Where did your present picture of God come from, and is it shaped more by Scripture or by experience?
- How might seeing God clearly in Christ change the way you come to Him in prayer this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Verse 3 says that after He made purification for sins, the Son sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. What is the significance of the fact that He sat down, and what does that posture tell you about the completeness of His work?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question opens one of the central themes of the whole letter, so handle it richly. Under the old covenant the priests stood day after day, offering the same sacrifices that could never take away sins, as Hebrews 10:11 will later say. There was no chair in the holy place because the work was never done. The blood of bulls and goats could cover but never finally cleanse.

When the writer says the Son sat down, he is announcing that the work is finished. The sacrifice has been offered once for all. There is nothing left to add, because nothing is lacking. This is the gospel posture. The Son does not stand anxiously, repeating an unfinished task. He sits, because purification has been made.

Help the class connect this to their own assurance. Many believers live as though they must keep adding to the work of Christ, as if their guilt were never quite dealt with. The seated Son says otherwise. At the same time, guard against the misunderstanding that nothing is asked of us. The Son sitting down speaks of the sufficiency of His sacrifice, while the rest of Hebrews will

make clear that we are called to draw near, hold fast, and remain faithful. His finished work is the ground of our ongoing faithfulness, not a substitute for it.

The phrase at the right hand also signals royal authority. The Son is not only the priest who finished the sacrifice but the King who now reigns. Psalm 110, which the writer will return to, stands behind this image. The crucified Savior is the enthroned Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The once-for-all completeness of Christ's sacrifice, pictured by His sitting down.
- The contrast between the standing Levitical priests and the seated Son.
- The present reign of Christ at the right hand of God, fulfilling Psalm 110.
- The assurance that flows from a finished work, balanced by the call to ongoing faithfulness.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the image of the seated Son speak to a believer who fears their sin is never fully forgiven?
- Why is it important that Christ both finished His sacrifice and now reigns as King?
- What is the difference between resting in a finished work and presuming on it?

Question 4

Student Question:

The passage moves from the vastness of the Son who upholds the universe to the intimacy of the Son who cleansed your sins. Where in your life right now do you most need to remember that the One who holds the galaxies together also holds you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the truth of the passage into the student's present circumstances. The writer deliberately joins the cosmic and the personal in verse 3, and that combination is meant to be a comfort. The same power that sustains creation is committed to the person who trusts the Son.

Encourage students to be specific. A vague sense that God is in control is easy to affirm and easy to forget. Naming the actual worry, the strained relationship, the health scare, the financial pressure, allows the truth to do its work. The point is not to minimize the difficulty but to set it next to the greatness of Christ.

Be sensitive here. Some in the class may be carrying heavy burdens. The goal is not to scold them for worrying but to lift their eyes to the One who is both strong enough and near enough to carry them. The God who upholds the universe is not too busy for them, and not too distant to care.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The providence and sustaining power of Christ over all creation.
- The personal nearness of Christ to the individual believer.

- Trust in God's strength applied to specific, present anxieties.

Discussion Prompts

- What specific situation feels too big for you right now, and how does this passage speak to it?
- Why do we so easily believe God is powerful in general but doubt He is near in particular?
- What would change this week if you truly believed the Sustainer of the universe was holding you?

Question 5

Student Question:

In verses 4 through 14 the writer piles up Old Testament quotations to show that the Son is far greater than the angels. Why do you think the writer works so hard to establish that the Son is superior to angels, and what is at stake if we get this wrong?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Give the class some background. In the first century, angels were held in extraordinarily high regard. The law was understood to have been delivered through angels, as Hebrews 2:2 and Galatians 3:19 note. Some were tempted to venerate angels or to see them as mediators. For the writer to exalt the Son above the angels is to make the strongest possible statement about who Jesus is.

The string of quotations is carefully chosen. No angel was ever called God's Son in the sense of verse 5. No angel was ever commanded to be worshiped, as the Son is in verse 6. Angels are servants and messengers, winds and flames, as verse 7 says, while the Son is addressed as God on an eternal throne in verse 8. The contrast could not be sharper.

What is at stake is the uniqueness and supremacy of Christ. If the Son is merely the greatest of created beings, then He is one mediator among others, and the door is open to placing trust in angels, saints, or other intermediaries. By establishing that the Son is in a category entirely His own, the writer secures the truth that we come to God through Christ alone.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The supremacy of Christ over all created beings, including angels.
- The danger of angel veneration or seeking mediators other than Christ.
- The unique mediatorship of Jesus between God and humanity.
- The careful use of Old Testament Scripture to establish New Testament truth.

Discussion Prompts

- Why might first-century readers have been tempted to give angels too high a place?
- In what subtle ways do people today look for mediators or helpers in place of Christ alone?
- How does the supremacy of Christ give you confidence in approaching God?

Question 6

Student Question:

Verse 14 describes angels as ministering spirits sent out to serve those who are to inherit salvation. How does it change the way you face an ordinary, difficult week to know that the unseen world is at work on behalf of God's people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves from doctrine to daily life. Having shown that angels are servants and not objects of worship, the writer reveals their assigned task: they are sent out to serve those who are to inherit salvation. That is a stunning thought. The same angels who stand in God's presence are dispatched on behalf of ordinary believers.

Encourage the class to hold this truth with both confidence and restraint. Scripture does not invite us to focus on angels, to speak to them, or to build our faith around them. But it does assure us that we are not alone and unguarded in the world. There is an unseen ministry at work for the people of God.

Apply this to the texture of an ordinary week. The believer who feels overlooked, who serves quietly, who battles discouragement, is surrounded by more than they can see. The point is not to chase signs but to gain courage. We walk through a contested world, but heaven is engaged on our behalf.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The biblical role of angels as servants of God and helpers of His people.
- The proper place of angels in the believer's thinking, neither ignored nor worshiped.
- Courage and comfort drawn from the unseen ministry of God on our behalf.

Discussion Prompts

- How does it steady you to know that the unseen world is engaged on behalf of God's people?
- Why is it important to honor what Scripture says about angels without becoming preoccupied with them?
- Where this week could you walk more courageously, remembering you are not alone?

Question 7**Student Question:**

In verse 5 God says to the Son, You are my Son, today I have begotten you, and in verse 6 He commands, Let all God's angels worship him. What do these words tell you about the unique relationship between the Father and the Son?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Take care to explain the word begotten, because it is easily misunderstood. It does not mean that the Son had a beginning or was created at a point in time. In Scripture begotten language speaks of a unique relationship of nature and love, an only Son who shares the Father's very

being. The quotation from Psalm 2 was applied to the enthronement of the King, and the writer applies it to the Son's exaltation and eternal standing.

The decisive word comes in verse 6: Let all God's angels worship him. Worship belongs to God alone. The first commandment and the consistent witness of Scripture forbid worshiping any creature. When God Himself commands the angels to worship the Son, He places the Son on the divine side of the line that separates Creator from creation.

Help the class see the relationship this reveals. The Father and the Son are distinct persons. The Father speaks to the Son and about the Son. Yet the Son receives the worship due to God. This is the heart of the biblical revelation: one God, eternally existing as Father, Son, and Spirit, with the Son fully sharing the Father's divine nature.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The eternal Sonship of Christ, not a created or temporal origin.
- The proper meaning of begotten as relationship of nature, not a beginning in time.
- The worship of the Son as proof of His full deity.
- The distinction of persons between Father and Son within the one God.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it important to understand that begotten does not mean created?
- What does it tell us about Jesus that the Father commands the angels to worship Him?
- How does the relationship between the Father and the Son shape the way we pray and worship?

Question 8

Student Question:

The Son did not cling to His glory but made purification for your sins at infinite cost to Himself. When you consider that He stooped this low for you, what is one specific attitude or habit He might be inviting you to lay down in response?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the doctrine of Christ's condescension into a call for personal response. The Son who upholds the universe humbled Himself to deal with our sin. That movement downward, from the throne to the cross, is the pattern that reshapes the believer's heart.

Invite the class to consider what they are clinging to that He let go of. He released His glory for a season; we cling to our pride, our grudges, our need to be right, our comfort. The contrast is meant to soften and humble us. Gratitude, not guilt, is the engine of this change.

Press for one specific thing. A general resolution to be more like Jesus rarely changes a life. But naming one habit, one attitude, one held grievance, and laying it down in response to His sacrifice, is the beginning of real formation. The cross is not only what saves us but what shapes us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The condescension of Christ as the pattern for Christian humility.
- Gratitude for the cross as the motive for transformation, not mere duty.
- The call to lay down pride, resentment, and self-protection in response to Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific attitude the Lord may be asking you to lay down in light of His humility?
- Why is gratitude a stronger motive for change than guilt?
- How does meditating on the cost of the cross reshape your daily choices?

Question 9

Student Question:

In verses 8 through 12 the Father Himself addresses the Son with words no creature could ever receive: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and, You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. Some teach that Jesus is a created being, a lesser god, or the highest of the angels. Using this passage, how would you show from the text that the Son is fully God, eternal, unchanging, and worthy of worship?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, so give it the most time. Lead the class carefully through the text itself, because the strength of the answer is that it comes straight from the words God speaks to the Son. In verse 8 the Father addresses the Son directly: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The Father calls the Son God. No created being is ever addressed this way. This single line answers the claim that Jesus is merely a lesser or created god.

In verses 10 through 12 the Father continues, quoting Psalm 102, a passage originally addressed to the LORD, the eternal God of Israel: You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain. The created order had a beginning and will wear out like a garment, but the Son remains the same and His years have no end. The Son is here placed on the Creator's side of the line, not the creature's. He made the heavens; He is not part of them.

This passage directly answers the ancient error of Arius and the modern teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses, both of which make the Son a created being. The text will not allow it. A creature cannot be the Creator of all things. A created being cannot be unchanging and eternal, the same yesterday and forever. A creature cannot be addressed as God and worshiped by angels. Every divine attribute the writer can name, eternity, immutability, creatorship, and the right to worship, he applies to the Son.

Show the class how to handle this graciously. The goal is not to win an argument but to honor Christ and to guard the gospel. When someone teaches that Jesus is the archangel Michael or a lesser god, the kindest and clearest response is to open this chapter and let the Father's own words about the Son speak. If the Father calls the Son God and commands the angels to worship Him, then to make the Son less than God is to contradict the Father.

Finally, draw the worship out of the doctrine. This is not a cold proof. The eternal, unchanging Creator is the very one who made purification for our sins. The more clearly we see His deity, the more fully we will trust Him and adore Him. Sound teaching here should end not in pride at having argued well, but in wonder that such a God would save us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The full deity of Christ, with the Father directly calling the Son God in verse 8.
- The eternity and immutability of the Son, who remains the same while creation wears out.
- The Son as Creator of heaven and earth, placing Him on the Creator's side, not the creature's.
- A clear, scriptural answer to Arianism and to the Jehovah's Witness teaching that Jesus is a created being or an angel.
- The worship of the Son as the necessary response to His deity.
- The pastoral aim of letting sound doctrine lead to deeper worship, not merely winning debates.

Discussion Prompts

- How does it strengthen your faith that the Father Himself calls the Son God?
- Why can a created being never be the eternal, unchanging Creator described in verses 10 through 12?
- How can we lovingly and clearly answer a friend who has been taught that Jesus is a created being?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter. The writer wants you to walk away seeing Jesus more clearly and loving Him more deeply. Name one specific way that seeing the greatness of the Son in this passage is reshaping how you will live, worship, or trust Him this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question gathers the whole lesson and asks for a personal, concrete response. Resist letting the answers stay general. The aim of Hebrews 1 is not merely accurate belief but transformed affection and renewed trust. A clear vision of the greatness of Christ should change something.

Encourage students to connect the doctrine to a specific area: how they will worship on the Lord's Day with fresh wonder, how they will face a hard situation trusting the One who upholds all things, or how they will lay down a sin in gratitude for the One who made purification for it. The form of the response matters less than its concreteness.

Close the class by returning to the heart of the chapter. God has spoken, and His final word is His Son. To see that Son rightly is to be changed by Him. Send students home not only convinced that Jesus is great, but warmed and steadied by it, ready to hold fast to Him as the rest of the letter will urge.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The movement from right doctrine about Christ to transformed living and worship.
- Personal, concrete application as the goal of studying the greatness of Christ.
- Perseverance and trust grounded in a clear vision of the Son.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the single most important truth about Jesus you are taking from this chapter?
- How will that truth change one specific thing this week?
- How can the greatness of Christ help you hold fast when faith feels costly?