

JESUS IS BETTER!
(The Book of Hebrews)

{DPa} "No turning back"

Those 3 words mark the 'refrain' of a 19th century hymn that later was made popular by the Billy Graham Crusades: **{SONG – 12 secs}**

"I have decided to Follow Jesus – No turning back, no turning back."

The lyrics recount the final words of a man from India.

When the Hindu village chief called this man to renounce his new Christian faith or lose his life **{DPc}** the man replied, *"I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back."*

So the chief signalled for his execution. The missionary who led this man to Jesus, who put the man's words to music, recounts that right before his execution, the man sang **{DP}**

"The Cross before me, the world behind me – no turning back."

Wow. History grounds those lyrics in profound meaning.

"No turning back" – a 3-word phrase that I **almost** chose as my summary phrase for the whole book of Hebrews.

You see the book of Hebrews was written to Christians who in many different ways, had to count the cost of following Jesus . . . who were very **tempted** to "turn back".

"Turn back" to **what?**

To Judaism, the Old Covenant **{DP}** ceremonial law/ritual, to turn back to "**shadows** and turn away from the **substance**, which is Christ.

Why were they tempted so?

Historical Context for the Book of Hebrews will help us here.

We don't exactly know who wrote Hebrews since it has no introductory paragraph of greetings (salutations) that was typical for an "epistle" or Greco-Roman Letter.

In fact, it is structured more like a sermon – and in the last chapter, the author almost considers it a sermon, calling his letter a "word of exhortation": **{DP}**

"Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly." (13:22)

What we do know: the original recipients of the Book of Hebrews were primarily **Jewish Christians**, Jews who embraced Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ . . . or at least "professed" faith in Christ.

Hebrews is the NT letter with the most OT links, and the author *assumes* the readers were very familiar with all of them.

Now let's consider a hypothetical story revealing *REASONS* they'd be tempted to turn back AND re. relevance, listen up for *temptations* that are the same for Gentile Christians today!

Simeon sat reflecting on his day, his menial task of stacking fruits & veggies, and how his employer – a rough bloke named Brutus – once again turned from counting the money to ridicule Simeon, throwing rotten figs at him: *"Here, Christian! Improve your cannibalistic diet with a bit of fruit!"* Laughter amongst the co-workers hung in the air with the fruit flies. *"Cannibals?!"* Simeon shook his head, *"O how they misunderstand the Lord's Supper! But they won't even listen to me."*

The verbal jabs struck deep, and each time Simeon “turned the other cheek”, emotional fatigue sunk deeper – taking its toll on his soul.

He remembered first coming to Christ years ago! He thought his *joy in salvation* would never be broken! Emmanuel – God with us, taking on flesh in Jesus the Messiah! Taking on our sin! Simeon thought he would always *feel the presence of God*.

He had been told about the cost of following the Messiah, but somehow his experience was different than he expected. His own ***father***, ruler of the local Jewish synagogue, had been one of the most outspoken opponents of the Christians. When young Simeon converted to Christianity, the old man nearly died, declaring his own son “dead to him” in a public shouting match that ended in tears.

Decades later, Simeon remembered with fondness the traditions of the synagogue, and the Temple with its grand visual reminders of his sins & God’s forgiveness – the curtain barrier to the Most Holy Place, the animals sacrificed for him, in front of him! And the joy, the pomp & circumstance of the great festivals of the Jewish calendar.

Simeon deeply missed some of his traditions—bur even more so he missed his family, especially, when they’d pass by him on the street, without a single word, treating him like a Gentile!

Simeon was all too familiar with hostility from Jews . . . but now it was spreading to Gentiles, too – his workplace, his neighbourhood!

In recent months abuse of Christians was escalating with the amused approval of the emperor himself. More and more, Christians were having their property confiscated, were losing their trade license, were being thrown in jail.

Simeon had been taught that the Lord, the righteous Judge, would vindicate His new covenant people. Did not the Scriptures speak of the Messiah saying that God would put “*all things in subjection under His feet*”? But the church was taking a beating, and then some! Discouragement was growing amidst members of its various house-groups . . . questioning whether Christ was really in control. Some, in their disillusionment, left the church altogether, walked away from Jesus.

For the past two week Simeon failed to gather for worship with his brother & sisters in Christ, as his ***motivation*** was just . . . lacking. Bitterness & loneliness closed in around him like a dark, damp blanket.

But this night, he heard the rumour of a new letter arriving – to be read to the believers meeting for evening worship and encouragement. With his curiosity aroused, and he decided to walk over and meet with his brothers & sisters in Christ. As he entered the room, he was greeted by others who looked somewhat worn & dejected.

When old Joseph arrived with the other leaders, He unrolled the first part of the scroll. And with a twinkle in his eye, he said, “I believe you will find this quite relevant and I hope, inspiring”. He started to read from the scroll,

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son . . .”¹

Did you catch a whole host of reasons these Jewish Christians were tempted to shrink back from Jesus and turn back to Moses and Judaism?

Let’s list just a few reasons, and consider how the principles/temptations apply just as much to **TODAY** and many Gentile Christians! **{DP}**

1] Cultural & Religious Traditions are strong pulls.

¹ I’ve substantially adapted & modified an illustration from George Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC series commentary).

Who doesn't miss the **fond** traditions of their childhood? – regardless of what sort!

Even converts from atheism have fond "traditions". . . like *Sunday morns* being for surfing, or the morning markets for great shopping deals, or for sleeping until noon. Hard to let go of!

It is particularly hard to let go **religious** traditions that are very *visual, visceral, tactile* in experience . . . any religion.

Just imagine the vibe, the buzz of millions of Muslims gathering at Mecca in Pilgrimage.

Even more so, Hinduism's Holi/Phagwah Festival **{DP}** with all its colours.

It's spreading like *wildfire* in the West. Likely seen it on many commercials here. It would be hard to let go of that experience, yet it's tied in directly with the worship of the Hindu God Vishnu – there can be no turning back to that.

It's the smells & bells, the incense & candles, the liturgy, a sensory "sense" of the divine that lures some Evangelicals to turn to *Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy* – both deny salvation by Grace alone through Faith alone in Christ alone!

We cannot give up the Gospel for Gut feeling!

The Old Covenant had similar senses – Feasts, like Tabernacles – an annual remembrance of God's wilderness provision – when Israel gathered making/living in tents for a week, & with its incense, it waving of palm branches – like a sanctified version of Woodstock!

As Simeon recalled in the story earlier, in the Old Covenant, you'd lay your hand on the animal that was being sacrificed for you, a symbol transferring your sin. That's impactful!

But on a timeline, on this side of Calvary, after Jesus' crucifixion, to sacrifice an animal to atone for your sins would be to spit on Jesus, or as the author of Hebrews put it, to "trample underfoot the Son of God, and treat as unholy the blood of His covenant" (Heb 10:29)

We cannot give up the substance for shadows! Traditions must bow to Jesus.

2] Economic Costs & Discrimination {DPa}

From 60AD onwards, discrimination & persecution of Christians was on the rise.

Heb 10 describes Christians having their property plundered, some being thrown in prison. Most Christians were **poor**. Roman politicians realised this "offshoot" from Judaism called 'Christianity', had become a DISTINCT religion, since most Jews **rejected** Jesus as the Christ.

Only *Judaism* **{DPb}** had *legal exemption* from certain demands like 'Caesar worship.'

By the 80s AD, failure to confess Caesar as Lord at his altar meant having your license to trade revoked. That's likely what Rev 13:17 & **{DPb}** the 'mark of beast' was about ("no buying or selling without the mark"). Christians were legally 'vulnerable' & increasingly objects of discrimination & poverty. Tempting to slip back under the banner of Judaism.

Today, discrimination is common in East; growing in West. Just 1 example, **{DP}** medical practitioners with Christian convictions against practicing lethal procedures, like abortion, might face legal discrimination: **{DPb}** not being hired if others will perform such or dispense such pills. Midwives & pharmacists are already not getting jobs. Withholding medical licensing could be next. It's getting more costly to hold onto Christ & Christian ethics

3] Relational Costs/Shame {DP}

One of the biggest pulls of all. Sometimes it's "intellectual shaming" at work or uni:
"Seriously?! You believe Jesus actually rose from the dead?!"

In many religions . . . Islam, Hinduism, Judaism . . . becoming a Christian can mean being cut off from family.

Anthony & Annette, our missionaries in Thailand, have experienced this firsthand with converts in the ministry there.

Some of you – members here – have experienced this shame & relational marginalisation from your Hindu family, your atheist family, your Muslim family, your Catholic family.

So do NOT think the 'Jewish' context makes the book of Hebrews irrelevant or distant!

The same temptations face us today!

In our age of religious pluralism this letter is a reminder that there is only one name under heaven by which men can be saved – Jesus!

And the author of Hebrews is burdened, saying,

The danger of turning back is **WORSE** than standing for Jesus. **Eternal** Danger!

So throughout the book, numerous warnings are given not to shrink back from Christ.

In the end, to sum up the Book of Hebrews, I decided on a more **positive** 3-word phrase than **"No Turning Back"**.

I decided to emphasise the *WHY* for "no turning back"! *Motivation*. It's what Simeon needed & it's what we need. So here's our 'positive' Big Idea for the Book of Hebrews:

"Jesus is BETTER!" {DP}

This really is the message of Hebrews.

The word "BETTER" shows up more in Hebrews than any other book in the NT {DP}

1:4 – "as **better than/superior to** angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

7:7 – the lesser is blessed by the **greater**.

7:19 – a **better** Hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

7:22 – This makes Jesus the guarantor of a **better** Covenant.

8:6 – Jesus ministry is **superior** because as the covenant He mediates is **better**, since it is enacted on **better** Promises.

9:23 – the copies of the heavenly things were purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves were purified with a **better** Sacrifice than these.

10:34 – you knew that you yourselves had a **better** Possession and an abiding one.

11:16 – But as it is, they desire a **better** Country, that is, a heavenly one.

11:35 – that they might rise again to a **better** Life.

11:40 – since God had provided something **better** for us,

12:24 – Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and His sprinkled blood, speaks a **better** Word

Jesus is *totally Unique*. Supreme. So he's actually the 'BEST'.

But a comparative ("BETTER") allows for direct comparisons, which is the author's approach.

If we put both the positive & negative into a fuller 'Big Idea' of the Book, it'd be {DP}

Don't Turn Back because **Jesus is Better!**

We consistently see both inspiration & warning in the author's blocks of thought:

Here's a visual **overview**, with helpful graphics from *The Bible Project* {DP seq}

- Chapters 1 & 2 discuss Jesus as Better than Angels, so (warning) don't neglect a such a great salvation, a Better **Message** brought by a Better **Messenger**.
- Chapters 3 & 4 show Jesus is Better than Moses & Joshua, so (warning) don't fall short of entering God's rest, like their generation in the wilderness
- Chapters 5–7 are all about Jesus having Better than Priesthood than Aaron in the line of that mysterious priest Melchizedek, and right in the middle in Chapter 6 the author throws in the whopper of all warnings about 'no turning back.'
- Chapters 8–10 show Jesus is Better Sacrifice, bringing a Better Covenant, so don't trample on His blood, and despise His grace.
- Chapters 11-13 concludes the letter with practical applications for Christian Community & persevering in the faith, with Jesus as our motivation.

*We're not 'Home' yet, and the Journey is challenging.
So **FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS** and don't look back!*

We could easily spend a year in this deep book!
But I don't want us to 'lose the forest for the trees.'
So while some will be disappointed, I want to press thru the book at a decent clip, keeping pace with each additional insight from the author about *ways Jesus is Better*.

Not just how Jesus is Better *historically*, but *practically*. What difference Jesus makes!

Just a sample of where the book is taking us, **{DP}** Jesus Provides . . .

- a Better **Hope** (because Jesus conquered death)
- a Better **Rest** (an eternal one)
- a Better **Conscience** (because His Better Sacrifice is once for all!)
- a Better **Inheritance** (a glorious, heavenly one)

That's a BIG introduction to the whole Book, but I hope it's a helpful one.

This Big idea for this morning's sermon, chapter 1, is: **{DPa}**

*There is no better Message, and no better Messenger. **Worship Jesus!***

Our Outline: **{DPb}**

He's a Better WORD (vv. 1-4)

. . . because . . .

He's of Better WORTH (vv. 5-14)

HE'S A BETTER WORD (vv. 1-4)

God is a communicator who has consistently spoken to His people. He's not a Star Wars "force". He cares for us & want us to *know Him personally*.

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God **spoke** to our fathers by the prophets,
BUT in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.*

Notice the contrasts **{DPa}**

Then

"in the past"

"to our forefathers"

"by the prophets"

"in various ways"

God's *past* forms of communication were diverse in method: "*in various ways*"

- 'tablets of stone' to Moses
- a whirlwind & 'still small voice' to Elijah
- dreams to Joseph
- songs to David
- proclamation through angels.

Those older diverse forms of revelation, while *all true & excellent*, were incomplete and ultimately inadequate to fully reveal God.

Only God Himself can *fully* reveal Himself.

So in these last days God's communication 'advanced' to *perfection* in Jesus, His *sublime Son*.

Now **{DPb}**

"*in these LAST days*"

"*to us*"

"*by His Son*"

(*climactic: the One, Better way . . . from now until the end of time!*)

Look at rest of verse 2,

*In these last days God has spoken to us by His Son,
whom He appointed the heir of all things,
through Whom also He **created** the world.*

Jesus, the Creator, entered creation, taking on flesh/human form, to dwell among us!

This is why Jesus is a better Messenger, a better Word.

To see *exactly* who Jesus is, look at the first half of v. 3,
*He (the Son, Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God and
the exact imprint of His nature*

"Radiance" is *dazzling splendour*, literally "shining out", like the rays of the Sun.

"Glory" is the word to describe the *visible manifestation* of God's majesty.

"Exact imprint" is from a **{DP}** Greek word we all know: **character** χαρακτήρ)

The word means a stamp.

Stamping warm, soft wax or a hot metal coin with an imprint, a pattern
which the wax or coin will continue to reveal when it hardens.

Therefore, Jesus can reply to Philip, **{DP}**

How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip?

Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)

Jesus is Divine. God the Son is one with, but distinct from, God the Father. **{DPa}**

Rest of vv.3-4 show He has a *Position*, *Power* & *Nature* that identify him with God. **{DPb}**

God has appointed Christ as Heir of all (verses 2-4 as a structural unit)

Through Christ He created the World

Jesus is the radiance of God's glory

Jesus bears God's exact imprint

Jesus sustains the universe by His Word

Jesus sat down at God's right hand

Structurally this is called is a *chiasm* (Greek letter X), where the *centre* is the 'focal point'. Effectively what we see in the centre focal point is **{DP}**

Jesus' Superior WORD

which is 'bookended' by the

Jesus' Superior RANK

Because of Who He is (God), and what He's done ("making purification for sin") the Son has ultimate **Worth & Authority** in the universe. This is what's unpacked in verses 5-14.

HE'S OF BETTER WORTH (vv. 5-14) {DPA}

Angels were often God's messengers in the Old Covenant, and so the superiority of Jesus as God's **Better Messenger** is the point here.

For time, we will focus only on **{DPb} verses 5-6, 8 & 13**

⁵ *For to which of the ANGELS did God ever say,
"You are my SON, today I have begotten you"?*

Or again,

"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a SON"? [answer: none, ever!]

⁶ *And again, when God brings the FIRSTBORN into the world, He says,
"Let all God's **angels** WORSHIP Him."*

⁸ *BUT of the **SON** he says,*

*"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Your kingdom*

¹³ *To which of the ANGELS has he ever said,*

"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? [answer: none!]

Heaps of citations from the OT, all focusing in on 2 clear themes:

- The Son is **Worshipped**, but angels are NOT! (v. 6)
- The Son is on the **Throne**, but angels are NOT! (vv. 8 & 13)

First let look at the idea of the **Son on the Throne, Reigning:**

"Firstborn" (v.6) here is about pre-eminence of Position, like the "**First Lady**" of America.
The highest in rank & authority.

And this is important because Heb 1:5 is citing Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7

Two OT passages about God making a Promise to **King David** of an unending dynasty.
Again, angels do **not sit on a throne & reign**.
David did . . . but he's just a man, right?

Well the promised Davidic king develops into quite a spectacular person in the OT.

The dynasty begins with David, then his son Solomon,

but already by Isaiah 9, there is an elevation of the *ultimate* king from David's line,
that he's called *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*.²

This is pointing ahead to King Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lord,
this foreshadowing is what the author Hebrews taps into. Not only is . . . **{DPa}**

² Insight from Don Carson, "The Book of Hebrews" (Lecture at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), 2013.

- The Son on the Throne, and angels are not . . . but
- The Son is **WORSHIPPED**, but angels are NOT! (v. 6)

This immediately destroys claims by Jehovah's witnesses that Jesus is just an archangel!

At the end of Revelation, chapter 22, the apostle John writes about his huge slip up. Captivated by the heavenly vision of the new heavens & earth that is to come, he writes:

{DPb} *"I, John, am the one who heard & saw all these things . . . I fell down to worship at the feet of the ANGEL who had been showing all this to me.*

But he said to me, "DON'T DO THAT! I'm a fellow servant with you . . . Worship God!" (22:8-9)

But Jesus consistently accepts worship: **{DPa}**

- **From Angels:** Hebrews 1:6 (which we've just seen)

- **From Men:** **{DPb}**

Those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Mt 14:33)

*The man born blind, whom Jesus healed said to Jesus **{DPc}***

Who is the Son of Man that I may believe in him."

Jesus said, "You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you."

Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped Him." (John 9:36-38)

Jesus is divine - the Better **Message**, because He is the Better **Messenger**.

The Ultimate Word of Ultimate Worth.

This is why at the start of chapter Hebrews 2, the author warns **{DP}**

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

Since the message DECLARED BY ANGELS proved to be reliable, every violation & disobedience received just punishment, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? (Heb 2:1-2)

Angels played a role in the giving of the Mosaic law. (see Acts 7:53)

If dismissing that law brought punishment, how much worse to dismiss Christ.

The **IMPLICATIONS** of Hebrews 1 are so clear and so important . . . **{DP}**

1] Don't wait for a better Message or a better Messenger. There isn't any!

So to Joseph Smith – the founder of Mormonism – who claimed an angel named Moroni showed up in the 19th century, to make known a BETTER WAY . . .

To Joseph Smith & all Mormons the Bible says, "NO! Repent!" And so must we.

Jesus is superior to angels! He is the Better Word, the final Message & final Messenger.

To Mohammed – who claimed he was the final prophet, the great prophet, and Jesus was "just a prophet" . . . the Bible says "NO!" And so must we.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son."

Jesus is more than a prophet.

He is Divine, the sublime sinless Son, the Saviour of the world, the Lord of Lords!

When James White was here last year, giving tips on sharing Christ to Muslims, I had a 'light-bulb' moment.

James White expressed our need to appreciate the *risk*, the *weightiness* of a Muslim converting to Christ, embracing Jesus as the Son of God . . . since to do so is "**Shirk**" – an unforgiveable sin in Islam.

As he as shared this, I realised, "*That's it! That's our common ground.*"

Jesus made the same-but-opposite claim: to **REJECT HIM** as the divine son of God is Shirk!

{DP} "*Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him.*" (Jn 5:23)

"Whoever rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." (Luke 10:16)

Jesus **MUST** be worshipped and embraced as divine, as . . .

*"the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,
who upholds the universe by the word of His power."*

We cannot view Jesus as merely a *noble example* of how to live, merely a '*great moral teacher.*'

Jesus claimed to be *eternal* God, the *only* way to Heaven. He promised to *rise from the dead.*

IF His claims were not true, He's no '*great moral teacher!*' He's an *arrogant false* prophet!

You would NOT send your kids to a Sunday School teacher like Him!!

So, Jesus can only be 1 of 3 men **[DP]**:

a **Bad Man**

a **Madman** or

the **God-Man!**

There's no more waiting for anyone better!!

The only "sequel" we are awaiting is His return!

2] Study Jesus; Drench Yourself in the Gospels - Christ and His unparalleled life

When the Pharisees tried to use words to "entrap" Jesus, the Better Word, I always marvel how He turns the tables and traps them!

Teacher, is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?

Should we pay or shouldn't we?" (Mark 12:14)

They tried to force Jesus into a simple "Yes or No" response.

Say "yes" and agitate Jewish zealots, or

Say "no" be perceived as guilty of treason & tax evasion

Jesus just "handles" them!

Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it."

They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image and inscription is on it?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

*And they **MARVELLED** at Him. (Mark 12:15 -17)*

They thought, "*Bros, we've been served!*" We can't get anything to stick on this Jesus!

Go through the Gospels, considering all the occasions people marvel at Jesus!

"They marvelled: what sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?!"

They marvelled, and rightly so at many such miracles.
 But there were **more important** marvels! Jesus said,
*“Do not marvel at that, for the Son also **gives life** to whom He wishes – an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice & come forth on judgment Day.”*

He is the Better Word, the Final Word!
 And He gives you **His Word**, if you repent & trust in Him, Worship Him, you will be saved!
 You can trust Him Word for He alone is **Worthy** . . .

The final book of the Bible, called Revelation, describes a scroll that announces of the vindication of God’s people. O how we all want that!

The apostle John, who describes this heavenly vision, writes in Revelation 5:1-5,
*Then I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll . . . sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “**Who is worthy** to break the seals and open the scroll?”
 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll . . .
 I wept & wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.
 Then one of the elders said to me, “**Do not weep!** See – the LION of the tribe of Judah . . . has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll!” (Rev 5:1-5)*

Jesus alone is worthy!
 But **HOW** has Jesus, the Lion of Judah, triumphed? By becoming a LAMB. The next verse,
Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne . . . He took the scroll” (vv. 6-7)

*[The those in Heaven] sang a new song:
 “You are **WORTHY** to take the scroll and to open its seals,
BECAUSE you were slain, and with your blood you redeemed people from every tribe and language and nation for God!” (5:8-9)*

Why is the Son Enthroned? Back to Hebrews 1:3
*AFTER making **purification for sins**, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

“Not all super heroes have capes – Mine wore a Cross.” **{DP}**

Nabeel Qureshi is a Pakistani American and former apologist for Islam.
 While studying to become a medical doctor, he became a Christian.

In this 1-minute clip Nabeel describes how he was disowned by his family and the cost of following Jesus.

But listen also for Nabeel’s “**motivation**” that keeps him from turning back:

Our Crucified Christ is Worth it!

Jesus is Better!! **{CLIP}**

Discussion Questions:

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

- 1] What were the original readers of Hebrews tempted to "turn back" to, and why?
(Discuss the historical context: Read 10:32-34)
- 2] What 'turn back temptations' apply similarly to modern Gentile Christians? Moreover, what 'turn back temptations' are the most challenging **FOR YOU**, and why? Take time here.
- Missing old Traditions/habits? (Religious and secular)
 - Financial/ethical/comfort costs of following Jesus?
 - Relational/Shame costs of following Jesus?
 - . . . Others?
- Has anyone in your discussion group *converted from another religion*?
If so, for you what has been the most difficult or costly thing about sticking with Jesus?
(or do you have a **friend** whose converted from Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and if so, what have they shared was most costly *to them*?)
- 3] What **solution** does the author of Hebrews give for battling these 'turn back temptations'?
- A] How do "warnings" fit into the author's purpose? Where do such warnings appear?
- B] What "positive" motivation fits into his purpose?
(What was the preacher's 3-word phrase as the book's big Idea?)
- C] What's the author's *purpose* in using a "comparative" (Better) vs a "superlative" (Best)

HEBREWS 1

Jesus is a Better WORD (vv. 1-4)

- 4] In what ways is Jesus a Better Word, a Better messenger?
(Who exactly is Jesus & what improvement does He make to *older* communications?)

Jesus a of Better WORTH (vv. 5-14)

- **Angels are *Not* Enthroned, the Son is!** (vv. 5, 8, 13)
- 5] How do the promises given to King David apply to King Jesus? First, what is a "dynasty"? Hebrews 1:5 quotes 2 Sam 7 where God makes a covenant/promise to David & his dynasty. Read Isaiah 9:6-7. On *whose throne* will the promised son reign? So who is this 'son'?
- **Angels are *Not* Worshipped, the Son is!** (1:6)
- 6] What about angels being worshipped: read Revelation 22:8-9
- 7] What clarity of superiority does Hebrews 1:6 show us? Whom do *angels* worship?
- 8] Does Jesus embrace Worship from mankind? (see Matt 14:33, one of many examples). **Why** is He UNIQUE in *Worth & Rank*? (read Revelation 5:1-9)
- 9] So what are the "evangelism implications" of Jesus for JWs, Mormons, Muslims (and all)?
(Luke 10:16; Phil 2:11-12)
- 10] What are the "personal" implications of Jesus as the Better Messenger & Message for us?
What "Jesus is Better" truths do you need to focus on to overcome the turn back temptations?

If time: to understand the warning in 2:1-4 that we have a "sneak peek" of, read Acts 7:53
What is the comparison with angels & Jesus regarding their *role* in bringing God's Message, and the contrast in the greatness of each Message (Old vs. New)?