

Hebrews 1:1-14

Learner
Session
Guide

Focus Statement

The person Jesus Christ, Son of God, is fully divine, God's very being. In Jesus, we see and know God.

Key Verse

He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.
Hebrews 1:3

Who Is Jesus? (Part 1)

Focus Image



The Ascension, Giotto di Bondone / Arena Chapel, Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua.
© SuperStock/SuperStock

Gather

Check-in

Take this time to connect or reconnect with the others in your group.

Pray

God of heaven and earth, before the foundation of the universe and the beginning of time you are the triune God: Author of creation, eternal Word of salvation, life-giving Spirit of wisdom. Guide us to all truth by your Spirit, that we may proclaim all that Christ has revealed and rejoice in the glory he shares with us. Glory and praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, second option for prayer of the day for Trinity Sunday, p. 37)

Focus Activity

Quickly write down three words that describe God. Then take a few minutes to meditate on these words as descriptions of Jesus.



Notes

Open Scripture

Read Hebrews 1:1-14.

- What words stand out most to you?
- What questions do you have?
- What is your emotional reaction?

Join the Conversation

Historical Context

1. Hebrews, one of the latest books of the Bible, was written sometime between 60 and 100 C.E., approximately 30 to 70 years after Jesus' death. This means some in the original audience were probably second- or even third-generation followers of Jesus Christ.
- Imagine yourself in the original audience, raised in the Christian faith from childhood, and now perhaps taking your faith for granted or neglecting it. You may be facing a hostile environment and growing weary of being faithful.
 - Make a list of things that might be distracting you, not only from the faith, but also from other important aspects of your life, such as time with family and friends, sleep, and your favorite renewing activities.
 - Brainstorm a list of things you could do in this situation to help bring your life back into focus.

2. The conversation of which Hebrews is a part is a conversation *within* a community of Jewish Christians. The controversy is not between being Jewish and being Christian. It is *within* Jewish tradition about a new development in that tradition. And so, throughout Hebrews, the author compares God's revelation in Jesus Christ with what has gone before in God's Word spoken through prophets in Hebrew scriptures, temple practices, and ritual traditions. In Hebrews 1:5-14, for example, a series of psalms (Psalm 2:7; 104:4; 45:6-7; 102:25-27; and 110:1) refer to Christ.

- How do you suppose the original audience reacted to this use of Hebrew scriptures?
- How does this connection between Hebrew scriptures and Christ affect your reading of Hebrews 1:1-14?

Literary Context

1. Throughout the book of Hebrews, you will find the author making comparisons. Signals for the comparisons are words such as *new*, *superior*, *better*, *more*, *excellent*, and the conjunction *but*.

- Review Hebrews 1:1-14. Find and list the comparisons in the text. What points do these comparisons make?

2. One of the concerns of Hebrews is to describe fully the person of Jesus. The author worships Jesus as Lord, and wants the audience to share that conviction.

- List the words in Hebrews 1:1-14 that describe Jesus. How do these descriptions assert that Jesus is Lord?

Lutheran Context

1. One Lutheran principle for reading and interpreting the Bible is the question, "What shows forth Christ?" Martin Luther says the Bible is like the manger holding the Christ child. Everything in the Bible points us and leads us to Christ.

- What do you think about the idea that everything in the Bible draws us to Christ?
- How does Hebrews 1:1-14 point you or lead you to Christ?

2. Another Lutheran principle for reading and interpreting the Bible is "Scripture interprets Scripture." To gain a better understanding of challenging passages of Scripture, we can look at related texts.

- Read John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; and Colossians 1:15-20. How do these texts affect your understanding of Hebrews 1:1-14? List what each text says about the relationship between God and Jesus.



Notes

SESSION ONE



Notes

Devotional Context

1. Take a moment to get quiet and comfortable. Look at the Focus Image for this session. Close your eyes for a few moments and hold the image in your mind's eye. Then share with another person what you see in the painting. What do you notice first? What emotional response do you have to the painting?

2. Sing together the first verse of "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!" (*LBW* 328, 329; *ELW* 634). Then sing together "You Are Holy" (*ELW* 525). How do these songs tell you that Jesus is Lord of all?

Wrap-up

Be ready to look back over the work your group has done in this session.

Pray

Power of the eternal Father, help me. Wisdom of the Son, enlighten the eye of my understanding. Tender mercy of the Holy Spirit, unite my heart to yourself. Eternal God, restore health to the sick and life to the dead. Give us a voice, your own voice, to cry out to you for mercy for the world. You, light, give us light. You, wisdom, give us wisdom. You, supreme strength, strengthen us. Amen. ("A prayer of Catherine of Siena," *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 87)

Extending the Conversation

Homework

1. Read the next session's Bible text: Hebrews 2:5-18.

2. Use what you learned and experienced in this session in daily devotions this week. In daily prayer, give thanks for knowing God in Jesus. Sing or recite aloud one of the hymns included in the session. Repeating the song "You Are Holy" several times can be a meditation in itself. Each day write a one-sentence prayer to God about yourself and your faith.

3. We are surrounded by distractions from what is most important to us. A minor crisis or sense of urgency about secondary commitments can distract us from our primary commitments. An advertisement can pull us toward things, activities, or people who aren't really important to us. Ruffled feelings can distract us from focusing on what's at the heart of an interaction. Weariness or a short temper can distract us from kindness and understanding. At the start of the week, make a list of the three or four people, relationships, activities, attitudes, or needs that are the highest priorities for your life, especially for your life this week. As you go about your daily activities this week, note how you are distracted. Being aware of distractions is part of learning to affirm and focus on what's most important.

Enrichment

1. If you want to read through the entire book of Hebrews during this unit, read the following sections this week.

Day 1: Hebrews 1:1-4

Day 2: Hebrews 1:5-14

Day 3: Hebrews 2:1-4

Day 4: Hebrews 2:5-9

Day 5: Hebrews 2:10-13

Day 6: Hebrews 2:14-18

Day 7: Hebrews 3:1-6

2. Many artists—painters, sculptors, composers, and others—have tried to convey Jesus' divinity. Search out and explore some of these on the Web or at your local library.

3. The Bible tells us that humanity is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). Make a list of the descriptions of Jesus' divinity or highlight the descriptions in your Bible. They tell us something about God, in whose image we are created. What do these descriptions tell us about who we are? What do these descriptions tell us about others?



Notes

SESSION ONE



Notes

For Further Reading

A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam by Karen Armstrong (New York: Ballantine, 1994).

Available at augzburgfortress.org:

Hebrews for Everyone by N. T. Wright (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004).