

SERMON OUTLINE

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

'Jesus: Simply the Best' - 1

Hebrews 1 v1 - 3

This is one of the most difficult books in the New Testament - yet (at one and the same time) one of the most important, and theologically and pastorally relevant books for the church in the days in which we live. What's it all about - why was it written?

1. THE SETTING OF THE BOOK

It's author - 'Tantalizingly anonymous!'

Its recipients - Christian believers with a Jewish background (note the Old Testament quotations, characters, and ritual imagery) who most probably lived in Rome. See - 13 v24

Its date - Some 15 years after the persecution in the reign of the emperor Claudius in AD 49. See - 10 v32 - 34. That is, just before the persecution in the reign of the emperor Nero in AD 64. See - 12 v4. In other words - these were hard days for the church.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

To encourage the believers. See - 13 v22. Lit - "bear with my word of encouragement....." The letter was written to encourage the believers in this church fellowship to steadfastness and faithfulness. Why?

A. SOME OF THE BELIEVERS WERE GIVING UP

And not just giving up in the face of the approaching persecution, but going back to their old religion - Judaism. See - chapters 3 and 4.

'In the Roman world the Jewish faith was permitted; the Christian faith very often persecuted. It would be only too easy to forsake the latter and go back to the former.'

B. SOME OF THE BELIEVERS WERE DRIFTING AWAY

See - 2 v1. The evidence of this happening? See - 10 v25. This drift-

ing away can happen so imperceptibly. Key Text - 6 v1a. Living the Christian life is all about going on - and not giving up.

3. THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

God has spoken!

A. GOD HAS SPOKEN - THROUGH HIS WRITTEN WORD

See - 1 v1

B. GOD HAS SPOKEN - THROUGH HIS INCARNATE WORD

See - 1 v2a. All that we need to know about God we find in Jesus. And so:-

Key Questions - (i) What is God like? See - 1 v3a
(ii) What has God done? See - 1 v3b

Application - This is the God who is with us. See - 13 v5b. Therefore - 'Fix your eyes upon Jesus.'

4. THE RELEVANCE OF THE BOOK

A. ITS RELEVANCE - THEOLOGICALLY

This book is the answer to so much 'wishy-washy' thinking about the person and work of Jesus.

B. ITS RELEVANCE - PASTORALLY

See - 1 v2b. If Jesus is the 'heir of all things' then He has everything that we could ever possibly need. Not only that, but as the God who made the universe there is nothing that is ever impossible for Him. This is why we're able to go on - and not give up!