


THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS.



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Abstract

This dissertation accomplishes three things. First, it identifies the literary and rhetorical devices that the author of Hebrews uses to construct his characterization of Jesus. Second, it reconstructs the portrait that emerges from the author's characterization of Jesus. Third, it indicates how the author's characterization of Jesus is important for his overall argument. This dissertation lays the methodological groundwork through an examination of characterization in both modern literary and ancient rhetorical theory and practice. The analysis reveals that characterization in ancient rhetoric demonstrates many affinities with modern literary theory and practice. The author of Hebrews employs a variety of techniques to construct his characterization of Jesus. First, the author uses encomiastic topics, which are categories by which the attributes of persons were conceived in the ancient world. Second, the author utilizes a variety of devices such as amplification, synkrisis, vivid description, attributed speech, and literary tropes to develop his portrait of Jesus. Finally, the author appeals to divine testimony to give authoritative support to his portrayal of Jesus' character. The author depicts Jesus as a person of exemplary character who exhibits the highest of human virtues but also divine attributes as well. These traits reveal both Jesus' greatness and moral excellence. The author's characterization of Jesus is significant for his overall argument. First, Jesus' character produces many benefits for his followers. Believers in some sense share in the same status and privileges that Jesus possesses. Jesus' exemplary character also produces many soteriological benefits for his followers. Second, his character entails certain obligations from his followers. Jesus' exemplary character is a model of imitation for his followers. The author frequently urges his audience to exemplify virtues that are also characteristic of Jesus. Jesus' character also serves as a warning for his followers to avoid disobedience and unbelief. Finally, Jesus' character serves as encouragement for his followers to persevere and mature in their faith, and to approach God boldly in worship.

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Second, the book of Hebrews emphasizes subjects that don't receive much, if any, attention in Paul's letters. For instance, the author of Hebrews mentioned Melchizedek three times. He drew attention to the Old Testament tabernacle. Taken together, these themes distinguish the book of Hebrews from books that we know were written by Paul. -2-. For videos, study guides and other resources, visit Third Millennium Ministries at thirdmill.org. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2). It's difficult to read these and similar passages without realizing that this author was hardly an impersonal scholar. The author of Hebrews uses a variety of literary and rhetorical devices in order to develop his characterization of Jesus. The portrait that emerges is that Jesus is a person of exemplary character, who exhibits both divine and human character traits. Some of the traits reveal Jesus greatness while others reveal his moral excellence. Jesus exemplary character plays a prominent role in the author s argument and has profound implications for his audience. Jesus character produces many benefits for his followers and his character entails certain obligations from his followers." ...more. Get The book of Hebrews is an exception, however, because here "Jesus" occurs alone eight times and only five times in combination. Evidently the Hebrew Christians to whom the epistle was written needed a better appreciation of just who the man Jesus really was. More than merely a great teacher, more even than their long-awaited Messiah, He was Jesus the Son of God, He was "even Jesus, made an high priest for ever" (Hebrews 6:20). Furthermore, "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should tast