

The intent of the writer of Hebrews is to demonstrate to his fellow Jews that Jesus Christ is indeed the long awaited Messiah that God had promised would come. In this first chapter the writer declares Jesus to be the final prophet through Whom God would speak, that Jesus is God and that He is superior to angels in name, power, glory and authority.

We do not know who the writer of Hebrews is, although many believe the author to be the Apostle Paul. The purpose of the writer, however, is obvious. He wants to demonstrate to the Jews that Jesus Christ is the Messiah that God had promised would come. Thus, he glorifies Jesus Christ by showing that He is superior to angels, to the Levitical priesthood, the OT sacrifices, etc. Jesus alone is the Savior and the writer of Hebrews demonstrates that Jesus fulfills everything that God promised the Messiah would be.

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

“God” – The writer does not begin with man’s opinion or ideas. He begins with God, showing that what follows is God’s idea and God’s work. Our opinions carry little weight because it is God’s will that matters.

“who at sundry times [in many portions]” – God did not reveal Himself all at once but gave each prophet some portion of revelation.

“and in divers manners [in many ways]” – Sometimes God spoke by visions, sometimes by dreams, and sometimes by an audible voice, etc. God chose a variety of methods to reveal His will to the prophets.

“spake in time past unto the fathers” – In whatever manner that God chose to speak, it was to “the fathers” (the ancestors of the Jewish readers of Hebrews). Israel is God’s chosen people and therefore when He spoke it was to and through the Jews.

“by the prophets [spokesmen]” – When God spoke, it was through the spokesmen that He authorized to speak for Him. God had spoken aloud at Mt. Sinai but the people begged Moses to be the one to speak to them instead of God speaking to them directly (Ex. 20:18-19) and so Moses became their first prophet. The LORD then promised to raise up another prophet like Moses, which was a reference to the Messiah (Deut. 18:15-19). The next verse declares Jesus as the ultimate prophet through Whom He would speak.

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” – God had spoken in the past through human prophets but now (“in these last days”) has spoken by His Son. The phrase “these last days” speaks of finality. There would not be any greater prophet through Whom God would speak and reveal Himself, for Christ is the final revelation of God to man. God had promised through Moses that the coming Messiah would be the One to Whom Israel was to listen (Deut. 18:15 “*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken*”). John 1:18 “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*”

“whom he hath appointed heir of all things” – There are many prophesies in the OT referring to Christ and what God had promised to Him. For example: Psalms 2:6-9 “*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*” After the resurrection Jesus declared that all power had been given to Him in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18).

“by whom also he made the worlds [ages]” – Jesus is the Creator: John 1:3 “*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*” Col. 1:16-17 “*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*” Eph. 3:9 “*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*”

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

“Who being the brightness of his glory” – Jesus was not like Moses, who only reflected the glory of God temporarily (Ex. 34:29-30, 35). Jesus radiates His own glory because He is God.

“and the express image [image left by an engraving or a stamp] of his person [substance; essence]” – The Greek word for “express image” is *charaktér* and is where we get our English word “character.” Jesus gave us a way to see the character of God in human flesh. He was a physical representation of the invisible God in human form. John 1:18 “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*” Col. 1:15 (speaking of Christ) “*Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*”

“and upholding [to carry; prevent from falling] all things by the word [something spoken] of his power” – The Greek word for “upholding” can be used of water carrying a boat. Jesus Christ keeps the universe running through His spoken word. Col. 1:17 “*And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [held together].*”

“when he had by [through] himself purged our sins” – The phrase “by himself” does not mean Christ did it alone, although He certainly did not need our help to purge our sins. Rather, the phrase means “through” or “by the means of” Himself. Christ did not arrange for the purging of our sins to be done by someone else or through our keeping of the law or some other means. Instead, He personally took our sins upon Himself and purged them by bearing the punishment for them.

“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” – The phrase “right hand of the Majesty on high” refers to the position of power and honor next to God Almighty. Jesus Christ has sat down on the right hand of His Father because (1) He has completed His work of salvation; and (2) that position belongs to Him. 1 Pet. 3:22 (speaking of Christ) “*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*”

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

“Being made so much better than the angels” – The Greek word for “made” refers to a change of state rather than being created. Even though He already existed, Jesus was “made a little lower than the angels” for the purpose of dying on the cross (**Heb. 2:9** “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*”). After the cross Jesus has been exalted to a higher position than the angels. **“as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they”** – After the cross God the Father restored to Jesus Christ all authority, power and glory, far above all angels. As a result, the name of Jesus compels all of creation to bow in worship and submission. **Phil. 2:9-11** “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

“For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” – The writer quotes from Psa. 2:7 to demonstrate that God has reserved the privileges of sonship for Jesus and has never extended them to any angel. **“And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?”** – The writer quotes a second OT passage (2 Sam. 7:14) referencing the relationship between God and His Son. There are no OT references to such a relationship between God and angels.

6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

The writer now quotes from the Septuagint translation of Deut. 32:43 to show the superiority of God’s Son to the angels because they are called upon to worship His Son. The term “firstbegotten” refers to Jesus being first in position, not in time. As God’s firstborn Son, He is heir to all the Father has.

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

The writer has just shown that Jesus is the Son of God and is heir to all God has and has been exalted with a name above every name. In contrast, he now uses the quotation from Psalm 104:4 to show that the role that God has given angels is that of being ministers (servants). The writer continues to point out this servant role of angels in vs. 13-14: “*But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*” Angels were created to serve but God’s Son is exalted and worthy of all glory and honor.

8 But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

The writer points out that this quotation from Psalm 45:6-7 is speaking of the Messiah, the coming King. In contrast to angels, which are servants, the Son of God is a king with a throne, a scepter and a kingdom. Because of His Son’s love of righteousness, God has anointed Him as king.

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

Verses 10-12 quote Psalm 102:25-27 and reference the Son as Creator. He created the universe (the heavens and the earth) and even though they will eventually grow old and perish, Christ will not (v. 11) for He is eternal and unchanging (v. 12). The fact that Christ is unchanging and eternal is further evidence of His deity.