

Hebrews 1:1–4

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This structure is presented by William Lane.¹

A God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son
B whom he appointed the heir of all things,
C through whom also he created the world.³
C' He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the
universe by the word of his power.
B' After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
A' having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews 1:1–14

This structure comes from Victor Rhee.² It organizes the whole section, but it misses the mirroring of 1:1–4 and 1:5–14, as well as the way 1:1–4 and 2:1–4 frame the center section (1:5–14).

A The function of the Son: God's final spokesperson (vv.1–2a).

B The Son in his exaltation: heir of all things (v.2b).

C The Son in his preexistence: bearer of God's nature, creator, and sustainer of the world (vv.2c–3b).

D The Son in his incarnation: purifier of sins (v.3c).

E The Son in his exaltation: he sat down at the right hand of God, with the result that he became superior to the angels (vv. 3d–4).

E' The Son in his exaltation: because of God's enthronement of the Son at the right hand, he is superior to the angels (v. 5).

D' The Son in his incarnation: the Son who is brought into the world is superior to the angels because they worship him (v. 6).

C' The Son in his preexistence: the Son is superior to the angels because he is God (vv. 7–12).

B' The Son in his exaltation: the Son is superior to the angels because the Father has exalted him at his right hand (v. 13).

A' The function of the angels: the Son is superior to the angels because they are the ministering spirits for the sons who will inherit salvation (v. 14).

¹ William Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, WBC, 6–7.

² Victor Rhee, "The Role of Chiasm for Understanding Christology in Hebrews 1:1-14." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012): 341–62.

What is this chapter about?

1. The Speech of God

1:1–2

2:1–4

3:15

4:7

4:12–13

The Ongoing speech of the Lord

3:7

10:5

10:15

Why would this word of exhortation focus on the Son and his Speech?

What was happening to the saints?

What goes through your mind when you suffer and bad things happen to you?

What do you do to comfort yourself?

2. This sermon is written to strengthen the weary saint.

Q. How does hearing the word of God strengthen the weary saint?

A. God is there and he is not silent.

Q. How does focusing on Christ strengthen our faith?

A. To see him (with our ears) is to become like him.

3. The Structure of Hebrews 1:1–4

What are these verses not like?

What are these verses like?

What do we learn about Hebrews?

What do we learn about Jesus?

A God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his **Son**
B whom he appointed the **heir** of all things, [Psalm 2:8]
C through whom also he created the **world**.³
D He is the **radiance** of the glory of God and
D' the exact **imprint** of his nature,
C' and he upholds the **universe** by the word of his power.
B' After making purification for sins, **he sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high, [Ps 110]
A' having become as much superior to angels as the **name** he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.³

1. Son . . . whose name is above all names
2. Heir of all things
3. Creator and Sustainer
4. He is God

4. The Son

- Son is greater than prophets (vv. 1–2)
- Son is greater than angels (vv. 5–14)
- Son is begotten of God and placed in Zion (1:5)
- Son is recipient of the kingdom (1:5)
- Son is firstborn of the world (1:6)
- Son is worshiped by God's angels; angels serve the Lord (1:6)
- Son is given the throne (1:8–9)
- Son is given creation (1:10)
- Son is given victory (1:13)
- Son is the center of the Psalms (ch. 1)
- Son is the Lord (2:3)
- Son's Speech is greater than Angel's Speech (2:1–4)

³ My structure happens to be the same one Thomas Schreiner adopts (*Hebrews*, 52).

The Structure of Hebrews 1:1–2:4

<p>Hebrews 1:1–4 Hebrews 1:5–14 Hebrews 2:1–4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Jesus is greater than prophets and angels Prophets bear witness to Jesus Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus</p>
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Hebrews 1:1–4

Hebrews 1:5–14

Greater than Prophets (v. 1–2a)

Hebrews 1:5–14 = Prophets bear witness

 Psalm 2:8 (v. 2b)

 The Son in Psalm 2:7 / 2 Samuel 7:14 (v. 5)

 Creation (v. 2c)

 Son Receives Worship in Creation (v. 6)

 The Son in himself (v. 3a)

 Angels Serve the Eternal Son (v. 7)

 The Son in creation (v. 3b)

 Son Receives His Throne (vv. 8–9)

 Creation (v. 3c)

 Son Renews Creation (vv. 10–12)

 Psalm 110 (v. 3de)

 The Son in Psalm 110 (v. 13)

Greater than Angels (v. 4)

Hebrews 2:1–4 = Spirit bears witness

Hebrews 1:1–4

A God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his **Son**

 B whom he appointed the **heir** of all things, [Psalm 2:8]

 C through whom also he created the **world**.³

 D He is the radiance of the glory of God and

 D' the exact imprint of his nature,

 C' and he upholds the **universe** by the word of his power.

 B' After making purification for sins, **he sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high, [Ps 110]

A' having become as much superior to angels as the **name** he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews 2:1–4

Therefore

we must pay greater attention to what we have heard,

Command

 \ so that we do not drift away from it.

Purpose

For

Angels

 if the message declared through angels was valid, and
 . . . every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty,
how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

Reason #1

Lord

 It was declared at first through the Lord, and
 it was attested to us by those who heard him,
 while God added his testimony

Reason #2

 by signs and

 wonders and

 various miracles, and

 by gifts of the Holy Spirit,

 distributed according to his will.

Hebrews 1:5–14

[1] For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my **Son**; today I have begotten you”? [Psalm 2:7]

[2] Or again,

“I will be his Father, and he will be my **Son**”? [2 Samuel 7:14]

[3] And again, when he brings the **firstborn into the world**, he says,

“Let all God’s angels worship him.” [Deuteronomy 32:43]

[4] Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.” [Ps 104:4]

HINGE → [5] **BUT** of the **Son** he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” [Ps 45:6–7]

[6] And,

“In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.” [Ps 102:25–27]

[7] But to which of the angels has he ever said,

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? [Ps 110]

Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Structure

1. How many quotations?
2. What is the center?
 - a. Fourth quotation?
 - b. Contrast in v. 8?
 - c. How does this center shape the verses? (See outline)
3. What themes do you see in these verses?
 - a. Quotations from . . .

Psalms 2 (v. 5), 104 (v. 7), 45 (vv. 8–9), 102 (vv. 10–12), 110 (v. 13)
(When speaking about the Son they follow canonical order)
Deut 32:43 (v. 6) – the angels who worship the Lord are ones who mediated the law
2 Sam 7:14 (v. 5) – Davidic Covenant that promised an eternal throne to David's son
 - b. Angels . . .
 - i. God never said he'd be a father to angels (v. 5)
 - ii. Angels will worship the Son (v. 6)
 - iii. Angels are servants, not exalted (v. 7)
 - iv. Angels never given a throne (v. 13)
 - v. Angels are ministering spirits
 - c. Son
 - i. I have begotten you (v. 5)
 - ii. I will be a father to him (v. 5) – What is the context of this promise?
 - iii. The son will be worshiped (v. 6) – When firstborn? Birth / resurrection?
 - iv. The Son receives a throne (v. 8–9)
 - v. The Son will make a new creation (vv. 10–12)
 - vi. All creation under his feet
 - d. Is there a narrative here?
 - i. God declares the Son
 - ii. God brings his exalted son into the world
 - iii. The son will receive worship from all the angels
 - iv. The son receives a throne
 - v. The son will make all things new
 - vi. The son will put all things under his feet
 - e. When does this story begin?

At Christ's birth

- Begotten suggests birth
- Firstborn suggests incarnation
- Anything else?

At Resurrection

- Structure points to resurrection, not birth
- “Appointed” son happens at his resurrection
 - He is appointed heir at his resurrection (v. 2)
 - He sat down at God’s right hand after purification for sins (v. 3)
 - Psalm 2:7 is used in the New Testament to refer to resurrection
 - Acts 13:33
 - Romans 1:4
 - Hebrews 5:5–6
- Firstborn is not creation, but new creation
 - “Firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18; cf. Acts 26:23; 1 Cor. 15:20; Rev. 1:5)
 - “Last days” (1:2) is inaugurated by new creation
 - Yes, there are angels worshiping Jesus at this birth, but the context of Deuteronomy 32 suggests new creation. Why? Because Moses song is looking forward to the coming of a new age. Listen to the LXX:

Praise, O heavens, his people, worship him, all you gods! For he will avenge the blood of his children, and take vengeance on his adversaries; he will repay those who hate him, and cleanse the land for his people. (Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX)
- Everything else in the chapter refers to resurrection / exaltation.
 - David’s son has received his throne
 - The firstborn from the dead has come, and the angels worship him
 - These angels are there to serve him
 - He has received his throne on high, and now on earth he is going to expand his kingdom
 - He who made the world is going to bring a new creation
 - He will do this through his royal priesthood.

So what?

- The resurrection of the son changes everything
 - The last days have come
 - The kingdom has come
 - The promises have been fulfilled
 - The one who upholds the universe with his word has come to speak himself
 - And this explains the repetitions of the angels.

Why all this angel talk?

- Is this because people worshiped angels (cf. Colossians 2)
- Is this because there was confusion about Christ and the angels, an angelic Christology?
- Or is it one more way to say that the covenant Christ mediates is greater than the covenant brought by angels?

What role did angels have in the old covenant?

- Deuteronomy 33:2 (same context as Deuteronomy 32:43)
- Acts 7:38, 53
- Galatians 3:19
- Hebrews 2:2

This brings us to the take away . . .

- The relationship between OT / NT is not replacement, but fulfillment
- The word of the Lord came
- The apostles of Jesus, the ones who heard the Lord (Mark 3:13–14; Acts 1:21–22), passed on God's Word, and God confirmed their apostolic message with signs, wonders, miraculous signs
- These things do not continue today; they were given to confirm the word. Now that the final revelation has come, there is no need for signs and wonders.
- Even more, signs and wonders accompanied Moses / Elijah + Elisha / Jesus + Apostles, but now that revelation has been completed, so listen to the word.

What do we learn about the individual verses?

1:5 – Two verses identify the messianic identity of Christ

- Psalm 2 – This Psalm originally spoke of David or his son, but in time it came to be applied to Jesus as the Christ
- 2 Samuel 7:14 – This verse recounts the covenant with David and his son. Of importance, Schreiner observes,

We should also note the promise in 2 Sam 7:13 that the future Davidic king will build a house for the Lord’s name. Later we are told that Jesus is the one who builds the house (Heb 3:3), which stands for the people of God (3:6). Jesus, as the builder of the new temple, as the elder brother (2:10–16), rules over the people of God. (66)

- Amazingly, Jesus both receives David’s house (people) and is building David’s house (a place), in this way he is the greater David and the greater Solomon

1:6 – The Angels Worship Christ

- This verse comes from Deuteronomy 32:43 (LXX) or Psalm 97:7
- The language of firstborn comes from Exodus 4:22 and has great theological meaning (cf. Ps 89:27)

When does this worship occur—incarnation, return, or exaltation?

Points from Thomas Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 68–69.

Reasons for Incarnation	Reasons for Exaltation
The angels worshiped when Jesus is born	“Again” is ambiguous and not determinative for context
	The angels at Christ’s birth worshiped God, not the man Christ Jesus
	As Hebrews 2:6–9 indicates, Jesus was lower than angels; the worship of Christ here is based on his exaltation
Reasons for Exaltation	
“Again” is applied to the verb “brings,” as in the HCSB: “And again, when he bring the firstborn in the world, he says. . .”	<p>“World” refers to a heavenly / eschatological realm; cf. Hebrews 1:5–2:4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation is future inheritance (1:14–2:4) • Consummation of the Son’s reign is in view (1:13) • Eternity of the Son (1:10–12) • The Son’s enduring dominion (1:8–9) • Therefore, the worship of angels is best seen in his exaltation⁴
	“Firstborn” does not refer to incarnation, but his sovereign rule. See Psalm 89: 27.

⁴ These points come from Ardel Caneday, “The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son: The *Oikoumenē* of Hebrews 1:6 and the Son’s Enthronement,” in *Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts*, ed. R. Bauckham, D. Driver, T. Hart, and N. MacDonald, LNTS 387 (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 28–39.

1:7 – The angels are only servants, not sons.

1. Jesus is greater than angels (vv. 4,
2. The sons of God are not the Son of God (v. 5)

Sons of God = Angels (see Gen. 6:2, 4; Job. 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; cf. Ps 29:1; 89:6; 138:1)
3. The angels worship the risen Christ (v. 6)
4. For a little while the Son was made lower than the angels (2:7), but in the exaltation he is made greater (vv. 7–8)

This also means that those raised with Christ will judge angels (1 Cor 6:3). To seek their support now is foolish. Instead we look to the Lord and trust him to send his angels as needed.

5. The angels do the Lord's work in creation (vv. 7, 14)

Unless we take this as literal, the point is not the constitution of angels, but the role they serve. They do the Lord's work on the earth – the place of wind and fire.
6. There will be angels who are sent to everlasting torment in the lake of fire; Jesus power to make all things new alludes to this (vv. 10–12)

Further evidence for this judgment: Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:7–10; cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6
7. The angels are sent out by Christ to serve him and his saints
8. The message that came "at the hands" of the angels at Sinai was true; what came by Christ is greater. Hence, in some respect angels are Old Testament servants, now replaced by the Spirit and the Church.

1:8–9 – Christ has received the throne of David⁵

- The language of God is probably not divine – see Exodus 7:1 and Psalm 82:1, 6
- The obedience of this son is what gives him the right to reign
- This is the implicit condition of the Davidic covenant
- Now, we have an obedient Son . . . therefore he is given the crown, and in this instance, this son of David is also God the Son
- This verse identifies the deity of the Son – the Divine Son is seated on David's throne.
- Few passages state explicitly Jesus's deity; this is one does (cf. John 1:1; 20:28; Rom 9:6; Tit 2:13)
- This passage also highlights Jesus's sinlessness (cf. Hebrews 4:14–16)

⁵ Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 72.

1:10–12 – Christ has power to make all things new

- This quotation applies words about Yahweh to Christ (cf. Rom 10:13; 14:11; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2:16; 10:22, 26; 2 Cor 10:17; Phil 2:10–11; 1 Thess 3:13; 4:6; 2 Thess 1:7–8; 2 Tim 2:19)
- There may also be themes between Psalm 45 and Psalm 102 (Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 74)

Divine Rule (45:6 = 102:12)

Divine Victory (45:4–5 = 102:15)

- Still, the main point seems to be that of creation and new creation; the one who made the world has authority and power to recreate it.
- New creation began in Christ's resurrection and now the one who is firstborn of new creation has place and power to make all things new

1:13 – Christ sends out his army from the right hand of God

- While Christ is in heaven, he is engaging in warfare on the earth = read Psalm 110
- The sort of rule he has is a priestly rule
- There are enemies that remain even though he has been exalted over all creation
- Spiritual warfare is the status of the world today

QUOTE (Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 77)

1:14 – Saints take a priority over the angels

2:1–4 – The message of Christ is greater than that of Angels

- The word of God has practical significance. Hebrews does not quote OT for the sake of OT quotation; it is for a purpose (William Lane, *Hebrews*, 38)
- The message of the Old Testament is not abandoned or eclipsed by the New Testament; it is fulfilled (2:2). What the prophets promised, the son has fulfilled (1:1)
- The point of “listening” is stressed in multiple ways
 - Command (v. 1a)
 - Warning (v. 1b)
 - Rhetorical question, based on a lesser to greater argument (v. 3)
 - God’s word came from the Lord and then was affirmed by the Spirit (v. 4)
- The overarching message: Listen to what I will tell!