

HEBREWS 1:1-12

May 16, 2021

NOTE: We started these notes Sunday May 9 and will resume May 16 with Chapter 1, Verse 6a (page 3). I am sending all verses for the benefit of anyone who was not with us last week. If you have the notes from last week, don't bother to print again.

Hebrews 1:1-4. God has spoken to us by his Son

¹ God, having in the past spoken to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds. ³ His Son is the radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself made purification for our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; ⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they have.

“God, having in the past spoken to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways”

1. A key feature both of Judaism and Christianity is God’s revelation to humans. God revealed himself and his will in various ways.

2a. “has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son

The phrase, “at the end of these days,” could be interpreted in several ways, but in this context probably means the new age brought into being by Christ.

2b. “whom he appointed heir of all things

This is the first of two things in this verse that demonstrate the superiority of Christ, God’s Son.

2c. “through whom also he made the worlds

This is the second thing in this verse that demonstrates the superiority of the Son. Not only did the Father appoint the Son as heir of all things (v. 2b), but the Son was present at the creation—intimately involved in the creation of all that is.

3a. “His Son is the radiance of his glory

Glory is characteristic of God, and refers to God’s awe-inspiring majesty. God shared this glory with Jesus. Jesus’ glory was revealed at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36) and his death and resurrection (Luke 24:26).

3b. “the very image of his substance

The Greeks used the word *translated as “image”* to speak of an engraved image that could be used to create an exact replica of the original. Thus it is especially appropriate in this verse to describe the Son, whose character exactly replicated that of the Father.

3c. “and upholding all things by the word of his power

The Greek word *for upholding* means “to bear up” or “to govern” or “to direct.”

3d. “when he had by himself made purification for our sins

The Greek word *for purification* is means “to make clean.” From those words, we get our word cathartic, which we usually use in one of two ways:

- We talk about the emotional catharsis (cleansing) that we experience when we discuss our problems with a good listener.
- We use the word cathartic to refer to laxatives, which cleanse us from the inside.

3e. “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high

Having accomplished his mission, the Son ascended to the heavenly kingdom from which he had descended for the Incarnation and took his seat at the right hand of the Father (see Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

4a b. “having become so much better than the angels as he has inherited a more excellent name than they have

In that culture, people considered a person’s name to be more than a simple label to identify that person. They believed that something of the person’s identity was tied up in the name—that the name expressed something of the person’s essential character. As is obvious from this verse, they also assumed that a name—at least some names—possessed something of the power of the one who wore that name.

5a. “For to which of the angels did he say at any time, ‘You are my Son. Today have I become your father?’

The quoted verse comes from Psalm 2:7.

In its original context, it referred to a situation where kings were plotting against Israel, but God was promising to enable his people to defeat their oppressors. However, early Christians regarded this verse as messianic, and in Acts 13:33 Paul applies it to Jesus.

5b. “and again, ‘I will be to him a Father, and he will be to me a Son?

This verse is from 2 Samuel 7:14.

6a. “Again, when he brings in the firstborn into the world

The Israelites and Jewish law favored the firstborn male in the family:

6b. “he says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship him

This quotation comes from the Septuagint (the LXX, the Greek version of the Old Testament)—an approximation of Psalm 97:7. The Hebrew translates, “All the gods must worship him.”

7. “Of the angels he says, ‘Who makes his angels winds, and his servants a flame of fire

The quotation is from Psalm 104:4, which says that God makes “the winds his angels or messengers, flames of fire his servants.”

Hebrew poetry often cites two parallel lines, as this verse does. In this case, angels or messengers parallels servants—both messenger and servant being subordinate—inferior to the Son.

8-9. “But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows

The quotation is from Psalm 45:6-7. In its original context, it referred to a king of Israel, but the Israelites considered it to be messianic in nature—as does the author of Hebrews. The Messiah will reign forever and ever in uprightness and righteousness. God has anointed the Messiah above his fellows—above the angels.

10-12. “And, ‘You, Lord, in the beginning, laid the foundation of the earth. The heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish, but you continue. They all will grow old like a garment does. As a mantle, you will roll them up, and they will be changed; but you are the same. Your years will not fail

The quotation is from Psalm 102:25-27. In its original context, “Lord” means God, but the author feels at liberty to apply this verse to the Messiah.

Bibliography

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