

*School of the Word*  
**Hebrews**  
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## HEBREWS 1:1-4

### Sequence

- ▶ First impressions of Hebrews and questions
- ▶ Introductory matters
- ▶ Layout of the document as a whole
- ▶ Reading Hebrews 1:1-4
- ▶ Conversation

### Introductory matters

- ▶ Hebrews  
P46 earliest extant copy from about 200 ad.
- ▶ Writing?  
Letter?  
Sermon really  
Very close to 1 Peter and 1 Clement
- ▶ Time?  
After the destruction of the Temple; most likely post 70 ad.  
Information re the cult is taken not from experience but from the Pentateuch  
Used by 1 Clement, so before 95/96 ad.

### Author and audience

- ▶ Author?
- ▶ Paul? (Barnabas, Apollos, Luke, Epaphras, Mary [!])
- ▶ Within the Pauline tradition; not aware of Gospels or even stories about Jesus
- ▶ Master of Greek language and rhetoric; highly educated (Middle Platonism); The Greek Old Testament (LXX) is his Bible
- ▶ Audience?
- ▶ The title "To the Hebrews" is secondary, although on the earliest manuscript
- ▶ Mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians, experiencing some kind of harassment
- ▶ Mostly like written to Roman Christians by a Roman Christian teacher from abroad

### *Christians for some time*

Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity, not laying this foundation again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, teaching about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this is what we intend to do, if God permits. (Heb 6:1–3)

### *Christians experiencing some suffering for their faith*

But remember the former days when you endured a harsh conflict of suffering after you were enlightened. At times you were publicly exposed to abuse and afflictions, and at other times you came to share with others who were treated in that way. For in fact you shared the sufferings of those in prison, and you accepted the confiscation of your belongings with joy, because you knew that you certainly had a better and lasting possession. So do not throw away your confidence, because it has great reward. (Heb 10:32–35)

Therefore, strengthen your listless hands and your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but be healed. (Heb 12:12–13)

We must go out to him, then, outside the camp, bearing the abuse he experienced. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. (Heb 13:13–14)

You have not yet resisted to the point of bloodshed in your struggle against sin. (Heb 13:14; 12:4)

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Do not neglect hospitality, because through it some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Heb 13:2)

Your conduct must be free from the love of money and you must be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you and I will never abandon you.” (Heb 13:5) And do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for God is pleased with such sacrifices. (Heb 13:16)

#### *The language of property*

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#### *Weakening of faith*

On this topic we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing. For though you should in fact be teachers by this time, you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God’s utterances. You have gone back to needing milk, not solid food. (Heb 5:11–12)

Thus we must make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by following the same pattern of disobedience. (Heb 4:11)

But we are not among those who shrink back and thus perish, but are among those who have faith and preserve their souls. (Heb 10:39)

And see to it that no one becomes an immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that later when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no opportunity for repentance, although he sought the blessing with tears. (Heb 12:16–17)

#### *Weakening of community belonging*

And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works, not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near. (Heb 10:24–25)

[The author doesn’t use the word “church” very much; here’s the other occurrence: saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you.” (Heb 2:12)]

#### **Puzzle and context**

- ▶ Jesus himself was a layman and not a priest
- ▶ As a follower of John the Baptist, he was critical of the Temple

- ▶ Jesus by-passed the OT priestly system and brought people into direct contact with God
- ▶ “On this topic we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing.” (Hebrews 5:11)

## Layout

### *Concentric*

- ▶ Announcement of the subject to be discussed (e.g., 1:1-4)
- ▶ Inclusions which indicate the boundaries of the developments (e.g., 3:1 and 4:14)
- ▶ Variation of literary genre: doctrine or exhortation (e.g., 2:1-4)
- ▶ Words which characterise a development (e.g., angels in chs. 1 and 2); Transition by immediate repetition of an expression or of a word which is termed a hook word (e.g., Melchizedek in ch. 7)
- ▶ Symmetric arrangements (1:5-14 and 2:5-18)

Section	Verses	Subject	Genre
	1:1-4	Introduction	
I	1:5-2:18	A name higher than the angels	Doctrine
II	A. 3:1-4:14 B. 4:15-5:10	Jesus, trustworthy high priest Jesus, compassionate high priest	Exhortation Doctrine
III	5:11-6:20 A. 7:1-27 B. 8:1-9:28 C. 10:1-18 10:19-39	Opening exhortation Jesus high priest according to the order Melchizedek Jesus high priest, perfected Jesus high priest cause of eternal salvation Closing exhortation	Exhortation Doctrine Doctrine Doctrine Exhortation
IV	A. 11:1-40 B. 12:1-13	The faith of the ancestors The necessary endurance	Doctrine Exhortation
V	12:14-13:19  13:20-21	The right ways  Conclusion	Exhortation

### *Rhetorical*

- ▶ Type of Rhetoric: forensic, deliberative and display
- ▶ Synkrisis (honour / shame)
- ▶ Layout (“disposition”)
- ▶ Argument (“invention”)
  - Word (“logos”)
  - Character (“ethos”)
  - Emotions (“pathos”)
- ▶ Introduction (1:1-2:4)
- ▶ Thesis (2:5-9)
- ▶ Proofs (2:10-12:27)
  - I. Jesus entered glory through suffering (2:10-6:20)
  - II. Jesus gives access to God (7:1-10:39)
  - III. Perseverance in faith leads to glory (11:1-12:27)
- ▶ Conclusion (12:28-13:21)

- ▶ Letter ending (13:22-25)

### Hebrews 1:1-4

Heb 1:1 In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; 2 in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,

Heb 1:3 who is the refulgence of his glory,  
the very imprint of his being,  
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.  
When he had accomplished purification from sins,  
he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,  
4 as far superior to the angels  
as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

*Heb 1:1 Polymerōs kai polytropōs palai o theos lalēsas tois patrasin en tois prophētais  
2 ep eschatou tōn ēmerōn toutōn elalēsen ēmin en uiō, on ethēken klēronomon pantōn, di ou  
kai epoiēsen tous aiōnas;*

*Heb 1:3 os ōn apaugasma tēs doxēs kai charaktēr tēs ypostaseōs autou,  
pherōn te ta panta tō rēmati tēs dynameōs autou,  
katharismōn tōn amartiōn poiēsamenos  
ekathisen en dexia tēs megalōsynēs en ypsēlois,  
4 tosoutō kreittōn genomenos tōn aggelōn  
osō diaphorōteron par autous keklēronomēken onoma.*

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- God spoke and God speaks (the usage of Hebrews)
- Past revelation was episodic and partial
- It took various forms: voices, events, visions, dreams, stories, and theophanies etc.
- It was through the prophets of old (meaning historical and prophetic books)
- Present revelation
- To us, in the end times
- Through a son
- He is God's heir (cf. Psalm 2 in the NT and in Hebrews)
- This son was God's agent in creation (cf. Prov 8:22–31; Wis 7:22, creation through "wisdom" / sophia)
- Takes us back to a long line of reflection in the Wisdom Books

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- Perhaps elements of a hymn cf. Phil 2:6–11; Col 1:15–20; 1 Tim 3:16
- Refulgence / imprint / sustaining: cf. Wisdom 7:22b-28 (next slide)
- 3de: priestly activity; cf. Psalm 110 to be used frequently. NB v. 1 and v. 4.
- Superior to the angels — an introduction to 12:5-2:16.
- NB superior / more excellent - important words throughout.
- Note the omission of Jesus, Christ and Lord!!

### Wisdom 7:22b-28

There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy,

unique, manifold, subtle,  
 mobile, clear, unpolluted,  
 distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen,  
 irresistible, 23 beneficent, humane,  
 steadfast, sure, free from anxiety,  
 all-powerful, overseeing all,  
 and penetrating through all spirits  
 that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.

24 For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;  
 because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.

25 For she is a breath (*atmis*) of the power of God,  
 and a pure emanation (*apporia*) of the glory of the Almighty;  
 therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

26 For she is a reflection (*apaugasma*) of eternal light,  
 a spotless mirror (*esoptron*) of the working of God,  
 and an image (*eikon*) of his goodness.

27 Although she is but one, she can do all things,  
 and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;  
 in every generation she passes into holy souls  
 and makes them friends of God, and prophets;

28 for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.