**Week 2: Introduction: The Supremacy of Jesus Christ**

**Reading: Hebrews 1:1–4**

**The Place of the Passage**

The opening verses of Hebrews present Jesus as the final and definitive revelation of God to humanity. The author begins by establishing that “Long ago, at many times and in many ways” God spoke to his people ([Hebrews 1:1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A1/)). But now, in these last days, God has conclusively spoken through Jesus—his beloved Son, the Creator, Sustainer, and Savior of the world ([Hebrews 1:2–3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A2%E2%80%933/)), and an exact image of the Father ([Hebrews 1:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A3/)). The greatness of Jesus is finally depicted by his exaltation at the right hand of God above all earthly and heavenly beings ([Hebrews 1:4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A4/)).

**The Big Picture**

[Hebrews 1:1–4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A1%E2%80%934/) draws our hearts to worship in light of the radiant majesty and unrivaled power of Jesus Christ.

**Reflection and Discussion**

Read through the passage for this study, [Hebrews 1:1–4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A1%E2%80%934/). After reading the passage, reread the following listed portions and record your own responses to the questions—first with regard to Jesus as divine revelation ([Hebrews 1:1–2a](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A1%E2%80%932a/)), then on Jesus’ person, work, and status ([Hebrews 1:2b–4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A2b%E2%80%934/)).

1. **Jesus as Divine Revelation (**[**Hebrews 1:1–2a**](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A1%E2%80%932a/)**)**

God has spoken. In the introductory verses of Hebrews, the author sweeps over the span of God’s progressive revelation and lands on Jesus Christ as the climax of his communication. Considering some of the miraculous ways God spoke to the patriarchs and prophets in the Old Testament, what is the author attempting to demonstrate by contrasting how God previously spoke, and how God, through his Son, has now definitively spoken to his people ([Hebrews 1:1–2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A1%E2%80%932/))?

In [Hebrews 1:1–2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A1%E2%80%932/), the author of Hebrews contrasts revelation in the Old Testament with the finality of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ in four areas. Compare the eras of revelation, the recipients of revelation, the agents of revelation, and the ways in which revelation was expressed.

Jesus is the definitive revelation of God in history. The implication of this truth is that God’s revelation in the Old Testament was sufficient for that era but incomplete. How does the revelation of Jesus “in these last days” affect how we read the complete canon of Scripture ([Luke 24:27](https://www.esv.org/verses/Luke%2024%3A27/); [John 5:39–40](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%205%3A39%E2%80%9340/))?

1. **Jesus: Person, Work, and Status (**[**Hebrews 1:2b–4**](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A2b%E2%80%934/)**)**

Many scholars believe that the titles “Son” and “heir” applied to Jesus in [Hebrews 1:2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A2/) are allusions to [Psalm 2:7–8](https://www.esv.org/verses/Psalm%202%3A7%E2%80%938/), a royal coronation Psalm recalling God’s pledge to David’s heir in [2 Samuel 7:12–16](https://www.esv.org/verses/2%20Samuel%207%3A12%E2%80%9316/). In ancient Israel, it was the firstborn son who had the right of inheritance. By virtue of his royal sonship, Jesus is the heir of the universe, including the world to come ([Hebrews 2:5–9](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%202%3A5%E2%80%939/))—which is a position of blessing and glory. What is the author highlighting in Jesus’ unique relationship and responsibility concerning the universe?

In [Hebrews 1:2–3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A2%E2%80%933/), the author asserts that all of God’s creation belongs to Jesus because it was through his agency that all things came into existence and through his power that the universe is upheld. The preexistence, authority, power, and full deity of Jesus are evident in his role in creating and upholding the universe ([Hebrews 1:10](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A10/); see [John 1:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%201%3A3/); [1 Corinthians 8:6](https://www.esv.org/verses/1%20Cor.%208%3A6/); [Colossians 1:16](https://www.esv.org/verses/Col.%201%3A16/)). What do these truths communicate to us about the purpose of creation and Jesus’ dominion over his handiwork?

In [Hebrews 1:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A3/), Jesus is described as the “radiance of the glory of God.” In biblical literature, “glory” often refers to the luminous manifestation of God’s person (see [Exodus 16:7; 33:18](https://www.esv.org/verses/Ex.%2016%3A7%3B%2033%3A18/); [Isiah 40:5; 60:1, 19](https://www.esv.org/verses/Isa.%2040%3A5%3B%2060%3A1%2C%2019/)). Concerning the significance of the word “radiance,” many have noted that the moon reflects light whereas the sun radiates light because it is its source. What does this tell us about Jesus as the radiance of God and our role as reflectors of God’s glory?

[Hebrews 1:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A3/) proclaims that Jesus is “the exact imprint of God’s nature.” To the initial readers, this language would have been reminiscent of an impression placed as an image, as on a coin. Simply put, Jesus is the true image of God ([2 Corinthians. 4:4](https://www.esv.org/verses/2%20Cor.%204%3A4/); [Colossians 1:15](https://www.esv.org/verses/Col.%201%3A15/)). How do these words help us understand what Jesus taught in [John 14:8–11](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%2014%3A8%E2%80%9311/)?

After making purification for sins, Jesus sat down at “the right hand of God.” Many scholars believe this is an overt allusion to [Psalm 110:1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Psalm%20110%3A1/). This Psalm is quoted directly in [Hebrews 1:13](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A13/) and alluded to in [Hebrews 8:1; 10:12; 12:2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%208%3A1%3B%2010%3A12%3B%2012%3A2/). What is being communicated when the author writes that Christ “sat down at the right hand of God?”

Jesus is declared superior not only to the prophets, but also to the angels, because of his more excellent inherited name ([Hebrews 1:4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A4/)). The author seems to be echoing [2 Samuel 7](https://www.esv.org/verses/2%20Samuel%207/) concerning the honor conferred on Jesus as the Davidic heir. What is the significance of distinguishing Jesus from the angels in the position of the royal heir?

**Definition**: Angel

A supernatural messenger of God, often sent to carry out his will or to assist human beings in carrying out his will. Though angels are more powerful than humans and often instill awe, they are not to be worshiped ([Colossians 2:18](https://www.esv.org/verses/Col.%202%3A18/); [Revelation 22:8–9](https://www.esv.org/verses/Rev.%2022%3A8%E2%80%939/)). The Bible does, however, note various appearances of an “angel of the Lord,” apparently a physical manifestation of God himself.

Read the following three sections on **Gospel Glimpses**, **Whole-Bible Connections**, and **Theological Soundings**. Then take time to reflect on the Personal Implications these sections may have for your walk with the Lord.

**Gospel Glimpses**

**PURIFICATION OF SIN.** The Bible is clear that sin and its corruption have destructive implications for humanity and for all of creation. The need for purification from sin is part of the overarching storyline of the Bible. The cosmic scope of sin sets the stage for cosmic redemption by the atoning death of Jesus. In the Old Testament, atoning sacrifices were established for God’s people to mediate punishment for their sin and obtain cleansing through blood ([Leviticus 16](https://www.esv.org/verses/Leviticus%2016/)). Atoning sacrifices also cleansed the objects of the earthly temple patterned after the cosmos, the temple dwelling of God. In Hebrews we see that the death of Jesus obtained the needed purification of sins and the cleansing of the human conscience before God ([Hebrews 1:3; 9:14](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A3%3B%209%3A14/)). Jesus’ sacrifice also extended to the purification of “heavenly things” ([Hebrews 9:23](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%209%3A23/)) and is therefore cosmic in scope. The heart of the gospel is the good news that the blood of Jesus atoned for sin and has implications for the entire cosmos.

**COMPLETE SALVATION.** Right before Jesus took his last breath on the cross, he proclaimed, “It is finished” ([John 19:30](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%2019%3A30/)). The work that the Father had sent him to accomplish was complete—namely, his perfect sacrifice for our sin was finished (Hebrews 1:3; 9:11–12, 25–28). The author of Hebrews points out that once Jesus’ work on the cross, and in the resurrection, was complete, he sat down at the right hand of God, underscoring the finality of his work and status. Unlike the Levitical priests who made imperfect sacrifices year after year to cover sins, Jesus made the perfect once-for-all sacrifice that eradicated sin—and then he took his seat to reign forever ([Hebrews 10:11–12](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%2010%3A11%E2%80%9312/)).

**Definition**: Sin

Any violation of or failure to adhere to the commands of God, or the desire to do so.

**Whole-Bible Connections**

**REVELATION AND REDEMPTION.** Revelation in human language is essential to the communication of God’s redemptive plan through Jesus Christ. Without verbal revelation, humanity cannot have access to the good news of God’s redemption. The revelation found in the Old Testament does not stand on its own, however; it is incomplete without its conclusion and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. “In these last days” we come to understand that the persons and institutions of the Old Testament point to the person and work of Jesus Christ, in whom we find redemption ([Hebrews 1:1–2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A1%E2%80%932/)).

**THE PERFECT SON.** In the Bible, sonship is related to familial likeness, lineage, and inheritance. Not only was God’s first “son” Adam created in his image, Adam also bore sons in his own likeness, and thus in the image of God ([Genesis 1:28; 5:1–3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%201%3A28%3B%205%3A1%E2%80%933/)). God later refers to Israel as his corporate “son” ([Exodus 4:22–23](https://www.esv.org/verses/Ex.%204%3A22%E2%80%9323/); [Psalm 2:7](https://www.esv.org/verses/Ps.%202%3A7/); [Hosea 11:1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hos.%2011%3A1/)) and his “firstborn” ([Deuteronomy. 33:17](https://www.esv.org/verses/Deut.%2033%3A17/); [Psalm 2:7](https://www.esv.org/verses/Ps.%202%3A7/); [Jeremiah 31:9](https://www.esv.org/verses/Jer.%2031%3A9/); Ezra 6:58). Both Adam and Israel failed to be what the Father desired. Both failed to do what God had required of them as “sons.” Their disobedience contrasts starkly with the flawless obedience of Jesus, the divine-human son, who perfectly images the Father and brings him honor ([Proverbs 10:1; 15:20; 23:15](https://www.esv.org/verses/Prov.%2010%3A1%3B%2015%3A20%3B%2023%3A15/)).

**GLORY OF GOD.** In biblical language, the glory of God is an image of his perfection, beauty, and greatness. In [Genesis 1:27](https://www.esv.org/verses/Genesis%201%3A27/), we are told that Adam was created in the image of God. As God’s image-bearer, Adam—along with the rest of humanity—was created to reflect God’s glory. But sin destroyed the pure reflection of God’s glory in Adam and his children. Unmarred by sin, Jesus is declared the second, and last, Adam, who fully represents God’s image and flawlessly radiates his glory ([Romans 5:12–21](https://www.esv.org/verses/Rom.%205%3A12%E2%80%9321/)). Yet unlike Adam, Jesus is the exact imprint of God and is identical in substance to God ([Hebrews 1:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%201%3A3/)).

**Theological Soundings**

**CREATION.** The biblical story begins with a majestic description of how God created the heavens and earth to be his dwelling place and how it came to be inhabited by his creatures. In [Hebrews 1:2–3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A2%E2%80%933/), we are told that Jesus is not only the instrument of the original creative act in [Genesis 1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Genesis%201/), but is also intimately involved in the continued care of creation (compare the description of Jesus in [John 1:1–18](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%201%3A1%E2%80%9318/)). Jesus was the agent in whom and through whom the entire universe of space and time came into existence. As the image of God incarnate, Jesus is the point of contact between the Creator and his universe. He is the frame of reference for the original purpose and for the post-fall renewal of God’s creation ([Colossians 1:15–23](https://www.esv.org/verses/Col.%201%3A15%E2%80%9323/)).

**PROVIDENCE.** The doctrine of providence teaches that God sustains the world he has created and directs it to his appointed purposes. In [Hebrews 1:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A3/), we see that God is personally involved with his creation in sustaining and preserving it. His providential dominion extends over all things in the universe; all of creation is sustained and carried forward by Jesus’ powerful word. Moreover, Jesus came to provide the final and complete purification for sins.

**Personal Implications**

Take time to reflect on the implications of [Hebrews 1:1–4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A1%E2%80%934/) for your own life today. Note the personal implications for your walk with the Lord in light of the (1) Gospel Glimpses, (2) Whole-Bible Connections, (3) Theological Soundings, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses
2. Whole-Bible Connections
3. Theological Soundings
4. [Hebrews 1:1–4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Hebrews%201%3A1%E2%80%934/)

**As You Finish…**

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord’s blessing and help as you continue in this study of Hebrews. And take a moment also to look back through the study questions you received during week 1, to reflect on some things that the Lord may be teaching you and to note things to review again in the future.