

Session 2 The Son's Identity and Superiority

Before the Silence: A Study of Hebrews

Session 2 | Hebrews 1:2-4

Pattern For The Hebrews Outlines

Each passage should be handled in a repeated flow:

- **Verse marker** - identify the exact text being handled.
- **KJV text** - keep the wording visible before interpretation.
- **Exegesis** - explain the grammar, argument, and flow of thought.
- **Closely relevant cross-references** - use passages that actually control or illuminate the text.
- **Text and translation notes** - include CT/TR differences, KJV wording, and key terms where they matter.
- **Theological insights** - not every verse needs this section, but sometimes a related or even tangential matter arises that is worth noting.
- **What the passage does not say** - warn against common over-readings without chasing every possible error.

God Has Spoken In The Son (Hebrews 1:2b-4)

Hebrews 1:1-4 is one long opening sentence in the KJV. Session 1 handled the contrast between former revelation and God's speaking "in these last days" by His Son. God has spoken by His Son, and Hebrews now identifies that Son. The rest of the sentence shows why His word carries final authority for Israel.

The movement is simple:

- **Hebrews 1:2b** - The Son is heir and creator.
- **Hebrews 1:3a** - The Son perfectly manifests God's glory and person.
- **Hebrews 1:3b** - The Son sustains all things.
- **Hebrews 1:3c** - The Son purged our sins.
- **Hebrews 1:3d-4** - The Son sat down at God's right hand and is better than angels.

Hebrews 1:2b - Heir of All Things

whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Exegesis

- **"Whom"** refers back to the Son through whom God has spoken.
- **"He hath appointed heir of all things"** places the Son in the position of inheritance, dominion, and final possession.
- The inheritance language is royal. Hebrews is not merely saying that the Son owns religious truth; He is heir of **all things**.
- **"By whom also he made the worlds"** reaches backward from inheritance to creation. The one who receives all things as heir is also the one through whom God made the worlds.
- The order matters: Hebrews first speaks of the Son's appointed future possession, then grounds that possession in His role in creation.
- **"Worlds"** is broader than physical matter alone. The term can carry the sense of ages or ordered realms. The Son is not a local messenger inside history; He stands over the ages.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Psalm 2:7-8** - The Son is given the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.
- **John 1:1-3** - All things were made by the Word, and nothing made was made without Him.
- **Colossians 1:15-17** - All things were created by Him and for

Him, and by Him all things consist.

- **1 Corinthians 8:6** - There is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.

Text And Translation Notes

- No major CT/TR issue in this clause changes the doctrine.
- **"Worlds"** translates a term often associated with ages. The KJV wording is defensible because the ages are not abstract time periods detached from the created order. Hebrews will speak of both the present order and "the world to come" in Hebrews 2:5.
- **"Appointed heir"** does not mean Jesus became God later. He was already the eternal Son. This is more like a prince being publicly named as the rightful heir: the announcement does not make him the son, but shows his official place and royal authority.

Theological Implications

- If Jesus, the fullness of the Godhead bodily, is heir, this displays God's regard for the physical creation. Too often the church has created a preference for reading all things spiritually, and has even treated the physical as less than godly. In the case of the Gnostics, the physical was treated as evil.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say the Son is a created being who later earned promotion.

- It does **not** say the Father made the worlds without the Son and later gave Him a role.
- It does **not** collapse the Son into a mere prophet. The Son is the heir and agent of creation.

- It does **not** teach that “all things” are already visibly subjected in experience. Hebrews will later say, “But now we see not yet all things put under him” (Hebrews 2:8).

Hebrews 1:3a - Brightness of His Glory

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,

Exegesis

- **“Who being”** continues the description of the Son. Hebrews is not moving to a second subject.
- **“The brightness of his glory”** means the Son is the radiance or outshining of God’s glory. He does not merely point toward God’s glory from a distance.
- **“The express image of his person”** means the Son exactly represents God’s underlying reality.
- The issue is stronger than moral resemblance. The Son makes God known because He shares and perfectly expresses God’s nature.
- Hebrews therefore begins with a Christological claim before it begins its priestly argument. The priesthood of Christ rests on the identity of Christ.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **John 1:14** - The Word was made flesh, and His glory was beheld.
- **John 14:9** - “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”
- **2 Corinthians 4:4-6** - Christ is the image of God, and the light of God’s glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.
- **Colossians 1:15** - Christ is “the image of the invisible God.”

Text And Translation Notes

- No major CT/TR difference here changes the reading.
- **“Brightness”** should not be weakened to a reflected glow, as

though the Son were merely a mirror. The point is manifestation of divine glory.

- **“Express image”** comes from language of exact impression or representation.
- **“Person”** translates a word that can refer to substance, reality, or underlying being. In Hebrews 11:1 the related idea is rendered “substance.” Here the KJV’s “person” points to God’s real being, not merely an outward role.

Theological Implications

- The Son is not a secondary glow standing away from God. The brightness belongs to the glory itself, like light streaming from the sun. The Son personally shines out God’s own glory because He shares the divine nature.
- **“Person”** refers to the Father, whose real being the Son perfectly expresses. This also helps us think about being made in the image of God: as the Son reveals the Father, so the body should reveal the soul, substance, and person within. Our bodies are not disposable shells; they are meant to reflect the person.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say the Son is only similar to God.
- It does **not** say Jesus is one more manifestation among many equal religious revelations.
- It does **not** erase the distinction between Father and Son. The Son is the brightness of **his** glory and express image of **his** person.
- It does **not** make Christ’s deity a later theological addition. Hebrews opens with it.

Hebrews 1:3b - Upholding All Things

and upholding all things by the word of his power,

Exegesis

- **“Upholding all things”** moves from creation to preservation. The Son does not merely begin the worlds; He sustains all things.
- **“By the word of his power”** joins speech and authority. The Son’s word is not advisory; it is effectual.
- The same passage that says God has spoken by the Son also says the Son upholds all things by His powerful word.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Colossians 1:17** - “By him all things consist.”
- **Psalm 33:6, 9** - The Lord creates and establishes by His word.

Text And Translation Notes

- No major CT/TR issue in this clause changes the doctrine.

Theological Implications

- Even in the time of “the silence of God,” the created order is held together by **“the word of his power.”** His word established the laws of the physical order, and only His word can change them.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say Christ merely created the world and then stepped away from it.
- It does **not** say the Son’s word is merely advisory. His word is effectual and sustaining.

Hebrews 1:3c - Purged Our Sins

when he had by himself purged our sins,

Exegesis

- **“When he had by himself purged our sins”** introduces the sacrificial and priestly theme that will dominate Hebrews.
- **“Purged”** is cleansing language. Hebrews will later unfold this through sacrifice, blood, conscience, priesthood, and sanctuary access.
- **“By himself”** stresses the sufficiency and personal accomplishment of the purging work. His work was complete, and thus was ready to stand as an available offer for Israel’s sins.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Hebrews 9:12-14** - Christ obtains eternal redemption and purges the conscience.
- **Hebrews 10:10-14** - Christ’s one offering stands in contrast to repeated sacrifices.
- **Titus 2:14** - Christ gave Himself to redeem and purify a people.

Text And Translation Notes

- This is the main textual issue in Hebrews 1:2-4.
- The KJV reads **“when he had by himself purged our sins.”**
- The received-text wording includes the emphatic idea represented by **“by himself”** and also reads **“our sins.”**
- Many critical-text translations omit **“by himself”** and often

read simply “made purification for sins.”

- The shorter critical-text reading still teaches Christ’s purification of sins, but the KJV/TR wording makes the personal sufficiency of the work more explicit.
- **“Purged”** is better than a vague “dealt with.” The word belongs to the cleansing logic of Hebrews.

Theological Implications

- The ESV says, **“After making purification for sins,”** and similar wording appears in many modern translations. The omission of **“by himself”** and the specification of **“our”** sins can cause the reader to miss the Levitical and Israel-centered nature of this verse. Other passages speak directly to the world today, such as **2 Corinthians 5:19**, but this verse should be read with a Hebrew mindset.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say Christ merely made purification possible if later priests complete it.
- It does **not** say sin is purged by moral improvement, Temple loyalty, or angelic mediation.
- It does **not** yet give the full mechanics of atonement; Hebrews will develop that argument over several chapters.
- It does **not** mean every person is automatically reconciled apart from the later warnings and faith-response demanded in the book.

Hebrews 1:3d - Seated at God’s Right Hand

sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Exegesis

- **“Sat down”** signals completed work, exaltation, and royal-priestly position.
- In the Levitical order, priests stood daily because the sacrificial work was repeated. Hebrews will later make that contrast explicit.
- **“The right hand”** is the place of honor, authority, and expectation.
- **“The Majesty on high”** is a reverent way of referring to God in His heavenly authority.
- This statement prepares the reader for Psalm 110, one of the controlling Old Testament texts behind Hebrews.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Psalm 110:1** - “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”
- **Mark 16:19** - The Lord is received up into heaven and sits on the right hand of God.
- **Acts 2:32-36** - Peter applies Psalm 110 to the risen and exalted

Christ.

- **Hebrews 8:1** - Hebrews returns to the point: “We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”
- **Hebrews 10:11-13** - Standing priests are contrasted with Christ, who sat down after one sacrifice.

Text And Translation Notes

- No major CT/TR issue here materially changes the text.
- **“Majesty”** emphasizes divine greatness and authority, not an impersonal force.
- **“On high”** locates the Son’s present session in heavenly glory, not merely in earthly memory or influence.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say Christ is inactive. Sitting denotes completed sacrifice and enthroned authority, not passivity.
- It does **not** say all enemies are already experientially subdued. Psalm 110 includes an “until.”
- It does **not** replace the coming kingdom with a purely inward spiritual experience. Hebrews will still speak of “the world to come” (Hebrews 2:5).

Hebrews 1:4 - Better Than the Angels

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

Exegesis

- **“Being made”** does not mean the Son was created. It speaks of His manifested position after the purging of sins and His session at God’s right hand.
- **“So much better than the angels”** introduces the first major comparison in Hebrews.
- Angels mattered deeply in Jewish thought because they were associated with heavenly service and the giving of the law.
- Hebrews does not insult angels. It puts angels in their proper place beneath the Son.
- **“By inheritance”** connects back to verse 2. The heir of all things has a name and position superior to angels.
- **“A more excellent name”** is not merely a better label. It refers to rank, identity, and revealed status.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Deuteronomy 33:2** - The law is associated with holy ones/angelic attendance at Sinai.
- **Acts 7:53** - Israel received the law “by the disposition of angels.”
- **Galatians 3:19** - The law was “ordained by angels.”

- **Psalm 2:7** - “Thou art my Son” will be quoted immediately in Hebrews 1:5.
- **Hebrews 2:2-3** - The warning depends on the comparison: if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, how much more the word spoken by the Lord?

Text And Translation Notes

- No major CT/TR issue here changes the doctrine.
- **“Being made”** can mislead modern readers if isolated from the context. The verse follows the Son’s eternal glory, creative agency, sustaining power, purging of sins, and heavenly session.
- **“Better”** is one of Hebrews’ controlling ideas. The Son is not merely newer than angels; He is superior in identity, office, and inheritance.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say angels are evil or useless. Hebrews 1:14 will call them ministering spirits.
- It does **not** say Jesus became the Son only after resurrection.
- It does **not** say the Son is one angel promoted above the rest.
- It does **not** make angelic revelation false. Hebrews 2:2 says the word spoken by angels was steadfast. The point is superiority, not contradiction.

One-Sentence Summary

Hebrews 1:2b-4 presents the Son as heir, creator, revealer, sustainer, sin-purger, enthroned Lord, and superior to angels, so that

His word cannot be treated as one more religious message.