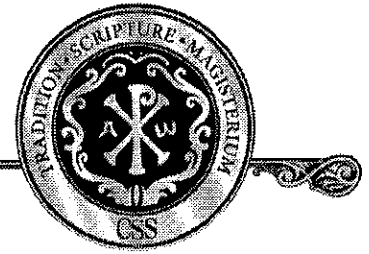


# The Book of Hebrews

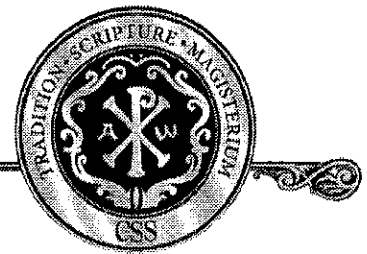


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# The Book of Hebrews



## Introduction

### Authorship

The authorship of Hebrews has long been debated and various candidates are proposed, though scholars have come to no consensus. Judging from the text, the original readers appear to have known the author (13:18-19), but their knowledge has not been preserved and the letter itself does not tell us who he is.

The Eastern Church, from antiquity, attributed the epistle to St. Paul (and, it should be noted, it was probably the Eastern Church—in Judea—which was the intended audience). However, in the West, because of the misuse of Hebrews by heretics, Pauline authorship was regarded with more hesitation in the early centuries (till two of the earliest great Western Fathers—Saints Jerome and Augustine—took the eastern view in the fourth century). After that, the presumption of Pauline authorship reigned until the sixteenth century, when doubts began to be heard again and eventually hardened into something like a prejudice. In modernity, the book's polished style, unique subject, and vocabulary differ so much from the other letters of Paul that a number of scholars have refused to accept or even consider Pauline authorship. However, this leaves the question of who else might have written it and here there is no consensus. Candidates include Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, and Clement of Rome, among a few others. But the lack of a date leaves all these speculations in the realm of conjecture.

While we would not dogmatically insist upon a return to earlier consensus, we would argue that there has been something of a whiplash in rejecting Pauline authorship. For despite the many differences with writings which are certainly by Paul, it is also true that there are many convergences and parallels with Paul's language, thought and theology which establish beyond doubt a connection between Hebrews and the Pauline tradition--and arguably with Paul himself. These differences could have very much to do with the sort of book Hebrews is (i.e. a carefully written homily), the subject matter (an exhortation written in the white hot heat of controversy over the temptation to abandon the Church and return to Judaism in the Jewish people's hour of grave crisis), and the intended audience (Palestinian Jews who were deeply suspicious of St. Paul). At minimum, the mention made of Timothy (13:23) probably places the author close to the circle of Paul and his missionary associates (Acts 16:1-3; Phil 2:19-24). So, while not insisting on Pauline authorship, we do note that the Pauline origin of Hebrews remains a better hypothesis than any other guess and we urge respectful attention be given to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, which addressed the question of the authorship of Hebrews (June 24, 1914), stating that, in light of the "abiding, unanimous and constant testimony of the Eastern Fathers with which, since the fourth century, the whole Western Church has been in perfect accord....[and] the continuous practice of the universal Church, we may [not] hesitate in reckoning the epistle... among the genuine epistles of the apostle Paul." That decision, while not infallible, does serve as an authoritative norm that offers reliable guidance.

## Date

It seems extremely likely that the Jerusalem Temple was still standing when Hebrews was written—placing its composition before 70 AD. Several clues point to this conclusion: (a) Heb 10:1-3 speaks as though the sacrificial rites of the Temple are still being celebrated; (b) Heb 8:13 speaks of the disappearance of the Old Covenant rites as imminent, but not accomplished; and (c) the author is silent about the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which, in a book devoted entirely to the passing away of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the New Covenant, would have constituted an overwhelming argument that the Old Covenant has now been fulfilled by the New. It is, therefore, extremely probable that Hebrews was written in the mid-60s AD as tensions between Jews and Romans were heating up, and as more and more pressure was being felt by Jewish Christians to choose between their faith in Christ and the increasingly threatened Jewish people from which they had come.

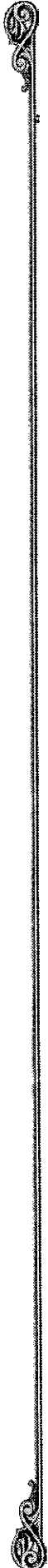
## Destination & Purpose

Hebrews does not identify its readers or its destination. Clearly the recipients were “sharers in Christ” (3:14) and had already suffered persecution (10:32-34). Moreover, they are obviously believers tempted to apostasy and a return to the rites and observances of the Mosaic Law. This is why the book focuses on arguing the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old and accords with the traditional view that the principal audience was Jewish Christians (i.e., “Hebrews”). Since so much of the book concerns itself specifically with the Levitical office and the sacrifices (which were only lawful in the Temple) it is reasonable to suggest Hebrews was written to a Judean community of Levitical priests who had converted and were now experiencing second thoughts (Acts 6:7), (though some suggest Hebrews was written to an Italian Jewish Christian community, based on Heb 13:24. At any rate, it is written to Jewish converts, who, because of pressure from non-Christian Jews, danger to their homeland in the years before the destruction of the Temple, and persistent doubts about the Faith, are tempted to revert back to traditional Judaism and its Temple-centered worship (3:12). Hebrews aims to keep these Jewish Christians in the fold by stressing the failure of the Old Covenant to free from sin (10:1-4) and by making clear the superiority of the New over the Old and the testimony to the New Covenant by the Old. Hebrews argues that the New Covenant does what the Old Covenant could not do: free us from sin.

## Themes & Characteristics

Hebrews is in all likelihood a homily rather than a letter. It lacks the typical features of ancient letters (introduction of sender, greetings, opening word of thanksgiving, etc.). In addition, the structure of the letter swings between doctrinal exposition and moral exhortation in classic homiletic form. Notably, the author describes it as a “word of exhortation” (13:22), which is a New Testament term for a synagogue sermon (Act 13:15). Finally, its well-ordered structure and finely crafted style suggest a work that was written with careful thought and planning.

The subject matter of Hebrews is unique. It reflects more profoundly on the priesthood of Jesus and focuses more on covenant theology than any other New Testament book. Hebrews sees Jesus as the heavenly high priest (4:14) who offered his blood once for all for our redemption (9:11-14) and who intercedes for us to the Father (7:25). It meditates on his role as the eternal priest of Psalm 110:4—a priest in the likeness of Melchizedek (7:1-19). It argues that the priesthood of Melchizedek is in every way superior to the Levitical priesthood since the Risen Jesus is subject to neither sin nor death (7:23). Moreover, the Levitical office, unlike Jesus’ priesthood, is not secured by oath (7:21), and is unable to take away sin (7:27; 10:1-4).



The superiority of the New Covenant over the Old is the major theme of Hebrews. This is founded on the identity of Christ as the “Son” and not a mere “servant” either angelic or merely human, as Moses was. Because Jesus is the Son of God, his saving mission can succeed where the Old Covenant failed, for Christ destroys the curse of death which resulted from the broken covenants made with Adam (2:5-15) and Israel (9:15-17) and pours out the blessings pledged in the divine covenants made with Abraham (2:16-18; 6:12-18) and David (1:5; 3:1-6; 5:5-6; 7:11-28). Accordingly, Hebrews focuses extensively on the “covenant moments” of biblical history, particularly when God himself swore oaths to bless the world through the offspring of Abraham (Gen 22:16-18) and to consecrate a royal Messiah from David’s house as an eternal priest (Ps 110:4). Hebrews is at pains to show that the New Covenant is not a departure from the Old, but a fulfillment of it and to show that, in fact, the New Covenant is prophesied in and awaited by, the Old. A New Covenant (8:8-12; Jer 31:31-34), a new priest (7:11-17; Ps 110:4), a new form of sacrifice (10:5-7; Ps 40:6-8), and a new invitation to enter the heavenly rest of God (3:7-11; Ps 95:7-11) all point inexorably to the New Covenant, which has now dawned, and to the passing away of the Old Rites, which will soon vanish from the world with the destruction of the Temple.

### **A Basic Rule of Scriptural Interpretation**


If you read a modern writer and he or she quips, “Use the Force, Luke,” you do not simply hear four words. You are instead reminded of the entire Star Wars saga and the huge number of associations that saga has in the minds of almost every person in the civilized world in the past 20 years. Similarly, if somebody says, “Oh say can you see?” it immediately calls to mind the entire “Star-Spangled Banner” and with it a host of images having to do with American patriotism. In short, literary or cultural references are like plants with a deep and complex root system. When you make a brief quotation or allusion, it connects with a dozen other ideas and images.

The same principle adheres with biblical quotations, particularly in a book as heavily focused on the Old Testament as Hebrews. For the biblical writers and their audience, the Old Testament is the cultural common coin. Everybody knows it as well as a modern audience knows Star Wars or the “Star-Spangled Banner.” They and their readers have minds steeped in it, and every biblical quotation they mention exists not in a vacuum, but in the context of a very deep and complex pattern of biblical passages and images. Thus, just as a modern writer would expect you to immediately recognize and recall the “Star-Spangled Banner” based on a few words or recognize the whole Star Wars universe in the glimpse of a light saber or the ominous sound of Darth Vader’s breathing, so the authors of Scripture knew—and knew their audience would recognize—the much larger context surrounding a given quote or allusion. So, for instance, when the gospel of John tells us John the Baptist describes Jesus as “Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29) the evangelist knows—and knows his hearers know—the significance of the sacrificial Passover Lamb and the entire story of the Exodus that goes with it. Because of this, he expects them to recognize how he is applying that imagery to their present circumstances.

This principle is a basic rule for dealing with every New Testament citation of the Old Testament and will govern the way in which we discuss the use of the Old Testament throughout this study.


### **Outline**

Following is an outline of the topics addressed within the 13 chapters of Hebrews. The book begins with an explanation of the Son of God and his relationship to the angels, moves through a detailed



description of Jesus the High Priest and his eternal sacrifice, and concludes with a summary of the Old Testament models of faith and the call of all believers to obey.

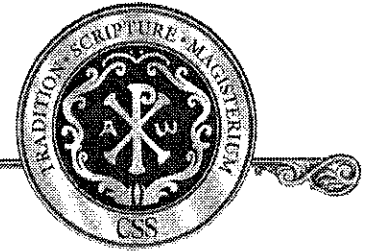
- (I) Introduction (1:1-4)
- (II) The Son Greater Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
  - (A) Messianic Enthronement (1:5-14)
  - (B) Exhortation to Faithfulness (2:1-4)
  - (C) Jesus Exalted in Humility (2:5-18)
- (III) Jesus: Faithful and Compassionate High Priest (3:1-5:10)
  - (A) Jesus, the Son, Superior to Moses, the Servant (3:1-6)
  - (B) Israel's Infidelity as a Caution (3:7-4:13)
  - (C) Jesus, Compassionate High Priest (4:14-5:10)
- (IV) Jesus' Eternal Priesthood and Eternal Sacrifice (5:11-10:39)
  - (A) An Exhortation to Spiritual Re-dedication (5:11-6:20)
  - (B) Jesus, Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek (7:1-28)
    - (a) Melchizedek and the Levitical Priesthood (7:1-10)
    - (b) The Levitical Priesthood Outmoded (7:11-28)
  - (C) The Eternal Sacrifice (8:1-9:28)
    - (a) The Old Covenant, Tabernacle, Worship (8:1-9:10)
      - (i) Heavenly priesthood of Jesus (8:1-6)
      - (ii) Old Covenant contrasted with the New (8:7-13)
      - (iii) Old Covenant Tabernacle (9:1-5)
      - (iv) Old Covenant worship (9:6-10)
    - (b) The Sacrifice of Jesus (9:11-28)

- 
- (i) Sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary (9:11-14)
  - (ii) The sacrifice of the new covenant (9:15-22)
  - (iii) The perfect sacrifice (9:23-28)
  - (D) Jesus' Sacrifice, Motive for Perseverance (10:1-39)
    - (a) The Many Sacrifices and the One Sacrifice (10:1-18)
    - (b) Assurance, Judgment, Remembrance (10:19-39)
  - (V) Old Testament Models of Faith and Our Call to Obey (11:1-12:29)
    - (A) The Faith of the Ancients (11:1-40)
    - (B) God's Treatment of His Sons (12:1-13)
    - (C) The Penalties of Disobedience (12:14-29)
  - (VI) Final Exhortation, Blessing, Greetings (13:1-25)





# The Book of Hebrews



## Lesson 1: Overture

### Introduction

Hebrews begins not as a letter but as what it most probably is—a homily exhorting Jewish Christians to remain faithful to the New Covenant that has been recently revealed. In masterful fashion it opens with a brief argument that encapsulates themes that will be expanded upon throughout the book. These themes are going to be founded on the inspired Scriptures the audience knows best (the Hebrew Bible), and the author wastes no time in placing before his audience a text which was universally recognized as referring to the Messianic Son of David, Psalm 110. That Psalm shall, as we will see in later lessons, figure very prominently in making the case that Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the audience's native Jewish faith had taught them to hope for in their longing for the Messiah.

#### THE TABERNACLE TENT

The entire tent was 45 feet (13.7 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (Ex. 26:15–29). Five wooden bars (overlaid with gold) passed through rings attached to each frame (Ex. 26:26–30).

The Most Holy Place was a 15-foot (4.6-m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10–22; 37:1–9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud theophany (divine appearance). The high priest could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see note on Heb. 9:7).

The framed structure was covered by four layers of cloth and skin (Ex. 26:1–14).

The table for the bread of the Presence (Ex. 25:23–30)

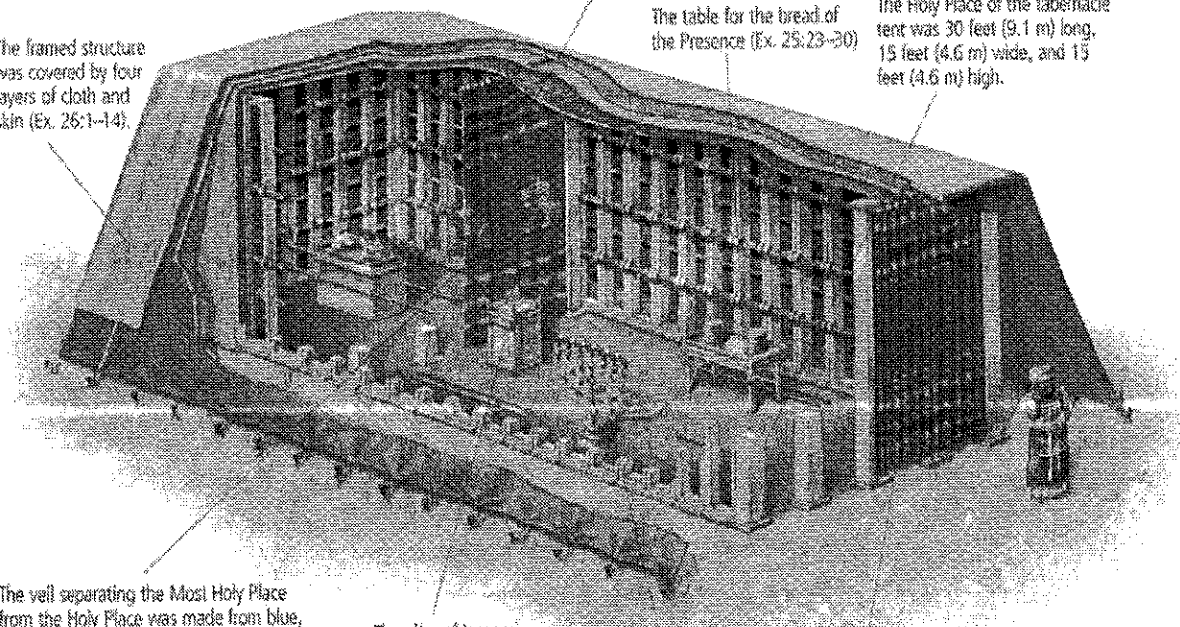
The Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was 30 feet (9.1 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high.

The veil separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns woven with fine twined linen and embroidered with cherubim (Ex. 26:31–33). It hung on four golden pillars.

The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1–5; 37:25–29)

The golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31–40; 37:17–24)

The veil that formed the entrance to the tabernacle was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it. It was suspended on five golden pillars (Ex. 26:36–37).



## Hebrews 1:1-4

<sup>1</sup> In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> **He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.** When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

## Points to Ponder


### The Situation of Hebrews

Though a carefully constructed and polished homily, Hebrews is not an abstraction. It is written, in fact, in the midst of white-hot racial and religious tension on the eve of a war that would visit the greatest calamity on the Jewish nation until the Holocaust: the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. It is necessary to understand this in order to appreciate what was at stake for the author and readers of Hebrews.

As we read in Acts 6:1, the Church faced ethnic and nationalist tensions at its birth just as it does today. Among other tensions was the stress between “Hellenists” and “Hebrews,” as St. Luke calls them, that is, between Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora and Palestinian Jews who lived in the Holy Land and who spoke Hebrew and/or Aramaic. This tension was only exacerbated when not just Greek-speaking Jews but Gentiles began to come into the Church in greater and greater numbers.

One early manifestation of that tension was the question that arose in the late 40s and which occasioned the “Council of Jerusalem” chronicled in Acts 15. “Hebrew” Christians from the Church in Jerusalem, perhaps nervous at the sight of so much that was familiar changing so quickly (a feeling not unknown to many Catholics after the Second Vatican Council), began to take it upon themselves to insist to Gentiles interested in the gospel, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). This precipitated the major crisis of the apostolic period: the question of the role the law of Moses still played in the life of the Church and the necessary corollary to that question: the exact relationship of the Church with Israel. The Church ruled and Paul tirelessly taught that Christians are “not under law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). This did not mean that Christians could feel free to kill and commit adultery but rather that the ceremonial and ritual elements of the law (such as circumcision and keeping kosher) had been intended to point us to Christ who alone could enable us to fulfill the moral law (Gal 3:23-26). Having led to Christ, the Mosaic Law no longer binds us, nor could Jewish Christians impose its rites and rituals on Gentile Christians.

The result of the Council, as of all councils in the Church’s history, was twofold: theological development for those who obeyed, and schism and heresy for those who did not. The factions that resisted apostolic development of doctrine were known as Judaizers, and their influence persisted for decades, particularly in the Holy Land. It is against this faction that Paul writes several years after the events of Acts 15 in his letter to the Galatians, and his opposition to them marks several other letters, such as Philippians. What angers Paul and merits the condemnation of the apostolic college is the idea that our obedience to the law “earns” the justifying grace of God: that if we just do the right things we can force God to love us and save us. On the contrary, the Church teaches there is nothing we can do



to “make” God love us because he loves us already. His love called us into being, and his love sent Jesus into the world to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins while we were still sinners (Rom 5:8). The corollary of the Judaizers’ teaching is this: if our works make God love us, then when we stop doing those works he will not love us anymore. The truth revealed by God is that he does not love us any less no matter what we do. His purpose is always to save, and we receive that salvation by faith in Christ. Our obedience to him is the fruit, not the cause, of justifying faith in Christ. His grace is the cause of our faith and our works.

The complaint of the Judaizers was the common fear of the Jews—a fear that was particularly acute to “Hebrew” Christians living in the Holy Land. It is summed up in the complaint of the men who accused St. Stephen: “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law: for we have heard him say that “this Jesus of Nazareth” will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us” (Acts 6:13-14). As the Church diverged from the immemorial practices of Jewish piety and exempted Gentile converts from them, a certain portion of Hebrew Christians began to fear that the Church was going off the rails and making a huge mistake.

This fear could only become more acute as the conflict grew, not only between Church and synagogue but between Judea and Rome. By the time the letter to the Hebrews is being composed in the mid 60s, that conflict has become acute. This means that Hebrew-speaking Christians in the Holy Land are being confronted with a stark choice by fellow Jews; are you with us or against us? Many Jews, feeling the Temple to be invulnerable to attack by the Gentiles, were actually eager for war with Rome since they believed that it would result in a miraculous deliverance for Israel and a defeat for Rome. Tremendous social and psychological pressure was being felt by Hebrew Christians to side with their beleaguered countrymen in their hour of national trial, and there was a strong temptation to abandon this newfangled sect and return to the way of their fathers.

Hebrews is written to say that the believers who had chosen to follow Christ—the Christ who had prophetically warned them of judgment, not deliverance, for Israel, who had bid them not to remain in Jerusalem when they saw the “eagles” of the Roman standard coming and who had said of the Temple that “there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down” (Mt 24)—had not made a mistake. It is written to assure them that the Christ in whom they believed was not a traitor to the nation but the fulfillment of all that the Temple, the sacrificial system, and the priesthood had meant. It aims to show these Jewish Christians that Christ is now reigning on high in the heavenly Jerusalem as the New Kingly High Priest offering a New and Eternal Sacrifice of a New Covenant in the New Temple.

## Overture

The first four verses of Hebrews are a sort of overture of the whole book containing basic themes that will be elucidated for the whole book the way an orchestral theme to a musical contains melodies from songs in the musical. Some of the themes in this densely packed passage include the following:

### 1. The Superiority of the New Over the Old

This is a major theme in Hebrews. The Old Covenant is a provisional covenant given in preparation for the new. At no time during the Old Testament does God give a definitive self-revelation. Rather

he speaks in various and fragmentary ways while constantly directing Israel to look for the coming of a mysterious figure called by various titles (“Star out of Jacob,” “Messiah” (or “Anointed One”), “shoot of Jesse,” “The Prophet,” etc.). Many of his signs are utterly mysterious. We sense that they signify something, but we do not know what.

However, in these Last Days, God has now given that definitive disclosure. He has spoken not by a servant, but by a Son. This is the same imagery our Lord uses in the Parable of the Vineyard (Mt 21:33-43). The Son, unlike mere servants, comes with the authority of the Father himself.

## 2. The Last Days

The writer of Hebrews, like Jesus in Mt 24, speaks of the “last days” which raises the question of what is meant by that term. Did Jesus really believe the world was coming to an end “soon,” and did he teach his disciples to think this way? The answer is “yes and no.” Jesus makes clear that a world—the world of the Old Covenant—is about to end in his Olivet Discourse (Mk 14, Mt 24, Lk 21). The Temple is about to be destroyed in judgment and as the definitive sign that the New World of the Messianic Age has arrived. But that judgment will itself be a sign of the Last Day when Jesus will return in judgment for the whole world and salvation for the Church since the Temple is a microcosmic cosmos just as the universe is a macrocosmic Temple. The fate of the Jerusalem Temple and the salvation of the Church from destruction in 70 AD prefigure the final salvation of the Church at the end of time.

## 3. The Inheritance of the Son

For the author of Hebrews, as for the apostle John, the world was made “through” the Son and also for the Son (Jn 1:3). He is the “heir” of all things because he “reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature” (Heb 1:3). (Interestingly, the “stamp” Hebrews speaks of is the same Greek term the Church uses to describe the “character” that is stamped on our souls in Baptism, which makes us co-heirs with Christ.) This passage, again, closely reflects John’s understanding that “the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1). Particularly notable as well is that God is depicted, not only as creating but “upholding” the universe by his “word” of power. The conception is not that God created the universe long ago and now it spins on by itself, but rather that the universe is held in being, moment by moment, by the active power of God. In short, if God wanted to destroy the world, he would not have to do anything. He would have to stop doing something.

## 4. The Royal Priesthood of Melchizedek in the Heavenly Temple

Heb 1:3 briefly summarizes the results of Jesus’ passion, death, resurrection, and ascension in a way that will evoke an image that would have been immediately recognizable to the Jewish Christian (and one which will dominate a large portion of the book of Hebrews): the Priest King in the line of Melchizedek.

Verse 3 tells us that Jesus “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” This is a clear allusion to Ps 110: “The Lord says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.” This Psalm, one of the most popular messianic texts in the New Testament, was commonly understood to refer to Messiah or “son of David.” It was cited by Jesus himself in arguments with the Pharisees (cf. Mt 22:41-46) and forms the basis for the major argument of Hebrews: that Jesus is the long-prophesied son of David who is a “priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek” and that his

eternal sacrificial offering of himself in the heavenly Temple is the reality that the earthly temple, priesthood, and sacrifice foreshadowed.

## Catechism Connections

- For more information on how Christ is the “unsurpassable Word” of God, see CCC 65.
- CCC 328-333 explains the nature of angels and their relationship to Christ.
- CCC 206-211 describes the significance of the divine name “I Am” from the Old to the New Covenant.

## Rome to Home


From an attentive reading of the Gospels we learn that Jesus lives and works in constant and fundamental reference to the Father. He frequently addresses him with the word full of filial love: “Abba”; even during the prayer in Gethsemane this same word is again on his lips (cf. Mk 14:36 and parallel passages). When the disciples ask him to teach them to pray, he teaches them the “Our Father” (cf. Mt 6:9-13). After the Resurrection, at the moment of his departure from earth, he seems once again to make reference to this prayer when he says: “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (Jn 20:17).

Thus by means of the Son (cf. Heb 1:2), God is revealed in the fullness of the mystery of his paternity. Only the Son could reveal this fullness of the mystery, because only “the Son knows the Father” (Mt 11:27). “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (Jn 1:18).

– Pope John Paul II, *General Audience, October 23, 1985*

## Study Questions


1. What are some of the “many and various ways” God spoke before the coming of Christ? (See Heb 1:1, Rom 1:20)



2. What are some of the titles that point to the Son of God in the Old Testament? (See Points to Ponder and Num 24:17, Is 11:1, Deut 18:18, Ps 132:17)

3. What might the phrase “in these last days” mean? Is the relationship between the Old and New Covenants a relationship between “bad” and “good” or between “good” and “best”? (See Heb 1:2, Points to Ponder)


4. How does Heb 1:1-2 relate to the Parable of the Vineyard in Mt 21:33-43? What does the Son inherit?



5. What is the similarity between Heb 1:2 and Jn 1:3?

6. What is the similarity between Heb 1:3 and Jn 1:1? Does creation exist independent of God once he creates it? Does the author of Hebrews believe the Son is God? How is this illustrated in Heb 1:3 (See Points to Ponder)

7. What does “he made purification for sins” refer to? What Old Testament passage is being alluded to in the line “he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3)? (See Points to Ponder)

- 
8. Do angels exist? Is the Son just another, or the most important, angel? What “name” has Christ inherited? (See Heb 1:4, Jn 8:58)

## Voices of the Saints

“As the print of the seal on the wax is the express image of the seal itself, so Christ is the express image—the perfect representation of God.”

—St. Ambrose

## Questions for Reflection

*The following questions are intended to help you reflect upon ways in which the discoveries you’ve made in this lesson can be applied to your own life.*

1. Hebrews is written to a flock conflicted about its allegiances. Have you ever felt torn between your faith and your family or friends?
2. Hebrews seeks to show that the New Covenant is superior to the Old and that the Old was the necessary prelude to the New. Do you ever struggle with how to incorporate new changes in your life with old and traditional things?



## Summary

*In lesson one, we observed:*

1. Hebrews opens with a brief “overture” that encapsulates the themes to be explored in this homily.
2. God has spoken in “various” ways in the past, but has now revealed himself definitely in Christ.
3. These earlier revelations pointed to Christ.
4. The Son is “heir of all things” and the One through whom the world was created.
5. He “bears the stamp” of the nature of God himself, and through him God maintains the universe in existence.
6. After his passion, death and resurrection, Jesus “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty”—just like the Messianic “son of David” in Psalm 110:1.
7. The Son is superior to the angels.

# Notes

