



Hebrews - Chapter One

Summary of Chapter One

The focus of God's salvation plan had been in place since before creation. It was to be implemented through a Messiah that would come to his people in order to free them from the bondage of their slavery to sin, and thereby reconciling them to God.

This was something that had been revealed as a sketch to many of God's servants, the prophets, but was revealed in its full reality through the work, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ of God.

The writer then goes on to elaborate, using several powerful, messianic Psalms that foretold the coming of the Christ, showing that he is superior even to the most elevated of heavenly beings - God's holy angels - in his person, for he is the unique Son of God and equal to him in nature, substance and deity.

I Hebrews 1:1-2:18 - Jesus Is Superior to Angelic Beings

A summary of who Jesus is (vv.1-4), culminates in the announcement of his superiority to angels. This superiority is proven first in his unique quality as Son of God (vv.5-14), and second in his humanity as Son of Man, which permits him to serve as the perfect founder of salvation (Hebrews 2:5-18). Amid this comes the first warning and exhortation (Hebrews 2:1-4).

I.a Hebrews 1:1-14 - The supremacy of God's Son

Jesus is God's final and definitive revelation surpassing the OT, for he is: the Son of God, the agent of creation as stated in vv.1-2; the very glory of God, and the one who purifies from sin (v.3).

In all this he is superior even to angelic beings, especially in his unique sonship (vv.4-14). This leads to a warning to the readers that they need to attend to the words of salvation, since they are from and about the Son in Hebrews 2:1-4.

I.a.i Hebrews 1:1-4 - Introduction: summary of the Son's person and work

Many themes of Hebrews are announced in this opening, which is a single Greek sentence. These include the contrasting periods of revelation, Jesus' unique status as Son of God, his purifying work, and his supremacy - in this case to angels in v.4.

To the extent that this brief description of the Son parallels the understanding of wisdom in some extra-biblical Jewish literature, the author may also allude to the Son's partaking of, and superiority to, wisdom.

¹ Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets,

Hebrews 1:1

Long ago contrasts here with: <<*these last days*>> (v.2). Two similar Greek words, *polymerōs* and *polytropōs*, emphasise the many times and various ways in which God has spoken.

This speaking was in many and various ways through his prophets, which in Jewish thought included the authors of both the prophetic and the historical books of the OT, including Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David and Elijah. Some scriptural examples to confirm this are: <<*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet*>> (Deuteronomy 18:15), <<*Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus*>> (Acts 1:16), and: <<*To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place*>> (Acts 26:22).

Although the many revelations of God, his Kingdom and the Messiah to come, were given in various ways, i.e. oration, practical demonstration, prophetic warnings and exhortations, they were but a sketch, a poor reflection of the truth that was to be revealed in and through Jesus.

Despite the remarkable revelation that has come through Jesus, it is still not a truly full picture: <<*Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.'* Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?'>> (John 14:7-9), and, as Paul explains, there will be an even fuller revelation at the time of the Second Coming of Christ: <<*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known*>> (1 Corinthians 13:12).

God spoke to our ancestors is confirmed by: <<*And he said, 'Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak face to face – clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?'*>> (Numbers 12:6-8).

Scripture records some of what God had revealed to individuals. These were just snippets, but together came into clear focus when the Messiah was revealed. Examples of who the Messiah would be were given:

- To Adam and Satan it was revealed that he would be the seed of the woman: <<*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers*>> (Genesis 3:15a).
- To Abraham that he would be from his own body: <<*But the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir'*>> (Genesis 15:4).
- To Jacob that he would come through his son Judah: <<*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the obedience of the peoples is his*>> (Genesis 49:10).
- To David that he would be from his house: <<*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom*>> (2 Samuel 7:12).
- To Isaiah that he would be born of a virgin: <<*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel*>> (Isaiah 7:14 NIV).
- To Micah that he would be born in Bethlehem: <<*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days*>> (Micah 5:2).

Our ancestors are the OT patriarchs, the fathers of their great nation: <<*do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors put me to the test, though they had seen my works*>> (Hebrews 3:8-9), and: <<*God finds fault with them when he says: 'The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I had no concern for them, says the Lord*>> (Hebrews 8:9), whom the author considers his audience's spiritual forebears.

² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

Hebrews 1:2

Four points of contrast occur between v.1 and v.2:

1. Time of revelation, i.e. 'long ago' vs. these last days.
2. The agent of revelation, i.e. 'prophets' vs. a Son.
3. The recipients of revelation, i.e. 'ancestors' vs. us.

4. Implicitly, the unity of the final revelation in the Son, i.e. the ‘many and various ways’ in v.1, implying, by contrast, that this last revelation came at one time, in one way, in and through God’s Son.

Since God has spoken finally and fully in the Son, and since the NT fully reports and interprets this supreme revelation then, once the NT is written, the canon of Scripture is complete. No new books are needed to explain what God has done through his Son. Now believers await his Second Coming: *<<so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him>>* (Hebrews 9:28), and the city to come: *<<For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come>>* (Hebrews 13:14).

Jesus has been appointed heir of all things, i.e. what he ‘inherits’ from his Father is all creation, by virtue of his dignity as Son (v.4). The pre-existence, authority, power and full deity of the Son are evident in his role in creating the world: *<<All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people>>* (John 1:3-4), *<<He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him>>* (John 1:10), and: *<<for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him>>* (Colossians 1:16).

³ He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Hebrews 1:3

The greatness of the Son is further exhibited. God’s glory is often viewed metaphorically as light: *<<Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you>>* (Isaiah 60:1), *<<In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ>>* (2 Corinthians 4:4-6), *<<And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb>>* (Revelation 21:23), and here the Son is that glorious light of God.

The reflection of God’s glory. Jesus is the full and definitive representation, the exact imprint, Greek *charaktēr*, of God’s very being or his nature, Greek *hypostasis*. Thus the Son is identical in substance to God, being himself fully God. In all attributes and abilities, the Son is exactly like the Father.

The concept in the bible uses an analogy from ancient times where a king would have an engraver create an image, perhaps with a legend, in hard metal. This would then be used to make an official seal or to mint coins by heating the

original to make an exact impression in soft metal or other substance like wax. In the case of Jesus, he was made as the exact expression of God and was revealed to the world as such.

What this opening passage also alludes to in this analogy is that, before it was possible to reveal an exact expression of God, the only technology available was to provide rough, yet recognisable sketches of the original, which were then revealed to the people by the prophets to whom the sketches were given in varied forms.

The Son, who created the universe (v.2), then upholds or sustains all things by his powerful word: <<*He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together*>> (Colossians 1:17). Jesus was not only above all things but he was before all things; therefore he pre-existed and must be God.

Jesus deals with the human need of purification for sins, which is described more fully in Hebrews 9:11-10:18. He then ascended to the place of supreme authority, the right hand of God, confirmed by: <<*The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath*>> (Psalm 110:5), <<*My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they stand at attention*>> (Isaiah 48:13), <<*Jesus said, 'I am; and "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power", and "coming with the clouds of heaven"'*>> (Mark 14:62), <<*Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear*>> (Acts 2:33), <<*Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us*>> (Romans 8:34), <<*God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places*>> (Ephesians 1:20), and: <<*who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him*>> (1 Peter 3:22), and indeed in many other Scriptures.

The fact that he sat down there indicates that his work of salvation had been completed: <<*When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit*>> (John 19:30).

Majesty on high also describes God in: <<*Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all*>> (1 Chronicles 29:11), <<*On the glorious splendour of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate*>> (Psalm 145:5), <<*Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*>> (Hebrews 8:1), which leads to praise: <<*Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen*>> (Jude 24-25).

⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews 1:4

The main theme of Chapters 1 and 2 is announced: Jesus is much superior to angels.

Angels were objects of much speculation in 1st Century Judaism. Certainly they were known to appear in human form, to minister before the very throne of God, to guide and protect humans, and to have revealed the Mosaic Law. Yet Jesus is deemed superior to them, in part because his name, i.e. his very essence, is ‘as the Son’ (v.5), which points to a far more intimate and deeper relationship that speaks of a better family inheritance, i.e. all that belongs to the Father belongs to his unique Son.

The name he has inherited is higher than anything else in all creation: <<*Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven*>> (Psalm 148:13), <<*God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come*>> (Ephesians 1:20-21), and: <<*Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*>> (Philippians 2:9-11).

I.a.ii Hebrews 1:5-14 - Evidence of his status as Son

A chain of OT citations supports the claim that Jesus is superior to angels (v.4) since Jesus has the position, nature, and authority as God’s Son. The Scriptures are carefully chosen and well utilised, for they all provide a partial revelation of what was yet to be fully revealed in the person of Jesus.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

‘You are my Son;
today I have begotten you’?

Or again,

‘I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son’?

Hebrews 1:5

You are my Son. This citation, written by David in Psalm 2:7, invokes the whole Psalm: the Messiah is the Anointed (Psalm 2:2), is king over all (Psalm 2:6-8), and especially, he is God’s true Son (Psalm 2:7).

Today I have begotten you is a poetic expression reflecting the unique relationship of the Son to God Almighty, and is developed further v.6. This speaks of entering into a new phase of that Father-Son relationship and should not be pressed to suggest that the Son once did not exist, but that it means he has begotten the already living Son ‘today’. Similar words of divine sonship are spoken

at Jesus' baptism: <<And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'>> (Matthew 3:17), <<And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'>> (Mark 1:11), <<and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'>> (Luke 3:22), which was virtually repeated by God at Jesus' transfiguration: <<While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'>> (Matthew 17:5), <<Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!'>> (Mark 9:7), <<Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!'>> (Luke 9:35), and: <<For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain>> (2 Peter 1:16-18). Psalm 2:2 is quoted by Paul in Acts 13:33, and later in this book (Hebrews 5:5).

He will be my son. This proclamation: <<I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings>> (2 Samuel 7:14), virtually repeated in 1 Chronicles 17:13, is declared to King David concerning his covenant heir, whom God will designate as his own Son.

In the context of Samuel, the reader might assume this refers to David's son Solomon, but Solomon failed to follow the law and was not 'established forever' as God had promised it would: <<Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever>> (2 Samuel 7:16); hence, the promise can only be fulfilled by the Davidic Messiah who was still to come in David's day.

Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel Chapter 7 are linked by the special designation Son, and by their messianic theology, a link also assumed in NT-era Judaism, e.g. 4QFlorilegium in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,
'Let all God's angels worship him.'

Hebrews 1:6

Firstborn is a title: <<I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth>> (Psalm 89:27), <<For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family>> (Romans 8:29), <<He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the

dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything>> (Colossians 1:15-18), and: <<*John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood*>> (Revelation 1:4-5); that conveys pre-eminence in family lineage and rights of inheritance: <<*When they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, the men looked at one another in amazement*>> (Genesis 43:33), and: <<*Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son”*>> (Exodus 4:22).

It would be wrong to think in physical terms here, as if the author were asserting that the Son had a physical origin or was somehow created, which is the classic Arian heresy; rather than existing eternally as the Son, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the Godhead. What the writer had in mind was the rights and privileges of a firstborn son, especially the son of a monarch who would inherit ruling sovereignty. This is how the expression is used of David: <<*I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth*>> (Psalm 89:27), as recently commented on.

Let all God’s angels worship him may be an interpretative citation from the Septuagint of either Psalm 97:7 or Deuteronomy 32:43, or possibly even both. In either case, angels are considered ‘sons of God’, but without the rights of the unique Son of God. The job of angels is to worship God, and hence to worship his Son, <<*the exact imprint of God’s very being*>> (v.3b).

Since only God is worthy of worship: <<*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me*>> (Exodus 20:2-5), and: <<*I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols*>> (Isaiah 42:8), <<*Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! for it is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him”’*>> (Matthew 4:10), <<*Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’*>> (Revelation 19:10), this is further evidence of the Son’s full deity.

⁷ Of the angels he says,

‘He makes his angels winds,
and his servants flames of fire.’

Hebrews 1:7

The splendour of the angels is acknowledged here, proving that the Son, who is superior to all the angels, is all the more glorious. The OT context of the quotation

from Psalm 104 points to the Lord God as creator and sustainer of all things, including angels (Psalm 104:1-30), and v.4 is quoted here. Since the Son is designated creator and sustainer of all things, it is implicit that the splendour of the angels also stems from his creative hand.

It should be noted that angels were created by God for his good pleasure and to serve him. He does not actually need them but does choose to use them and accept their loyal service in the spirit in which it is given to him.

He makes his angels winds is often translated spirits in this passage, for breath, spirit and wind are the same word in the Greek. However, Psalm 104:4 is most commonly translated as winds: <<*you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers*>>, thus the NRSVA translation remains faithful to that line of thought. What this passage is clarifying is that God had made the angels to be his servants and not an embodiment or likeness of him, unlike the Son who is an exact match, although not a replica but an original.

The angels played an important part in the revelation of the law, which became the backbone of Judaism, and quite rightly, as it was implemented through these angels, the most glorious of all created beings, upon God's instruction. However, they did so through the authority of the Son: <<*Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator*>> (Galatians 3:19).

⁸ But of the Son he says,

‘Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever,
and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.’

Hebrews 1:8-9

The quotation here, Psalm 45:6-7, is from a psalm extolling the Davidic king. Only Jesus, as the Davidic Messiah, the anointed One, truly meets this description, since by reigning at God's right hand he possesses an eternal kingdom, i.e. forever and ever, and reigns in true righteousness.

Your throne, O God. The messianic Son is rightfully also called God, in this case by God the Father. Other verses where Jesus is called God include: <<*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*>> (John 1:1), <<*Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'*>> (John 20:28), <<*They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen*>> (Romans 9:4-5), <<*while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ*>> (Titus 2:13), and: <<*Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as*

precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ>> (2 Peter 1:1).

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. This is a breathtaking passage, because it addresses the king - for the whole Psalm is about the king - as if he can be called God. It speaks of the king, in this godlike way, as exercising a sovereign rule through which, as many passages said should be the case, uprightness, and justice, and the rule of true law are put into effect in the world. One of the great themes about God's future purposes throughout the Bible is that God longs for real justice.

It should be remembered that John the Baptist had resisted baptising Jesus on the grounds of his far superior status: <<*But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.'* Then he consented>> (Matthew 3:15). This fulfilment of all righteousness set Jesus, not just as the anointed mediator or intercessor, but as the equal of the Father, God incarnate.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you. This is a very personal reference to the relationship between Father and Son, for the Son, although equal to the Father in deity, still submits to the Father's will and can call upon as his God, for he was also fully human. This was part of the reason why he called out on the Cross when separated from the Father: <<*At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'*>> (Mark 15:34).

Beyond your companions indicates that Jesus is not just another man created in God's own image, important as they are to him. The Son is way out in front of everything and cannot be compared to anything or anyone other than the Father.

¹⁰ And,

'In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;

¹¹ they will perish, but you remain;

they will all wear out like clothing;

¹² like a cloak you will roll them up,

and like clothing they will be changed.

But you are the same,

and your years will never end.'

Hebrews 1:10-12

In light of the clear designation of deity in vv.8-9, and the consequent eternal status of the Son (v.8), i.e. 'forever and ever', the author connects God's Son with Psalm 102:25-27. This emphasises the role of the Son in creation, the ongoing sustainability of all things, and his eternity.

In the beginning marks the start of creation, for the Godhead pre-existed everything and is timeless. Time was created along with everything else: <<*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth*>> (Genesis 1:1), with Jesus, the Eternal Word, at the centre of the act of creation: <<*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people*>> (John 1:1-4), and: <<*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us*>> (1 John 1:1-2 NIV).

The heavens are the work of your hands. There is nothing seen or unseen, known or unknowable that God did not create and does not sustain through his omnipresence and power: <<*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding*>> (Job 38:4), and: <<*The word of the Lord concerning Israel: Thus says the Lord, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the human spirit within*>> (Zechariah 12:1).

They will perish speaks of the renewal of creation that is to come, for the old will disappear, i.e. like a cloak you will roll them up, as foreseen by the prophet: <<*All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall wither like a leaf withering on a vine, or fruit withering on a fig tree*>> (Isaiah 34:4), and further revealed to John: <<*The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place*>> (Revelation 6:14). However, God and therefore his Christ are eternal, never changing and indeed unchangeable, i.e. but you are the same, and your years will never end.

This concept of the world changing but God remaining unchanged is repeated: <<*At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.’ This phrase ‘Yet once more’ indicates the removal of what is shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain*>> (Hebrews 12:26-27). These passages therefore form literary bookends, with the main thrust of the letter contained between them.

God’s preparatory purposes through the law and the prophets have reached their climax in the Messiah; and the Messiah himself will be the one who will see God’s plan of salvation and justice through to the ultimate ‘new age’, the ‘age to come’, the time of renewed heavens and earth: <<*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever*>> (Hebrews 13:8).

¹³ But to which of the angels has he ever said,

‘Sit at my right hand

until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’?

Hebrews 1:13

To which of the angels has he ever said. Despite their privileged position in the very presence of God, not one angel had ever been exalted in the way Jesus was.

Sit at my right hand. This verse is cited from Psalm 110:1. This psalm of David is quite significant in Hebrews, being referred to again in 5:6, 7:17, and 7:21, as well as being quoted by other NT authors in reporting the words of Jesus in his discussions of who the Messiah really was: <<*He said to them, ‘How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’?”*>> (Matthew 22:44); as part of Peter’s address on the Day of Pentecost to show that David was not speaking of himself but of the Messiah to come: <<*For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand*>> (Acts 2:34); and Paul alludes to it as well: <<*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet*>> (1 Corinthians 15:25). It applies to ‘great David’s greater son’, the Messiah.

Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Captured soldiers would frequently be made to lie on the ground and have their captors place their feet upon them to show they were now until full submission: <<*When they brought the kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the Israelites, and said to the chiefs of the warriors who had gone with him, ‘Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.’ Then they came near and put their feet on their necks*>> (Joshua 10:24).

In the Gospels, Jesus applied this verse to himself, arguing that when David says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord’, he must be prophetically ascribing deity both to God himself and to David’s messianic ‘Lord’. This context of messianic deity is likely also implied here; however, the author emphasises the exaltation of the Son to the right hand of God, the position of privilege and power.

¹⁴ Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Hebrews 1:14

Spirits in the divine service. One particular role of the angels is to minister, for they are sent to serve those who are to inherit salvation, that is, Christian believers.

Salvation is possible only through Jesus’ work, sacrificial death and powerful resurrection to life; therefore, the angels’ important role still pales in comparison to Jesus’ authority as Son of God, exalted at the ‘right hand of the Majesty’.

To inherit salvation means to find a true heavenly home in the presence of the Father for all eternity: <<*All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland*>> (Hebrews 11:13-14).