



# **An Introduction to Hebrews**

(Hebrews 1:1-4)

# Introduction: “Zero-Based Budgeting”



## Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB)

*[ˈzɪr-(.)ō ˈbāst ˈbə-jət-ɪŋ]*

A method of budgeting in which all expenses must be justified for each new period.

# Introduction

## “Resetting Your Equilibrium”



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## “Resetting Your Equilibrium”



# Hebrews 1:1-4

**1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

**3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

# Hebrews 1:1-4

- After making 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 inherited is more excellent than theirs.

# Rhetorical Site: Author

- **Unknown**
- Originally thought to be **Paul**—but unlikely: “It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard” (Hebrews 2:3)
- Possibly: **Luke or Barnabas or Silas**
- A Good Argument for: **Apollos** (Taught with Paul at Corinth; reputation as an eloquent speaker who was able to construct well-ordered arguments; knew Scriptures well because born Jewish [Hebrews quotes extensively from the Old Testament]; was from Alexandria [home of the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament] and thus knew Greek well [Hebrews, like most of the New Testament, was written in Greek]) . . . Luther thought Apollos wrote Hebrews

# Rhetorical Site: Audience and Date

- **Jewish Christians**, whose Christian faith is faltering due to Jewish persecution, continuing appeal of Judaism, and delay of Jesus' Second Coming
- Second-generation Christians. Likely written in late 60s A.D. (**67-68 A.D.**), before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D.
- **Location: Unknown** (possibly in Asia Minor near Ephesus, or Rome)



# Rhetorical Site: Purpose

- To strengthen the faith of believers in Jesus Christ, to endure persecution and grow through it. To dissuade readers from drifting from their faith.
- “A series of arguments for the superiority of Jesus over all rival claims to allegiance which his readers were feeling and hearing. Their attention was easily diverted off in other directions, just as our attention is easily distracted today” —Ray Stedman, *Hebrews*, p. 20-21)

# Rhetorical Site: Genre and Themes

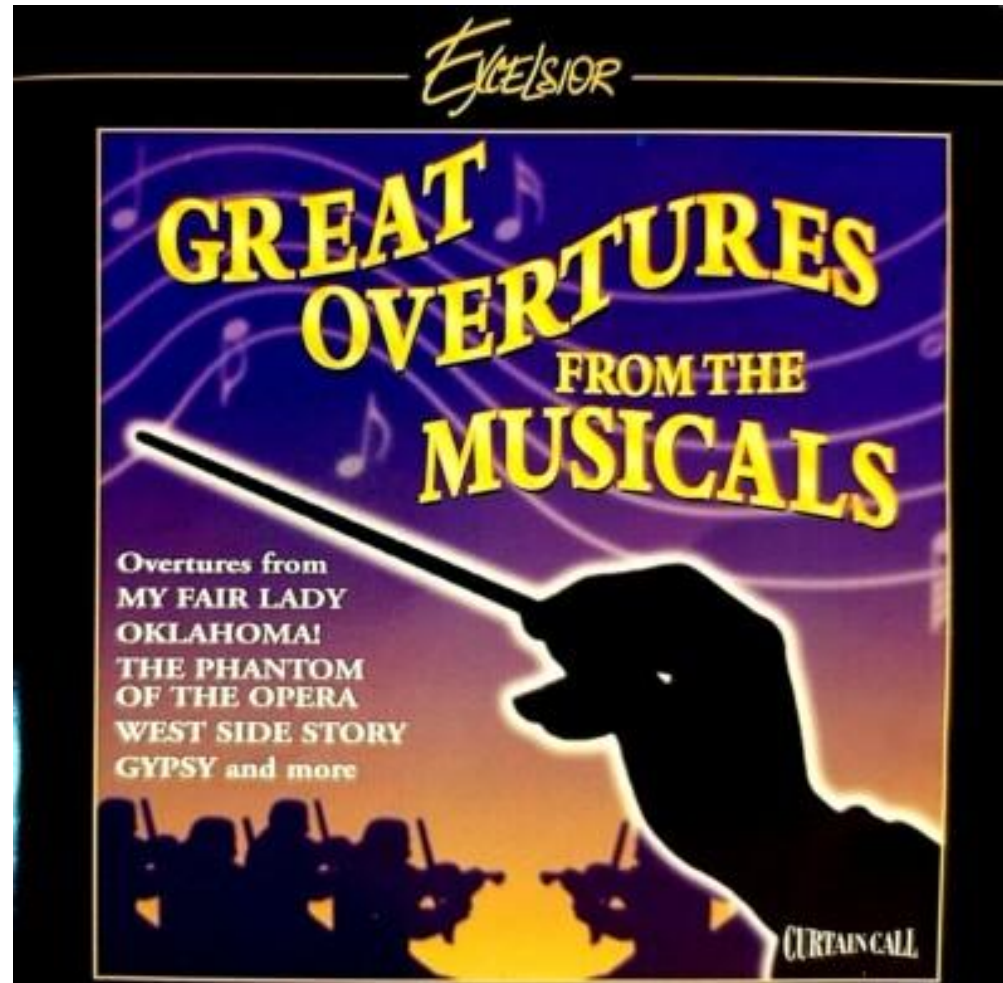
A **“Christology”**: a study of the person and ministry of Jesus Christ

- **To present the superiority of Christ:**
- As creator, higher than the angels
- As heir, higher than Moses and the other prophets
- As divine priest, higher than the lineage of Levi
- As propitiation, a higher, all-encompassing sacrifice vs. daily animal sacrifices
- As God incarnate, shares the essence of God

# Rhetorical Site: Stylistics

- One of the most stylistically polished books in the New Testament
- Extensive use of metaphors and imagery
- Extensive use of “**allusions**”—references to Old Testament verses
- Extensive use of “**typology**”: Old Testament characters and events as foreshadowings of Christ’s person and works (e.g., Joseph as a “Christ figure”)
- Extensive use of **comparison/contrast**
- Extensive use of long, flowing sentences that build towards their main points
- Extensive use of parallelism (e.g., the long solid table and the short flimsy chair)

# The Prologue as Overture



# Hebrews 1:1

- **Long ago, at many times and in many ways**, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1)
- In Old Testament times
- Before the coming of the Messiah
- *Polymeros kai polytropos palai* (Greek): “In many fragments and in many fashions” in former times.

# Hebrews 1:1

- Long ago, at many times **and in many ways**, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1)
- Dreams (Joseph)
- Visions (Ezekiel)
- God's mighty acts (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- Stories (Creation)
- Commands (The Ten Commandments)
- Exhortations (Gideon)
- Angelic appearances (Abraham)
- Appearances by God (Job)

# Hebrews 1:1

- Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1)**
- “A prophet mainly *tells forth* the word of God. Often (though not always) the prophet’s message also *foretells* the future. The utterance of a prophet is called an *oracle*—a message from God. . . . An oracle can be an oracle of judgment, and oracle of salvation or redemption, or an oracle of blessing . . . The three main themes of prophetic writing are sin, judgment, and restoration/redemption.”  
(Leyland Ryken, *The Literary Study Bible*)
- Old Testament prophets: Elijah, Elisha, Deborah, Ezekiel, Amos, Isaiah, etc.

# Hebrews 1:2

- “**but in these last days** he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”



# Hebrews 1:2

- “but in these last days he has **spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things**, through whom also he created the world.”
- **God’s one and only Son as the Messiah:**
- We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.
- And in one Lord Jesus **Christ,**  
**the only Son of God**

(The Nicene Creed)

# Hebrews 1:2

- **Definition of “Messiah”:**
- “A Hebrew term meaning ‘**anointed one**.’ The OT people of God came to anticipate a person anointed by the Spirit who would function once again as king and priest over Israel. Hence in Jewish (OT and intertestamental) theology, the Messiah was the person, whether supernatural or earthly, endowed with special powers and functions by God, who would appear as the divinely appointed, eschatological deliverer and ruler of Israel. Although Jesus rarely used the title specifically for himself, the NT designation of **Messiah**, (Greek **Christos**) belongs only to Jesus, both as a title and as a personal name” (*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*).

# Hebrews 1:2

- **The Messiah is superior to King David:**
- “Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, <sup>42</sup> saying, “**What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?**” They said to him, “The son of David.” <sup>43</sup> He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,
  - <sup>44</sup> “‘The Lord said to my Lord,  
“Sit at my right hand,  
until I put your enemies under your feet’”? [Psalm 110:1]
- <sup>45</sup> If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” <sup>46</sup> And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.”  
(Matthew 22:41-45).

# Hebrews 1:2

- **The Messiah predates Abraham:**
- “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” <sup>57</sup> So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” <sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I am.**” <sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple” (John 8:56-58).

# Hebrews 1:2

- **By identifying himself as the “I AM,” Jesus identifies himself as God:**
- Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” <sup>14</sup> **God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”**<sup>[a]</sup> And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD,<sup>[b]</sup> the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Exodus 3:13-15 ESV)
- Exodus 3:14 Or *I AM WHAT I AM*, or *I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE*
- Exodus 3:15 The word *LORD*, when spelled with capital letters, stands for the divine name, *YHWH*, which is here connected with the verb *hayah*, “to be” in verse 14.

# Hebrews 1:2

- **The disciples identify Jesus as the Messiah: (Messiah = Jesus)**
- Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).
- **Thomas identifies Jesus as God: (Jesus = God)**
- Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:27-28).
- **Thus, the Messiah (Jesus) is God (Messiah = God)**  
(A “syllogism”)

# Hebrews 1:2

- “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, **through whom also he created the world.**”
- “<sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15-17).
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).
- As maker of the universe, Jesus is God

# Hebrews 1:3a

- “He is **the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature**, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”
- “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15a)
- “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1:19).
- “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup> and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority” (Colossians 2:9-10).



# Hebrews 1:3a

- “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he **upholds the universe by the word of his power.**”
- “In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.” (Job 12:10).

# Hebrews 1:3c

- “After **making purification for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”
- “And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20).

# Hebrews 1:3c

- “After making purification for sins, he **sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high”
- And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,
- <sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.

# Hebrews 1:3b

- “After making purification for sins, he **sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high”
- He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” [Isaiah 61:1-2]
- <sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant **and sat down**. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>And he began to say to them, “**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**” (Luke 4:16-21).

# Hebrews 1:3c

- “After making purification for sins, he sat down **at the right hand of the Majesty on high**”
- “The Lord’s right hand represents his authority, strength, presence, and benefits” (*NLT Study Bible*)
- **The place of honor, described in Psalm 110:**
- “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies’ (Psalm 110:1 NLT).

# Hebrews 1:3b

- “After making purification for sins, he sat down **at the right hand of the Majesty on high**”
- **Jesus” claimed this position for himself:**
- But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” <sup>64</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see **the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power** and coming on the clouds of heaven.” <sup>65</sup> Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy” (Matthew 26:63-65).

# Hebrews 1:4

- **A segue to next week's study . . .**
- "having become as much **superior to angels** as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."



**Let Us Pray**

