

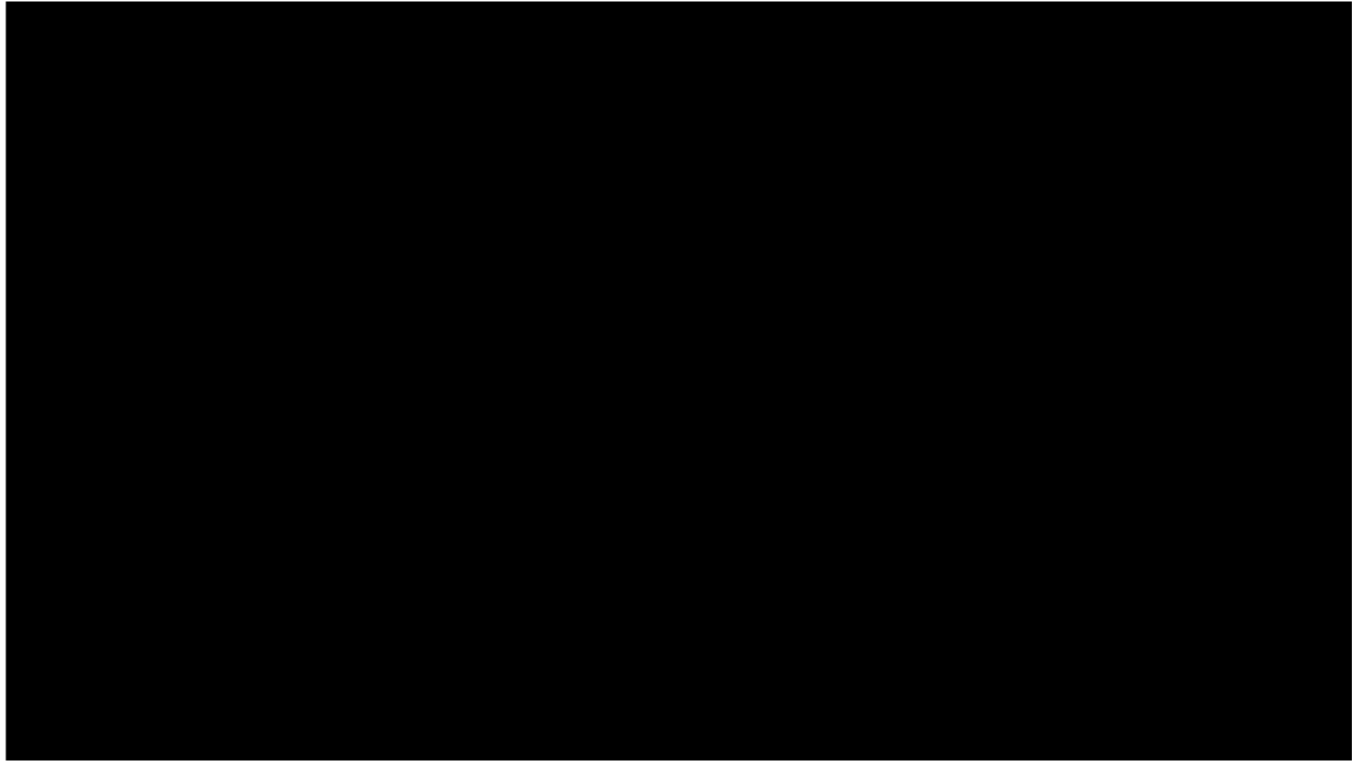
**Hebrews**



**Promises  
Faithfully  
Kept**

**Heb. 1:1-4 (ISV)**

**A Royal Introduction of the Son**



Pray

**1:1 God, having spoken in  
former times in fragmentary and  
varied fashion to our forefathers  
by the prophets,**

**2 has in these last days spoken  
to us by a Son whom he  
appointed to be the heir of  
everything and through whom  
he also made the universe.**

**3 He is the reflection of God's  
glory and the exact likeness of  
his being, and he holds  
everything together by his  
powerful word.**

**After he had provided a  
cleansing from sins, he sat  
down at the right hand of the  
Highest Majesty**

**4 and became as much superior  
to the angels as the name he  
has inherited is better than  
theirs.**





# We should feel the weight of Christ's supremacy in light of God's Word.

o Have you ever been intimidated and thrilled all at the same time? You know when you stand in the presence of a great person?

o The author is describing the most glorious Son in glorious words meant to make us feel the weight of His glory while speaking about it. So we have to be careful today with our points.

o You can't appreciate the glory of a **SUNSET** by speaking about only about the tilt of the earth or the lower atmosphere's bending of sun rays. Those factors are there helping display the beauty of the creation, but talking about those details in mere scientific explanation and not in **awe-filled wonder** can distract you from enjoying the brief art expo put on display every evening.

Our experiences and emotions should never determine our theology, but our theology flowing from the fount of Scripture should permeate our entire lives, shaping our experience and emotions. So the truths communicated by the author here should affect us, even so that we feel the weight of what he is saying.

o This passage is considered by many commentators to be the most densely yet beautifully constructed pieces of theology in the entire New Testament.

o It reads very much like a regal introduction, giving the context for a royal's greatness and listing his character, titles, and accomplishments.

o Context: Temptation to think of Jesus just as the whipping boy and not the prince

■ Reference the book *The Whipping Boy* by Sid Fleischman. EXPLAIN

■ The audience of this letter had begun to think that Jesus was possibly some whipping boy but not deserving of their worship and devotion. Maybe he really wasn't the Messiah since he suffered, as that was a stumbling block for many Israelites at that time. Maybe Jesus was just the latest whipping boy. Maybe he was like the prophets who came before but were killed or disregarded. Maybe God is going to send the Messiah later who won't have to suffer and who will keep us from suffering.

- The author enters into the room by means of his letter to say, “May I have the great honor of introducing to you the Son,” kinda like how Queen Elizabeth II is introduced by her regal name and titles. The queen has 15 different ways of being acknowledged regally, depending on where she is in the world.
  - Here’s the one for the U.K.: Elizabeth II, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.
  - The author of Hebrews doesn’t begin his letter by telling his audience how they can adjust their lives to live better within their culture as Christians. Rather, he presents the Son according to God’s revelation, the Son’s glory, and His accomplishments that speak to His grandeur and supremacy. He goes right to the heart of the matter by speaking to how they were viewing Jesus.
- o ■ • The author of Hebrews starts us off with a presupposition. What we believe will reveal if we belong to God and determine how we live. But he is not talking about just any belief. He is speaking to the category of God, particularly looking at the Son.

Belief regarding God is so foundational to existence that everyone must acknowledge or deny the existence of a god or gods before being able to live any kind of genuine existence. And if this God has spoken and revealed Himself by means of a unique Son, who is equal with the Father and has made this Son the only way to salvation with and from God, then what we believe about the Son of God defines us in the most essential way.

- George Guthrie points out that the American protestant church has been drifting toward pragmatism since at least the 70s. Many churches and Christian ministry groups have placed strong emphasis on practical application for daily life but to the neglect of prioritizing how we view Christ and whether we hold to the deep truths of Christianity. He writes, “We want to know how Christianity affects our lives today and how it can help us make it through tomorrow. In their devotional times, many Christian find themselves returning again and again to the ‘practical’ sections of Scripture . . . that can be applied readily to the nitty-gritty issues of living in contemporary culture. [When we had brick and mortar Christian book stores], one [would find] hundreds of Christian self-help books on a plethora of topics and only a handful dealing with theological issues. At times we drift dangerously close to the backwaters of our culture’s pragmatism, going so far as to judge sermons on the basis of whether we were offered anything practical or relevant. If the truth taught in a Bible study, devotional time, or sermon does not have immediate implications, we do not embrace it. . . . Warm-hearted, devotional, application-oriented Christianity should be encouraged. The Scriptures were written to change, mold, and direct the lives of God’s people. YET grave danger lies in focusing on the so-called practical teachings of Christianity to the neglect of the ‘theological.’ Theology and practice are both vitally important aspects of following Christ” (Guthrie, 59–60).
- Hebrews 1:1–4 speaks to the doctrines of Revelation, Theology proper, Creation, the Trinity, the Relationship between the Testaments, Atonement, [Eschatology, Angelology], and clearly Christology (Mohler, 12). Al Mohler notes that In our passage Jesus the Christ is characterized as “the Son of God, Full Revelation of God, Fulfillment of all prior revelation, Heir of All Things, Agent of Creation, Radiance of God’s Glory, Expression of God’s Nature, Preserver of All Creation, Purifier of God’s People, and Mediator for God’s People” (12). Thom Schreiner adds that our passage today also pictures Jesus as the long expected Prophet, Priest, and King (61–62).
- Now, let’s consider the beautifully constructed introduction of King Jesus

# God has always been a communicating God.

- God is a communicating God
  - Periodically and partially in the past [the] God was speaking to our predecessors by means of the prophets,
    - About the past with God speaking:
      - One God; the Creator is the One who has revealed Himself and chosen a people from the line of Abraham. He was of consistent character and communication, but He intentionally did not communicate the fullness of His mind. While He revealed Himself through all of nature, God's Word through the prophets was understandable and to be used in shaping the lives of God's people and all who would join with them.
      - He spoke by means of prophets, those speaking on behalf of God with borrowed authority, saying "Thus says the Lord..."
      - Messages came in parts and pieces and in various ways
        - Some prophets communicated primarily by writing. Some were great preachers. Some specialized in visual demonstrations. Some spoke primarily to kings. Others spoke directly to the people. They depended on prior revelation of Scripture to speak to their current day, while sometimes they spoke with forward looking prediction.
  - For what God had revealed, it necessitated response. When God gave the 10 commandments to Moses, He placed them in the context of Him saving Israel, rescuing them out of Egypt. They were to look back to the time and remember He alone is God and He alone is Savior and they were now His people. And all other nations were to pay attention. The miracles done in Egypt and along their journey were meant to communicate to both Israel and the nations that there is only one God and no other is in His category and everyone is supposed to respond in worship of the one true God.
  - Those who received God's word as revealed in the Old Testament had to trust God's promises in light of what was revealed by that time.
  - Revelation that was prior was sincerely authoritative revelation, but it was insufficient to accomplish God's ultimate plan of salvation of the nations from sin; what came

before the Incarnation could not redeem and restore God's creation.

o but upon these last days He [has] spoken to us by a Son.

■ Feeling the weight of revelation (audible exhales of breath before silence preceding the introduction of the Son)

# God has clearly spoken, revealing Himself and His message by One who is uniquely Son.

o In the original language, the author uses a technique to emphasize something about the Son. Instead of just referring to him as the Son of God, He is referring to Him as One who uniquely fulfills the characteristics of sonship.

- Jesus is being **set in contrast** to all the communication and communicators of God's revelation that came prior. The author is poetically telling the struggling believers that Jesus is better.
- Jesus is better than the prophets. He is better than Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, and any and everyone who ever spoke or wrote authoritative words of the Lord. He is better than the Tabernacle set up in the wilderness and better than the Temples constructed in Jerusalem. He is better than the angels who serve the Lord and who helped communicate the Lord's will.
- But Jesus is not just a better option. He is the culmination of all that God had been communicating. He had been using His servants to point forward to the one who uniquely relates to and represents God fully.
- This Son was communicating prior to the prophets when He created the universe. As the agent of creation, He was the rightful King and heir over all of creation. It all belonged to Him already. The Son was deserving of full glory because He was the giver and keeper of life for the whole universe. Still, He endured the full test that revealed Him as heir of all creation, including the nations. We rebelled against the good king and each have tried to stand on dung heaps declaring ourselves kings of our own mountains. This one you think of as whipping boy has always been king, but he was willing to become whipping boy for you.
- God raised up a lineage through Abram, promising him to be a father of many nations. His messianic descendent would be the unilateral means by which God would accomplish His promise. The Son who is the rightful heir would come and walk through the full gauntlet of the Father's mission for Him, one by which He would perfectly reveal that He is the rightful king.

o The transcendent God has made Himself known clearly by the Son coming close to us. (Radiance, exact representation)

■ Sometimes we dismiss greatness because of familiarity. Have you ever been hiking in the mountains and been blown away by the majesty of the view? Or been to a pristine beach or tropical location and stunned by the beauty of that place?

■ You know who is likely not stunned by those locations? The people who have lived there for an extended period of time. In our depravity, it is easy to take greatness for granted when you have been around it for a while.

■ Jesus is the radiance of God's glory who has come close. The term radiance refers to the brightness that reaches you from a light source. You experience the warmth of the sun by means of its rays. You don't think of a sunbeam as a runaway ray. No, you acknowledge that the sun is shining on you. You enjoy the glory of God by means of the Son of God incarnate.

■ The reference to likeness sounds similar to God creating men and women in his likeness in the beginning. "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." We are made in the image of God, but there is a distinction in how Jesus is the likeness of God.

■ First, the Son is preexistent to creation. He was begotten, not created. He was not made; rather, by him, we all were made. Also, He is the EXACT likeness of God. While we are made in the image of God, we do not represent him perfectly. Jesus perfectly images and reflects the Father.

■ Prior to the incarnation, if you wanted to know what the Son would be like, we would have asked what God is like. For the Son will be like the Father. Now, we are able to say if you want to know what the invisible God is like, look to the Son, look to Jesus.

■ And He is not just a messenger of God. The Son is the full message of God, His character, mission, intentions, love, justice, mercy. God sent His only Son, but he appeared to some as if he was just a pawn in their game.

■ Jesus once told a parable about wicked tenants farmers and the owner of the land sending messengers to them. Prophets, each was beaten. Then the master sent His very own Son. The wicked farmers thought that they could stop all collections on the land and claim it for themselves if there was no heir to the master. So they killed him.

■ But this Son actually came to die in order to accomplish the Father's mission of redeeming and restoring. Killing him did not end him. His death revealed his worthiness of being heir over all things.

■ Also, there is something distinct in relationship of the Father and Son from how we experience sonship. While a mere human heir can represent a parent and communicate the will of a parent, we do not have one mind and will with our parents.

■ The Father and Son and Spirit are three distinct persons yet of one divine essence. They perfectly relate in love and unity as one God yet three persons. So while all three are at work any time you see one person of the Godhead acting, certain tasks or agencies are appropriate to a particular member of the Trinity.

■ While it was all according to the Father's plan, the way God spoke to bring about creation and to sustain it is by the Son, the agent of creation and sustenance. He is the Word by which God created the world. He fully embodies the wisdom of God by which the world was logically structured.

■ When the author refers to the Son upholding everything by His powerful word, don't think of a struggling Atlas, straining all his muscles. Rather, think of Genesis 1-2, in which God speaks a simple sentence and entire mature galaxies are created out of nothing. The same word bringing forth creation with joy is the same word keeping it going until he says "The end."

■ He is the means of salvation from sin, making atonement by offering Himself as sacrifice to the Father, propitiating God's wrath and cleansing from sin all who belong to Him. Cleansing from sin has whole-life implications, not just a one-time profession of faith.

■ Our uncleanness came from within our very own hearts and worked its way out into our thoughts, words, and actions (cf. Mark 7:21–23). We needed a Savior from outside of ourselves to rescue us from ourselves. We needed someone who could identify with us in every way, who could be tempted but never defiled by sin. We needed a Savior who would not be made filthy by our sin but whose purity would cleanse us. God demands purity from sin and confers it on us by means of faith in this one and only Son.

■ Jesus’s suffering and death is not something his followers should be embarrassed by. Identifying with him through suffering is not something we should run from. It is as the poor, suffering, beaten, homeless man dying on the cross that God most revealed the glory of the Son, whom He would raise on the third day. If the message of the cross is “it is finished,” then the message of the empty tomb is “behold, all things are new.” The presence of the Spirit within the people of God announces that the Son is seated at the right hand of God.

So, let’s feel the weight of Christ’s glory as we go through our days. Let’s not be like the accountant in *The Dark Knight*.

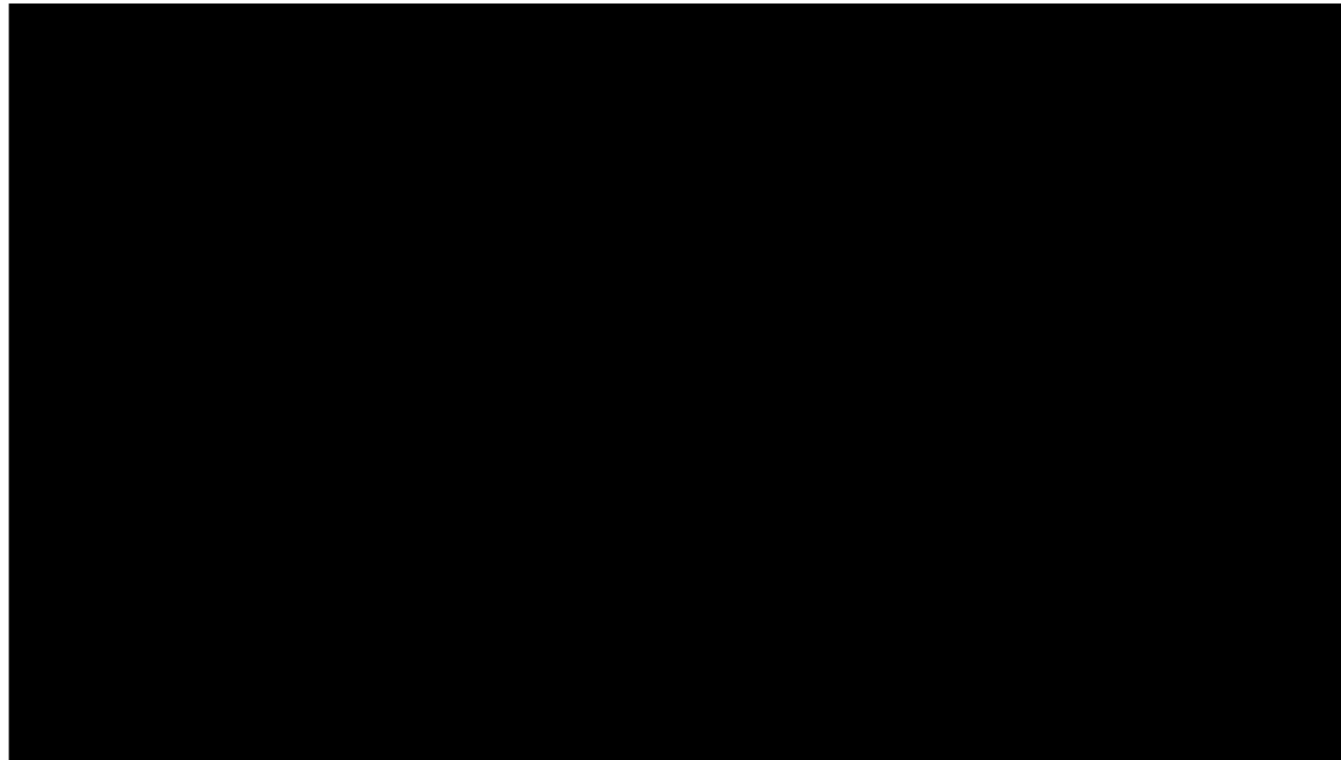






Double picture of accountant blackmailing Bruce Wayne and of Lucius Fox, retelling what is said.

Let me get this straight. You think that your client, one of the wealthiest, most powerful men in the world is secretly a vigilante who spends his nights beating criminals to a pulp with his bare hands and your plan is to blackmail this person? ....Good luck.



- The original audience was thinking of turning back to their old lives without Christ, thinking that they could at least get some comfort now and feel like they were properly relating to God. At that low point, the author of Hebrews walks into the room and regally introduces the Royal King of the Universe according to His titles and accomplishments. Basically, from the beginning of his message, he says, “Let me get this straight, you want enter into God’s presence and rest by denying the very Son by whom he has spoken and who is the only way to salvation available to you and who is even keeping your life going just because He wills it to be so? Think that through again.