

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

**Episode 175**

**Hebrews 1:1-4**

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Hebrews 1:1-4 sets the tone for the entire epistle. The writer asserts that the revelation given by God through one particular son—Jesus Christ—is superior to Torah. It is Christ who is the full expression of God’s wisdom, and the actual, essential being of God Himself. Since the “inheritance” language of Heb 1:1-4 cannot suggest that God himself is being retired and succeeded, the language needs to be understood in terms of co-rulership. But why is this particular son (1:2) different than all others? This episode explores and expands on these themes and addresses this question by discussing the Old Testament context for the phrases, “the radiance of the glory of God,” Wisdom Christology, and hypostasis terminology.

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 175: Hebrews 1:1-4. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you?

**MH:** Pretty good. Getting set for Fantasy drafts this weekend!

**TS:** Yeah, it's actually this weekend, so I'm excited!

**MH:** I've renamed my team. I don't know if you noticed.

**TS:** I did! Something about pugs, right?

**MH:** "The Pugnacious Pugs." And we are pugnacious. [laughter]

**TS:** That's a little too cute for me for Fantasy Football. I think you just sealed the deal that you're not going to be a major threat with a name like that.

**MH:** [laughs] Maybe I should change the picture.

**TS:** I'm not quite worried now, so thank you. I can just count you out.

**MH:** We're the sleeper team.

**TS:** Okay, well you can think that. We shall see, Mike, we shall see. I'm excited that football is starting up, and good luck to you, sir.

**MH:** Yep, well, good luck. That's a great theological statement right there. "Good luck, said the Calvinist." [laughter] "Happy Providence," I don't know.

**TS:** So here we are—the book of Hebrews!

**MH:** Finally here, in terms of chapter content. This is going to be like our other book studies. I'm going to hit a few verses at a time. There's so much in Hebrews that I doubt if we'll ever really hit a whole chapter in one episode, but who knows? We'll just wait and see until we get there. Same procedure—this is not going to be verse-by-verse commentary. I'm just going to land on things that I think I need to say something about or things that are especially interesting. That's how we're going to begin.

As far as the structure of the book, I should say something here real briefly. We're going to do what scholars recognize as the introduction of the book today—the first four verses. Then you can actually break the book into three sections. The first section would be Christ's royal sonship. The theme is the supremacy of Christ, so his supremacy as the elect royal son, as opposed to the other sons of God or anybody else. That's from chapter 1:5 all the way into chapter 4 at about verse 13. From that point on, it's really the superiority of Christ's high priesthood. That goes from chapter 4:14 all the way into chapter 10 around verse 18. The rest of the book is basically a series of exhortations to believers in light of what they just talked about: superiority of Christ. The book is actually pretty simple to break down. We're not necessarily going to worry too much about structural things, but there are those who like that information so I thought I'd say something up-front. Let's just jump into the section we're going to do today. I'm going to read all four verses and then, like I said, I'll just drill down at different points. I'm reading from the ESV, starting in verse 1:

**Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>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>3</sup>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. 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.**

That's verses 1-4. There are going to be places where I'm going to suggest doing something a little bit different with the translation, but generally there's nothing terrible about the translation. We're not like in Deuteronomy 32:17, where the ESV just messes that up terribly. It's pretty straightforward.

5:00

There are a couple things, just off the bat here. I'm going to mention these quickly because I want to camp on other things. In verse 3, this line that "he upholds the universe"... There's nothing special about the verb "upholds." It's just a very common verb: *phero*. BDAG, which is the standard lexicon for New Testament Greek, lists as one possible meaning (and I think this is the one that captures the intent here) that *phero* can mean "to cause to continue in a state or condition." In other words, it's kind of a maintenance or sustenance idea. *Phero* typically means "to carry" or "to pick up" in the sense of like a burden—you're carrying something heavy and that sort of thing. But here the author uses it in a little bit more of an abstract sense—to continue in a state or condition. Again, that's what happens to the "universe."

There is an issue here with translation. There's no Greek word for "universe," although you're going to see this translation if you're using the ESV in a couple of other places where we have the term *aion* (like the age, or it could be translated "world"). You're going to see that in the plural. So when we hit those instances, we're going to talk about whether Hebrews affirms the plurality of "worlds," because the term is in the plural. But that term is *not* here. Literally, what this phrase says is that "he upholds all things." For those of you who have a little Greek, this is the plural of *pas* (*pantas*). So we don't even have that *aion* word here. You might say, "Why in the world would they opt for "universe" here?" I don't think it's a bad translation. It's obviously not very literal. But he upholds or sustains, in their present state of condition, "all things." It's sort of a modern way of looking at "all things." You can see how "universe" might occur to a modern person, so that's why I think the ESV translator used it here. But there is no specific word for this. It's literally just "all things." When we run into those other instances where we talk about the plurality of worlds idea, we'll flag that when we get there, but that's not going to be in chapter 1. It's not going to be for a while, actually.

Having just made a couple comments there, I think I should say something about two adverbs here. This "many times" and "in many ways." One is *πολυμερῶς* / *polumerōs* ("many times" in ESV) and the other is *πολυτρόπως* / *polutropōs* ("many ways"). The first one speaks of things done incrementally—"many times." It's some sort of incremental dispensing of information because it's God speaking at many times in many ways. It refers to something that's just piecemeal. This is probably a reference to the Old Testament revelation. The Old Testament revelation came in sections or portions at various times. It's quite large, so it was never produced at the same time. Hence, this description. The other one is "in many ways." This would refer to the diverse forms and the variety of content—

maybe genres, maybe subject matter, and that kind of thing that is the Old Testament. It's not just one subject, not just one literary form, not just one *anything*. So this is the reference to "long ago": in this incremental way and in various modes of speaking, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

Now you say, "That's kind of straightforward. Why bring it up?" There are some who might want to take this language and drive some sort of wedge between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Or "as time went on, later revelation corrected earlier revelation." Those are not ideas that you can divine from these normal Greek adverbs. It's obvious what they describe, but to read in anything like that would be unwarranted. I think Attridge and Koester in their commentary on Hebrews (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* in the *Hermeneia* series) put this well. They write:

God's speech through the prophets comprised commandments and exhortations, oracles and stories, and it came to its human recipients sometimes directly, sometimes in visions or dreams, sometimes in awesome theophanies, and at other times in a still, small voice. However the multiplicity of God's speech of old is to be conceived, Hebrews' basic affirmation is that *such diversity contrasts with the singularity and finality of God's eschatological speech in the Son [Jesus]*. Thus, while the initial adverbs are not necessarily pejorative, they serve here to contrast the two phases of the divine address, to the disadvantage of the earlier.

In other words, the revelation about Jesus is superior because Jesus is a superior revelation.

10:00

While there is a clear contrast between the old and new, there is no sense that the two phases stand in contradiction to one another.

I think that's well-said. It highlights the fact that what the author of Hebrews is doing from the get-go (and I think most listeners have read the book of Hebrews)... The big theme in the book is how the revelation in Christ and what Christ did and even who Christ *is*—all of that is superior to what has preceded. I think this quote by Attridge and Koester really does a nice job of saying, "Hey, look, from the very first sentence, this is implied. God gave us revelation before. It was fragmented, it was incremental, it was sort of all over the place. But now, in these last days (and we'll talk about that phrase in a moment), he has spoken to us by his son. And that's fully-formed, it's final, and it's superior."

Just as a little bit of an editorial comment here, one thing I'd like the listeners to be thinking of as we go through Hebrews is this question. I don't mean to be overly critical. I mean to be *appropriately* critical here. But you should be asking yourself: How in the world could anybody in the Hebrew Roots movement read the book of Hebrews and like it? Because it is consistently making this claim of the superiority of Christ. How in the world does going back to the (by implication

and by statement) inferior stuff assist us as believers? How does that even honor or take seriously the content of the book of Hebrews? I'd like listeners to be thinking about that as we go through the book. We're going to be here for a while. But in almost every place, that's an appropriate question.

Going back to the passage, "our fathers" is going to orient us back to the Israelites—to the Jews, the Hebrews. We don't lose the Gentiles from the get-go because the writers is going to be using the Septuagint a lot. So if you're a Gentile convert to following Christ and you can read Greek (which, basically, everybody could), you have access to the Septuagint (which might be a different question)... Those who are literate and can do that and have access to it are going to be familiar with Old Testament content because that was the Bible of the early Church. That's their Bible. That's what they're talking about on a weekly—or even daily—basis when they meet. That is the body of revelation that is scripture. It's the Old Testament. So Gentiles are not hopelessly ignorant of Old Testament content, especially since they have a translation in the Septuagint. So this phrase "our fathers" isn't either to divorce what's going to be said from the Gentiles or leaves the Gentiles hopelessly confused. Neither of those things is going to be the case.

Now down into verse 2, this phrase "in these last days"... What does that mean? This is a book written in the New Testament period, sometime in the first century. We talked about dating last time when we introduced the book. Scholars throw around the date of 60 A.D., roughly. That seems to be the working number here. What do they mean "in the last days?" You've got two options, really. It's a phrase that means either "at the end of *these* days" that we're like living in now (and for the immediate audience, that would be the end of the early Christian period, the end of the first century) or it could mean "at the end of the previous age." It could mark the end of the previous age, in other words. So the dawn of a new era is something they're experiencing right then. And it's a positive thing. It's great to be at the dawn of a new era while this other one is passing away, and "these last days" indicates that we get to witness the passing of the old era and we're here at the cusp of the new. So you've got two choices: either this is an apocalyptic thought that "Oh, the world is going to end, and here we are as Christians and things are just going to be no more imminently" and they're thinking of the end of their own time period, or they're thinking of the end of the previous time period and that they're at the dawn of this new beginning. It's probably the latter, actually, due to the parallel expression/similar phrase in Hebrews 9:26, which reads:

**<sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

15:00

It's the closest phrase, and it's pretty close to this one—"end of the ages" and "last days." Most scholars would say this is probably sort of a correlative or parallel reference here, which would indicate that they're thinking of the passing of the old and the dawn of the new. That's not to say that he's writing to a bunch of people who would not be like with the early Church (that the Lord's going to come back soon). It's not a denial of that. It's just that the particular phrase probably most viably refers to the passing of the old and the dawning of the new—the dawning of the era of Christ, that sort of thing. With the Church, we have this circumcision-neutral thing. Even though we're writing to Hebrews, everybody's aware that Gentiles are in the mix. That's not news to anybody. Nobody's going to go "huh?" By 60 (or even if it's later), this is obvious that the Gentile inclusion... that one of the important goals of the messianic work—reclaiming the nations—has begun. And now the old order is passing away and the new order—the time of Gentiles that we're in... And, of course, they're thinking that is going to have an end at some point, too. Paul talks about that and associates it with the return of the Lord. For those reasons, it's probably better to look at it that second way. Hagner, again, I think has a nice little statement of this in his *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*. He writes:

A turning point in the ages has been reached ("he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages" [9:26]). This means that the author, in agreement with all of early Christianity, believed that the present age was in some sense the beginning of the end of time, a unique era in which God poured out gifts upon his people that were anticipations of the age to come (see 6:5; 12:22)

They're in a new era that is going to have a terminus point. The old is passing away, but now they're at this new dawn—the new time—which is going to have its own end. But in some sense we're at:

...the beginning of the end of time, a unique era in which God poured out gifts upon his people that were anticipations of the age to come.

The eschatological age. I think that's well-put. Let's go back to verse 2:

**<sup>2</sup>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.**

If you've ever looked at the text in Greek, there's an interesting item here on which I'm going to disagree a little bit with commentators. The Greek here has no definite article when you get to "his son." There's no definite article before the noun, and there's also no possessive pronoun. Literally this reads:

**<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.**

I think commentators kind of miss the boat here because they lack a divine council context. To be blunt about it, most New Testament scholars do. I'm not blaming them for anything because if your field isn't Semitics, chances are you're not going to run into this. Your contact with the Old Testament is going to consist of the fact that the New Testament quotes the Old. You're not going to be going back and looking at the Old Testament in its own context. Most New Testament commentators don't have any sort of frame of reference for divine council stuff, and I think that's a bit of a harm here.

I'm going to give you two examples. The commentators are writing about the fact that this has literally "a son" instead of "the son" or instead of "his son," even though the ESV translates it "his son." Literally in Greek it's "a son." So Guthrie says in his little Tyndale commentary:

When, in the Greek text, the writer says *a Son* rather than *his Son*, he does this to show the superior means used. He is certainly not saying that God has more than one Son. He is implying that the finest of the prophets cannot stand comparison with a Son as a means of revelation.

Well, I'm sorry but there are sons of God in the Old Testament. I don't know how you could miss that, but there are. While I'm going to agree with his conclusion (and frankly, the rest of the book of Hebrews bears out the conclusion), the means to arguing it just is not very good.

Attridge and Koester here have the same problem. I'll read what they say:

The expression, without a definite article, does not imply that there are many sons whom God could have chosen as agents of revelation. [MH: That I would agree with.] Rather the term emphasizes the exalted status of that final agent. Westcott usefully paraphrases "in one who is Son." [MH: That's a little awkward. I don't know how useful that is, but they're calling it useful!] As the following chapters will indicate, that Son, seated at God's right hand, is superior to all other agents through whom God's word has come, particularly to the angels...

20:00

That's better than Guthrie because I would agree that of all the other sons of God—the supernatural sons of God from the Old Testament, which is a term used of the angelic host... And they are sons because God created them. They are his "offspring." So they're there. Guthrie's denial, as if this language doesn't exist, just isn't helpful. This is a little bit better, but I think the point could have been made a lot more forcefully because of the contrast with the angels. If you have a divine council view here, it just makes the contrast all the more pointed. So the point about the superiority to angels is, of course, important, but embracing this Old Testament concept/reality that God *does* have other

supernatural sons—the divine council—makes the contrast even that more pronounced.

Here's what I would propose. Let's read about it or think about it this way:

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 (i.e., he has spoken to us by one particular son — to the exclusion of all the others — pointing to the great superiority of that particular son — by whom, incidentally, he created the world).

It highlights this one particular son from all of the others. It accentuates him in opposition to all the others. So if you come at this with a Semitic context (hey, it's the book of *Hebrews*!) and you know that God has other supernatural sons, it's still a profound thing to say that there's this one particular one. We're going to get into, "Why that one? What makes that one different?" And the first four verses here are going to tell us what makes that one different. Again, I think it's kind of useless for Guthrie to say he doesn't have any other sons when he very well does, and the singular here with the lack of the definite article doesn't hurt the status of Christ. In fact, I would say it accentuates it because it creates a definite contrast between him and all the other ones that could say, "Hey, we're sons of God, too, out here! We were here before the foundations of..." Big deal. You're not *this* one! [laughs] You're not this one. Again, I think it actually makes the contrast even more significant.

This agent of creation status is one thing that makes this particular son different from the others. In Hebrews 1:3, we have that statement about through whom he created the world. That is the beginning of how the writer of Hebrews is going to focus on this one particular son and say, "There's something different about this one." And then when you get into verses 3 and 4 we're going to get a full description of what makes this one different. But before we get there, we need to talk about the inheritance language in 1:2. I'll just read it again:

**<sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things...**

Then down in verse 4, there's this reference to "the name he has inherited." It's more excellent than the one that the angels have and all that. There's inheritance language here. The inheritance language does not mean that there was some point in the past when the son—this particular son—wasn't around, or that another son (another council member) held his status. And it *is* a status. The inheritance language is about status, not a statement of ontology. It's not a statement that he didn't exist—as if he had to be created and then he'd become the inheritor. That's reading into the language in a pretty dramatic way, and I would say it's quite an unnecessary way, but people have their agendas here. It's

a status, not a statement of ontology. There's no obstacle in the text to affirming that one and only one divine son was designated as the inheritor in the mind of God from eternity. This is implied, as we'll see when we hit the term "firstborn" in verse 6, which would be in our next episode. I just wanted to say that now because we're going to focus on the inheritance language and how that is defined and fleshed out in the first four verses. But then we're going to hit it a little bit again when we get to verse 6 and get the firstborn language.

The important questions to ask at this point as we're thinking about the inheritance issue are these—there are really two of them:

1. Why is this particular son the inheritor?
2. Does inheritance mean the one giving the inheritance is passing on or passing away? (That would be God.) In other words, is inheritance about a successor or a changing of the guard?

25:00

Well, the answer to the second one is obviously "no." God isn't going bye-bye. God isn't retiring. God isn't fading out of the picture. And he isn't being replaced. It's not the idea of a son-succeeding-the-father situation, because the father is always in the picture. If you read through the New Testament to the end of the eschaton, he's still there! The Father is always in the picture. Consequently, we need to think differently than that about the inheritance language. I would say the inheritance language is best understood as sharing or co-possession. In other words, this particular son mutually shares in or mutually possesses certain things. So when we talk about this particular son being the inheritor—inheriting, being appointed heir of these things—it's not God saying, "Hey, you over there... I'm going to appoint you heir to inherit all this stuff when I leave." No. Rather, it's God selecting one particular son (and we'll talk about why) to be the co-possessor, the co-sharer, really the co-regent, the co-ruler. Because what is shared? Well, there are two things that are actually mentioned in the first four verses that get "inherited." (Now I'm suggesting that means "shared.") One is "all things" (verse 2) and the other one is the divine name (verse 4). So God isn't like, "Hey, I'm kinda through with being the master of all things here. You take the job, I'm going to retire." That isn't it. The rest of the New Testament bears that out. And he's also not saying, "I'm kind of tired of being who I am. I have this special name—this Yahweh thing—the name that is my essence." If you've read *Unseen Realm*, you know all about the name theology. So God isn't saying, "You know, I'm tired of being God, and you can do that now." [laughs] It's not about a transition from one person to another, as though there's this succession thing going on. That is not the point. So the point can't be that, and therefore, we need to understand the inheritance language in a different way. I'm suggesting that it's really about both God and this particular son sharing or co-possessing all things and the divine name. I think that's the point.

That obviously would put this whole issue in a different light. And it begs the question, "Why? Why is this particular son different than all the others? Why is he deserving of this status?" And that brings us to the third verse, because the writer is going to explain that. He's already sort of gotten into this thing about "the one who is appointed heir created the world," so there's a bit of an equation going on already. But when you get to verse 3, it's a smack-down.

**<sup>3</sup>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. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...**

In addition to being the agent of creation, verse 3 gives us five things about this particular son—five notes. This particular son is:

1. The radiance of the glory of God
2. The exact representation of his being or his nature (we'll talk about that term in a moment)
3. The upholder, sustainer of all things by his (his own, not God's) powerful word (an echo of the creative word in Genesis 1)
4. The one who provided purification for sins (a clear reference to Jesus)
5. The occupant of the throne at the right hand of the majesty in heaven

Note carefully and note well: these are not the things he inherited. They are the things that establish this particular son as the one worthy of the inheritor status (in my suggestion, the co-possession/co-sharer status). This is what characterizes the son. It's really what validates him as the one who has this status of inheritor. The text never has the son inheriting that list of five things. They establish *why* he is the co-possessor of all things and *why* the name that is above all names is his. In a nutshell, these five things identify this particular son with God, with Yahweh. But he is those things, regardless of what he is eligible to co-possess. He just *is* those things. But they make him... They validate God's selection, as it were—God's bestowal of this equal status to this one particular son.

30:00

I'm going to go through all of them, but to be honest with you, I'm only going to talk at length about the first two. The last three are kind of ancillary and supportive, but the first two are the most important. So for the sake of time, we're going to camp there.

### **"The radiance of the glory of God"**

That's the first one in verse 3. If you've read *Unseen Realm*, you'll know what this term is. This is ἀπαύγασμα, *apaugasma*. It occurs only one time in the New Testament—right here. To figure out what the writer of Hebrews meant, we have to look at his source for it. It actually only occurs one other place. This is a really

rare term. The writer is quoting the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), but the Septuagint, of course, included other books that are outside the Hebrew Bible—other books that many Jews and Christians today don't consider part of the canon, but which in ancient times some considered sacred. Others didn't assign sacred status to it but they were still well-known. The term here—*apaugasma*—in Hebrews 1:3 comes from The Wisdom of Solomon. That's the only other time it occurs. This is a rare term. So it's very clear where the writer of Hebrews is getting it. Again, it's only found one time in the Septuagint, and here it is: Wisdom of Solomon 7:26. It's a longer verse here:

For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.

For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

For she is a reflection [*apaugasma*] of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.

(*Wisdom of Solomon* 7:24–26 NRSV)

Verse 26 is the one that has the term in it. Now you say, "Wisdom... okay, I've heard that before." Well, you've heard it if you've read Proverbs 8, and it's probably resonating with you if you read the original draft of what would become *The Unseen Realm: The Myth That is True*. I had a whole section in that on Lady Wisdom in Proverbs that didn't make it into *Unseen Realm* because we're saving that for something later. We're going to get into that here. If you go to my website ([www.thedivinecouncil.com](http://www.thedivinecouncil.com)) there's a short paper—a little essay—on Jesus and Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8 that you might want to read.

But here we have a reference to wisdom and the pronouns were feminine. *She* is a reflection, *she* is an *apaugasma*, and *her* was a pronoun used in here. This book of the apocrypha here (or the Deuterocanonical if you're Catholic), The Wisdom of Solomon, draws on Proverbs 8. This is an intertestamental/Second Temple piece of literature. It's drawing on Proverbs 8's portrayal of wisdom as a woman. Sirach is another book that does this. Sirach 24:1-3 and verse 22 say this:

Wisdom praises herself, and tells of her glory in the midst of her people. In the assembly of the Most High [MH: there's the Divine Council] she opens her mouth, and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory: 'I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist' ... All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us. (NRSV)

We'll get back to that statement in a moment, because Jews thought that wisdom was Torah and that this was personified Torah. They put Torah at the level of God, which puts Paul's problem with the Judaizers in a whole new light. But again, we'll come back to that in a moment to say something real brief about it.

Another passage, Wisdom of Solomon 9:1, 4, 10, 18, to just hit the highlights here, says:

God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy... give me the wisdom that sits by your throne... [MH: Oh, wow... wisdom is by the Lord's throne! Isn't that interesting?] Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her... that I may learn what is pleasing to you... and people were taught what pleases you, and were saved by wisdom. (NRSV)

35:00 The Jewish writer of Wisdom of Solomon gets this idea from Proverbs 8 (and, of course, Sirach does, too)—wisdom as a woman in the book of Proverbs. And while the term most often refers to practical, insightful living according to God's law in the book of Proverbs, the writer of Proverbs at times portrays wisdom as a woman. There's a reference to *her* voice (Proverbs 1:20), you've got Proverbs 4:6, 7:4, 9:1-6... Wisdom is portrayed as a feminine figure. Proverbs 8:1 describes wisdom speaking to God's people:

**Does not wisdom call?**

**Does not understanding raise her voice?**

But what is especially remarkable about wisdom in Proverbs 8 is Proverbs 8:22-30. She is described as God's co-creator—the agent of creation. Here's the passage in the NIV:

<sup>22</sup> **"The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,  
before his deeds of old;**

<sup>23</sup> **I was formed long ages ago,  
at the very beginning, when the world came to be.**

<sup>24</sup> **When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,  
when there were no springs overflowing with water;**

<sup>25</sup> **before the mountains were settled in place,  
before the hills, I was given birth,**

<sup>26</sup> **before he made the world or its fields  
or any of the dust of the earth.**

<sup>27</sup> **I was there when he set the heavens in place,  
when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,**

<sup>28</sup> **when he established the clouds above**

**and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,  
<sup>29</sup> when he gave the sea its boundary  
so the waters would not overstep his command,  
and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.  
<sup>30</sup> Then I was constantly at his side.  
I was filled with delight day after day,  
rejoicing always in his presence...**

The wording here echoes Proverbs 3:19, where we read:

**<sup>19</sup> By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations; by understanding he set the heavens in place.**

Jeremiah 10:12 says something similar:

**<sup>12</sup> It is he who made the earth by his power,  
who established the world by his wisdom,  
and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.**

But in Proverbs 8, this wisdom figure is personified. Again, you can go to [www.divinecouncil.com](http://www.divinecouncil.com) and read the full paper. In a nutshell here, why the feminine language? It's because of grammatical gender. Not biological gender—grammatical gender. In Hebrew, *hokmah* is grammatically feminine. It's a feminine noun. Hebrew, like Spanish, German, whatever... they assign grammatical gender to nouns to coordinate nouns with verbs so that you know what is the subject, the object, the indirect object, what person and number... If you have a group who's doing the speaking, is it collectively "they" or "he, she or it?" This is all person, number, and gender in a language like Hebrew. Greek does the same thing. It has nothing to do with biology. For instance, in German, *das Mädchen*—"little girl"—is grammatically neuter. Little girls are feminine; they're female. But it's grammatical gender, and in many cases, it is arbitrary. It's a system of classification that languages use. That's what it is; it has nothing to do with biology.

But how is this consistent with the New Testament teaching about Jesus, because Jesus is the co-creator in the New Testament? Here in Hebrews 1, he's the one through whom God created the world. Here you've got something in Proverbs 8 going, "I was appointed, I was by God's side when he was creating the world..." What's up with that? How is this consistent with Jesus? We need a little more back drop to answer that question.

I'm taking this from the thing on [www.divinecouncil.com](http://www.divinecouncil.com). I'm just going to read a few portions of this—actually a good bit of it. For a lot of listeners, this is going to be new because this material is not in *Unseen Realm* and they may not have come across it on the website. What we're talking about here is how this particular son in Hebrews 1 is distinguished. He's the co-creator and he's the radiance of God's glory. He's the *apaugasma* of God's glory. Wisdom in the Old Testament is credited with both of those things—this agent of creation and *apaugasma* (the Old Testament if you count the Second Temple books in there). But even if you don't, hey—it's still part of Second Temple Judaism. Wisdom falls into both those categories. So how is this consistent with Hebrews 1, where we're talking about the supremacy of the particular son, who, of course, is going to be Jesus? How does this work?

Let me just read a little bit to you:

There are several instances in the New Testament where Jesus is identified in some way with Wisdom. 1 Cor 1:24 is considered by some an explicit statement to that effect since Paul refers to Jesus as “Wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). However, it is not completely clear that Paul meant to identify Jesus with the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 in that statement in light of his wording in verse 30: “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

So some would say, “Yeah, we can't really say for sure if Paul was actually thinking of personified Wisdom in Proverbs 8.” And that's legit.

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The wording here seems to simply list wisdom among a number of other attributes and theological concepts. Since it is also possible that Paul could have derived his notion of Jesus as co-creator (Col 1:16; 1 Cor 8:6) from other lines of thought, scholars are hesitant to affirm a “Wisdom Christology” too firmly with respect to Paul.

Much more striking is Luke 11:49-51. This text refers to the Wisdom of God in personified terms as in Proverbs 8. Note the underlined portion:

<sup>46</sup> And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. <sup>47</sup> Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. <sup>48</sup> So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. <sup>49</sup> Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ <sup>50</sup> so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the

**foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,<sup>51</sup> from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.**

The passage is straightforward. In context Jesus is the speaker and railing against the hypocrisy of his enemies. But in verse 49 Jesus suddenly interjects another speaker, the Wisdom of God, who proceeds to say in the first person, “I sent you prophets and apostles....” Scholars know this is not a direct quotation of any passage in the Old Testament about Wisdom. Rather, it is apparently an allusion to the Wisdom of Solomon. This book has much to say about divine Wisdom. In Wisdom 7:27, Wisdom “... makes everything new, although she herself never changes. From generation to generation she enters the souls of holy people, and makes them God’s friends and prophets.” Regardless of the source, Jesus creates the impression that it was *Wisdom* who sent the prophets and apostles, something we know from both the Old and New Testament that *God the Father* did (e.g., Isa. 6:8; 10:6; Jer 1:7; I Cor. 1:28). Jesus’s statement therefore identifies Wisdom and God the Father.

Is Jesus confused? Is the gospel writer careless? No. The wording is deliberate—but the amazing impact of the statement comes when one compares Luke 11:49 with the parallel passage of the incident in Matthew 23. Note the underlining carefully once more, remembering that the speaker, as in Luke 11, is Jesus:

<sup>29</sup> **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous,<sup>30</sup> saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’<sup>31</sup> Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.<sup>32</sup> Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.<sup>33</sup> You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?<sup>34</sup> Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town,<sup>35</sup> so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.<sup>36</sup> Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.**

The point is startling. Whereas the gospel of Luke had Jesus making Wisdom a second speaker, Matthew puts the very words of Wisdom, who was identified with God the Father in Luke, *into Jesus' own mouth!* Luke and Matthew, through a written tag-team effort, identified Jesus as God's co-creator, Wisdom, who was in turn also identified as Yahweh, the God of Israel.

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You put the two things together and it's really startling. The point of all of this for Hebrews 1:3 is that this particular son is the *apaugasma* of God—a description only found in one other place, used of wisdom, "the breath of God, who is in the assembly of the Most High, who came forth from the mouth of the Most High." Jesus is identified as wisdom in Hebrews 1:3. And wisdom was *eternal!* This is the second reason why this particular son is different than the others. He is the co-creator—the agent of creation—and he's also eternal. "How do you know he's eternal from all that, Mike? Why? Why does that speak of eternity?" Because he is wisdom. He's the wisdom of God. There could not be a time when God lacked wisdom. Wisdom comes forth from God and was always there. Wisdom is an attribute of God. It's this personified language. When the writers do this (when they personify wisdom) it's not that God's sitting there thinking, "Oh, I know I was supposed to do something today... Oh yeah! Wait a minute... I'd better create wisdom now so I can remember what I was supposed to do, or so I can think a thought and decide to do something." Poof—there's wisdom. "Oh, now I know what to do." You can't have a God that's described in such a fashion. He wouldn't be God. You can't have an ignorant God. That is not the God of the Bible. This attribute of wisdom is eternal. When the scriptural writers start talking about God's wisdom and casting God's wisdom as this other person—this hypostasis (we're going to get to that word in a moment, as well)—it's again a statement that this other person *is* part of God and is eternal. You can't separate the one from the other, and you can't have a chronology. Otherwise you'd have a dumb deity at some point. You can't say these things and be consistent with what scripture says in so many places!

The result of it is that there's no time when God lacked wisdom and wisdom comes forth from God. God takes that card out of his hand and says, "Okay, we're going to do this because I'm wise and I always have been wise." Wisdom is eternal. When the son is identified with wisdom in Hebrews 1:3, that means that this particular son is eternal. He's *different*. Why? Because all of the other sons of God are created beings. You can read *Unseen Realm* for the passages related to that effect, where God creates the other parts of the heavenly host.

A side note here... Some Jews of the period and a few centuries before Jesus (I mentioned this earlier) equated Torah with wisdom. "Torah" is also a feminine noun. That's grammatically feminine in Hebrew. The Torah makes one wise. This meant that, to many Jews, the Torah was divine. The Torah was at the level of God. The Torah was eternal.

Just think about how interesting this is: The writer of *Hebrews* knows these traditions. He's using this passage about wisdom and he *knows* the material. The writer of *Hebrews* has already suggested that the old revelation given to the fathers was lesser. "That was just incremental. That was scattered around. That was this and that. But in these last days, God has spoken to us by this particular son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. And that particular son is the *apaugasma* of the glory of God." And we're going to get to the next line: the exact imprint of his nature. It's not the Torah that's these things. The Torah is not the radiance of the glory of God. The Torah is not the exact imprint of his nature. The Torah is not the agent of creation. The *son* is—this particular son.

So he's a Hebrew writing to the Hebrews, knowing that what he's writing is really going to torque some of them off because they view Torah at that level. Hebrews is about the superiority of Christ to the Torah and, frankly, to the Old Testament in general. So this opening statement laid down the gauntlet and was already setting up the writer's appeal to believers later on in the book to not return to Judaism—to not return to the prior revelation. This is why I said earlier that I don't know how you can be in Hebrew Roots and like the book of Hebrews. I just don't know how you could do that. If this applies to somebody out there, you need to think about that.

Next phrase:

**"The exact representation of his being" or his nature.**

"The exact imprint of his nature" is how ESV renders it. "Imprint" there is the Greek word *charaktēr*, from which we get our word "character." That's not the really important one. It's the word translated "nature." That is *hypostasis*. We get our word "hypostasis" from it. From BDAG:

The citation of Heb 1:3 draws attention to the Greek word *hypostasis*, often translated as "nature." The term refers to "essence, actual being, reality."

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Think about that: This particular son is the actual being or essence of God. This again, along with the *apaugasma* and along with the identification of wisdom, means he is co-eternal. Therefore, the inheritance language doesn't mean that there was a time when the son was sort of out of the picture. He's a co-sharer. He deserves this status because he is eternal, he is the exact imprint, he is the hypostasis, he is the essence of God himself.

Hagner has a nice little ditty here—little quotation—about this phrase:

The meaning, however, is not far different from either the Pauline notion of Christ as the “image of God” (as in 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) or the Johannine assertion that to have seen the Son is to have seen the Father (Jn 14:9; cf. Jn 1:18). The Son is the unique revelation of God.

He's not lesser than—he *is* God. He is this expression, this manifestation, this revelation of the Father. I would suggest that the inheritance language is really about sharing. It's about this fused identity—this co-possession—of the rule of all things and the divine name. But there's even more to it than that, some of which we'll only get to in the next episode.

But real quickly in these next phrases... “The upholder or sustainer of all things by his powerful word.” I've already said this whole thing about this being an allusion to the Word of God that came forth and arranged things—brought order out of chaos (this Genesis 1 idea). Hagner writes:

The Son upholds or sustains the whole of the created order. The Greek present participle, *pherōn*, “sustaining,” points to the Son’s present and ongoing activity in upholding all that exists.

Notice again, this is not what's inherited. This particular son didn't *inherit* that power—he *had* it. It's what makes him worthy of the inheritor status. It's another statement that points to eternity, because if he's the one who really does this—really sustains the creation—well, then he would have had to have been there from the beginning. You concatenate these thoughts.

In the first five of the phrases we encounter statements that require us to identify Jesus uniquely with God. The Son is put with God at the beginning and the end of time, as instrumental in creation and as the eventual heir of everything at the end of the age. He also functions in a divine capacity throughout all interim time as the one who through an overruling providence makes possible all ongoing existence.

The remaining two phrases, “the one who provided purification for sins” and “the occupant of the throne at the right hand of the majesty in heaven”... we're going to hit both of these themes later in the book. They're both going to be picked up again—the sacrifice for sins and sitting at the right hand of God. We're going to defer our discussion to when we hit those again. But just think about 1:4 again before we wrap up here.

**<sup>4</sup>...having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.**

To go back to verse 1, which says that God revealed himself in the Old Testament in scattered ways, but now we have a final revelation from Christ. He has spoken to us by this particular son, who he is the co-possessor/co-sharer of all things, through whom he created the world. He's the one who is wisdom—there from the beginning. He's part of God, and, therefore, inseparable from God and, therefore, co-eternal. He's the exact imprint—the hypostasis of God—his very essence. He upholds the universe by his power. Then we get the purification language and the sitting down at the right hand of God. Then we get verse 4, which I just read.

**<sup>4</sup>...having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.**

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"Having become"... the Greek is *ginomai*. This makes it sound as though he wasn't before—that he didn't have that superior status before. The lemma is often translated "to be" or "to become," so this participle could just as easily be translated "having been as much superior..." But I would say "become" is fine, not because he wasn't superior in the past, but because this particular son was, for a time, a little lower than the angels. That's Hebrews 2:7. That's why "become" would be appropriate here. He surrendered that status. He surrendered the status he had at the beginning. He was incarnated and became a little lower than angels, and now he has become superior. It's actually a reference to his return to his previously superior status, which he did not consider a thing to be grasped, according to Philippians 2. He let it go to become humbled—to become a man. It's the incarnation. So I'm fine with a translation like "become" here if it's taken in context. Now, people are going to twist it and try to make Jesus a lesser status or a created being or whatever. You just have to ignore context, like Philippians 2. You just have to ignore that. But people do... what can you say?

Another couple of things here. We could go off into the grammar. There's just a lot more to say here. The grammarians discuss this a lot. You have a bunch of aorist participles here in conjunction with an aorist main verb. The main verb is "he sat down." Wallace, for instance, says this. I'll just throw this one quote in:

The *aorist* participle is normally, though by no means always, *antecedent* in time to the action of the main verb. But when the aorist participle is related to an *aorist* main verb, the participle will often be [but doesn't have to be] contemporaneous (or simultaneous) to the action of the main verb.

So in Hebrews 1:4, the first participle must be understood as antecedent in time. "Purification for sins" preceded, naturally, the ascension to the right hand of God. We're talking about this state of incarnation here. But the others could well be simultaneous. You could look at the passage this way or read it this way:

**After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become [MH: because the incarnation was over] as much superior to the angels as the name he possessed... [MH: or the name that he *had* possessed]**

To say that again, "...as much superior to the angels as the name he possessed or that he had possessed is more excellent than the names of the other angels."

You have a number of grammatical things going on here. The word "is" there isn't even in the text, it's implied in English. We can't rabbit-trail on all these things. This suggestion, though, suggests that the superiority of this son was a reality before he ever sat down on the throne. It's just that his superior status was surrendered. In other words, Jesus didn't become superior to the angels only after the cross, resurrection, and ascension. Hebrews 1:3-4 can be rightly be translated and understood in a way that reflects his prior, original, eternal superiority. And then you have this "becoming" language because of the incarnation. You say, "Well, is that cheating?" No. It's not cheating because of what follows in Hebrews 1:5-6. We're not going to go off into this—this is the next episode—but it says:

**<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say,  
    "You are my Son,  
    today I have begotten you"?**

**Or again,**

**"I will be to him a father,  
    and he shall be to me a son"?**

**<sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,  
    "Let all God's angels worship him."**

Hebrews 1:5-6 is going to establish the fact that Jesus had exalted status long before the cross. The phrasing there in verses 5 and 6 about "begotten"... here's a hint for the next episode. People think that "begotten" and this whole thing about "you're my son, today I've begotten you," that's like talking about the origin point, in terms of existence of the son, Jesus. Guess what, folks? That phrase is actually used two other times in the New Testament where it's *can't* be chronological. I'm just going to leave it there. We'll save that for next time. There's something else going on there.

As we wrap up, our understanding of inheritance is the big deal here. It needs to be borne out by the context of all these things we've talked about—the context of Hebrews 2 (what comes after it is going to be a big deal), this whole notion of understanding inheritance as a handing-off of the baton and the one that hands

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off the baton fades out of the picture and now we have a succession (that is not in view because God is always in the picture). You have to understand the inheritance language in a different way and, again, I'm suggesting co-possession and co-sharing. Why? Because the two entities sharing are identified with each other. They're both eternal and one is the essence of the other. You have to take the meaning of the terminology and understand a little bit about the wisdom background, and then think about the implications for the links back to an attribute of God cast as an entity or hypostasis. It has to be eternal. All these things factor into how we would understand the inheritance language.

Just this last thought about the name... Think about it this way: Jesus already had the most excellent name before the cross, before he ever sat down on the throne. How do we know that? We know that from John 17. Jesus already had the name. "I've come to manifest your name." "I thank you for the name given to me." If you've heard me lecture before, basically what Jesus is saying there is, "Isn't it great that I got to become a man? And I'm here to reveal what you are like to them because you have given me the name. I am you and you have given me this body so that I can be among them and show them who you are. If you have seen the Son, you have seen the Father." The theology of John here is significant. So you can't look at this statement about "the name he has inherited is more excellent than..." and say, "He didn't have the name before because he inherited it." No, no, no, no, no... He had the name before he ever went to the cross (John 17).

There are other things going on, too. You can read *Unseen Realm* for that. But all of these things factor into the context. The real wrap-up statement here is that what Hebrews 1:1-4 does is it makes it clear that there is only one son eligible to possess/co-possess all things and to claim the name. There's only one of those. When you get off into verse 5 (as we'll do next time) and the content of chapter 2, that one son, of course, is going to be identified (as if anybody needed it to be) as the Word. It's going to be Jesus. All of that—that revelation, from the opening statement—is superior to the Torah. It's superior to what has preceded.

Next time we'll hit verses 5-14. We'll finish up chapter 1. It's going to really build off what we've talked about this time. Again, the superiority of Christ to Torah and to everything else—to Torah and to all the other sons of God—to anything else in heaven and earth is really the point of the first four verses—the introduction. That's just the introduction.

**TS:** A lot packed in the first four verses. Mike! Who woulda thunk?

**MH:** Yeah, there's a lot there.

**TS:** Well, I'm excited about next week, getting into the rest of the chapter. Do you have anything else that we need to discuss for this episode, Mike?

**MH:** I don't think so. It's been a mouthful. [laughs]

**TS:** All righty. Looking forward to the rest of the book of Hebrews. I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.