



Daily Verse and Comment

Hebrews 1:1-4

(1) God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (2) has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (3) who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (4) having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

New King James Version

This opening paragraph broaches the core of the entire epistle. The remarkable amount of material here is reminiscent of what is written in [John 21:25](#): “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even [the world](#) itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

Names and titles identify people, objects, and even political, religious, or cultural movements within societies. Historical names and titles tend to identify those personalities who lived at the forefront of significant human occurrences of the past. They appear in our histories because people desired to know and understand their activities for their own edification.

God's early dealings with Abram are an example. In [Genesis 11:26](#), [God](#) begins the history of their relationship. Before God speaks directly with Abram, we find that his father's name was Terah. God also provides us with Abram's birthplace, Ur of the Chaldees, and his lineage beginning with Shem, son of Noah.

As time passes, God also informs the reader that Abram married Sarai, who was then barren. He leaves the length of time within this first contact unspecified, but God eventually speaks to Abram in Ur and commands him to depart. However, by the time Abram and Sarai leave Ur for Canaan, the elderly Terah seems to have decided to move with them, and he leads the group from Ur to Haran, a city far to the north. In Haran, Terah seemingly abruptly dies at age 205, leaving Abram, Sarai, Lot, and the unnumbered remainder of Abram's party to continue to Canaan without him.

While Abram and Sarai were in Ur, God never appeared to them. He did no more than speak to them. Not until [Genesis 12:7](#) does the Bible first mention God appearing to him, and by then, they had arrived in Canaan.

Also, at some time after their arrival in Canaan, the term “the Hebrew” is added to Abram's identity ([Genesis 14:13](#)). Perhaps this was done to distinguish him from other Abrams whom God did not want confused with the biblical Abram. Maybe He did it to help future readers make a positive identification. We have always accepted that the term “Hebrew” identified a person as being a descendant of Eber. However, scholars claim that this is not the only usage of the term's root, saying that “Hebrew” was used anciently to distinguish a person who had “crossed over.” This usage implies an individual with no long-term community roots, a wanderer. A Hebrew, then, was a traveler into an area who had crossed a border, a mountain range, or a river, or even one who changed loyalties into, say, a new religious belief.

The beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews contains a compact form of a similar procedure of identification. God inspired the human author to focus immediately on the central Personality of the entire letter—Jesus Christ—identifying Him by titles and by His associations with a magnificent series of mindboggling accomplishments and bestowed honors. By the time the brief, four-verse opening paragraph is concluded, God has already set a strong foundation for convincing those skeptical about Jesus' qualifications that, yes, He is qualified to be High Priest under the New Covenant to assist the elect children whom God is calling into His Family.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Why Hebrews Was Written \(Part Eight\): Hebrews 1](#)

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[Haran](#)

[Jesus Christ as Creator of All Things](#)

[Jesus Christ as High Priest](#)

[Shem](#)

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