



**The meaning of the phrase τῷ ῥήματι τῆς
δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ in Hebrews 1:3: An exegetical
study**

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PREFACE

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Master of Theology with New Testament at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. The subject of Hebrews 1:3 was chosen because its interpretation posed an exegetical challenge. This exegetical problem could only be solved by doing a thorough investigation of the Greek text and its syntactical and theological implications. As someone who thoroughly enjoys the detailed study of Greek texts, this topic of research was sure to be engaging and rewarding for me.

Upon completion of this dissertation, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all who supported me:

I am especially thankful to my husband, Armand, whose unwavering love and encouragement sustained me through every stage of this process.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Professor Albert Coetsee, whose guidance and expertise proved invaluable throughout this study.

Above all, I give thanks to my Heavenly Father. By the grace of God, I have the opportunity to interpret his Word and be transformed by it. His faithfulness alone made this endeavour possible.

ABSTRACT

Hebrews 1:3b contains the interesting phrase *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* (“he upholds the universe by the word of his power”; ESV, 2016:1221). This verse refers to the Son, who is said to uphold the universe specifically “by the word of his power” (*τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*). This study aimed to uncover the intended meaning of this interesting phrase, specifically with regards to the use of *ῥῆμα*. In order to achieve this, three objectives were accomplished. First, who the Son is in the book of Hebrews was determined by means of a literature study. Second, his role in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament was determined by means of a grammatical-historical investigation of certain New Testament passages according to the method of Fee (2002). Third, how the author uses *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* in his book, and how *ῥῆμα* is used in Early Christian Literature, was determined by means of a detailed word study. The study concluded by drawing the lines together and reflecting on the use and meaning of the phrase “by the word of his power” (*τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*) in Hebrews 1:3. This occurrence of *ῥῆμα* was concluded to be a verbal utterance of the Son, serving as his powerful instrument in sustaining the universe.

Key words

Hebrews; Hebrews 1:3; word; *ῥῆμα*; *λόγος*; power; Christ; Son; uphold; sustain.

LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TABLES

Biblical abbreviations

The following table provides a list of abbreviations used throughout this study for biblical books based on the SBL Handbook of Style (Peterson et al., 1999).

Reference	Abbreviation
Genesis	Gen
Exodus	Exod
Numbers	Num
Deuteronomy	Deut
2 Samuel	2 Sam
1 Kings	1 Kgs
Psalms	Ps
Jeremiah	Jer
Hosea	Hos
Zachariah	Zech
Malachi	Mal
Matthew	Matt
Romans	Rom
1 Corinthians	1 Cor
2 Corinthians	2 Cor
Galatians	Gal
Ephesians	Eph
Philippians	Phil
Colossians	Col
Hebrews	Hebrews
1 Peter	1 Pet
2 Peter	2 Pet
Revelation	Rev

Other abbreviations

The following table provides a list of other abbreviations used in this study, including references to the LXX, Early Christian Literature, and noted dictionaries. These abbreviations are based on the SBL Handbook of Style (Peterson et al., 1999; Society of Biblical Literature, 2016).

Esdras	Esd.
Judith	Jdt.
Sirach	Sir.
Wisdom of Solomon	Wis.
1 Maccabees	1 Mac.
Baruch	Bar.
1 Enoch	1 En.
<i>Barnabas</i>	<i>Barn.</i>
<i>1-2 Clement</i>	<i>1-2 Clem.</i>
<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>	<i>Mart. Pol.</i>
Herodotus, <i>Histories</i>	<i>Hist.</i>
Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>	<i>Poet.</i>

Pindar, <i>Nemean</i>	<i>Nem.</i>
Pindar, <i>Pythian</i>	<i>Pyth.</i>
Plato, <i>Protagoras</i>	<i>Prot.</i>
Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War	<i>P.W.</i>
Plato, <i>Phaedo</i>	<i>Phaed.</i>
Plato, <i>Cratylus</i>	<i>Crat.</i>
Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i>	<i>Theaet.</i>
Plato, <i>Sophist</i>	<i>Soph.</i>
Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>	BDAG
Swanson, <i>Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)</i>	DBL
Louw and Nida, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains</i>	LN
Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i>	LSJ
Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley, <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>	TDNT

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The Epistle to the Hebrews varies from other New Testament epistles in that it does not begin with the customary opening salutation mentioning the names of the writer and the addressees (Bruce, 1990:3). Instead, Hebrews begins with a summary of how God has spoken in the past through prophets, and now again in the Son (Heb 1:1-2a).

The question of the authorship of Hebrews has never been settled, but the most serious speculations include Paul, Barnabas, and Apollos (Attridge, 1989:1-6). It is apparent from the text of Hebrews that the recipients of this letter were a particular group of people tempted to lose confidence in the Gospel of Christ due to their fear of being persecuted (Bruce, 1990:3-9). The author was writing to this group in hope of restoring their confidence, calling them to hear God's word in Christ once more, and he consequently emphasises the greatness of Christ and the finality of his work.

According to Hughes (1977:2-4), the overarching theme of the book of Hebrews is the supremacy of Christ. His supremacy is described by looking at the Scriptures logically. Christ is superior to all the prophets and patriarchs of the past, as well as all spiritual angelic beings. All of these were by nature imperfect and temporary, but Christ is the perfect and eternal Word of God.

The divinity of Christ Jesus is another clear theme in Hebrews. According to Griffiths (2016:36-48), the Greek text of Hebrews 1:3 shows that the Son perfectly communicates the nature (*χαρακτήρ*) of God's own being (*ὑπόστασις*). The agency of Jesus is not merely that of a messenger, it is personal. This is what makes Him fundamentally superior to all other prophetic messengers. Jesus is not merely a mouthpiece of God, but God speaks through Him in all that he is and does. God does not just make known facts about Himself through the Son's words, but God reveals Himself through the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. However, God's revelation through the prophets should not be disparaged; they are a shadow of God's complete communication of himself through Jesus Christ the Son (Griffiths, 2016:36-48).

Hughes (1977:35-50) writes that in the opening verses of Hebrews the Son is considered in the threefold character of his messianic office. First, as the Prophet through whom God spoke his final word (Heb 1:2), second as the Priest who made purification for sins (Heb 1:3a), and third as the King sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:3b).

According to Pierce (2020:1-34), parallels can be drawn between the opening verses of Hebrews and John 1:1-2, as the God of Hebrews who speaks throughout Scripture *continues* to speak here through Jesus. The writer of the book expands on who the Son is in Hebrews 1:2b-4, writing in verse 1:3 that Jesus "upholds the universe by the word of his power" (*φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*). The author's intended meaning with the phrasing of this part of verse 3 has been considered by various scholars.

Cockerill (2012:86-100) views this phrase as an affirmation of the close link between the identity of the Son and that of God. The Son, as universal heir and agent of creation also upholds the universe. The phrase "by the word of his power" according to Cockerill, reestablishes the Son's sovereignty. Hughes (1977:35-50) states that the word of the Son is no different than the word of the Father, for the Son is himself the Word, as well as the perfect expression of the mind of God. The word of the Son would therefore be infallibly effective, being one with the word of the Father.

The expression is believed by Griffiths (2016:36-48) to affirm that the Son sustains all creation through his word (*ῥήμα*). Griffiths further explains that Hellenistic Jewish speculation connects both wisdom and the word with God's creating work, and these figures are given a special role in sustaining his creation. Griffiths also notes that in Hebrews 11:3, the "word" (*ῥήμα*) is said to be God's agent in creation.

Koester's (2001:186-190) view links to this, as his summary of verses 2-3 states that all things were created through the word God spoke through the Son, and by the Son's word all things continue to be supported and directed. This upholding work of the Son is also considered by Hughes (1977:35-50) as not merely supporting but moving. It is a carrying forward and onward of all things to their appointed destiny by Christ's word of power. Hughes states that were it not for the sustaining providence and rule of God, everything would relapse into non-existence. The Son can be seen as the nucleus of creation, and the coherence of everything is achieved by his word. This "word" is seen as the expression of his will and is a dynamic word – it always effects its intended purpose.

Hebrews 1:1-4 is viewed by Loader (2018:235-237) as presenting a high Christology, as it emphasises Christ's pre-existence and superiority. Verse 3 is seen as introducing the priestly and sacrificial imagery that is central to the portrayal of Christ in Hebrews. Coetsee (2018:6-8) interprets verse 3 as contributing to the author's portrayal of God's sustaining activity in creation. The phrase *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* is believed to indicate that the Son actively governs and maintains all things, rather than merely holding them passively. In this interpretation, the *ῥήμα* is seen as an extension of God's creative speech.

Steyn (2003:1119-1120) views Hebrews 1:1-4 as emphasising the Son's exalted status compared to the angels. Steyn further notes that these verses establish the Son's identity as divine agent and upholder of creation. The literary and theological function of verse 3 is believed to be an introduction to the Christological and soteriological argument of Hebrews, laying the groundwork for a discussion of the Son's superiority over the angels.

Ellingworth (1993:89-106) examines the use of the verb *φέρων* in this phrase and helps to contextualise the text. Possible meanings of *φέρων* include "bear, bear up, sustain, bear along, guide, rule, bear patiently, endure, and put up with". Attridge (1989:37-48) also writes on this point that the Son, who is so closely linked with the Father, "bears all things" (*φέρων τε τὰ πάντα*), sustaining the universe as well as creating it. The present participle *φέρων* is understood as a reference to the active sustaining of the agent of creation. Christ sustains actively "through the word of his power" (*τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*).

There are various English Bible translations for the phrase *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*. The English Standard Version (2016:1221), for example, reads: "he upholds the universe by the word of his power," the New International Version (2011): "sustaining all things by his powerful word," while others like the New Living Translation (2015) state "he sustains everything by the power of his command". These translations do not differ much in meaning. It can be seen in some translations that *δυνάμεως* is translated as a genitive of quality, almost serving as an adjective (e.g. "powerful"). Bruce (1990:44-51) translates it this way, stating that the expression that Jesus upholds all things "by the word of his power" is likely an instance of the Hebraic adjectival genitive. Thus, the expression may mean "his mighty word" or "his enabling word". For this study, the ESV translation is used as departure point. All quotations from Scripture are taken from the ESV.

The scholars mentioned above all seem to interpret the phrase as referring to the Son's role in sustaining the creation. The question that remains, however, is why the author of Hebrews

states that the Son sustains creation “through his *ῥῆμα*”? A neutral translation of *ῥῆμα* would be “word”, but it could refer to various things. It is presumed that the Greek noun *λόγος* could just as easily have been used for “word”, but apparently the author chose *ῥῆμα* for a specific reason.

It would seem that very few scholars have asked this question and attempted to answer it. This study wants to revisit the Greek text of Hebrews 1:3 to investigate the occurrence and use of *ῥῆμα* in the phrase *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*. In the process, existing explanations will be evaluated, and if convincing, a new explanation will be given.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The meaning of the phrase *τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* (Heb 1:3) is obscure and difficult to interpret. This study wants to investigate what *ῥῆμα* refers to in this phrase in order to uncover the author’s intention with this unique phrasing. Very few scholars have investigated this topic. By investigating the use of *ῥῆμα* in Hebrews 1:3, an evaluation of suggested proposals can be done, or it could lead to a new suggestion for how the phrase should be interpreted and understood.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to investigate the meaning of *τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* in Hebrews 1:3, the following questions will need to be answered:

- **Who is the Son according to the book of Hebrews?**
The context of Hebrews 1:3 shows that *αὐτοῦ* refers to the Son. In order to better understand this phrase, one must therefore first determine who this Son is. A thorough investigation into the identity of the Son will lay the groundwork for the following investigations, which will ultimately contribute to answering the main research question.
- **What is the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament?**
As the main focus of this study concerns the Son’s “upholding” work in Hebrews 1:3, the next logical step would be to determine his unique role in creating and sustaining the universe. Although Hebrews is the central text for this study, it is beneficial to also compare other related New Testament passages to gain a clear idea of this role. This comparison places Hebrews within the broader early Christian understanding of Christ’s cosmic work, contributing to the investigation of how the Son upholds the universe “by the word of his power”.
- **How does the author employ the nouns *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* throughout Hebrews, and how is *ῥῆμα* used in Early Christian Literature?**
Finally, the use of *ῥῆμα* and its Greek synonym *λόγος* needs to be investigated to uncover the most probable meaning of *ῥῆμα* in Hebrews 1:3. Observing how the author of Hebrews employed *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* in the rest of the epistle will provide a clearer idea of his use of *ῥῆμα* in Hebrews 1:3. Early Christian Literature, composed around the same period, offers additional insight into how the noun *ῥῆμα* was understood and commonly used during the time of the author of Hebrews.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to determine the meaning of the phrase *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* (“he upholds the universe by the word of his power” [ESV, 2016:1221]) in Hebrews 1:3.

1.4.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of this research study will include:

- To determine who the Son is according to the book of Hebrews.
- To determine the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament.
- To investigate how the author employs the nouns *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* throughout Hebrews, and how *ῥῆμα* is used in Early Christian Literature.

1.5 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the meaning of the phrase *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* can be determined if the identity of the Son, his role in the creation and preservation of all things, and the use of *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* in Hebrews are established exegetically.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This research study is done from the viewpoint of the South African Reformed tradition within the Christian religion. It encompasses a literature study of relevant literature and the exegesis of relevant Biblical texts. The basic method of grammatical-historical exegesis as proposed by Fee (2002:6-7) is used and then placed revelational-historically within the rest of Scripture. Fee’s exposition of the exegetical process in his *New Testament Exegesis* amounts to a grammatical-historical approach (Coetsee, 2014:7).

A grammatical-historical approach attempts to determine the intended message of the author to the original readers (grammatically), and the reason of this message (historically) (Coetsee, 2014:140). Although Fee’s method does not list translation as a distinct step, literal translations are provided in this study to make the Greek texts’ grammar and meaning clear as we engage with it. These are not rigid word-for-word translations, but closely rendered translations that attempt to preserve the grammatical structure and meaning of the Greek texts. The grammatical-historical method is foundational and is used with awareness of its limits, considering the wider theological context of Scripture.

The specific methodologies employed in the chapters of this study are as follows:

Chapter 2

The second chapter uncovers who the Son is according to the book of Hebrews. For this chapter, a literature study is done.

Chapter 3

The third chapter investigates the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews (1:2-3, 3:3-4, 11:3, 13:8) and the rest of the New Testament (John 1:3, Acts 17:28, 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:16-17, 2 Pet 3:7). These texts are studied using a grammatical-historical method of interpretation, as proposed by Fee (2002).

Chapter 4

The fourth chapter looks at how the author employs the nouns *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* throughout Hebrews, and how *ῥῆμα* is used in Early Christian Literature. A word study of these words is done to determine their specific meaning within the given context. For this purpose the following dictionaries will be used: Greek-English Lexicon (LSJ, 1996), A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (BDAG, 2000), Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains (LN, 1996), the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT, 1985), and A Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Greek – New Testament (DBL, 1997). To these dictionaries will be added the findings of more recent studies on the use of *λόγος* and *ῥῆμα* in Hebrews (e.g., Griffiths (2016), Pierce (2020), etc.).

Chapter 5

The fifth chapter brings the study to a close by drawing together all the lines of the study and presenting the conclusion of the research by answering what *ῥῆμα* in Hebrews 1:3 refers to.

Chapter 2: The Son according to the book of Hebrews

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to determine who the Son is according to the book of Hebrews. The person who “upholds the universe by the word of his power” in Hebrews 1:3 must be investigated to better understand the context of this phrase. To achieve this aim, a literature study will be done.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the book of Hebrews was addressed to people who were tempted to reject the good news about Christ that they had accepted in the past. The writer attempts to restore their confidence in Christ by calling them to hear God’s word in Christ anew and he highlights the Son’s greatness and the finality of his work (Griffiths, 2016:36-48).

The exordium found in Hebrews 1:1-4 reveals the threefold messianic office of the Son as Prophet (1:2), High Priest (1:3), and King (1:3b-4) (Bruce, 1990:44-51). These remain the central themes of Christ’s role throughout Hebrews.

This chapter begins by exploring the Sonship and divinity of Jesus, establishing a basis for his messianic roles. It then examines the Son’s threefold messianic office as Prophet, High Priest, and King. The chapter concludes by reflecting on how an understanding of the Son’s identity contributes to the interpretation of the phrase τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ in Hebrews 1:3.

2.2 THE SONSHIP OF JESUS

2.2.1 The Son’s inheritance

Examining Jesus’ role as the Son of God is essential for a comprehensive study of his identity. According to Hebrews 1:2, God’s final revelation did not come through prophets but “through a Son” (ἐν υἱῷ).

The theme of inheritance is introduced by the statement that God “made” (ἔθηκεν) the Son “heir of all things” (κληρονόμον πάντων) in verse 2. Inheritance is the logical result of sonship. The phrase “whom he made heir of all” in Hebrews 1:2 stands in chiasmatic parallel with the phrase “he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” in Hebrews 1:3 (Cockerill, 2012:92). Jesus entered his sonship as universal heir fully when he sat down at the right hand of God. He will exercise this inheritance fully at his second coming “when his enemies are made a footstool for his feet” (Heb 1:13; 2:5-10; 9:28) and the faithful inherit their salvation (Heb 1:14).

Hebrews 2 discusses the Son’s heirship. Hebrews demonstrates how the eternal Son fulfils his role as Son and heir through his incarnation, earthly obedience, self-sacrifice, and exaltation. Hebrews 5:9 states that “being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him”. Jesus was fully glorified at his resurrection from the dead when he completely assumed his role as great High Priest. All of this, as well as his inheritance of the earth, can be seen as the natural result of his Sonship (Cockerill, 2012:92).

Hebrews 10:12-13 states that “when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.” These verses anticipate the consummation of Jesus’ work. Several royal connotations can be found here, and taking the seat at the right hand of Majesty probably refers to Jesus being named Son of God and heir of all things (Koester, 2001:188-189).

2.2.2 The Son's unique identity

Hebrews 1:5 shows Jesus' unique identity as the Son of God: "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"?" Jesus is superior to the angels because he is God's Son. The Hebrews author uses allusions to Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 to make this point.

There are times when the angels are referred to as "sons of God" (Job 1:6), but never is an angel individually specified as such. The word "begotten" in Hebrews 1:5 from the Greek word *γεννάω*, generally means produced from oneself, especially from the father. It speaks to the close relation between the Father and Son; they share the same essential nature.

2.3 THE DIVINITY OF THE SON

2.3.1 The Father calls the Son "Lord" and "God"

In Hebrews 1:5-14 one finds an explanation by the Father himself about who the Son is (Pierce, 2020:35-62). This explanation includes the following citations about the Son: Hebrews 1:8, "But of the Son he says, your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom", and Hebrews 1:10-12, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." In these verses the Father affirms the Son's divinity by addressing him as both "God" and "Lord". The Father also attributes creation to the Son and alludes to his immutability in Hebrews 1:10-12. These verses alone already provide a compelling argument for the divinity of the Son. However, there are several other ways to conclude his divinity in the book of Hebrews, all of which must be discussed.

The text in Hebrews 1:10-12 is from Psalm 102:25-27 (101:25-27 LXX) speaking of Yahweh, and the writer of Hebrews clearly feels it is meant to refer to Jesus. The powerful words of this text show that the Son is the Creator of the universe (confirmed by Isaiah 45:12, 18 about Yahweh). He is self-existent because he will remain even as the whole earth perishes. He is sovereign, having the authority over all creation to do with it as he wills. He is unchanging, always remaining the same in his nature. He is eternal, his years are not bound to time. It is implied throughout Hebrews that the Son existed since the dawn of time (Heb 1:2, 10; 7:3; 9:26).

Hebrews 1:10-12 portrays the Father's direct affirmation of both the Son's involvement in creation and his immutability. This passage will therefore provide Scriptural background to many of the pericopes discussed in Chapter 3, although it will not be examined under its own separate heading.

2.3.2 The Son as Creator

Some scholars look at the Son's role in creation to determine his divinity. Hebrews 1:10-12 affirms his role in creation in the previous section. Hebrews 1:2 further supports this with the words "his Son ... through whom also he created the world." Additionally, Hebrews 1:3 states that the Son "bears all things" (*φέρων τε τὰ πάντα*), implying that he not only created the universe but also sustains it (Attridge, 1989:37-48). Chapter 3 will contain a comprehensive study on this point, but for the sake of proving his divinity it must also be mentioned here.

There exists some ambiguity about whether it is God's word or the Son's word referred to in Hebrews 1:3, "by the power of his word". However, this ambiguity is seen to emphasise the close identity between the Son and God (Cockerill, 2012:95). The Son not only accomplishes God's purposes by making purification for sins and taking his seat at God's right hand, but in a broader context he will also do so by his second coming.

2.3.3 The Son's close relation to the Father

The Son's unique relation to the Father can also be used to prove his divinity. The Son is described as the radiance of God's glory from eternity in Hebrews 1:3. This means that he reveals God's power and presence (Koester, 2001:189). The nature of the divine will be revealed fully in the exalted Son (Cockerill, 2012:96). Furthermore, the Son's exaltation to God's right hand in Hebrews 1:3 suggests that he rules with the authority and power of the Father himself.

The Son has always been the "radiance of the glory of God" and he has "upheld the universe by the word of his power" since it was created (Cockerill, 2012:95-96). God's revelation in the Son is final because the Son is God's agent in creation and the universal heir designated by God. The Son's inclusion in the unique identity of the Father is made clear when creation as well as ultimate sovereignty is attributed to him in the book of Hebrews.

The immutability of the Son is addressed in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." He will never change, and thus his commands and promises will never change, but stand forever. As immutability is an attribute unique to God (Duby, 2022:28-29), this verse supports Christ's divinity. This truth is further affirmed by Hebrews 1:3, where the Son is seen as the living image of God Himself.

2.3.4 The Son as imprint of the Father

The Greek term *χαρακτήρ* in verse 3 was used for the impression made by a seal, or the impression made on a coin. The term implies that the impression would be an exact correspondence of the seal that made it. The Son is thus an exact impress of the person of God. The expressions, "the radiance of the glory of God" and "the exact imprint of his nature", are complementary. They reveal the uniqueness of the Son while also affirming that his revelation is final due to his close identity with the One whom he reveals (Cockerill, 2012:94-95).

The word *χαρακτήρ* in verse 3 suggests that the Son is the identifying mark of God, and the word *ὑποστάσεως* suggests not merely "being", but an inner resolve that manifests in one's actions (Koester, 2001:189). The Son being the imprint of God's nature implies that God's inner resolve or faithfulness is displayed in him. A new covenant had been promised, and it was inaugurated through the death of Christ (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:8-12; 9:15). God promised that one who is called "Lord" would serve as a priest forever at his right hand, and this was accomplished through the exaltation of Jesus (Ps 110:1, 4; Heb 1:13; 7:15-17).

2.3.5 The Son as the Wisdom of God

Some scholars view Christ as the personified Wisdom of God (Viljoen, 2024:8). This can be linked to him being called the "radiance" of God's glory in Hebrews 1:3 (Bruce, 1990:44-51).

The statement that the Son is the *ἀπαύγασμα* of God's glory (1:3) is thought to derive from Wisdom 7:26, where Wisdom is called an "*ἀπαύγασμα* of the glory of the Almighty" (Attridge, 1989:37-48). This term could either be understood actively as "radiance" or passively as "reflection".

This description of wisdom immediately precedes Sophia (Wisdom) being described as an "unblemished mirror" and "image", much like the Son is called an "imprint" of God. The author of Hebrews likely drew some of the elevated language for the Son from Israel's wisdom traditions (Koester, 2001:187). It was said at times that wisdom lived on earth (Bar. 3:37), is exalted to heaven (1 En. 42:1-2), is seated beside the throne of God (Wis. 9:4) and is the radiance of eternal light (Wis. 7:25-26).

2.4 THE SON AS PROPHET

2.4.1 The father speaks through the Son

The opening verses of Hebrews (1:1-4) show how God has spoken through his Son. Verses 1-2a show how God's revelation in his Son is the fulfilment of his Old Testament revelation. Cockerill (2012:87) observes in Hebrews 1:1-2a that Christ is God's final word that fulfils his previous revelation and thus surpasses it. The "last days" referred to in verse 2a began with Christ's session and will end with his second coming according to Hebrews 1:13, when his "enemies" will be made "a footstool" for his "feet". "At the end of the ages" in Hebrews 9:26 focuses on the coming of the Son when the days of prophetic revelation have ended. Verses 2b-3 emphasise the supremacy of this revelation, and verse 3 reaches its climax with the words, "he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The Father not only speaks through the teaching of Jesus, but also through his being (Pierce, 2020:1-34). The Son is the ultimate prophet through whom God has spoken his final word. He is the culmination of all the promises and prophecies of the past. This can be linked to 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." In the former times God spoke through the prophets, but in this final age He has spoken through his Son.

God did not merely speak "by" the prophets but "in" them, and particularly "in" the Son (Cockerill, 2012:90). In Jeremiah one sees how personal the prophets' involvement were with the word of God (Jer 8:18-9:3; 12:1-4). In Hosea 1:2-11, Hosea's life is seen to represent his message. God addressed the hearers of that time through the very person of the prophet. In a much greater sense God's revelation was in the person of the Son. The Son, as the supreme revelation of God, became the worthy Savior of mankind, who is seated at the right hand of God (Heb 2:5-18).

God's word in the Son ties all the pieces of the past fragmented revelation together by accomplishing the salvation that was anticipated. The Greek *ἐν υἱῷ* in verse 2a can be translated as "a Son". The greatness of Christ's Sonship is emphasised by the omission of a definite article, since God's final word came through "one who is" nothing less than his "Son" (Cockerill, 2012:90).

2.4.2 The Son's humanity as prophet

Hebrews 2:5-8 states that God put the world in subjection to man (Ps 8:4-6 is referenced). Considering this, verse 9 focuses on Jesus taking on human form during his earthly ministry.

The angels never had the dominion that man originally received over the earth in Genesis 1:26. The author of Hebrews demonstrated in Hebrews 1 the deity of Christ and his superiority over the angels. Here in Hebrews 2, he demonstrates Christ's humanity and the implications thereof. In verses 10-13, Jesus's humanity is also proven in the fact that he calls men brethren: "That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise."" (Heb 2:11b-12).

However, at the end of verse 8 one sees that all things are not yet subjected to man ("At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."). The promise of Psalm 8:4-6 seems to be unfulfilled, but its fulfilment is found in Jesus. He is Lord over all, and through him, man can again have the dominion that was originally received (Rev 5:10). The last part of Hebrews 2:9 ("crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone") shows that Christ's suffering and death was necessary for him to be crowned with glory and honour.

The Son revealed God's final word as a human to other humans. He has dominion over all the earth and yet he calls his followers "brothers". His prophesies are divine, but he declared it on earth as a mere human. The Son was the ultimate prophet because he did not merely repeat words that he received from God, but he walked on earth as a human representation of the Father himself.

2.4.3 The Son's supremacy as prophet

The Son as God's supreme instrument of revelation is seen most clearly in him being "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb 1:3) (Cockerill, 2012:94). The glory of God is the revelation of his nature, which can be seen in Christ (John 1:14; 14:7-9; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Kgs 8:11). The "radiance" (*ἀπαύγασμα*) of the glory of God means that the Son is the "reflection" of who God really is, making Him the ultimate mouthpiece of God.

Lane (1991:9) explains why the Son is uniquely qualified to be the agent of God's final revelation. God's ultimate word was spoken through one who has a unique relationship to the Father, which distinguishes him from all other modes of revelation. In the Son are found the attributes and privileges of royalty, the wisdom of God, and royal Priesthood.

2.5 THE SON AS HIGH PRIEST

2.5.1 The Son as God's instrument for salvation

The Greek term for priest is *ιερεύς*. Hebrews is the only book in the Bible that uses this term when referring to Jesus, and he is called a priest more than once (Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:11,15). The Son as priest is the instrument of God's salvific will. He has accomplished a salvation that exposes the typological nature of the Old Covenant order, as the author describes it in Hebrews 4:14-16. The finality of Christ's atonement provides the grace needed for perseverance, while also emphasising the urgency for it to the ancient readers of Hebrews (Heb 10:19-31) (Cockerill, 2012:91).

Hebrews 9:25-28 shows that Jesus needed to die only once to bear the sins of mankind. He does not need to sacrifice Himself repeatedly as the Old Testament priests needed to continually make sacrifices for sins. According to verse 28, Jesus will appear a second time apart from sin, for salvation. At his first coming he came to atone for the sins of mankind, but at his second coming he will have already dealt with the sin of man; therefore, he only comes

to save his redeemed people. In the meantime, Hebrews 9:24 teaches that the Son continues as mediator and High Priest in heaven, “to appear in the presence of God on our behalf”.

2.5.2 The Son’s unique qualifications for high priesthood

The humanity of the Son has been discussed in 2.3.2. If Jesus was not human, he would not be able to atone for the sins of mankind as High Priest and intercede for them before the Father. He was so much human that Hebrews 4:15 states that he can sympathise with the weakness of man, having experienced the external temptations of the world. The Greek for “sympathise” used here is *συμπαθῆσαι* (from *συμπαθέω*), meaning to be affected by sympathy for someone, or to share in their sufferings.

It is made clear that Jesus knew what it was to be tempted by sin in human weakness, but he never gave in to sin (Heb 4:15). He also knew more human suffering on the cross than most humans will ever experience, but this suffering was necessary because it was the very means by which God accomplished his salvific purposes.

In Hebrews 7:23-25 the unchanging nature of the Son’s priesthood is seen. He will never die and therefore his priesthood is eternal. The Greek for “continues forever” in verse 23 is *παραμένειν* (from *παραμένω*) which could also be translated as “remaining or staying beside another”. He remains to be a priest for his people.

Hebrews 7:26-28 shows how the Son is more worthy of priesthood than all previous priests. He is completely holy, unstained by sin, exalted above the heavens, and his atonement lasts forever. Unlike other priests, he does not bring a sacrifice to the altar to offer, he is both the priest and the ultimate offering.

2.5.3 The Son fulfils the old covenant as High Priest

The theme of the Son’s priesthood was announced in Hebrews 2:17 and 5:6 and then discussed extensively in Hebrews 7. Hebrews 6:20 states that the Son had become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:1-3 gives relevant information about the Old Testament priest Melchizedek. He is said to be like the Son of God. The author of Hebrews argues that Melchizedek resembled Jesus in his priesthood.

The Son being a high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” has the following implications: First, Hebrews 7:15-17 states that Jesus’ priesthood is superior because it is “by the power of an indestructible life”, while the Aaronic priesthood is “a legal requirement concerning bodily descent”. Second, the priesthood of Jesus is superior because it was confirmed by an oath, namely the oath of God in the introductory words of Psalm 110:4: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind” (cf. Heb 6:13-20). Third, the priesthood of Jesus is superior because it continues forever. The priesthood of the Son according to Melchizedek is therefore concluded to be superior to the Levitical priesthood (Chan, 2016:182-183). Hebrews 7:11-21 shows how the Levitical priesthood never made anything perfect like Jesus could. According to Hebrews 5:7, Jesus was not established as priest by any human laws, but God Himself declared him to be a priest forever (Ps 110:4).

According to Hebrews 7:18-19, it is through the Son that humans can draw near to God and have a relationship with Him, no longer through the law. Hebrews 7:22 states that Jesus is a guarantor of a better covenant. The Greek for this guarantee or surety is *ἔγγυος*, which means to be “under good security”.

2.5.4 The Son's purifying work

The High Priesthood of Jesus clearly discloses his sonship, and that the final revelation of God came through him. The theme of the Son's priesthood is anticipated in verse 3 with the words *καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος*. The term *καθαρισμος*, which can be translated as "purification", is rarely used in the New Testament when referring to Christ's atoning sacrifice. It appears only here and in 2 Peter 1:9 (Ellingworth, 1993:101-102). It is also significant that the writer alludes to Christ's death in Hebrews 1:3c, because in the context of this verse, the Son's purifying work for sins can be considered as part of his revelatory work (Griffiths, 2016:36-48).

The uncleanness that caused the need for *καθαρισμος* in Hebrews 1:3 was considered by Jewish law to be a sort of infection. Thus, people who became unclean through sin could contaminate other people and places, and they were banned from their community and the sanctuary until they had been cleansed (Koester, 2001:188). In Hebrews, the Son is said to make purification for sins by his blood physically (Heb 9:12) and repentance was expressed through a washing with water (Heb 6:1-2; 10:22).

The cleansing that the Son accomplished was not merely physical, it cleanses the conscience as well, according to Hebrews 9:14 and 10:2. This purification breaks the barrier between God and man (Heb 9:23-24) and allows people to come before God with confidence (Heb 4:14-16; 10:19-22) and to take part in their own community (Heb 10:25).

Hebrews 9:12 states that the Son entered into the holy places once for all. One sees in Hebrews 9:12-15 that animal sacrifices used to suffice for temporary purification of sins, but only the worthy offering of the Son could accomplish eternal atonement (Moore, 2020:523,527). The Old Testament priests at the tabernacle had to make their sacrifices on an altar outside of the veil and then take the atoning blood inside the most holy place. This stands parallel with the way Jesus sacrificed himself on earth outside of heaven and then entered heaven to complete his atoning work (Bruce, 1990:380).

Christ's death is sometimes viewed as the primary act of atonement, with his intercession following as a subsequent expression of its effect (Loader, 2018:277-278). This view emphasises causal priority. The book of Hebrews presents intercession as an ongoing act essential for sustaining the believer's faith (Heb 7:25; 10:19-22). Christ's death is therefore indeed foundational, but the ongoing role of Christ's intercession should not be viewed as secondary but as part of the atoning act by the Son.

2.5.5 Parallels between the Son and ancient Hellenistic kings

Priestly offices used to be held by Hellenistic kings, and the emperor often served as high priest (*ἀρχιερεὺς*). However, in Hebrews, the Son is the high priest who makes purification for sins. The image used for emperors was usually a figure seated on a throne with a staff in his hand. In Hebrews, however, the Son is the one seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Sometimes rulers used to adorn themselves in a way to reflect divine radiance, but Hebrews calls the Son himself the "radiance" of God's glory. There are also certain priestly implications made in Hebrews 10:11-14. The Son's seated posture is said to point to the finality of his sacrifice. Victory is understood to be implied in Hebrews 12:1-2, when the Son had endured the race and taken his seat as victor. In the same way that ancient rulers depicted

themselves as kings, high priests, and victors, Hebrews denotes Jesus as encompassing all these traits (Koester, 2001:188).

2.5.6 Summary

Hebrews 10:19-21 presents the results of the Son's high priestly work for his people. In Him they may have confidence to enter the holy place, he gave them a new way to worship the father personally by tearing the veil, and he intercedes for them in the presence of God. In light of all this, the author of Hebrews encourages and warns his readers in 10:22-31 to draw near to God, hold fast to the truth, pursue community with other believers, and not to reject Jesus' sacrifice for them for "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31).

2.6 THE SON AS KING

2.6.1 The Son's superiority to past prophets

The ultimate superiority of the Son is the overarching theme in the book of Hebrews. His supremacy allows no challenge, from human beings nor angelic beings. The Son's superiority is the same as that of the new covenant, as he is himself the fulfilment and mediator to the old covenant. The old covenant was temporary and imperfect, but the new covenant, having been established in Christ, is perfect and eternal. In Hebrews 1, the Son is introduced as the one through whom God has spoken his own final word.

As God's mouthpiece, the Son is superior to the prophets. Hebrews 1:1-3 shows the contrast between God's previous revelation through the prophets of the past, and his final revelation in Christ Jesus. He spoke to the old prophets "many times and in many ways", but the Son is the ultimate and final prophet, who has made God's revelation clear by walking on earth as a perfect representation of the Father. Verse 2 also contrasts the past prophets with Jesus by pointing out that he is uniquely the Son of God, universal heir, and the one through whom the world was created.

2.6.2 The Son's superiority to the angels

Hebrews 1:4-14 gives clear evidence of the exalted Christ's supremacy over the angels. Hebrews 1:4 describes the Son as "having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs". The Greek term *κρείττων* used to describe the Son in this context refers to being superior in rank. The name that Christ inherited is not only "more excellent" (*διαφορώτερον*) than the angels' names, but more excellent than the angels themselves (*παρ' αὐτούς*) according to verse 4. Psalm 2:7 shows that this "more excellent" name that the Father called Jesus is "Son". No angel was ever given this superior name.

Hebrews 1:6 also proves that Jesus is superior to the angels because the angels worship and serve him. The text referenced in Hebrews 1:7 is Psalm 104:4, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." This text shows that Jesus is Lord over his angels and ministers, and they belong to him. Jesus is also seen as the object of angelic worship in Revelation 5.

According to Hebrews 1:8-12, the Father Himself calls Jesus "God" and "Lord", words never attributed to any angel. This point will be discussed more extensively at 2.6.1, but here it is

also relevant to point out the contrast between the Son and the angels. In verse 8 the description of the Son is preceded by the words “But to the Son he says,” implying a clear contrast between what the Father says of the angels and what he says of the Son. Jesus’ superiority to the angels can also be seen in Hebrews 1:13-14 when he sat down at God’s right hand after completing His work. The angels always continue to work, as their role is only to minister and not to govern.

The expectations of universal dominion promised to David’s heir in Psalm 2:8 (“I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession”) are fulfilled by Jesus (Cockerill, 2012:92-93). He became the worthy saviour of his people through his incarnation, death, and exaltation. According to Hebrews 1:14, the angels do not have the salvific function that the Son has. Thus, the Son who was always superior to the angels became superior to them in a new way at his exaltation through saving his people.

2.6.3 The Son is enthroned at the Father’s right hand

Psalm 110:1 (“The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”) can be interpreted as referring to the Son being enthroned at the right hand of the Father. This is significant, because in ancient times the right hand usually symbolised supreme authority and highest honour (cf. 1 Kgs 2:19).

The author of Hebrews often alludes to this Old Testament verse (Heb 1:3-4, 13; 2:8; 10:12-13) to emphasise the Kingship and exaltation of the Son. His royal enthronement affirms the Son’s unique authority and divine status. It is implied that he does not reign in a subordinate capacity as the angels do, but as a co-ruler with the Father. The Son’s Kingship is not only portrayed as superior to the angels and prophets but is also integrally linked to his role as divine mediator.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this chapter was to determine the identity of Jesus, the Son of God, according to the book of Hebrews. A literature study was done to achieve this goal, and the following results were found:

Jesus holds the unique identity of Son and heir of God. God made him heir of all things because he is God’s Son. His Sonship was fully established at his heavenly session, and his inheritance will be fully received at his second coming. None of the angels enjoy this unique relation to God. Jesus’s sonship naturally results in his salvific and mediatorial work.

The Son is the instrument of God’s final and ultimate revelation. The Father is revealed not only through the Son’s words, but through his being. The Son prophesied on earth as a human, walking among men and being a living representation of the Father.

The Son is the ultimate high priest, who has accomplished salvation and righteousness for his people. His priesthood is infinitely superior because his single offering was sufficient, and the purification he provides is everlasting. He died for the sins of mankind being fully human and fully God, which enabled Him to procure this eternal salvation.

The Son’s role as King is seen most clearly in his utter supremacy, specifically over the prophets of the past and the angels. He is the superior prophet (Heb 1:1-3) because of his unique role as Son of God. He is superior (*κρείττων*) to the angels for the same reason.

The Son is Himself God, working in harmony with the Father. This is seen in the fact that the Father calls him “God” and “Lord” as well as his role in creating and sustaining the universe. It is also seen in his close relation to the Father, being the radiance of God’s glory and the imprint of his being. He is also unchangeable and unbound to time, which are divine characteristics. Lastly, the Son is compared to Sophia, the Wisdom of God. This comparison shows him working in perfect harmony with the Father in all that he does.

Having established this background of who Jesus Christ is according to the book of Hebrews, the next chapter can investigate his role in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament.

Chapter 3: The role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the Son's identity according to the book of Hebrews was determined to better understand who the Upholder of the universe is in Hebrews 1:3. This included a brief discussion of the Son's role in creating and sustaining the universe, which will be discussed more extensively here. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament. This will be achieved by doing grammatical-historical investigations of key New Testament texts that touch on the Son's activity in the creation of the universe and the sustaining thereof.

In chapter one, nine pericopes were identified where the Son's role in creating and sustaining the universe is mentioned or implied. Four pericopes from Hebrews will be studied followed by five from other New Testament books, of which an overview is provided in Table 1 below. Key words of each pericope have also been identified.

Pericope	Key words
Hebrews 1:2-3	<i>ποιέω, αἰών, φέρω, ῥῆμα, δύναμις</i>
Hebrews 3:3-4	<i>οἶκος, κατασκευάζω</i>
Hebrews 11:3	<i>καταρτίζω, αἰών, ῥῆμα, φαίνω, βλέπω</i>
Hebrews 13:8	<i>ὁ αὐτὸς, αἰών</i>
John 1:3	<i>γίνομαι</i>
Acts 17:28	<i>ζάω, εἰμί</i>
1 Corinthians 8:6	<i>(εἰμί)</i>
Colossians 1:16-17	<i>κτίζω, συνίστημι</i>
2 Peter 3:7	<i>λόγος, θησαυρίζω</i>

Table 1: Pericopes with the key words that are investigated in Chapter 3

To determine how and why the themes of the Son's creating and sustaining work are referenced in these pericopes, this chapter will make use of a grammatical-historical exegetical approach. This exegesis will be guided by Fee's (2002:6-7) methodology but will also include other steps deemed necessary for this study.

The essential subdivisions of the grammatical-historical methodology are as follows:

1. Survey the historical context of the pericope in general.
2. Survey the literary context of the pericope.
3. Establish the pericope.
4. Provide a literal translation.
5. Analyse the sentence structure and syntactical relationships.
6. Analyse key words.
7. Consider the broader biblical and theological contexts.
8. Consult secondary literature.

The specific pericopes have already been established in chapter one and secondary literature will be consulted and applied throughout the exegesis of each pericope. Consequently, these two steps will not be investigated in what follows. For the purposes of this study, the following will be investigated at each pericope:

1. Literary context
2. Historical context
3. Literal translation (all translations are my own)
4. Sentence structure and syntactical relationships
5. Analysis of key words
6. Broader Biblical and theological contexts

The investigation will begin with the pericopes from Hebrews, followed by the other New Testament pericopes in biblical order. More attention will be given to the pericopes from Hebrews, while the other pericopes will serve as supporting studies.

3.2 HEBREWS 1:2-3

3.2.1 Literary context

Hebrews does not follow the typical style of a New Testament epistle. For instance, it does not start with the customary greeting and introduction of the author. Rather, it has characteristics of both an epistle and a sermon. The book opens with an exordium, as was common in ancient rhetoric. This exordium consists of one long periodic sentence in Hebrews 1:1-4 and directs the reader's attention to the central themes of the book. These verses emphasise the theme of God's speech (*ῥῆμα*) (Griffiths, 2016:36-48). This exordium opens the book with an announcement of the Son's superiority to angelic beings (Heb 1:1-2:18). The author's decision to omit a greeting and rather start immediately with the topic of the Son's superiority seems to imply an urgency to this message. This book is introduced to be primarily about the Son as ultimate mouthpiece of God.

3.2.2 Historical context

As discussed in Chapter 1, speculations on the authorship of Hebrews include Paul, Barnabas, and Apollos. The most probable range of dates within which Hebrews was composed is 60 to 100 CE (Attridge, 1989:1-6). The circumstances surrounding this epistle included its Jewish Christian recipients being tempted to lose confidence in the Gospel of Christ due to their fear of being persecuted (Bruce, 1990:3-9). The author's reason for writing was therefore to restore this group's confidence in Christ once more, and he emphasises the greatness of Christ and the finality of his work.

The pericope of Hebrews 1:2-3 deals with the unique identity of Christ. The author places great emphasis on this topic, because the addressees were at risk of drifting from the faith and rejecting the Good News of Christ. The author therefore wants to convince them once and for all that that Jesus is the Son of God and the climax of God's revelation, and that he is their ultimate High Priest.

3.2.3 Literal translation

² ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας·

³ ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμόν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, [NA²⁸]

2 in these last days he has spoken to us in a Son, whom He made heir of all things, and through whom he made the worlds.

3 Who, being the radiance of his glory and the exact imprint of his nature, upholds all things by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

3.2.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.2.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
2 ἐπ' ἐσχάτου	In the last	Adjective, genitive, neuter, singular	Genitive with the preposition
τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων	these days	Common noun, genitive, feminine, plural	Genitive of time
ἐλάλησεν	He has spoken	Aorist, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Aorist indicative denotes a simple action in the past. Main verb of sentence that started in the previous verse.
ἡμῖν	to us	Personal pronoun, dative, plural	Indirect object of λαλέω
ἐν υἱῷ	in a son	Common noun, dative, masculine, singular	Dative of means
ὃν	Which	Relative pronoun, accusative, masculine, singular	Introduces relative clause modifying υἱῷ
ἔθηκεν	He has made	Aorist, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Aorist indicative denotes a simple action in the past.
κληρονόμον πάντων,	heir of all things	Common noun, accusative, masculine, singular	Direct object of τίθημι
δι' οὗ	through whom	Relative pronoun, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive of agency
και	Also	Conjunction	Denotes addition
ἐποίησεν	he made	Aorist, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Aorist indicative denotes a simple action in the past.
τοὺς αἰῶνας	the worlds	Common noun, accusative, masculine, plural	Direct object of ποιέω
3 ὃς	Who	Relative pronoun, nominative, masculine, singular	Introduces relative clause modifying υἱῷ
ὢν	being	Present participle, active, nominative, masculine, singular	Adverbial participle of manner, linked to the verb καθίζω

ἀπαύγασμα	the radiance	Common noun, nominative, neuter, singular	Complement
τῆς δόξης	of his glory	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Objective genitive
καὶ χαρακτήρ	and the exact imprint	Common noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Complement
τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ	of his nature	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Objective genitive
φέρων	Upholds	Present, participle, active, nominative, masculine, singular	Adverbial participle of manner, subordinate to the verb καθίζω
τε τὰ πάντα	all things by the	Adjective, indefinite, accusative, neuter, plural	Direct object of φέρω
τῷ ῥήματι	Word	Common noun, dative, neuter, singular	Dative of instrument
τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ,	of his power	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Genitive of quality
καθαρισμὸν	Purification	Common noun, accusative, masculine, singular	Direct object of ποιέω
τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν	for sins	Common noun, genitive, feminine, plural	Genitive of separation
ποιησάμενος	[after] making	Aorist, participle, middle, nominative, masculine, singular	Adverbial participle of manner, linked to the verb καθίζω.
ἐκάθισεν	he sat down	Aorist, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Aorist indicative denotes simple action in the past. Main verb of the sentence.
ἐν δεξιᾷ	at the right hand	Adjective, dative, feminine, singular	Dative with the preposition
τῆς μεγαλωσύνης	of the Majesty	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Genitive of reference
ἐν ὑψηλοῖς,	on high	Adjective, dative, neuter, plural	Dative with the preposition

Table 2: Syntactical analysis of Hebrews 1:2-3

3.2.4.2 Exegetical implications

The phrase ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ in Hebrews 1:2 forms the basis of the main sentence and the emphasis of the whole exordium (Coetsee, 2014:143). Every other clause or phrase is dependent on this main clause. The theme of God's speech is found in the aorist indicative ἐλάλησεν, which denotes a simple action in the past.

Between Hebrews 1:1-2 and 1:3, there appears to be a stylistic break marked by $\delta\varsigma$. The grammatical subject changes from God in 1:2 to the Son in 1:3, although the Son is already the central theme in 1:2b. This change is introduced by two relative clauses in 1:2 (Ellingworth, 1993:91-101).

In Hebrews 1:1-2 one sees that God, having spoken in the prophets (*λαλήσας ... ἐν τοῖς προφήταις*), has now spoken in the Son (*ἐλάλησεν ... ἐν υἱῷ*). The exalted status of the Son is described in Hebrews 1:2-3 in a series of three relative clauses (1 *ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων*; 2 *δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας*; 3 *ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*). These clauses refer to the Son (*υἱῷ*) in Hebrews 1:2 (Griffiths, 2016:36-48).

The last of these relative clauses is the first of another series of clauses in verse 3 (1 *ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*; 2 *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*; 3 *καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος*). These clauses are built around the participles *ὢν*, *φέρων*, and *ποιησάμενος*, all of which relate to statement that Christ “sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high” (*ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς*).

There exists one text critical matter about the phrase [*τῷ ῥήματι*] *τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμὸν [τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος]* (“by the Word of his power, after making purification for sins”). Another possible reading is [*τῷ ῥήματι*] *τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, δι' αὐτοῦ καθαρισμὸν [τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος]* (“by the Word if his power, after making purification **through himself**”). The support for the first version is κ A B 33 81, while the support for the second reading is \mathfrak{B}^{46} D^{9f} 236 263 2005 2127. Metzger (1994:592) states that the support for the second reading is weakened by the possibility of conflation in those manuscripts. The *δι' αὐτοῦ* in this reading could have been added to emphasise the middle voice of *ποιησάμενος*. The first reading is therefore accepted as the more likely reading.

In Hebrews 1:3, *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως* reinforces *ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης*, as it describes the unity and exact resemblance between God and the Son. The pronoun *αὐτοῦ* should be taken with both phrases (Ellingworth, 1993:91-101). The present participle *φέρων* refers to the ongoing sustaining activity of the Son (Attridge, 1989:45).

In Hebrews 1:3, the Greek noun *ῥῆμα* is used instead of *λόγος* for “word”. A possible explanation is that *ῥῆμα* is more expressive than *λόγος*, placing the focus on the powerful utterance rather than the content of what is being said (Allen, 2010:115-128). The phrase *τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* could be an instance of the Hebraic adjectival genitive. The “word of his power” may also be translated “his powerful word” (Bruce, 1990:47-49).

The participle *ποιησάμενος*, being in the aorist tense, indicates that the cleansing work was completed before he “sat down”. The fact that it is in the middle voice shows that this was the Son’s own action, on his own behalf. The participle *ποιησάμενος* is also temporal, indicating that *after he* had made purification, he sat down. This implies that his work of purification was a prerequisite to being seated at God’s right hand (Greenlee, 1998:18). The middle voice of *ποιησάμενος* implies that this purification was achieved personally in Christ. God “made” the universe through the Son, who “made” purification for sins in his own person (Cockerill, 2012: 91-97).

3.2.5 Analysis of key words

There are various words from Hebrews 1:2-3 which are important. For instance, ἀπαύγασμα, χαρακτήρ, and ὑποστάσεως all have great semantic significance. However, for the goal of this study, which does not focus on these concepts, these phrases have been sufficiently looked at in Chapter 2 (2.3.4, 2.3.5, and 2.4.3 specifically). Instead, the following key words will be looked at now, which contribute to the problem statement of this study: ποιέω (1:2), αἰών (1:2), φέρω (1:3), ῥῆμα (1:3), and δύναμις (1:3)

3.2.5.1 ποιέω

BDAG (2000:687) translate ποιέω as *do, make, manufacture, or produce*.

LN (1996:512) translate ποιέω as *to do, act, carry out, accomplish, perform, doing, or performance*.

LSJ (1996:1427-1428) and TDNT (1985:458-459) all have similar translations for ποιέω, such as *do, make, manufacture, produce, create, bring about, behave and act*. In the context of Hebrews 1:2, the best possible translation seems to be *to make*, as it relates to *making* purification for sins, rather than *creating* something.

3.2.5.2 αἰών

LN (1996:1-7) state that αἰών refers to *the universe*, perhaps with some associated meaning or “age” in the sense of the transitory nature of the universe. BDAG (2000:26) state that αἰών could either refer to a period (*age*), the “aeon” as a person, the *world* as a spatial concept, or to a long period of time, without reference to a beginning or end. It could also refer to a unit of time as a particular stage or period of history. Translations include *a very long time, the past, earliest times, eternity, and age*.

The translations of BDAG (2000:26), TDNT (1985:197-208), LN (1996:7), and LSJ (1996:45) all seem to overlap. These translations include *age, time, universe, lifetime, generation, world, era, eternity, material universe, cosmos, a period of existence, and a definite space in time*.

Taking the above dictionary entries into consideration, the best possible translation for αἰώνας in this pericope seems to be *worlds*, as that is what was created by God in the context of Hebrews 1:2-3.

3.2.5.3 φέρω

BDAG (2000:862) translates φέρω as *bear or carry*, and in Hebrews 1:3 specifically, as *who bears up the universe by his mighty word* (φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ).

Other scholars, including LN (1996:256), LSJ (1996:1922), and TDNT (1985:56-60) all suggest similar translations, such as *to carry, bring, lead, drive, uphold, present, sustain, bear, take along, endure, and suffer*.

In the context of Hebrews 1:3, the best possible translation for φέρω seems to be *sustain*. However, taking all the above dictionary entries into consideration, *uphold* might be more appropriate, as it relates better to the concept of *bearing* and so better illustrates the Son’s work in this passage.

3.2.5.4 ῥῆμα

BDAG (2000:742) state that ῥῆμα refers to that which is said, and translate it as *that which is said, word, saying, or expression*. LN (1996:217), LSJ (1996:1569) and TDNT (1985:742) all provide similar translations to this, with LN adding *event* to the lists. A more comprehensive word study of ῥῆμα will be done in Chapter 4.

It seems from above dictionary entries that ῥῆμα usually refer to a *spoken word*, rather than a written word or idea (BDAG, 2000:742). In the context of Hebrews 1:3, *word* seems to be the appropriate translation, referring to that which is spoken.

3.2.5.5 δύναμις

BDAG (2000:206) translate δύναμις as *power, might, strength or force*.

LN (1996:67), LSJ (1996:452), and TDNT (1985:284-317) all seem to concur with these possible translations, with LSJ adding *ability, influence, means, capability* and *capacity* to the list.

Taking all these dictionary entries into consideration, *power* seems to be the best translation in the context of Hebrews 1:3, as it refers to the Son's power.

3.2.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.2.6.1 ἐν υἱῷ

The Greek phrase ἐν υἱῷ shows how God's final revelation came through one who is nothing less than his Son. In the past God spoke through prophets by giving them a message to preach, but now he speaks through his Son Jesus Christ, who is Himself the message. The Son is the Messiah announced by past prophets.

3.2.6.2 δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας

The Greek phrase δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας makes it clear that it is the Son who was the instrument of God's creation. In verse 2 the Son is shown to be God, not a created being like the angels and prophets. This idea is confirmed in Hebrews 1:5-14.

The noun αἰῶνας primarily means "ages", but in this context it refers to the whole created universe of space and time. The statement that God brought this universe into being through the Son relates to other New Testament statements such as John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16 (Bruce, 1990:47-49).

3.2.6.3 φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ

The Greek phrase, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, reveals that it is the Son who upholds, bears, or carries all things by the word of his power (cf. Col 1:17).

3.2.6.4 χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ

Verse 3 calls the Son the "exact imprint" of the nature of God. This is in accordance with what the rest of the Bible teaches – Christ is both fully God and fully man (cf. John 1:1-5; Phil 2:6-8; Col 2:9). The fact that "all things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3) clearly implies that the Son was not created but is instead himself the Creator of all things.

3.2.7 Summary

In Hebrews 1:2-3, the Son is portrayed as the ultimate prophet and mouthpiece of God, as well as the agent of creation. He is further said to be the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. The Son as Redeemer, being both perfectly God and perfectly man, made purification for sins, after which he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty – the ultimate place of honour.

3.3 HEBREWS 3:3-4

3.3.1 Literary context

In 3.2.1 the literary context of Hebrews in general was covered. The book of Hebrews is unique in its lengthy descriptions of the Son of God, his mighty role, and his superiority.

In Hebrews 3:3-4, the Son's apostolic and high-priestly office is underscored (cf. Heb 3:1). This passage follows the author's description of the Son's superiority in Hebrews 1 and a call to trust the Son at the end of Hebrews 2. In Hebrews 1-3 the Son's superiority to all previous agents of revelation is revealed, including angels, prophets, and now Moses specifically. In Hebrews 3:3-4 a comparison is made between the Son and Moses. Moses was faithful to God and seen as the greatest respected prophet of old through whom God gave the Law to his people. The Son was also faithful; however, his faithfulness is greater than Moses' because of who he is.

3.3.2 Historical context

The historical context of Hebrews was covered in 3.2.2. The author's reason for writing was to remind the addressees to have faith in the gospel of Christ because of his faithfulness to save them, so that they might not abandon their faith.

In the pericope of Hebrews 3:3-4, the author makes specific reference to the prophet Moses. As Jesus' superiority to the angels and past prophets has been discussed, the author now focuses attention on his superiority to Moses specifically. His reason for singling Moses out is possibly because his addressees thought Moses to be a very great prophet, as a previous mouthpiece of God through whom they received the Old Testament Law (Exod 4:15-16; 20; Deut 34:10-12). Jesus is now placed in a side-by-side comparison to the greatest prophet they know, and he proves superior.

3.3.3 Literal translation

³ πλείονος γὰρ οὗτος δόξης παρὰ Μωϋσῆν ἠξίωται, καθ' ὅσον πλείονα τιμὴν ἔχει τοῦ οἴκου ὁ κατασκευάσας αὐτόν·

⁴ πᾶς γὰρ οἶκος κατασκευάζεται ὑπὸ τινος, ὁ δὲ πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός. [NA²⁸]

3 For this One has been considered worthy of more glory than Moses, as much as he who built the house has more honour than the house.

4 For every house is built by someone, but all things were built by God.

3.3.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.3.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
3 πλείονος γάρ	For much more	Adjective, genitive, feminine, singular	Comparative genitive
οὗτος	this one	Pronoun, demonstrative, nominative, masculine, sing	Subject of sentence
δόξης	Glory	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Comparative genitive
παρὰ Μωϋσῆν	than Moses	Proper noun, accusative, masculine, singular	Accusative with the preposition indicating comparison
ἡξίωται	considered worthy	Perfect, indicative, passive, 3 rd person, singular	Completed action in the past with the effect continuing into the present
καθ' ὅσον πλείονα	as much as	Comparative adjective, accusative, feminine, singular	Accusative of measure with the preposition κατά
τιμῆν	Honour	Common noun, accusative, feminine, singular	Direct object of ἔχει
ἔχει	he has	Present, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Present indicative denotes a simple action in the present
τοῦ οἴκου ο	the house	Common noun, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive of comparison
κατασκευάσας αὐτόν·	he who built	Aorist, participle, active, nominative, masculine, singular	Substantive participle
4 πᾶς γὰρ οἶκος	For every house	Common noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Subject of the sentence
κατασκευάζεται	is built	Present, indicative, passive, 3 rd person, singular	Present indicative denotes simple action in the present
ὑπό τινος,	by someone,	Pronoun, indefinite, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive of agency
δὲ πάντα	but all things	Adjective, indefinite, accusative, neuter, plural	Direct object of κατασκευάσας
ὁ ... κατασκευάσας	the builder	Aorist, participle, active, nominative, masculine, singular	Substantive participle; subject of clause

θεός	God	Common noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Complement to κατασκευάσας
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Table 3: Syntactical analysis of Hebrews 3:3-4

3.3.4.2 Exegetical implications

The word γὰρ introduces this passage, indicating that a reason for considering Jesus will follow. The reader's attention must be fixed on Jesus, for he is exalted far higher than Moses. This word connects the passage with the preceding discussion about Christ's supremacy (Greenlee, 1998:89-93). The word γὰρ places this passage in contrast with the previous verse, serving almost as a "but" – Jesus and Moses are similar, *but* Jesus is worthy of more honour.

The demonstrative οὗτος is placed at the beginning of the verse for emphasis. "This one" refers to "Jesus", as seen in verse 1. Jesus is due greater δόξα ("glory") than Moses, as the builder of a house is due greater τιμή ("honour") than the house itself. The glory of Jesus is superior in degree as well as in kind (Cockerill, 2012:164-166).

The relationship between the Son and Moses is illustrated using a common proverb: The Son is to Moses as the builder of a house is to a house. Verse 5 reveals that the house in this illustration is representative of the people of God, while the builder of this house is God. The term κατασκευάσας, however, can refer to more than just "building". The completion of the house is being referred to, fully furnished and equipped for use. The people of God can therefore be understood as being fully equipped to serve and glorify him (Cockerill, 2012:164-166).

The verb ἡξίωται in verse 3 implies Christ's worthiness. This word is in the perfect tense, implying that Christ's worthiness, which started at his exaltation, continues. The father is the one who bestows this worthiness on Christ. The phrase καθ' ὅσον clearly indicates that a comparison is being made, translated as "*just as the builder has more honour than the house.*" At the same time, it also expresses the degree of the comparison: "*by as much as the builder has more honour than the house*" (Greenlee, 1998:89-93).

3.3.5 Analysis of key words

In this pericope, the words κατασκευάζω and οἶκος are repeatedly used. There are other concepts that could be considered semantically significant, such as ἀξιόω or τιμή, but the theme of this pericope seems to be centred specifically around the key words κατασκευάζω (3:3, 3:4) and οἶκος (3:3; 3:4).

3.3.5.1 κατασκευάζω

BDAG (2000:419) translate κατασκευάζω as *build, construct, erect or create*.

LN (1996:135) translate κατασκευάζω as *make ready or build*. LSJ's (1996:911) translation is similar, translating it as *to equip, furnish fully, construct, build, prepare, arrange, establish, fabricate, or make*.

Taking all these dictionary entries into consideration, the general translation of κατασκευάζω seems to be *build*. The translation of LSJ, which includes the concept of *furnish fully*, illustrates the way God creates as well as equips. However, in the context where a literal builder is referred to, *build* proves to be the best translation.

3.3.5.2 οἶκος

LN (1996:173), LSJ (1996:1204-1205) and BDAG (2000:562-563) all translate οἶκος in a similar way, including *house*, *temple*, *sanctuary*, *abode*, and *dwelling*. TDNT (1985:119-131) add to these translations “household”, “family”, and “race”.

In the context of this pericope, οἶκος is used in the context of a physical building, while also metaphorically referring to the household of God (verses 5-6). The best translation in this context would therefore be *house*, as it preserves both the literal and figurative meaning.

3.3.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.3.6.1 ἡξίωται

This Greek phrase communicates that Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses. Why is the Son being compared to Moses specifically? In the Old Testament Scriptures Moses was a great saint and a very honourable servant of God. Through him God did many great wonders and led God’s people, the Israelites, out of Egyptian slavery and on their way to the Promised Land.

3.3.6.2 πλείονα τιμῆν

Through the Greek phrase πλείονα τιμῆν it is implied that Jesus and Moses were both greatly honoured as heads of their own “households”. Moses had an important position in his household, but Christ was a son in his (Greenlee, 1998:89-93).

3.3.6.3 πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός

This Greek phrase communicates that all things are built by God. As the Son of God and the one through whom God creates (Heb 1:2; John 1:3), Jesus is therefore more worthy of honour and glory than Moses or any other highly esteemed saint of the Old Testament (Du Toit, 2021:5).

3.3.7 Summary

Hebrews 3:3-4 places Jesus in comparison with Moses, as both are significant prophets through whom God spoke great prophecies. God is described as the builder of his household in verse 4. Moses was a servant in this house, exalted by his outstanding faithfulness as chief administrator of the household of God. Jesus, the Son of God, is seen in Hebrews 1:2 and John 1:3 to be God’s agent in creation. This sheds light on the way God “builds” in this pericope – through the Son. Jesus is therefore concluded to be infinitely more worthy of glory and honour than any other prophet, including Moses.

3.4 HEBREWS 11:3

3.4.1 Literary context

In 3.2.1 the literary context of Hebrews in general was covered. The book of Hebrews places emphasis on the Son’s superiority, glory, and faithfulness to save. Hebrews 10 ends with a warning of what will happen to those who “shrink back” in the Christian faith (verse 38). The readers must not be one of these but persevere in the faith.

Hebrews 11:1-7 serves as an introduction to verses 8-40, which include a list of past leaders of faith, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc. Hebrews 11:3 should be interpreted within

this context of faith. In this pericope the author expands on this faith that it enables believers to trust in unseen things. The use of “we” in this verse implies that the author includes himself with the addressees.

3.4.2 Historical context

The historical context of Hebrews was covered in 3.2.2. The Jewish Christian addressees were being threatened with persecution for their faith. Their faith in Christ was beginning to fade, and the author attempts to remind them of the great hope they have in Christ the Son, so they might be encouraged to persevere in the faith and not be lost.

In Hebrews 11 the author recalls a long list of faithful believers in the Old Testament as encouragement to them. This list starts in the verse following this pericope, Hebrews 11:4.

3.4.3 Literal translation

³ Πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι. [NA²⁸]

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

3.4.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.4.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
Πίστει	[By] faith	Common noun, dative, feminine, singular	Dative of instrument
νοοῦμεν	we understand	Present, indicative, active, 1 st person, plural	Present indicative denotes simple action in the present
κατηρτίσθαι	were framed	Perfect, infinitive, passive	Completing infinitive after νοέω
τοὺς αἰῶνας	that the Worlds	Common noun, accusative, masculine, plural	Direct object of καταρτίζω
ῥήματι	[by the] word	Common noun, dative, neuter, singular	Dative of instrument; subject of passive verb κατηρτίσθαι
θεοῦ	[of] God	Common noun, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive of origin
εἰς τὸ	so that the	Preposition, accusative	Follows accusative preposition
ἐκ φαινομένων	[things which are] visible	Present, participle, middle/passive, genitive, neuter, plural	Present participle middle denotes unqualified action; substantive use in prepositional phrase

τὸ βλεπόμενον	things which are seen	Present, participle, passive, accusative, neuter, singular	Present participle denotes unqualified action; substantive use as subject of γεγονέναι
μὴ ... γεγονέναι	were not made of	Perfect, infinitive, active	Infinitive as subject; linked to εἰς τὸ, indicating result

Table 4: Syntactical analysis of Hebrews 11:3

3.4.4.2 Exegetical implications

The noun πίστει is placed at the beginning of the clause for the sake of emphasis and is repeated for the same purpose. The dative case frequently occurs in this passage, making πίστει an anaphoric dative. Dative of instrument is indicated here.

The word καταρτίσθαι is in the perfect tense, showing the worlds/ages as having been prepared beforehand and now being in that prepared condition. This implies the worlds/ages being set in proper order (Greenlee, 1998:431).

The word ῥήματι, from ῥήμα, refers to utterance or spoken words (Greenlee, 1998:431-432). Through the powerful ῥήμα of God, the universe was created. The ῥήματι θεοῦ here is not believed to refer to the Son, as λόγος does in John 1:1-3. In John 1, λόγος is used to refer to the hypostatized Word of God, while ῥήμα is used here to refer to God's creative command as in Genesis 1 (Bruce, 1990:278-279). The word ῥήματι is in the dative case, denoting means.

The use of φαίνω as a substantive participle is seen only here in the Greek Bible (Cockerill, 2012:568-571). It is used in classical Greek literature to refer to an experience of the senses.

3.4.5 Analysis of key words

In translating the verse, the following words have been identified as key words: καταρτίζω, αἰών, φαίνω, and βλέπω. There are other words in Hebrews 11:3 that could be considered important, for example νοέω or ῥήμα, but considering the specific context of the pericope, καταρτίζω, αἰών, φαίνω and βλέπω are the most key phrases.

3.4.5.1 καταρτίζω

BDAG (2000:418) and TDNT (1985:476) have similar translations of καταρτίζω, including *put in order, restore, prepare for a purpose, prepare, make, outfit, and design*.

LN (1996:135) translate καταρτίζω as *make adequate, produce or create*. LSJ (1996:910) have a unique translation of καταρτίζω, translating it as *to adjust or put in order again, restore, or to furnish completely*.

From the dictionary entries above, καταρτίζω holds both the idea of creating and detailed design. It refers not merely to *making* something, but also to prepare it fully for its intended function. In the context of this pericope, the concept of design certainly plays a role in the meaning of καταρτίζω. God made and perfectly designed the worlds; therefore, a translation of *design* or *frame* would be most fitting.

3.4.5.2 αἰών

Translations of *αἰών* from esteemed dictionaries have been discussed in 3.2.5.2. The two main ideas from these translations of *αἰών* appear to be *world* and *age*. God has formed both the ages and the worlds, so both translations would be comprehensible in the context of Hebrews 11:3. The translation of *αἰώνας* as *worlds* seems to make the most sense as the verse is referring to material creations.

3.4.5.3 ῥῆμα

The translation of *ῥῆμα* according to distinguished dictionaries has been discussed in 3.2.5.4. Considering these dictionary entries, the general translation of *ῥῆμα* in this context seems to be *word*. It is unclear why *ῥῆμα* is used instead of *λόγος*, which is used in John 1. What is clear, is that *ῥῆμα* refers to a spoken word or statement, rather than an idea. The most suitable translation for *ῥῆμα* in this pericope would be *word*.

3.4.5.4 φαίνω

BDAG (2000:859) translate *φαίνω* as *appear, become visible, things which appear*.

LN (1996:255) and LSJ (1996:1912) have similar translations of *φαίνω*, including *shine, give light, bring light, things which are visible, shine, be bright, be revealed, make known and make to appear*. TDNT (1985:1-2) adds to these translations “to manifest”, “show”, and “light up”.

In the context of this pericope, the material, visible things which were created by God, are said to have been created out of things that are not visible. These invisible things likely refer to the creative “word of God” (11:3a). Taking all the dictionary entries above into consideration, *φαίνω* seems to refer to the act of *being visible* rather than *shining*. The best translation for the context of Hebrews 11:3 would therefore be *things which are visible*.

3.4.5.5 βλέπω

TDNT (1985:343-344) state that *βλέπω* denotes sense perception, being able to see. LN (1996:46-47) provide several possible translations for *βλέπω*. These include *see, be able to see, watch out for, think about, understand, and cause to happen*.

BDAG (2000:142), LSJ (1996:318) and TDNT (1985:343-344) are all generally unanimous on the translation possibilities for *βλέπω*. They add to the list of possible translations *become aware of, notice, glance, perceive with the eye, look, look to, look for, have the power of sight, watch, and regard*.

Taking all the above translation options into consideration, the best translation for *βλέπω* in Hebrews 11:3 would be *seen*, which would then change to *[things which] are seen* in the context of the pericope.

3.4.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.4.6.1 κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ

This Greek phrase shows that the world was “made”, “fitted” or “framed” by the word of God. The verb used here is *καταρτίζω*. The same verb is used in Hebrews 10:5 in the context of “preparing”, and in 13:21 in the context of “equipping”.

Hebrews 11:3 talks about faith. The addressees are called to look backward and see how God has always been faithful and trustworthy. When one looks at all of God’s fulfilling work

throughout the Bible, the logical conclusion is that he is faithful to fulfil his promises. This is perceived in Psalm 19:1, Luke 1:1-4, and especially Romans 1:18-20: “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.”

God created every visible thing out of things which are not visible – that is the creative word of God. Humans can therefore see with their own eyes the results of God’s creative work and have faith that even though they cannot always see God’s purposes, he is faithful and able to save.

3.4.7 Summary

Hebrews 11:3 discusses the forming and furnishing of the worlds by the Word of God. The Word of God is not believed here to refer to the Son as in John 1, but rather to God’s creative command as in Genesis 1. Only the Father’s role in creation is discussed in this pericope, but the Son’s role as agent of creation is affirmed in Hebrews 1:2 and John 1:3. The passage therefore explains that all creation, of which the Son was the agent, was made from things that are not seen – that is, by the word of God.

3.5 HEBREWS 13:8

3.5.1 Literary context

In 3.2.1 the literary context of Hebrews in general was covered. In Hebrews 13, the author describes a life that is pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:7 calls the addressees to remember their good teachers, their teachings, and way of life. Verse 8 reminds them that Christ remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. This is said to warn them not to listen to the false teachings referred to in verse 9, because Christ’s teachings do not change and remains true forever.

This passage affirms the Son’s eternal unchangeable character. If Christ is unchangeable, then he is also unfailingly reliable. Christ is unchangeable, and therefore His Gospel message is also unchanging. This pericope is an independent comment not directly connected to the previous passages. It expresses a reflection after a pause. It does, however, form a transition from the previous pericope, which connects the passages. The addressees’ former leaders grounded their faith in the unchanging Jesus Christ; therefore, they must reject false teachings (Greenlee, 1998:583-584).

3.5.2 Historical context

The historical context of Hebrews was covered in 3.2.2. The events surrounding this passage include the threat of persecution of Jewish Christians. The author writes to this group to call them to hold fast to their faith and not be tempted to reject the Gospel of the Son.

In Hebrews 13:7-9 the author is urging his addressees to hold fast to the teachings of the Scriptures. They are called to remember their good teachers and imitate their good works as they apply their teachings. They are also warned against false teachers who were attempting to mislead them with strange teachings, likely including Jewish ways that were made obsolete by the new covenant (Du Toit, 2021:9). Since Christ remains the same forever, it is implied that his teachings are unchanging as well. Therefore, new teachings that contradict them must be false.

3.5.3 Literal translation

⁸ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐχθὲς καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. [NA²⁸]

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and into the ages/forever.

3.5.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.5.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
8 Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς	Jesus Christ	Proper noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Subject of the sentence
ἐχθὲς	Yesterday	Adverb of time	Indication of time
καὶ σήμερον	and today	Adverb of time	Indication of time
ὁ αὐτὸς	the same	Pronoun, nominative, masculine, singular	Complement of Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας	and into the ages	Common noun, accusative, masculine, plural	Prepositional phrase denoting time

Table 5: Syntactical analysis of Hebrews 13:8

3.5.4.2 Exegetical implications

The Son's full title, "Jesus Christ" is rarely seen in the book of Hebrews. It is used in this passage to add emphasis and solemnity to what is being said. "Jesus" is his personal name, "Christ" refers to his identity as the Anointed One and his unchangeable nature (Greenlee, 1998:583-584).

This verse is not very lengthy, and the words ἐχθὲς καὶ σήμερον ... καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας make up most of the verse. The term ἐχθὲς ("yesterday") generally refers to time past, but it can also be interpreted more specifically as referring either to the former leaders mentioned in the previous verse or to Christ's completed work of atonement on the cross — that is, his work of salvation in the past which remains effective for believers today (Greenlee, 1998:583-584).

The term σήμερον ("today") refers to the present time of the author and his addressees. It could also refer to Christ's active work of intercession for believers (Greenlee, 1998:583-584). The phrase εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας ("into eternity") is written in an emphatic manner. It implies "forever", an unending future. Christ's work as ultimate high priest, and his future work of intercession, redemption, and consummation, are eternal. If Christ is unchanging, then he is, was, and will always be the perfect high priest, mediator, and redeemer of mankind.

3.5.5 Analysis of key words

Hebrews 13:8 is a short verse with quite simple terminology. The most significant words in this text that could be considered key phrases are ὁ αὐτὸς and αἰών.

3.5.5.1 ὁ αὐτὸς

LN (1996:39) translate αὐτὸς as *same, he, she, it, and self*. BDAG (2000:122) and LSJ (1996:282) add to the translation of αὐτὸς *of oneself, the same way, at the same time, of one's own accord, the very one, the soul, and alone*.

In the context of Hebrews 13:8, ὁ αὐτὸς is used to describe how Jesus remains unchanged throughout all time. He remains *himself or the same*. Taking all these dictionary entries into consideration, the most fitting translation of ὁ αὐτὸς in this context seems to be *the same*.

3.5.5.2 αἰών

Translations of αἰών by esteemed dictionaries have been provided in 3.2.5.2. Taking these dictionary entries into consideration, the most fitting translation of αἰών in Hebrews 13:8 seems to be *eternity*, since the preceding words are εἰς τοὺς. The phrase εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας can be translated as *into the eternity*, or simply, *forever*.

3.5.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.5.6.1 ὁ αὐτὸς

Hebrews 13:8 speaks to the immutability of Christ. It also implies that he has existed for all time, as he remains ὁ αὐτὸς (himself, the same) forever. This would mean that Jesus also existed at the time of creation, which links to Hebrews 1:2, where it is stated that He was the very agent of creation. Hebrews 1:10-12 also confirms Christ's immutability and involvement in creation.

In the book of Hebrews, the unchanging nature of God as well as his plan is prominent. The writer often refers to the Old Testament scriptures to show how God fulfilled his promises, and everything happened exactly as he intended. The Lord has always been faithful to them, and since he is unchanging, He will remain faithful forever.

As God never changes, neither does his word. In Galatians 2:1-10 Paul is seen to confirm that he preaches the same gospel as the other disciples, as there is only one truth, and it does not change. Paul even declared a curse over anyone who would try to twist this truth in Galatians 1:8-9.

3.5.6.2 ἐχθές καὶ σήμερον ... καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας

Hebrews 13:8 states that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus' work yesterday (ἐχθές) can be seen in Hebrews 5:7: he "offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save him from death". Today (σήμερον) he represents his people before the Father as High Priest. Forever (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας) he continues to live as Son of God (Bruce, 1990:375).

3.5.7 Summary

Hebrews 13:8 highlights the immutability of the Son. He is unaffected by time, remaining the same yesterday, today, and forever. This fact reaffirms Christ's role in creating (Heb 1:2, 10-12) and sustaining (Heb 1:3) the universe and it sheds light on how he can continuously uphold all things. The Son's unchanging nature ensures that his sustaining power is never interrupted or weakened. The creation and sustaining of the universe require a consistent and unailing

nature, which the Son is shown to possess. The One who upholds the universe is therefore constantly present in His preserving role.

3.6 JOHN 1:3

3.6.1 Literary context

The book of John is the fourth Gospel in the New Testament and is written in the form of a narrative. It is distinguished from the Synoptic Gospels in the sense that it includes Jesus' teachings on certain theological matters which are not found in the other Gospels. The author's purpose for writing this book was to share the Good News of Christ so the readers may believe and receive eternal salvation through Him (John 20:30-31).

John 1:3 is found within the book's prologue (John 1:1-18). The author makes a purposeful connection to Genesis with the words "In the beginning...". The "word of God" is introduced here as an eternal being that has always been with God and is also God (verses 1-2). Through this "word of God" everything was created (verse 3), in him was life, which was the "light of men" (verse 4), and darkness does not overcome it (verse 5). The way in which John 1:1-18, and especially 1:14, describes the "word of God" makes it clear that Jesus is being referred to as the Word. This passage therefore speaks to Jesus' role in creation as the Word of God.

3.6.2 Historical context

The Gospel of John finds its historical context in the first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman world. The first intended recipients of the Gospel of John are unknown, although the original audience who received this gospel is referred to as the Johannine Community. This gospel was evidently meant to be received by a wide audience to cooperate with the general witness of early Christianity and to spread the good news of Christ. The origin of John's gospel is unknown as well, although the early church suggests that the Gospel had its origin in Ephesus (Klink, 2017:41).

The author of John's gospel never introduces himself, but when the gospel was passed on to individuals who did not know the author personally, they changed the title to "the Gospel according to John", which suggests that John was the author (Klink, 2017:58-62). The author, as first-hand witness, relays in this gospel how Jesus the Word became flesh (1:4), was crucified (18:28-19:27) and resurrected (20:1-10). The author makes an effort to root this book in its specific historical and theological foundations to accurately guide the reader through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel of John is believed to have been written sometime within the range of 70-95 AD (Klink, 2017:58-62).

In the introductory verses of John, the author opens this book with a clear announcement of the Son's divinity and in John 1:3 his role as the Father's agent of creation is seen. Jesus therefore could not have been a mere human prophet, as he has always existed with the Father, even at the point of creation, where he was powerfully involved.

3.6.3 Literal translation

³ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν [NA²⁸]

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

3.6.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.6.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
3 πάντα	all things	Adjective, indefinite, nominative, neuter, plural	Subject of the sentence
δι' αὐτοῦ	through Him	Personal pronoun, genitive, masculine, singular	Preposition takes the genitive case, genitive of agency
ἐγένετο	were made	Aorist, indicative, middle, 3 rd person, singular	Aorist indicative denotes simple action in the past
καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ	and without Him	Pronoun, personal, genitive, masculine, singular	Follows genitive preposition, genitive of separation
ἐγένετο	was made	Aorist, indicative, middle, 3 rd person, singular	Aorist indicative denotes a simple action in the past
οὐδὲ ἓν.	Nothing	Adjective, nominative, neuter, singular	Subject of ἐγένετο
ὃ	Which	Relative pronoun, nominative, neuter, singular	Introduces relative clause modifying ἓν
γέγονεν	was made	Perfect, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Denotes completed action in the past with its effect continuing into the present

Table 6: Syntactical analysis of John 1:3

3.6.4.2 Exegetical implications

This verse starts with πάντα (“all things”), the totality of all created things. Verse 1 shows that the “him” through whom all things were made is the λόγος (“word”). This would imply that the presence of λόγος at the beginning of creation was not an idle one, but he is actively the source and means of all creation.

John states that in verse 1 the λόγος was indeed God himself. He then introduces the subject of creation to prove the Word’s deity. All things ἐγένετο (“were made/came to be”) through the Word. This implies the deity of the Son since the means of all creation cannot himself be a created thing. The aorist indicative tense of ἐγένετο indicates that creation took place as a simple completed action.

The divinity of the λόγος as sole agent of creation is often debated by scholars. Smarius (2022:151-154), for example, argues that the way θεός appears in καὶ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος (John 1:1) may refer to a distinct, subordinate divine being rather than the same being as God. This view emphasizes the relational and functional role of the λόγος instead of its inherent divinity. However, the broader context of John (cf. 1:14) affirms the full divinity of the λόγος as the pre-existent agent of creation.

It seems strange that $\delta \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \omicron \nu \epsilon \nu$ occurs after the full stop. In the oldest manuscripts, there is no punctuation here (Metzger, 1994:195). The question therefore exists whether $\delta \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \omicron \nu \epsilon \nu$ should be added to the words preceding the full stop or those that follow after. Orthodox writers added it to the preceding sentence to prevent the heretical understanding that the $\lambda \acute{\omicron} \gamma \omicron \varsigma$ (Christ) was among the created things. Another credible argument is that this punctuation was necessary to fit into the pattern used by the author in this prologue. This pattern of climactic parallelism involves the end of one line matching the beginning of the next line. It is ultimately thought to be consistent with the Johannine style to conclude that it should be considered as part of the preceding sentence (Metzger, 1994:195).

The $\lambda \acute{\omicron} \gamma \omicron \varsigma$ as means of creation of all things has been stated in a positive way, but John then goes further to also explain it negatively, including words like $\chi \omega \rho \acute{\iota} \varsigma$ (“without”) and $\omicron \upsilon \delta \acute{\epsilon} \acute{\epsilon} \nu$ (“nothing”). The negative clause can be translated as “without Him nothing was made”. The relative clause ending the sentence translates as “which was made”. This would imply that not a single created thing was made apart from Christ. The use of both a positive and a negative way to bring this point across, emphasises John’s message.

John 1:3 states that no created thing was created apart from Christ. This proves that Christ is not himself a created being (cf. Heb 1:2-4, 10-12). His existence had no point of beginning; he has always existed.

3.6.5 Analysis of key words

In John 1:3, the word $\gamma \acute{\iota} \nu \omicron \mu \alpha \iota$ appears three times. The other words in this pericope are not very semantically significant, therefore $\gamma \acute{\iota} \nu \omicron \mu \alpha \iota$ will be looked at as the key word in this text.

3.6.5.1 $\gamma \acute{\iota} \nu \omicron \mu \alpha \iota$

BDAG (2000:157), LN (1996:51), LSJ (1996:349), and TDNT (1985:681-682) all provide similar translations for $\gamma \acute{\iota} \nu \omicron \mu \alpha \iota$, including *come into existence, be, be made, become, be created, be manufactured, be performed, be formed, be done, be produced, be born and be begotten*.

In the context of John 1:3, $\gamma \acute{\iota} \nu \omicron \mu \alpha \iota$ is used to refer to God’s creating act. God brings things into being through Jesus, and only Jesus. Taking all the dictionary entries above into consideration, the general translation of $\gamma \acute{\iota} \nu \omicron \mu \alpha \iota$ in this context seems to be *be made or come into existence*.

3.6.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.6.6.1 $\pi \acute{\alpha} \nu \tau \alpha \delta \iota \acute{\alpha} \upsilon \tau \omicron \upsilon \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \nu \epsilon \tau \omicron$

This Greek phrase communicates that all things were made through the Word of God. Since Christ is the Word of God, this provides proof of his role in creation. He is himself the agent of all creation.

Genesis 1:1 states that “in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.” John 1:1 adds to this teaching the fact that the divine Word already existed at the beginning of all created things. He was therefore not created along with the rest of creation but has existed for all time.

3.6.6.2 $\chi \omega \rho \acute{\iota} \varsigma \alpha \upsilon \tau \omicron \upsilon \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \nu \epsilon \tau \omicron \omicron \upsilon \delta \acute{\epsilon} \acute{\epsilon} \nu$

This Greek phrase serves as a limitation or rather lack thereof. It reveals that not one thing was created apart from the Word.

This verse shows Jesus as the agent in creation of all things, as established in the prior verses, John 1:1-2: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” These verses show that the “word” referred to is Jesus Christ, the Son, as he is confirmed in the rest of the Bible to have been alive and involved at the point of creation, and that he is himself also God.

3.6.7 Summary

The role of the Son as the agent of creation is most clearly revealed in John 1:3. All things were created *through* him, and apart from him, not a single thing was made. The Son is therefore not only a means of creation, he is the only means of creation.

3.7 ACTS 17:28

3.7.1 Literary context

The book of Acts narrates the church’s history directly after Jesus’ ascension. It is the only book that relays this history, which makes it unique. The book of Acts was written to document and share how the Gospel message of Christ was spread from the Jewish to the Gentile world through the work of his apostles and other disciples.

In Acts 15, the issue of how Gentiles are to be incorporated into the church takes all the main characters of Acts to Jerusalem to confer on the matter. Paul went to Antioch as part of his missionary travels, where he established and encouraged several churches. A narration of his work in Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Athens is found in Acts 16:1-18:23 (Bock, 2007:6-8). Paul embraced an opportunity to share the gospel with the high council of Athens, the Areopagus, in Acts 17:16-34.

Verse 28 forms part of Paul’s address to the highly sophisticated philosophers at the Areopagus. In this verse he cleverly uses quotations from the Cretan poet Epimenides (“In him we live and move and have our being”) and Aratus’ poem *Phainomena* (“For we are indeed his offspring”) (Rothschild, 2014:7). He knew these poets were well-known to the people he was teaching, so he referenced their work to better relate his message.

3.7.2 Historical context

The book of Acts is widely accepted by scholars as a sequel to the gospel of Luke. It highlights God’s plan of salvation through Jesus’s ministry, death, and resurrection. It explains how the new and challenging institution which combines Jews and Gentiles is rooted in ancient Jewish promises and has been God’s plan since the beginning of time.

The events of Acts begin in Jerusalem and follows the travels of Paul to Rome. The book is centred around God, and it focuses on his activity and his plan (Bock, 2007:2-3). The author writes about God’s work in establishing the church through Jesus, a church that consists of both Jews and Gentiles. The Book of Acts can be summarised as a sociological, historical, and theological work following this new community.

The location where Acts was written is unknown, however, Rome, Achaia, Caesarea, Corinth, and Ephesus are viewed as possible locations. Acts is accepted to have been written after the death of Christ as it is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. This fact, together with the mention of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome during the time it was written, places the date of Acts no earlier than 62 AD (Bock, 2007:30-32).

In verse 28, Paul is preaching the Good News of Christ to Areopagite philosophers. He observes their way of worship and compares their idols to God. God, in contrast to their gods, wants to have a close relationship with his people. He is not cold and distant but desires to be near to us in spirit. He is so close in fact, that every person finds their being in Him, and is “his offspring”. Apart from Him, no one can exist.

3.7.3 Literal translation

²⁸ ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν· τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν. [NA²⁸]

28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, “For we are also his offspring.”

3.7.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.7.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
28 ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ	For in Him	Personal pronoun, dative, masculine, singular	Dative of means with ζάω, κινέω, and εἰμί
ζῶμεν	we live	Present, indicative, active, 1 st person, plural	Present indicative denotes simple action in the present
καὶ κινούμεθα	and move	Present, indicative, passive, 1 st person, plural	Present indicative denotes simple action in the present
καὶ ἐσμέν,	and have our being	Present, indicative, active, 1 st person, plural	Present indicative denotes simple action in the present
ὡς	As	Adverb of comparison	Introduces comparative clause
καί	Also	Adverb of addition	Emphasises τινες
τινες	some	Pronoun, indefinite, nominative, masculine, plural	Subject of the relative clause
καθ' ὑμᾶς	of your own	Personal pronoun, accusative, plural	Accusative with preposition κατά
τῶν ... ποιητῶν	Poets	Common noun, genitive, masculine, plural	Partitive genitive
εἰρήκασιν	have said	Perfect, indicative, active, 3 rd person, plural	Perfect indicative denotes completed action in the past with the effect continuing into the present
τοῦ	–	Definite article, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive article of implied antecedent θεός
γὰρ καί	for also	Adverb of addition	Describes ἐσμέν

γένος	Offspring	Common noun, nominative, neuter, singular	Complement of ἐσμέν
ἐσμέν	we are	Present, indicative, active, 1 st person, plural	Present indicative denotes simple action in the present

Table 7: Syntactical analysis of Acts 17:28

3.7.4.2 Exegetical implications

Acts 17:28 is about mankind living, moving, and having their being in God, and is said to allude to pagan ideas (Bock, 2007:590). The expression, γένος ἐσμέν (“we are his offspring”), refers to a pagan poem by Aratus. Paul makes it clear that he intended this reference with the words τινες τῶν καθ’ ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν (“some of your own poets”).

Paul uses ideas from the Greek world because this is what was familiar to the Athenians he was preaching to. The Greek text of Acts 17:28 includes quotations from Greek poets to build Paul’s argument. The phrase ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν references the poet Epimendes, while τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν is a line from Aratus about the relationship between God and humans (Bock, 2007:590). The Greek idea of the “spark of divine being” in humans as tied to Zeus, is cleverly utilised by Paul to carry the message that humans are made in God’s image.

3.7.5 Analysis of key words

In this text, the verb εἰμί appears twice. There are several words in this pericope that could be considered important, like κινούμεθα or εἰρήκασιν, but in the context of Acts 17:28, the most important key words are ζάω and εἰμί.

3.7.5.1 ζάω

BDAG (2000:336) state that ζάω refers to physical living in contrast to death.

The translation for ζάω seems to be unanimous among esteemed scholars. LN (1996:112), LSJ (1996:758), and TDNT (1985:832-872) all translate ζάω as *live*.

From the above dictionary entries, there seems to be only one correct translation for ζάω in any given context. In the context of Acts 16:28, *to live* would indeed be a fitting translation for ζάω.

3.7.5.2 εἰμί

LN (1996:73) give many possible translations for εἰμί, including *be, be identical, exist, happen, be in a place, be possible, belong, and represent*. LSJ (1996:487-488) provide the general translation of *exist, for my part, or for myself*. BDAG (2000:221-225) and TDNT (1985:398-400) add to this list “to be”, “live”, “occur”, or “be present”.

In the context of Acts 17:28, this verb follows the actions of *living* and *moving*. Taking the dictionary entries above into consideration, the appropriate translation of εἰμί in this context seems to be *to be* or *exist*. In the form of ἐσμέν it translates to *have our being*.

3.7.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.7.6.1 *ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν*

This Greek phrase shows that human beings find their living, moving and being only in the Lord. If this is so, then this shows his active role in creating and sustaining. We live because of Him, and we continue to exist because of Him.

This verse shows the total dependence of mankind upon God. According to Psalm 36:9, He is the “fountain of life”. Genesis 2:7 and Acts 17:25 show God as the giver of life and breath. In Luke 20:38, Jesus himself said that “all live to [God]”. Believers in Jesus receive life (John 11:25) and Jesus gives life to whom he wills (John 5:21). Believers owe their continued existence to God because He sustains them (Heb 1:3). Everything is created by God and held together by him (Col 1:16-17). Believers are also called his “offspring” in this verse. This refers to God being their Father, an idea which is consistent throughout Scripture (Gen 1:27; Mal 2:10; Luke 2:28; Eph 3:14).

3.7.7 Summary

In Acts 17:28, as Paul is addressing the Athenian philosophers, he references the words of their own poets to make the point that humans have their being in God. This verse states that God alone enables man to live, move, and have his being. The poet Aratus has said that man is God’s offspring, which is used to imply that man is made in the image of God.

This pericope states that God not only created humans but continuously sustains their living, moving and being. Although the Son is not explicitly mentioned in this passage, his role in creating and sustaining the universe is described in a similar way elsewhere in Scripture (Heb 1:2-3; 10-12; John 1:3). This Scriptural background suggests a close relationship between God and the Son, and supports the view that Christ is implicitly present here as the agent of creation and the active sustainer of human life.

3.8 1 CORINTHIANS 8:6

3.8.1 Literary context

The book of 1 Corinthians is an epistle addressed to the church in Corinth, dealing with the specific issues the Corinthian congregation faced (Gardner, 2018:19-20). These issues included the sin that was seeping into the habits of the church. Paul received word of these sins from several sources in the congregation (1 Corinthians 1:11-4:4:5; 11:17-4; 15:12-34) and wrote this epistle in response.

In 1 Corinthians 8, idolatry and the eating of food that has been offered to idols, are addressed. There are many false “gods” that idolaters worship, but Christians believe that there is only one true God, as is stated in 1 Corinthians 8:6. The Father is said to be the only true God, and all things exist from Him and for Him, and there is only one Lord, through whom all things exist. This Lord is clearly said to be Jesus Christ in verse 6, he is the Father’s means of creation.

3.8.2 Historical context

The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus (Gardner, 2018:19-20). It was likely written around 54-55 AD and 1 Corinthians 16:8 implies it was a little before the Pentecost of that specific year. The epistle starts with a greeting from Paul himself, indicating him as the author. The original recipients of this letter were the church in Corinth.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9, a previous letter is mentioned, and it is possible that this letter is a follow-up to that letter which warned against sexual immorality. However, this epistle had a much broader reason for being written, as it seems Paul received information about the church from several sources, including Apollos, the people mentioned by Chloe, and a letter from the Corinthian church.

The occasion of this epistle is that the church in Corinth was dividing itself into groups. This division caused splits and conflicts between Christians (Gardner, 2018:8). Paul refers to this issue in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 and again in 3:3-9 and he mentions members who see themselves as “of Paul... of Apollos... of Cephas... of Christ” in 1:12 (Gardner, 2018:21-22). The author seems to be addressing the “strong” in chapter 8 as he talks about those who might be “weak” in the congregation. He is warning the congregants not to cause one another to stumble because of small disagreements between them.

In contrast to the religions that surrounded the addressees of this epistle, the Christian God is shown in 1 Corinthians 8:6 to be both the Creator of all things and the purpose for which it was created.

3.8.3 Literal translation

⁶ ἀλλ’ ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι’ αὐτοῦ. [NA²⁸]

6 but for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we exist.

3.8.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.8.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
6 ἀλλ’	But	Conjunction	Forms contrast with previous verse
ἡμῖν	Us	Personal pronoun, dative, plural	Indirect object of implied verb ἐστίν (from εἰμί)
εἷς	One	Adjective, nominative, masculine, singular	Numerical modifying θεός
θεός	God	Common noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Subject of the sentence
ὁ πατὴρ	the father	Common noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Modifies θεός
ἐξ οὗ	of whom are	Relative pronoun, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive of source, referring to ὁ πατὴρ
τὰ πάντα	all things	Adjective, indefinite, nominative, neuter, plural	Object of implied verb εἰμί

καὶ ἡμεῖς	and we [exist]	Personal pronoun, nominative, plural	Subject of relative clause
εἰς αὐτόν,	for him	Personal pronoun, accusative, masculine, singular	Accusative after the preposition, referring to ὁ πατήρ; expressing goal
καὶ εἷς	and one	Adjective, nominative, masculine, singular	Numerical modifying κύριος
κύριος	and one Lord	Common noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Subject of clause
Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς	Jesus Christ	Proper noun, nominative, masculine, singular	Modifies κύριος
δι' οὗ	through whom	Relative pronoun, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive of agency after the preposition, referring to Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
τὰ πάντα	all things [exist]	Adjective, indefinite, nominative, neuter, plural	Subject of relative clause
καὶ ἡμεῖς	and we exist	Personal pronoun, nominative, plural	Complement to πάντα
δι' αὐτοῦ.	through him.	Personal pronoun, genitive, masculine, singular	Follows genitive preposition, indicating agency

Table 8: Syntactical analysis of 1 Corinthians 8:6

3.8.4.2 Exegetical implications

This verse states that πάντα (“all things”) are ἐξ (“of”) God, implying that God the Father is the source of all things. The phrase πάντα refers to the entire work of creation, shown in Genesis 1:1 to find their origin in God.

All things are also said to exist εἰς αὐτόν (“for/in/unto him”). The implication is that all creation is formed for him, his purpose, and his glory. The αὐτόν here is still referring to God the Father.

The second part of the verse then switches to the κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς (“Lord Jesus Christ”). The phrase κύριος here is used to describe the Son, which holds the sense of a ruler, master, governor, or king. Jesus Christ is therefore portrayed as the Ruler of his people in this passage.

It is δι' οὗ (“by/through”) this Lord Jesus Christ that all things exist. The Son is shown here to be the agent of creation of all things. The word δι' contrasts with the word ἐξ previously used in the context of the Father. The Father is the source of all things, while the Son is the means by which all things were created.

Four prepositional phrases, each with some semantic significance, can be identified in this verse: ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα (“of whom are all things”); καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν (“and for whom we exist”); δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα (“through whom all things exist”); and καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ (“and through whom we exist”).

The preposition ἐξ from the first prepositional phrase denotes source. The Father is the source of all things. The preposition εἰς in the second prepositional phrase indicates that the Father is also the purpose for the existence of all things. In the third prepositional phrase, δι' denotes means or agency. The Son was the agent for the creation of all things. In the fourth prepositional phrase, δι' denotes that the Son is the means of man's personal creation, ἡμεῖς ("we exist").

3.8.5 Analysis of key words

In 1 Corinthians 8:6, there are several significant nouns, including θεός, πατήρ, and κύριος. The word that appears to be most significant in the context of this pericope, however, is the verb ἐστίν (from εἰμί), which does not occur in Greek text, but is implied twice.

3.8.5.1 εἰμί

The verb εἰμί does not occur explicitly in 1 Corinthians 8:6, but it is implied, particularly in the phrase καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ ("and we [exist] through Him"). The translation of εἰμί by distinguished dictionaries has been discussed in 3.8.2.2. Taking these dictionary entries into consideration, the general translation of εἰμί seems to be *I am*. In the context of this pericope, the implied translation is *we exist*.

3.8.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.8.6.1 πατήρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν

This Greek phrase reveals that all things exist *for* the Father and his glory. The Father is said to be the reason for all creation; he will be glorified through it. This differs from the Son's role since the Son is said to be the agent of Creation (Heb 1:2; John 1:3). All things exist through the Son, in order to bring glory to the Father.

3.8.6.2 Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

This Greek phrase reveals that all things exist *through* the Son. The Son is the instrument of creation, and all things continue to exist through his sustaining work.

This verse could be seen as referring to the Trinity, although reference to the Holy Spirit is not directly made. The Father is the reason for the existence of all things, but the Son is the means of its existence. A discussion of the Holy Spirit's role may have been omitted purposefully, so as to make the writer's focus of Christology clear. The main emphasis of this verse is that all believers' existence is from God, through the Son, and for (the glory of) God.

3.8.7 Summary

1 Corinthians 8:6 is written in the context of false teachings influencing the Corinthian church. Paul is attempting to remind them that there is only one true God and one Lord, which is Jesus Christ. One sees in this pericope that Christ is indeed Lord, and all things exist through him.

3.9 COLOSSIANS 1:16-17

3.9.1 Literary context

The book of Colossians is an epistle written to the Church in Colossae. The church was facing the threat of false teachings among them, and this epistle was written in response, calling them to remember the true Gospel and not be deceived.

In the first chapter of Colossians, the author calls upon the church to remember how they were saved and delivered from darkness that they would walk in the light, and “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Col 1:10).

The true doctrine of Christ is presented in what appears to have been an early Christian hymn in Colossians 1:15-20. This hymn celebrates Christ as the image of God, the one through whom mankind, once alienated from God, can be restored to have a close relationship with God once more (Bruce, 1984:27). The pericope of Colossians 1:16-17 finds itself within this apparent hymn. The author likely wishes to impress on the readers such a glorious image of the Son that they might remember the saviour that they have is not fickle and their faith should not be either.

3.9.2 Historical context

The city of Colossae was located on the south bank of the Lycus Valley. Two neighbour cities, Laodicea and Hierapolis are mentioned in Colossians 2:1 and 4:13-16. These were all situated in the Lycus Valley of Western Anatolia (now Asia Minor) (Bruce, 1984:3). Paul wrote this letter while he was imprisoned in Rome during 60-61 AD.

Colossian heresy was threatening the Gospel of Christ. They were specifically questioning the uniqueness of his person and deity, the completeness of his work of redemption, the reconciliation accomplished by his death on the cross, and the spiritual liberty enjoyed by all who believe in him. The letter was apparently a direct result of the news Epaphras sent to Paul in his place of imprisonment. Paul’s letter to the Colossians shows that good knowledge and application of Christology in daily life is the best defence for believers against the Colossian heresy (Bruce, 1984:3-28).

In the pericope of Colossians 1:16-17, the author reminds the addressees of the identity Christ. They must not be deceived by the false teachings in the congregation, for they were created through Jesus Christ; the whole universe exists and continues to exist only through Him. He is also said to be before all things, he is not limited or changed by time.

3.9.3 Literal translation

¹⁶ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται·

¹⁷ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, [NA²⁸]

16 For in Him all things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17 And he is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

3.9.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.9.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ	For in Him	Personal pronoun, dative, masculine, singular	Dative after the preposition, indicating agency
ἐκτίσθη	were created	Aorist, indicative, passive, 3 rd person, singular	Aorist indicative denotes simple action in the past
τὰ πάντα	all things	Adjective, indefinite, nominative, neuter, plural	Subject of the sentence
ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς	in the heavens	Common noun, dative, masculine, plural	Follows dative preposition, modifies πάντα
καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς	and on the earth	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Follows genitive preposition, modifies πάντα
τὰ ὄρατά	the visible	Adjective, nominative, neuter, plural	Qualifies πάντα
καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα	and the invisible	Adjective, nominative, neuter, plural	Qualifies πάντα
εἴτε θρόνοι	whether thrones	Common noun, nominative, masculine, plural	Subject of relative clause, qualifies πάντα
εἴτε κυριότητες	or dominions	Common noun, nominative, feminine, plural	Compliment to θρόνοι, qualifies πάντα
εἴτε ἀρχαὶ	or principalities	Common noun, nominative, feminine, plural	Compliment to θρόνοι, qualifies πάντα
εἴτε ἐξουσίαι	or authorities	Common noun, nominative, feminine, plural	Compliment to θρόνοι, qualifies πάντα
τὰ πάντα	all things	Adjective, indefinite, nominative, neuter, plural	Subject of the sentence, emphasised through repetition
δι' αὐτοῦ	through him	Personal pronoun, genitive, masculine, singular	Genitive of agency after the preposition
καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν	and for him	Personal pronoun, accusative, masculine, singular	Accusative after preposition; indicating goal
ἔκτισται	were created	Perfect, indicative, passive, 3 rd person, singular	Perfect indicative denotes completed action in the past with the effect continuing into the present; the passive indicates emphasis on δι' αὐτοῦ

17 καὶ ... ἔστιν	and is	Present, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Present indicative denotes simple action in the present
αὐτός	He	Pronoun, nominative, masculine, singular	Subject of clause
πρὸ πάντων	before all things	Adjective, indefinite, genitive, neuter, plural	Temporal genitive
καὶ τὰ πάντα	and all things	Adjective, indefinite, nominative, neuter, plural	Subject of the sentence
ἐν αὐτῷ	in him	Personal pronoun, dative, masculine, singular	Locative dative
συνέστηκεν	hold together	Perfect, indicative, active, 3 rd person, singular	Perfect indicative denotes completed action in the past with the effect continuing into the present

Table 9: Syntactical analysis of Colossians 1:16-17

3.9.4.2 Exegetical implications

In this pericope, it is stated that all things were created in Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ). At the beginning of verse 16, the preposition ἐν (“in”) is used instead of the usual διὰ (“through”), possibly to emphasise the agency of Christ in creation. The phrase ἐν αὐτῷ (“in him”) indicates that all creation takes place in relation to Christ.

All things being created for Christ (εἰς αὐτὸν) implies that he is the purpose for creation. This implication plays an important role in Pauline Christology and soteriology (Bruce, 1984:61-66). Paul’s encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road radically transformed his life, and an understanding of his personal devotion to Christ is vital to understanding the Christology of Colossians.

The Greek phrase, ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, shows that in Him all things were created. This “Him” refers to the Son, as can be seen in verse 13. The Greek phrase, τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται, communicates that all things were created through the Son and also for Him. In the first clause ἐκτίσθη is in the aorist tense to refer to the historical act, while ἔκτισται is in the perfect tense to indicate the continuing existence of the creation (O’Brien, 1982:45).

In verse 17, Christ is said to be πρὸ πάντων (“before all things”) and in him all things συνέστηκεν (“hold together/cohere”). This verse essentially summarises the teaching of verses 15-16, reaffirming the pre-existence and cosmic significance of Christ (Bruce, 1984:61-64). The statement that all things συνέστηκεν (“hold together/cohere”) in him, speaks to the Son’s role as agent in creation. What has been created through him is also maintained by him. The Greek verb συνέστηκεν has Platonic and Stoic roots, as can be seen in the philosopher Philo’s words that the human body “coheres and is quickened as into flame by the providence of God” (Bruce, 1984:61-64). The perfect tense of συνέστηκεν indicates a continuous sustaining activity, without which, all creation would disintegrate (O’Brien, 1982:47).

3.9.5 Analysis of key words

Several words in Colossians 1:16-17 could be considered significant, including the nouns οὐρανοῖς, γῆς, θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, and ἐξουσίαι. In the context of this specific pericope, however, κτίζω (1:16) and συνίστημι (1:17) seem to add most to the meaning of the text and have therefore been identified as the key words.

3.9.5.1 κτίζω

BDAG (2000:456) and LN (1996:148) translate κτίζω as *create*. LSJ (1996:1002-1003) and TDNT (1985:1000-1035) have similar translations of κτίζω including *produce, bring into being, and bring about*.

Taking all these dictionary entries into consideration, the general translation of κτίζω in this context seems to be *to create*. In the context of Colossians 1:16-17, where God's act of creation is being referred to, *create* seems to be a fitting translation. He *created* all things.

3.9.5.2 συνίστημι

TDNT (1985:896-898) state that συνίστημι has the sense of putting together. Translations include "to put together".

BDAG (2000:798) translate συνίστημι as *bring together, unite, collect, put together, constitute, establish, prepare, be composed, consist, continue, endure, exist*. LSJ (1996:1718) and LN (1996:237) add to these translations *to set together, combine, associate, band together, to hold together, recommend, demonstrate and continue*.

Taking all these dictionary entries into consideration, the general translation of συνίστημι appears to be *to hold together*. In the context of Colossians 1:16-17, συνίστημι is used to refer to Jesus' work of maintaining creation. A fitting translation of συνίστημι in this pericope would be *hold together*, as all things are held together by Him.

3.9.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.9.6.1 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων

This Greek phrase shows that the Son existed at the time of creation. This implies that Christ the Son is not a created being, or even the first created being as some people might argue. He was there even before the work of creation happened. The question of whether the Son is a created being has been a point of debate in church history. Further discussion on this can be found in the works of Hanson (1982) and Moga (2019).

3.9.6.2 τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.

This Greek phrase communicates that all things are held together by the Son. This speaks to his sustaining work. He is Himself the Creator and Sustainer of all things in the heavens and earth.

3.9.7 Summary

Colossians 1:16-17 is a rich pericope. In these verses, all things are said to have been created in the Son, both things that are seen and things that are invisible. The purpose of the creation of all things is said to be Christ and his glory, and he is also the means of the creation of all things. This passage also shows that Christ transcends time. He is before all things, which

implies that he has always existed. Finally, this passage also states that all things are held together by Christ.

3.10 2 PETER 3:7

3.10.1 Literary context

The literary genre of 2 Peter is an epistle. The author wrote to a group of Gentile Christians to warn them against false teachers and harmful influences among them. The book of 1 Peter painted a clear picture of the circumstances of the original recipients. They were struggling with hostility and social rejection because of their faith. Peter refers to this struggle in 1 Peter 1:6, 2:12-20, 3:6-22, and 4:1-19, and he encourages them not to lose courage and to continue in good works. The contents of 2 Peter are much different, however, as they were now facing the dangers of false teachings in the church. Peter urges them not to listen to those who wish to lead them astray but to hold fast to the Christian Gospel.

In 2 Peter 3, the author reminds readers that God's activity continues, even though Christ is no longer physically present on earth. The passage of 2 Peter 3:7 teaches that the same "word" of God that was the means of creation, can also be the means of destruction for the ungodly. They must therefore hold fast to their faith in the Gospel of Christ and not fall into apostasy, lest they be destroyed on the day of his return.

3.10.2 Historical context

The original recipients of the epistle of 2 Peter were facing deception by false teachers, both theological and moral (2 Pet 2:1). These lies threatened the stability of many individuals' faith. Peter wrote this epistle with great urgency, warning them not to be deceived by these false teachings (2 Pet 1:5-15). The false teachers were apostates who were trying to lead members of the church into the same error (Green, 2008:150-158). These dangerous teachers apparently arose from within the church and not from outside the Christian communities.

If Peter was himself the author of this epistle, he would have written it around 64-65 AD, since he is believed to have been crucified around that time (Green, 2008:17-18). He was imprisoned in Rome during this time.

In 2 Peter 3:7, the addressees are being reminded that God's word is powerful and active. It sustains, but it also destroys. They must heed Peter's warning and hold fast to the Word of God, rejecting the false teachings among them.

3.10.3 Literal translation

⁷ οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων. [NA²⁸]

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

3.10.4 Sentence structure and syntactical relationships

3.10.4.1 Syntax

Greek term	English translation	Syntactical analysis	Syntactical relationship
7 δὲ νῦν	But now	Adjective	Describes οὐρανοὶ
οἱ ... οὐρανοὶ	the heavens	Common noun, nominative, masculine, plural	Subject of the sentence
καὶ ἡ γῆ	and the earth	Common noun, nominative, feminine, singular	Subject of the sentence
αὐτῷ	(by) the same	Adjective, dative, masculine, singular	Dative with λόγῳ
τῷ ... λόγῳ	Word	Common noun, dative, masculine, singular	Dative of instrument
τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν	Preserved	Perfect, participle, passive, nominative, masculine, plural	Periphrastic construction: participle with the verb εἰσὶν
πυρί	Fire	Noun, dative, neuter, sing, common	Indirect object of τηρέω
τηρούμενοι	Reserved	Present, participle, passive, nominative, masculine, plural	Adjectival participle linked to οὐρανοὶ and γῆ
εἰς ἡμέραν	for [the] day	Common noun, accusative, feminine, singular	Follows accusative preposition, accusative of time
κρίσεως	Judgment	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Genitive of apposition
καὶ ἀπωλείας	and destruction	Common noun, genitive, feminine, singular	Genitive of apposition
ἀσεβῶν	of ungodly	Adjective, genitive, masculine, plural	Describes the genitive phrase τῶν ἀνθρώπων
τῶν ... ἀνθρώπων	Men	Common noun, genitive, masculine, plural	Objective genitive

Table 10: Syntactical analysis of 2 Peter 3:7

3.10.4.2 Exegetical implications

The phrase τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ is translated above as “the same word”, but it could also be translated as “His word”. Either translation implies that all creation is reserved for judgment and destruction by the same word that created it (2 Pet 3:5).

The heavens and earth were made by God’s λόγῳ (“word”). In this passage, Peter states that the word which created the heavens and earth, now also reserves (τηρούμενοι) them for the

coming fire. The message Peter wants to convey is that all of creation's existence is utterly dependent on God and his omnipotent word.

The word *θησαυρίζω* used for the reservation of all creation implies laying up or storing up something for the purpose of safekeeping. In Romans 2:5, Paul also uses this word figuratively for the storing up of wrath. In this pericope, *τεθησαυρισμένοι* is in the perfect tense, denoting the ongoing duration of this "reservation". The act of reserving the heavens and earth started at some point and its effect is continuing into the present. In 2 Peter 3:10-13, Peter explains what is meant by this *πυρί* ("fire") the world is reserved for.

The Greek word *εἰς* is used here as a preposition with the accusative. It is translated as "for" but can also be read as "until". The word of God keeps the heavens and earth safely reserved up *until* a certain point in time when it will be destroyed instead. The day of judgment is sure to come, though man does not know when. Peter is conveying the message that the false teachers are wrong, Christ is returning and the judgment and destruction of the ungodly is nearby.

3.10.5 Analysis of key words

Various words seem at first glance to be significant in this pericope, including the nouns *οὐρανοί*, *γῆ*, *λόγῳ*, *πυρί*, *ἡμέραν*, *κρίσεως*, and *ἀνθρώπων*, and the verbs *τεθησαυρισμένοι*, *εἰσὶν*, and *τηρούμενοι*. Out of all these words, only some can be considered key words. Considering the context of 2 Peter 3:7, the phrases *λόγος* and *θησαυρίζω* are semantically significant.

3.10.5.1 *λόγος*

LSJ (1996:1057) provide a wide range of translations for *λόγος*, including *computation*, *reckoning*, *account*, *measure*, *tale*, *esteem*, *consideration*, and *value*.

LN (1996:153) give quite different translation possibilities for *λόγος*, including *statement*, *speech*, *gospel*, *treatise*, *Word*, *reason*, *event*, *appearance* and *accusation*. BDAG (2000:478) add to these translations *speaking* and *command*. TDNT (1985:73-75) add the possible translations of "collection", "calculation", "account", "consideration", and "reflection". A more comprehensive word study on *λόγος* is done in Chapter 4.

Looking at the above dictionary entries, there appears to be quite a variety of possible translations to choose from when translating *λόγος*. It is therefore critical that the context of the passage wherein *λόγος* appears, determines its meaning. In the context of 2 Peter 3:7, the most fitting translation seems to be *word*, as it is referring to the word of God which holds the power of destruction as well as preservation.

3.10.5.2 *θησαυρίζω*

BDAG (2000:362) translate *θησαυρίζω* as *store up*, *gather* or *save*. LN (1996:119), LSJ (1996:800), and TDNT (1985:138) all provide similar translations for *θησαυρίζω*, including *to keep safe that which is of great value*, *to treasure up*, *to keep safe*, *to store*, *to keep* and *to lay up*.

Taking all these dictionary entries into consideration, the general meaning of *θησαυρίζω* seems to be *to store up*. In 2 Peter 3:7, the heavens and earth are *stored up* for fire on the day of destruction. In the context of this pericope, the translation of *reserve* would be most applicable.

3.10.6 Broader Biblical and theological contexts

3.10.6.1 *αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν*

This Greek phrase shows that the heavens and earth are preserved by the word of God, specifically for the day of judgment. This speaks to the word's sustaining work in creation.

As previous pericopes have established, God created the world. Therefore, he can also destroy it whenever and however he wills. In Genesis 6-9 God made use of this right in the events of Noah's time, when he destroyed nearly all life on earth with water because of the sins of mankind.

In this verse Peter reveals that God will once again bring destruction upon the earth, but this time with fire. With the same "word" he used to create the heavens, he will destroy them on the day of judgment along with all ungodly humanity.

3.10.7 Summary

In 2 Peter 3:7, the word is described as the means which God preserves the heavens and earth until the day of judgment, when they will be burned up by fire, and ungodly men will be destroyed. It has been established in other New Testament verses (John 1:3; Col 1:17) that it is the Son who sustains all things, specifically by his word of power (Heb 1:3). Therefore, although 2 Peter 3:7 primarily refers to God's continued governance, there appears to be a significant overlap with how the Son is described elsewhere as sustaining all things by his word.

3.11 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to investigate the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament. In the broader context of this study, this chapter examined whether the Son is involved in creation and the sustaining of the universe – and, if so, in what way. A grammatical-historical investigation was done to achieve this purpose. At the end of each pericope, the results found were summarised. From these results, preliminary conclusions can be drawn.

The Son is the unique agent of all creation.

- Hebrews 1:2, John 1:3, and Colossians 1:16 clearly state that God created all things without exception through the Son.
- Hebrews 3:3-4 compares the glory of the Son to that of Moses, just as a builder's glory is greater than that of the house he built. God is seen as the "builder" in verse 4, but the background of Hebrews 1:2-3 and John 1:3 reveals that he "builds" through the Son. This building act of God holds the sense of fully furnishing and equipping the house for use.
- Hebrews 11:3 reveals the Father's role in creation by his spoken word (divine command). This role is distinct from the role of the Son as the agent of creation (Heb 1:2; John 1:3), whose involvement is implied in God's act of creation. Furthermore, God created everything out of unseen things, that is, his creative word.
- 1 Corinthians 8:6 states that Jesus Christ is Lord, and while all things are "from" the Father, it is "through" the Son. The Father is therefore shown to be the source of creation, and the Son the agent through whom he creates.

- It is seen in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Colossians 1:16 that the purpose of all creation is for the glory of both the Father and the Son.

The Son is the active sustainer of all creation.

- Hebrews 1:3 clearly states that the Son upholds the universe by the word of his power.
- Colossians 1:17 states that all things are held together by the Son, further affirming his sustaining work. His immutability is implied by the words “he is before all things”, showing that he can uphold all things actively and continuously.
- Hebrews 13:8 also reveals that the Son is unaffected by time. This would mean that he is able to sustain all things actively and continuously.
- Acts 17:28 states that humans live, move, and exist in God. Although the Son is not explicitly mentioned, the New Testament background (Heb 1:3; Col 1:17) shows that it is the Son’s role to sustain the universe, implying he is the one actively upholding humans as they live, move and exist.
- In 2 Peter 3:7 the word of God is seen to preserve the heavens and earth until the day of judgment. Although this verse does not explicitly state that it is the Son who preserves, the act of preservation is attributed to him in Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17. Considering this Scriptural background, the *λόγος* in this pericope can therefore be understood as referring to the sustaining word of the Son.

Having established the Son’s role in creating and sustaining the universe, the next chapter can be introduced. In the following chapter, a deeper investigation into this “word” will be done by looking at the use of the nouns *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* in Hebrews, and specifically *ῥῆμα* in Early Christian Literature.

Chapter 4: The use of the nouns ῥῆμα and λόγος in Hebrews, and the use of ῥῆμα in the LXX, NT and Early Christian Literature

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to the New Testament was established. This was done by investigating the texts that pertain to this topic in Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament. In Hebrews 1:3, the “word of his power” is seen to be the means of the Son’s sustaining work. In this chapter, a deeper investigation into this “word” will be done by doing a word study of ῥῆμα and λόγος, observing how these nouns are employed throughout Hebrews, and observing how ῥῆμα is used the LXX, New Testament and other Early Christian Literature. The objective of this chapter is to form a more well-rounded understanding of the Greek noun ῥῆμα and its synonym λόγος to better determine the meaning of ῥῆμα in the context of Hebrews 1:3.

In the book of Hebrews, ῥῆμα occurs four times and λόγος twelve times. The following table shows these occurrences in the order which they appear in Hebrews:

Verse in Hebrews	Relevant phrase
Hebrews 1:3	τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ
Hebrews 2:2	ὁ δι’ ἀγγέλων λαληθεὶς λόγος
Hebrews 4:2	ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς
Hebrews 4:12	ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ
Hebrews 4:13	πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος
Hebrews 5:11	πολὺς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος
Hebrews 5:13	λόγου δικαιοσύνης
Hebrews 6:1	τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον ἐπὶ
Hebrews 6:5	καλὸν ... θεοῦ ῥῆμα
Hebrews 7:28	ὁ λόγος δὲ τῆς ὀρκωμοσίας
Hebrews 11:3	ῥήματι θεοῦ
Hebrews 12:19	φωνῇ ῥημάτων; μὴ προστεθῆναι αὐτοῖς λόγον,
Hebrews 13:7	τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ
Hebrews 13:17	ὑμῶν ὡς λόγον ἀποδώσοντες
Hebrews 13:22	τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως

Table 11: Occurrences of ῥῆμα and λόγος in Hebrews

This chapter starts by investigating the various semantic usages of ῥῆμα and λόγος according to notable dictionaries to acquire a baseline-interpretation of the nouns. Next, the occurrence of these nouns in Hebrews are investigated on a verse-by-verse basis by doing a literature study of relevant sources. Special attention is given to the works of Griffiths (2016) and Pierce (2020), who provide more modern and in-depth study on ῥῆμα and λόγος in Hebrews. The aim of this section is to determine the meaning of each noun in its specific context. Next, a study of ῥῆμα in the LXX, New Testament, and other Early Christian Literature is done to understand how ῥῆμα was used in literature written around the same time as the New Testament. Having done this, the chapter returns to Hebrews 1:3 by incorporating the findings from the previous sections to reach a more nuanced interpretation of ῥῆμα in this verse. Finally, the chapter closes with a few paragraphs that draw together and summarise all the previous sections.

4.2 SEMANTIC USAGES OF ῥῆμα AND λόγος ACCORDING TO NOTABLE DISCTIONARIES

For the purpose of the word study, the following dictionaries are referenced using their standard abbreviations, as previously listed: LSJ, BDAG, LN, TDNT, and DBL. In what follows, the entries of the Greek nouns λόγος and ῥῆμα in these dictionaries will be summarised according to the different semantic categories provided in these dictionaries for these words, followed by a brief discussion of how the context led interpreters to identify these categories. In a concluding paragraph, all these findings will be combined to arrive at the general translation possibilities of λόγος and ῥῆμα.

4.2.1 LSJ

4.2.1.1 λόγος

According to LSJ (1996:1057-1059), λόγος is the verbal noun of λέγω. Numerous possible categories of translation are suggested. The first category involves a sense of computation, translations include *reckoning, account, measure, tale, esteem, consideration, value* (put on a person or thing), *worth, repute, and regard*. The second involves the concept of *relation*, translations include *reasoning, math, ratio, proportion, analogy, and rule*. The third category is about *explanation*, more possible translations include *plea, pretext, ground, reason, account, case, statement* (of a theory), *argument, arguable, reasonable, argument, theory, discourse, proposition, rule, principle, law, plan, rule* (of conduct), *principle, thesis, hypothesis*, (provisional) *ground*, (maintain a) *thesis*, (provisionally assuming a) *proposition, hypothesis* (of equivalence), *proof, formula*, (term expressing) *reason, definition*, (divine) *order, principle, and forces*. The fourth category involves the sense of an inward debate of the soul, translations include *thinking, reasoning, reflection, deliberation, idea, thought, argument, process of thought, theory, abstract reasoning, explanation, and discursive reasoning*.

The next category has the sense of a continuous statement, translations include *narrative, oration, fable, legend, tale, story, histories, historical work, section, argument, speech* (delivered in court), *body of a speech, spoken word, and written word*. A sixth category is a verbal expression or utterance, translations include *word, phrase, talk, words, expression, message, pretence, common talk, report, tradition, rumour, mention, notice, description, expression, talk, repute, good report, praise, honour, fame, story, credit, discussion, debate, deliberation, speech, dialogue, section, division, branch, department, division* (of a system of philosophy), *literature, letters, and treatise*. The seventh category involves a particular utterance, translations include *saying, divine utterance, oracle, proverb, saying, assertion, word, express resolution, consent, terms, proposal, terms, conditions, and word of command*.

The next category includes *a thing spoken of, subject-matter, matter, secret, subject, question, point, plot, subject, thing talked of, and event*. The last category includes *expression, utterance, speech, eloquence, language, orations, prose, arguments, dialogue, phrase, complex term, expression, sentence, complete statement, and word*. A possible meaning of λόγος more specific to the New Testament is the Word of the Wisdom of God, often personified as his agent in creation and world-government and identified with the person of Christ.

4.2.1.2 ῥῆμα

LSJ (1996:1569) translates ῥῆμα in the category of that which is said or spoken. Possible translations include *word, saying, subject of speech, phrase, verse, line, and matter*.

4.2.2 BDAG

4.2.2.1 λόγος

The first category of translation for λόγος in BDAG (2000:478-480) involves *speaking, word, deed, question, preaching, prophecy, command, report, story, proclamation, instruction, teaching, and message*. Another possible category of translation involves the proclamation of wisdom, translations include *speaking wisely, the message of faith, corresponding to the teaching, assertion, declaration, speech, the subject* (under discussion), *matter, thing, and treatise*. Translations of λόγος in the context of revelation by God include (of God's) *word, command, and commission*. Possible translations can also include *computation, reckoning, account, give account, make an accounting, settlement* (of an account), *respect, regard, with regard to, for the sake of, reason, and motive*. BDAG states that the most prominent feature of the concept λόγος in the New Testament is the personified "Word" of God.

4.2.2.2 ῥῆμα

BDAG (2000:742-743) translates ῥῆμα as *that which is said, word, saying, expression, prophecy, or prediction*. In the context of the Word of Scripture, translations include *command(ment), order, direction, threat, speech, sermon, proclamation, gospel, and confession*. Another category of translation includes *thing, object, matter, and event*.

4.2.3 LN

4.2.3.1 λόγος

LN (1996:153) state that λόγος is a derivative of λέγω (*to say*). The general translation they provide involves the specific content of that which has been stated or said.

There are several semantic domains of λόγος occurrences. Semantic domain 13, "Be, Become, Exist, Happen", includes the use of λόγος as a happening to which one may refer, translations include *matter, thing, and event*. In semantic domain 30, "Think", λόγος refers to that which is thought to be true but is not necessarily so. Translations include *appearance, and to seem to be*.

Semantic domain 33, "Communication", includes five occurrences of λόγος. The first use is a relatively formal and systematic treatment of a subject, translated as *treatise, book, and account*. The second use is something that has been said or stated, with focus on the content thereof, translated as *word, saying, message, statement, and question*. The third use is in the context of the act of speaking, translated as *speaking and speech*. The fourth use is as a title for Jesus in the Gospel of John, referring to God's revelation and a verbal echo of the verb "to speak" in Genesis 1 and other utterances of the prophets. Translations include *word and message*. The fifth use is that which is preached about Christ or about the Gospel, translated as *what is preached concerning Christ and the good news about Christ*.

Semantic domain 56, "Courts and Legal Procedures", includes the use of λόγος as a formal declaration of charges against someone in court, translated as *charges, accusation, and declaration of wrongdoing*. In semantic domain 57, "Possess, Transfer, Exchange" λόγος refers to a record of assets and liabilities, translated as *account, credit, and debit*. Semantic domain 89, "Relations", includes the use of λόγος as a reason, with the implication of verbal formulation. It is translated as *reason*.

4.2.3.2 ῥῆμα

LN (1996:217) provide two categories of translation for ῥῆμα. The first involves *that which is said*, translations include *word, saying, expression, or statement of any kind*. The second category involves the sense of an event that can be spoken about, translations include *thing, object, matter, and event*.

Semantic domain 13, “Be, Become, Exist, Happen”, includes the use of ῥῆμα as a happening to which one may refer, translated as *matter, thing, and event*. Semantic domain 33, “Communication”, includes two occurrences of ῥῆμα. The first instance is a minimal unit of discourse, often a single word, translated as *word and saying*. The second instance is that which has been said or stated, with focus on the content thereof, translated as *word, saying, message, statement, and question*.

4.2.4 TDNT

4.2.4.1 λόγος

TDNT (1985:73-75) discusses the classical use of λόγος, which will be considered here. In the Greek world, translations for λόγος included “collection”, “counting”, “reckoning”, “calculation”, “account”, “consideration”, “evaluation”, “reflection”, “ground”, and “condition”. In a general sense, translations include “to say”, “to speak”, “to tell”, “word”, “speech”, etc.

In the Greek and Hellenistic world, λόγος became well associated with the process of rationalisation which characterised the Greek spirit. Figuratively, λόγος holds the sense of *counting, reckoning, and explaining*. In the poetic or religious sphere, λόγος always refers to something material. Translations include *counting up, recounting, account, speech, language, sentence, and saying*. In a metaphysical sense, which involves principles discovered in calculation and reason as the product of thought, λόγος is translated as *to give an account, to account for, reckoning, cash account, and account*.

Λόγος was also used as a technical term in mathematics, translated as *proportion, relation, and element*. As a term in mathematics and philosophy, λόγος holds the sense of rational relation of things to one another, translated as *order and measure*. From the end of the fifth century BC, the understanding of λόγος shifted to man’s ability to think, translated as *reason, mind, spirit, and thought*.

TDNT (1985:73-75) also discusses the use of λόγος in the New Testament. The development of λόγος is said to be parallel to that of λέγω. The category of translation which involves the sense of collection has the derivatives “gathering” and “assembling”. The second category is said to be very rare, it includes “counting”, “reckoning”, and “number”. A more frequent category is that of “reckoning numbers”, which includes the translations *calculation, total income, and total expenditure*. The translation of *account* can be used in other instances than financial matters – for instance, *to take account of*, from which there arises the translations *consideration, review, evaluation, and value*.

Another category of translation which became important in everyday use and philosophy includes *reflection, ground, and condition*. TDNT also provides other general translations of λόγος, including “narrative”, “word”, “speech”, “command”, “promise”, “good or evil reputation”, “tradition”, “written account”, “writing”, “speech”, “conversation”, “sentence”, “prose”, and “thing”.

4.2.4.2 ῥῆμα

TDNT (1985:75-76) states that the root ερ- ρη rarely forms a present tense in Greek, though the other tenses are common. The sense of the lexical root is therefore non-durative, “to state specifically”. The classical use of ῥῆμα included the translations “saying”, “treaty”, “word”, and “statement”.

4.2.5 DBL

4.2.5.1 λόγος

DBL (1997:§3364) states that λόγος is a masculine noun. Ten possible categories of translations are suggested. First, *statement*, or *that which is said*. The second category includes *speech* or *the act of speaking*. The third suggests *gospel*, *the content of what is preached about Christ*. Another category includes *treatise* and *systematic treatment of a subject*. The fifth category includes *word*, *message*, and *a title for Christ*. The sixth includes *account*, *a record of assets and liabilities*. The seventh category includes *reason*, *a cause for something*. The next category includes *event*, *matter*, and *thing*. The ninth possible translation category is *appearance*, or *to seem to be*. The last category suggests *accusation* or *legal charge of wrongdoing*.

4.2.5.2 ῥῆμα

DBL (1997:§4839) states that ῥῆμα is a neuter noun. The first category of translation DBL provides includes *word*, *a single unit used in discourse*. Another possible translation is *statement*. The last category of possible translations includes *event*, *matter*, and *thing*.

4.2.6 Conclusion

All the information gathered above can be summarised into translation categories in order to create a simpler frame of reference. A translation of λόγος can fall into one of the following nine categories:

1. Computation (reckoning, esteem, worth, etc.)
2. Relation (math, ratio, etc.)
3. Explanation (account, case, argument, etc.)
4. Inward debate (thinking, reasoning, idea, etc.)
5. Continuous statement (narrative, speech, etc.)
6. Verbal expression or utterance (phrase, dialogue, message, etc.)
7. Utterance (message, prophecy, title for Christ, etc.)
8. A thing spoken of (matter, event, etc.)
9. An expression (utterance, written account, language, etc.)

A translation of ῥῆμα can fall into one of the following four categories:

1. That which is said or spoken (word, saying, etc.)
2. Prophecy (prediction, etc.)
3. Word in Scripture (commandment, sermon, gospel, etc.)
4. Matter (object, event, etc.)

As can be observed from the dictionary entries above, the translations of ῥῆμα and λόγος are very similar, therefore authors may sometimes use the words interchangeably for stylistic

reasons (LN, 1996). These translation categories will help to identify the specific meaning of *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* within their given context in the sections to follow.

4.3 THE USE OF *ῥῆμα* AND *λόγος* IN HEBREWS

In this section the specific context in which the nouns *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* occur in Hebrews will be examined. The context of each occurrence is vital for understanding the author's intended meaning in each case.

4.3.1 Hebrews 1:3

Hebrews 1:3 was discussed extensively in Chapter 3; the focus of this section is more specifically on its use of *ῥῆμα*. This verse forms part of the introductory verses of the book. Verses 1-2 state that although God spoke through prophets in the past, he now speaks through his Son. Verse 3 goes on to describe the Son as the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of God's nature, and the upholder of the universe by means of the power of his word.

The relationship between *ῥήματι* ("word") and *δυνάμει* ("power") has previously been discussed in Chapter 3. "Power" can be understood as an attributive of "word", changing the translation to "the powerful word" (Greenlee, 1998:16-17). The use of the descriptive genitive in this verse is often paralleled throughout Hebrews. It resembles Semitic construct chains and shows the Septuagint's influence on the community in Hebrews (Attridge, 1989:45).

The translation category that fits best for *ῥῆμα* in this verse is that which is said or spoken ("word"). The categories of prophecy, Scripture, or matter do not fit in this context.

In this passage, *ῥῆμα* can be understood as a "word", or more specifically, an "uttered word", "statement", "commandment", or "order" (Greenlee, 1998:16-17). TDNT (1985:75-76) states that the lexical root of *ῥῆμα* is non-durative when referring to a specific spoken utterance. However, in the context of Hebrews 1:3, where it is used with the present participle *φέρων*, it is associated with a durative action.

"Word" can also be understood as the utterance which proceeds from "power", his word therefore being a manifestation of his power (Attridge, 1989:45). The statement that the Son "upholds the universe by the word of his power" appears to affirm that the Son sustains creation by means of his *ῥῆμα* (Griffiths, 2016:43). A preliminary conclusion is therefore that the use of *ῥῆμα* in this passage refers to the agent through which Christ's sustaining activity takes place. Accurate translations include "word" and "utterance".

4.3.2 Hebrews 2:2

Hebrews 2:1-4 forms a fitting conclusion to chapter 1, as it draws a comparison between the roles of angels and Jesus in communicating the covenants to the people. The overarching message of Hebrews 2 is Jesus' superiority over the angels. His superiority adds to the significance of the salvation found in him. The first covenant, communicated through the angels, was of great consequence. The second covenant, communicated through the Son, is therefore of the greatest consequence (Pierce, 2020:92-93).

In Hebrews 2:2, the writer shows God's word to be effective and binding, and those who receive this message are obligated to respond. God's message of salvation is also proved to be reliable, therefore, to ignore it would be inexcusable (Griffiths, 2016:61).

The giving of the law is traditionally associated with angels. In Hebrews 2:2, the *λόγος* spoken through angels seems to refer to the Torah being delivered at Sinai (as can be seen in the parallel verses, Acts 7:38, 53 and Gal 3:19) (Griffiths, 2016:53-54). The message spoken of in Hebrews 2:2 is parallel to the message delivered through the angels. This message of God carries with it *σωτηρία*, but if it is ignored, they will not escape God's judgment.

The translation category of *λόγος* that seems to fit best here is that of a particular utterance. A specific message or "word" from God is referred to. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, and something spoken of can therefore be ruled out. The use of *λόγος* here does not refer to a direct quote, therefore a verbal expression does not best describe it. A specific message is being referred to; therefore, the category of utterance fits better than that of an expression.

In this passage, *λόγος* can be translated as "word", "word of law", "message", "statement", or "speaking". The noun *νόμος* would also have made sense in this context, but *λόγος* was used to emphasise God's speaking (Greenlee, 1998:43-44). The use of *λόγος* in this passage therefore carries the sense of a message. It seems to be a message of salvation but could also be a message of warning of judgement to those who do not heed it.

4.3.3 Hebrews 4:2

Hebrews 4:1-11 continues the topic of Hebrews 3:8-19, focusing on faith and obedience. In this verse, the addressees are exhorted to hold fast to the faith. The author reminds them of the generation of Israel who lost their entire inheritance because of their lack of faith.

The thematic heart of Hebrews 4:2 involves the Abrahamic promise of entering "the land I swore to their fathers" (Num 14:23). In this verse the writer states that the promise of entering God's rest still stands, but he warns his addressees not to make the same mistakes as the wilderness generation (Griffiths, 2016:69-70). A parallel can be drawn between delivering the "good news" to the wilderness generation and delivering the "good news" to the recipients of Hebrews 4:2. The effect of the "preached word" or "message" in Hebrews 4:2 was ultimately none, as it "did not benefit" them (Griffiths, 2016:73).

This passage uses Psalm 94:7-11 LXX to encourage the addressees not to make the same mistakes as those led by Moses, but rather to follow Jesus and find rest. The writer uses portions of this citation as an anchoring refrain throughout Hebrews 3:7-4:11 (Pierce, 2020:179).

The noun *ἀκοῆς* must be investigated to better understand the use of *λόγος* in this passage, as they are related in a genitive construction. The genitive *ἀκοῆς* can be seen as a qualitative genitive, describing *λόγος* as "the heard word". The genitive *ἀκοῆς* can also be seen as a descriptive genitive, describing *λόγος* as "the word of hearing". Another possibility is that it is in apposition to *λόγος*, translated as "the message which they heard" (Greenlee, 1998:125). Understanding *ἀκοῆς* appositionally clarifies that *λόγος* refers specifically to the message, and is therefore the accepted interpretation for this study.

The translation category that fits best for the use of *λόγος* in this verse is once again a particular utterance. The author refers to a particular message that was heard, and therefore verbally spoken. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, verbal expression (not specific), a thing spoken of, and an expression can therefore be ruled out. In the case that the message referred to was a long speech, the category of a continuous statement is also applicable.

In this passage, *λόγος* (“word”) is translated as “message”. The phrase *ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς* is therefore translated as “the message they heard”. From the context of this passage, it seems as though *λόγος* is best translated as “message”. This message is a “word” of good news that was heard, but it did not benefit the hearers because they were not united in faith. This good message was the promise of entering the Promised Land.

4.3.4 Hebrews 4:12

An extended discussion of Psalm 94 LXX in Hebrews 3:7-4:11 leads to a conclusion to this section in Hebrews 4:12-13. In Hebrews 4:12, the author warns his addressees about the judicial power of the *λόγος* of God. This *λόγος* is “living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword”, it penetrates to divide even the material things from the immaterial things regarding human life, and it judges the heart’s intentions (Griffiths, 2016:79).

The use of *λόγος* may refer to *λόγος* in Hebrews 4:2, or to the preached *λόγος* in general. It is thought here to refer to God’s word in general, without a specific reference to a particular mode of its delivery (Griffiths, 2016:82). Personifying characteristics attributed to *λόγος* in Hebrews 4:12 includes that it “pierces”, “divides”, and “judges”.

The illustration of the *λόγος* as “sharper than any two-edged sword” reminds one of the personalised descriptions of *λόγος* in Wis. 18:15-16. It is written that the *λόγος* leaped from heaven and bore “your irrevocable command as a sharp rapier” to pass judgment on the Egyptians (Griffiths, 2016:83).

Philo’s concept of the personal *λόγος* as a divine intermediary is believed to be of the most influential among Hellenistic Judaism. He associates *λόγος* with a sword, presenting the “severing *λόγος*” as God’s agent in cutting up the animal for the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15:10. The *λόγος* is said to sever “the whole succession of things material and immaterial” (Griffiths, 2016:82-83). As Griffiths observes, Philo’s description of *λόγος* stands parallel to the description found in Hebrews 4:12. Both show the severing power of the *λόγος* to have a material and non-material quality, and both describe the *λόγος* as a sort of sword or *τομεύς*. The divine *λόγος* is seen in Hebrews 4:12 to have very personal characteristics, functioning as an agent of God’s judicial work. The Hebrews author does not fully personalise *λόγος*, however, nor does he link *λόγος* to Christology.

The category of translation that fits best for the use of *λόγος* in this verse is a verbal expression or utterance. The “word of God” is often used as a phrase referring to the gospel message. In this context, the word of God in its judicial capacity is being referred to. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, particular utterance, a thing spoken of, or an expression are not applicable.

“Word” in this passage refers to the word of God. The phrase *ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ* in the New Testament is generally assumed to refer to the Gospel message. In the context of Hebrews 4:12, however, it is referring to God’s word of judgment. The addressees are warned of the judicial power of God’s word, that it is “sharper than any two-edged sword” and “able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”. In this context *λόγος* therefore refers to the spoken word of God, described here in a unique and dynamic way.

4.3.5 Hebrews 4:13

Hebrews 4:13 focuses on the scene of judgment from the previous verse, everything is “open” and “laid bare” to the one who judges. The use of *λόγος* as a commercial concept (e.g. “account”) occurs in numerous Oxyrhynchus Papyri, and the translation of *λόγος* as “account” is generally based on these occurrences. In the papyri this term is used to refer to a bill that is generated, an account containing funds that can be drawn, or an account that is examined (Griffiths, 2016:85).

The phrase *πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος* resembles formulaic conclusions in Philo. It implies that God is the one “to whom we must render an account”. The author of Hebrews subtly manipulates, not here for the first time, the meaning of *λόγος* (Attridge, 1989:136).

Commentators believe that the author purposely used *λόγος* twice in 4:12-13, playing on this close proximity, perhaps for the purpose of emphasis (Griffiths, 2016:90).

The translation category that fits best for *λόγος* in this context is that of an explanation. An explanation or “account” must be given to God. In this context therefore, the categories of computation, relation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, particular utterance, a thing spoken of, and expression will not fit as well as explanation.

In the context of this passage, *λόγος* is normally not translated as “word”, but rather as “reason”, “answer”, or “account”. The phrase *πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος* is therefore translated as “to whom we must render an account” (Greenlee, 1998:146-147).

It would seem therefore that the context of *λόγος* in Hebrews 4:13 implies the sense of giving a reason or rendering an account. An accurate translation would be “account” rather than “word”.

4.3.6 Hebrews 5:11

In the middle of his description of Jesus as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:10), the author interrupts himself in Hebrews 5:11-6:20 to first shame the addressees so that they can hear his teaching on the high priestly ministry of Jesus from Hebrews 7:1 onward. In Hebrews 5:11-6:12 he warns the addressees, followed by encouragement in Hebrews 6:13-20. In Hebrews 5:11-14 he is warning his addressees not to be spiritually immature, nor be hard of hearing when he shares his message.

The “message” is “hard to explain” because the author faces the problem that the addressees have become “poor listeners”. The author refers to that which he still needed to tell them as *ὁ λόγος* in this verse, using the same language that has been applied to God’s speech at Hebrews 2:2, 4:2, and 4:12. Using *λόγος* to refer to his own address is believed to imply a high view of his own homily. The phrase *πολὺς λόγος* and its close equivalents were commonly used in classical literature to refer to “a great speech” or “a long speech” (Griffiths, 2016:93).

The *λόγος* referred to in Hebrews 5:11 contains an Old Testament exposition. The author places his address within the sphere of God’s speech. His exposition of the Old Testament focuses on the revelation in Christ, and he encourages his addressees to respond to this “word” of revelation, which is God’s word. The author states further that this word requires a certain standard of maturity to accept and understand (Griffiths, 2016:98).

The category of translation that best describes the use of *λόγος* in this passage is a particular utterance, since reference is made to one particular message or address from the author about

Jesus. In this context therefore, the categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, thing spoken of, or expression would not be as fitting.

Griffiths (2016:97) concludes that all the uses of *λόγος* in Hebrews 5:11-6:2 fall under the umbrella of the general concept “the word of God”. However, in Hebrews 5:11, *λόγος* is not translated as “word”. Instead, the phrase *πολὺς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος* is translated as “we have much to say”. In the immediate literary context, *λόγος* clearly functions as a reference to the author’s discussion rather than to divine revelation itself. The use of *ἡμῖν* (“we”) is a case of the authorial plural indicating that the author is including other individual(s) in voicing his statement. The noun *λόγος* is connected with *πολὺς* “much” and *δυσσερμῆνευτος* “difficult to explain” – the topic is both much and difficult to explain (Greenlee, 1998:175-176).

Commentators generally agree that the specific translation of *λόγος* in this context is “address”. An accurate translation of *λόγος* in this context appears to be to leave it out. Instead of the awkward direct translation “we have many words to speak”, it would be better to simply translate it as “we have much to say”. There are, however, still some things to be deduced from the occurrence of *λόγος* in this passage. It implies that the author’s words can be viewed as an address or a homily, and that he views this “word” as very important.

4.3.7 Hebrews 5:13

The context of Hebrews 5 is the royal priesthood of the Son. As mentioned before, the author pauses from this topic in Hebrews 5:11-14 to warn his addressees about their spiritual immaturity. This warning then continues until Hebrews 6:8, and the author only continues the topic of priesthood in Hebrews 7:1. The author writes that those who live on milk are *ἄπειρος λόγου δικαιοσύνης*. It seems therefore that *λόγου δικαιοσύνης* metaphorically refers to the solid food for which his addressees are not ready.

The phrase *λόγου δικαιοσύνης* is translated as “word of righteousness”. This phrase is believed by some to signify God’s full revelation of righteousness in the gospel of Christ (Greenlee, 1998:181-182). However, this interpretation appears too broad for the immediate literary context. Here, *λόγος* refers specifically to the perceiving and teaching of righteousness, reflecting the readers’ spiritual immaturity and lack of ethical discernment rather than the proclamation of the gospel. To be “unacquainted with the word of righteousness” could therefore mean to lack moral integrity.

The translation category that best describes the use of *λόγος* in this context is a particular utterance, as it refers to the teachings about righteousness. In this context, therefore, the categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, a matter spoken of, or an expression will not be a good fit.

In the context of this passage, *λόγος* refers to a “teaching”, “message”, “principle”, or simply “word”. This “word” refers to Scripture’s teachings on ethical matters for Christians (Greenlee, 1998:181).

The phrase *λόγου δικαιοσύνης* (“word of righteousness”) can be seen as referring to God’s revelation or “word” (Griffiths, 2016:93-96). In this context, the simple translation of *λόγος* as “word” appears to suffice, referring to a teaching of righteousness.

4.3.8 Hebrews 6:1

Hebrews 6:1 forms part of the author's warning against apostasy in Hebrews 5:11-6:12. The importance of persevering in the Christian faith and growing mature in their understanding of this faith is emphasised. In Hebrews 6:1 the author encourages his addressees to go beyond the foundational teachings of Christianity to reach spiritual maturity.

In the context of this passage, *λόγος* is not translated as the usual "word", but rather as "teaching", "lesson", or "doctrine". The phrase *τὸν λόγον τοῦ Χριστοῦ* "the teaching about the Christ" can also refer simply to "Christianity" (Greenlee, 1998:185). In this genitive construction, *ἀρχῆς* ("beginning") can be seen as an attribute of *λόγος* "teaching", leading to the translation of "elementary teaching". The noun *ἀρχῆς* can also be seen as the object of *λόγος*, leading to the translation "teaching the basics" (Greenlee, 1998:186). Another possible translation of *τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον* is "the word of the beginning of Christ," which might refer to Christ's ministry while he was on earth (Attridge, 1989:162). However, this seems less likely given the immediate context, which addresses the readers' need to move beyond elementary teachings. A more likely possibility is therefore that *ἀρχῆς* should be understood as the same kind of descriptive genitive that is seen in Hebrews 5:12, namely "basic principles" or "elementary teachings".

The category of translation that best describes the use of *λόγος* here is a particular utterance. The author is referring to teachings about Christ in particular. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, a matter spoken of, or an expression would therefore not be relevant.

Χριστοῦ λόγον in Hebrews 6:1 can also be seen as part of the broader substance of the "word of God", referring to the initial proclamation of the gospel of Christ (Griffiths, 2016:97).

The context of *λόγος* in this verse appears to be teachings about Christ, and more specifically, those that are "elementary" or "basic". The basic gospel message seems to be what is referred to by this phrase. In this passage, *λόγος* is not to be translated as "word", but rather as "teaching".

4.3.9 Hebrews 6:5

As mentioned above, Hebrews 5:11-6:12 contains the author's warning against apostasy. He warns his addressees not to have a shallow understanding of the gospel, but to become mature in the faith. If one falls away from the faith after tasting the goodness of the gospel, one cannot be restored to repentance. Perseverance in faith is encouraged, as well as maturing in their knowledge of the teachings of Christ. Hebrews 6:5 finds itself within this context, specifically referring to the "goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" known by a believer. If a believer, knowing this, does not commit to maturing in the faith, they are in danger of falling away from the faith.

The author uses *ῥῆμα* here instead of *λόγος* which had been previously used, although the meaning is hardly different. The noun *ῥῆμα* refers to the "word" of promise but also of fulfilment (Attridge, 1989:170).

The good word of God (*καλὸν ... θεοῦ ῥῆμα*) in Hebrews 6:5 is interpreted by some as referring to God's word which created and sustains the universe, as in Hebrews 1:3 and 11:3 (Griffiths, 2016:103-105). However, the use of *ῥῆμα* in this context is best categorised as Word in Scripture. The "good word of God" refers to Scriptural teachings which are sanctifying to the

receiver. Therefore, the categories of that which is said or spoken, prophecy, or matter would not describe the use of *ῥῆμα* here as accurately.

In this passage, *ῥῆμα* can be translated as “word”, “utterance”, or “message”. In the phrase *θεοῦ ῥῆμα* “word of God”, God is the source of the word. This phrase refers to any word God expresses to mankind, including the gospel message, the fulfilment of God’s promises, and all Christian teaching (Greenlee, 1998:195-196).

The use of *ῥῆμα* in this passage conveys the sense of God’s word, message, or teaching. The translation “good word of God” seems appropriate. As for the reason why *ῥῆμα* was used instead of *λόγος*, some believe these two terms to be interchangeable in certain contexts without much effect (LN, 1996). The explanation that seems to make the most sense is that *ῥῆμα* refers to Scriptural teachings which are good for the receiver.

4.3.10 Hebrews 7:28

Hebrews 7 emphasises the high priestly role of the Son after the order of Melchizedek. The Son is uniquely able to offer worthy sacrifice to believers. Hebrews 7:28 points out that while the Levitical priests were subject to weakness, having to offer sacrifices, the Son is perfect, offering a single sacrifice which is eternally sufficient. This makes him the ultimate mediator between God and man. In this passage the law is set in contrast to the words of the oath. The oath here is a form of speech as well as a means of establishing a priesthood (Griffiths, 2016:110). The law and the oath serve as two forms of speech which represent the old and the new covenant.

The phrase *ὁ λόγος τῆς ὀρκωμοσίας* can be translated as “the word of the oath”, “the promise of an oath”, or “the sworn word”. The *ὀρκωμοσίας* (“oath”) is the content of the *λόγος* (“word”), the word expresses the oath (Greenlee, 1998:274).

The author did not need to use the construction “word of the oath”, as simply “oath” would have sufficed. The construction of *λόγος* paired with a genitive is believed to add weight to the contrast he wished to draw, as it emphasises the power and continued relevance of the oath in Christ (Griffiths, 2016:123-125).

In the context of Hebrews 7:28, the translation category which best describes *λόγος* is a particular utterance. The author is not referring to just any words, but particularly the words of the oath which appointed the Son. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, a thing spoken of, or an expression would therefore not accurately describe *λόγος* here.

In this passage, *λόγος* is therefore used in the sense of divine speech. A translation of *λόγος* as “word”, “command”, or “promise” is said to be accurate, although the plural form is suggested by some (Greenlee, 1998:273). In the context of Hebrews 7:28, *λόγος* is used together with *ὀρκωμοσίας* to form the phrase *ὁ λόγος τῆς ὀρκωμοσίας*, best translated as “word of the oath” (Ps 110:4).

4.3.11 Hebrews 11:3

This verse was discussed more extensively in Chapter 3; the emphasis of this section is specifically on its use of *ῥῆμα*. Hebrews 11:1–7 forms an introduction to the list of Old Testament believers that follows. This section includes a definition of faith and describes the

period from creation to Noah. Hebrews 11:3 should therefore be interpreted in the light of 11:1–7 (Coetsee, 2018:2). Hebrews 11:3 describes nature of faith, that it enables the believer to trust in unseen things, such as the creation of everything visible out things that are invisible.

The noun *ῥήματι* is in the dative case, denoting means: *by* the word of God the world has been created. The lack of a definite article before *ῥήματι* does not change its meaning to “a word of God”, since the modifying noun *θεοῦ* “of God” also lacks the article (Greenlee, 1998:432). In the context of this verse, *θεός* is the genitive of origin of *ῥήμα*, implying that *ῥήμα θεοῦ* refers to the “the word of God” or “the word spoken by God” (Coetsee, 2018:3).

In Hebrews 11:3, *ῥήμα* is said to be the means by which God created the world. In Genesis 1 God uses words when creating the universe (e.g. “Let there be light”, Gen 1:3). It is possible that *ῥήμα* here refers back to those words of creation. In Hebrews 1:2, Jesus is said to be the means by whom God created the world. A logical conclusion from these two passages would be that Jesus is himself the “word” by which God created the world. However, the book of Hebrews does not confirm such a belief in the same way that John does (Griffiths, 2016:126-129).

In the context of Hebrews 11:3, the occurrence of *ῥήμα* is best described by the translation category of Word in Scripture. The creative ‘word’ of God might appear to be a verbal utterance or command, but the text does not support this interpretation. It is best categorised as a Scriptural word, conveying the sense of a divine command. The categories of that which is said or spoken, prophecy, and matter is therefore not relevant to this passage.

In this context, *ῥήμα* is believed by some to refer to an uttered word, translated as “word”, “utterance”, “order”, or “command”. It refers to God’s spoken word which brought the universe into creation. Other explanations include God’s creative force, creative command, or authoritative command (Greenlee, 1998:431).

It is noteworthy that the author used *ῥήμα* instead of *λόγος* in this verse. Thus far in Hebrews, *ῥήμα* has rarely been used in the context of person-to-person verbal communication, for example a spoken message of salvation. In the context of this verse, it is used to refer to the creative and cosmological “word”. “Word of God” seems to be a sufficient translation for the phrase *ῥήματι θεοῦ*.

4.3.12 Hebrews 12:19

Hebrews 12:19 forms part of the author’s encouragement in Hebrews 12:14-29, to live in faith and peace, and to avoid sexual immorality and bitterness. The *φωνῆ ῥημάτων* was the voice of God that delivered the covenant at Sinai. This phrase translates to “sound of words” or “voice of words”, which is drawn directly from Moses’ report in Deuteronomy 4:12-13. Hebrews 12:19 occurs at the end of a list of physical manifestations of God’s presence at Sinai. This list ends with a focus on the sense of hearing (“the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words”). The sound of words refers to God speaking, the content of which was presumably the law (Griffiths, 2016:140).

The phrase *μὴ προστεθῆναι αὐτοῖς λόγον* can be translated “a word not be added to them”, “not to hear another word”, or “no further word be spoken to them”. The noun *λόγον* is the subject of the infinitive *προσθεθῆναι* “to be added”, referring to the message that no further words be added (Greenlee, 1998:548).

In the hearers' response to these words, *λόγος* is used to refer to the divine message instead of *ῥήμα*. The author's decision to use *λόγος* could simply be a stylistic variation, serving as a synonym for *ῥήμα*. However, it seems as though *λόγος* is used to refer to God's instruction given through Moses at Sinai, while *ῥήμα* refers to God's voice as a sound. *λόγος* refers to the covenantal obligations that God's *ῥήμα* communicated (Griffiths, 2016:141;151).

The translation category that best fits the use of *ῥήμα* here, is that which is said or spoken, as it refers to a voice heard, and the hearers beg that this voice speaks no more. The categories of prophecy, word in Scripture, and matter would therefore not be as relevant. The occurrence of *λόγος* in this verse is best described by the translation category of utterance. The hearers are referring to the particular words they are hearing and begging not to hear any more. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, a thing spoken of, or an expression would therefore not fit as well.

In this passage both *ῥήμα* and *λόγος* are found. The phrase *φωνῆ ῥημάτων* can be translated "sound of words", "voice of words", or "the sound of a voice speaking". This phrase was likely derived from Deuteronomy 4:13 (Attridge, 1989:373). In the context of this passage, *λόγος* refers to "word", "speaking", "message", or "statement" (Greenlee, 1998:547).

God's speech is being referred to in this verse, which would categorise this occurrence of *ῥήμα* as divine speech. The context of *λόγος* in this passage appears to refer this same divine word, but now it is in the context of the hearers who wish to hear no more, rather than the utterance of these words, as is the case with *ῥήμα*. Although the translation of *ῥήμα* and *λόγος* is the same in this passage, a difference can be observed in the way they are utilised. While *ῥήμα* clearly refers to an utterance of words that can be heard, *λόγος* refers to the idea or concept of these words.

4.3.13 Hebrews 13:7

In Hebrews 13 the author provides instructions for the Christian life. Hebrews 13:7 states the responsibilities of the church leaders and the church members respectively. The church leaders were expected to speak the word of God and be role models in their conduct. The church members were expected to remember their leaders, both their teaching and their exemplary lives, and to imitate their leaders' conduct and faith (Coetsee, 2016:191-196).

The category of translation that best describes the occurrence of *λόγος* in this passage is utterance. The leaders spoke a particular "word", "teaching", or "message" of God to them. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, a thing spoken of, or an expression are therefore not relevant.

In this passage, *λόγος* can be translated as "word". The phrase *ἐλάλησαν ὑμῖν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ* "spoke the word of God to you" was commonly used to refer to the Christian gospel (Attridge, 1989:391). It can be assumed that the leaders who spoke this word of God to them are the same ones who first brought the gospel of salvation to them and founded their community.

The phrase *τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ* also occurred in 4:12, referring to the word of God. Here, in Hebrews 13:7, the word of God more directly refers the person and message of Christ. In both occurrences this phrase implies that the message originated with God as a form of divine speech (Griffiths, 2016:153; 159). An accurate translation of *λόγος* in this passage is therefore "word". In Hebrews 13:7 the context of its use is divine speech.

4.3.14 Hebrews 13:17

In the context of giving instruction for the Christian life, the author instructs the addressees in Hebrews 13:17 to obey their leaders and submit to them. They are also reminded that their leaders bear the heavy responsibility of having to give an account to God for their lives. The writer exhorts the church members to “obey” (πειθω) and “submit” (ὑπέικω) to their leaders. The form of both Greek verbs implies a continuous action. The church leaders in turn are exhorted to keep watch over the spiritual health of the congregation (Coetsee, 2016:194-197).

In Hebrews 13:17 the author employs a familiar idiom to say that the leaders will have to “give an account”. The noun λόγος in this verse is anarthrous and, in the accusative, linked to the key verb ἀποδίδωμι. In this context, λόγος has no direct association with divine speech, but rather refers to the familiar idiom meaning “to render account” (Griffiths, 2016:155, 160). This occurrence of λόγος is therefore the same as in Hebrews 4:13.

The translation category that fits best for the use of λόγος in this verse is that of explanation. The category of computation includes the translations of “account” and “reckoning”, but more likely refers to the business sphere. The leaders of this congregation will have to provide an “explanation” or “account” for the flock they are responsible for. The categories of computation, relation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, particular utterance, a thing spoken of, or an expression will therefore not fit as well.

In the context of this passage, λόγος is not translated as “word”, but rather as “account” or “reckoning”. The account they must give refers to an account of the leaders’ care as well as an account of the readers’ souls (Attridge, 1989:600-601).

In Hebrews 13:17, the addressees are exhorted to obey their leaders, as they bear the heavy responsibility of rendering an account for their souls. The sense in which λόγος is used in this passage is therefore that of giving an account or answer, and an accurate translation is “account”.

4.3.15 Hebrews 13:22

Hebrews 13:22 forms part of the final greetings of the author. He concludes with a plea to consider his teachings earnestly. The addressees are exhorted to hold fast to their faith and the sound teachings they have heard, despite the challenges they face.

The phrase τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως “message of exhortation” is also used in Acts 13:15 when the synagogue leaders asked Paul to address the synagogue. This parallel adds to the consideration of Hebrews as a homily (Attridge, 1989:408).

The expression τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως (“word of exhortation”) marks the genre of Hebrews as a homiletic address. Other occurrences of this phrase in Hebrews are grounded in God’s speech (Griffiths, 2016:156-158). In this genitive construction, the παρακλήσεως “exhortation” is the contents of τοῦ λόγου “the word”. This phrase is commonly used to refer to a sermon (Greenlee, 1998:611-612).

The translation category that best describes the occurrence of λόγος in this verse is a particular utterance. The author had a particular “word” or “message” of exhortation to share with his addressees. The categories of computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, a thing spoken of, or an expression would therefore not be as relevant here.

In Hebrews 13:22, *λόγος* is used with *παρακλήσις* to refer to the book of Hebrews as a word of exhortation. While Griffiths suggests that *λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως* might imply divine speech, a more probable category of translation is a sermon, speech, or message.

4.3.16 Preliminary conclusions

When reflecting on these findings concerning the relevant translation categories for each occurrence of *ῥήμα* and *λόγος* in the book of Hebrews, a few preliminary conclusions can be made:

- The noun *λόγος* occurs the most by far in the context of a particular utterance in the book of Hebrews. This category of translation is seen nine times out of the twelve occurrences of *λόγος* (2:2; 4:2; 5:11,13; 6:1; 7:28; 12:19 13:7; 13:22). Twice *λόγος* falls under the category of explanation (4:13; 13:17), and once under the category of a verbal expression or utterance (4:12).
- The noun *ῥήμα* occurs only four times in the book of Hebrews. Two occurrences fall under the category of that which is said or spoken (1:3; 12:19), and the other two under Word in Scripture (6:5; 11:3).
- The focus verse of this study, Hebrews 1:3, was discussed among these verses. As established, the noun *ῥήμα* was used here to refer to a verbal utterance of the Son, by which he sustains the universe. This *ῥήμα* is powerful and commands the obedience and submission of all creation.

The next section will investigate the occurrence of in the LXX, New Testament, and Early Christian Literature to form a better understanding of *τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* in Hebrews 1:3.

4.4 THE USE OF *ῥήμα* IN THE LXX, NEW TESTAMENT, AND EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

In this section, the specific contexts in which *ῥήμα* occurs in the LXX, New Testament, and Early Christian Literature will be examined to better understand the different usages of the noun in each instance. Due to the large number of occurrences of *ῥήμα* in the LXX, New Testament and Early Christian Literature, the investigation is limited to only the most relevant instances of the noun. This relevance is determined by whether an occurrence appears in a context similar to Hebrews 1:3, carries theological significance, or is noted in standard lexical sources. The works of Hatch and Redpath (1998:1249-1251), Muraoka (2002:503-504), BDAG (2000:742-743), and TDNT (1985:75-76) serve as guides for identifying these occurrences.

In the first section of this chapter, dictionary entries for *ῥήμα* are summarised into four main categories of translation, namely that which is said or spoken, prophecy, Word in Scripture, and matter. The context of each occurrence of *ῥήμα* clarifies its intended meaning, so that it can be placed under one of these four categories of translation.

4.4.1 The use of *ῥήμα* in the LXX

Table 12 below presents the most relevant occurrences of *ῥήμα* in the LXX. From the large number of occurrences of *ῥήμα* in the LXX, a select number of 38 has been identified as most

relevant. The works of Hatch and Redpath (1998:1249-1251) and Muraoka (2002:503-504) served as guides in making this selection.

That which is said or spoken (“word”, “saying”, etc.)	x17	Gen 15:1; 24:33; 44:2; Exod 33:4; Hos 6:5; Zech 1:13; 1 Esd. 3:5; Jdt. 1:11; 2:6; 6:4; 8:8, 9; 10:13; 11:5; Sir. 4:24; 46:15; 1 Mac. 5:14
Prophecy (“prediction” etc.)	x2	1 Esd. 2:1; Tob. 2:6
Word in Scripture (“commandment”, “sermon”, “gospel”, etc.)	x5	Deut 4:13; 1 Esd. 9:55; Sir. 2:15; 39:17; Bar. 4:37
Matter (“object”, “event”)	x14	Gen 21:11; 22:1, 16; 24:28, 66; 39:9; Exod 12:24; Deut 2:7; 17:1, 8a, 8b; Jdt. 6:17; 7:28; 1 Mac. 5:37

Table 12: The occurrences and meaning of the noun $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in the LXX

The category of translation that involves a saying or statement occurs seventeen relevant times in the LXX. Possible translations under this category include “word” (8x: Gen 15:1; Hos 6:5; Zech 1:13; Jdt. 6:4; 8:9; 11:5; Sir. 4:24; 46:15), “saying” (3x: Exod 44:3; Jdt. 1:11; 2:6), (spoken) “matter” (1x: Gen 24:33), and “expression”/“statement” (5x: Gen 44:2; 1 Esd. 3:5; Jdt. 8:8; 10:13; 1 Mac. 5:14).

The category of prophecy involves the idea of something prophesied or predicted. Two relevant occurrences in the LXX fall under this category of translation. In 1 Esdras 2:1 as well as Tobit 2:6, $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ is translated as “word” but refers to specific prophecies. In 1 Esdras 2:1, a prophecy revealed to Jeremiah is referred to, and in Tobit 2:6 a prophecy of Amos is referred to.

The category of Word in Scripture, as proposed in BDAG (2000:742-743), refers to occurrences of $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in the context of commandments or messages from God that make up the Scriptures. Examples of this category include references to the Old Testament teachings such as the Ten Commandments as “word”. This category appears five relevant times in the LXX. Translations include “commandment” (1x: Deut 4:13), “order” (2x: Sir. 39:17; Bar. 4:37), and “direction” (2x: 1 Esd. 9:55; Sir. 2:15).

The category of matter occurs fourteen times that is of relevance. This category involves the sense of a tangible object or event, and possible translations include “thing” (8x: Gen 22:1; 22:16; 24:28; 24:66; 39:9; Deut 2:7; 17:1; Jdt. 7:28), “object”/“matter” (3x: Gen 21:11; Deut 17:8a, 8b), and “event” (3x: Exod 12:24; Jdt. 6:17; 5:37).

It appears that of the 38 most relevant occurrences in the LXX, $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ is most used in the context of that which is said or spoken, second-most in the context of a matter, third-most referring to a Word in Scripture, with the least uses in the context of a prophecy.

4.4.2 The use of $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in the New Testament

The following table presents the most relevant occurrences of $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in the New Testament. From the large number of total occurrences, a select number of 55 can be identified as most relevant, as proposed by BDAG (2000:742-743). See Table 13 below for an overview of each occurrence placed under one of the four categories of translation.

That which is said or spoken (“word”, “saying”, etc.)	x23	Matt 4:4; 12:36; 26:74; 27:14; Mark 9:32; 14:72; Luke 1:38, 65; 2:17, 29, 50; 5:5; 7:1; 9:45; 18:34; 20:26; 22:61; John 14:10; Acts 2:14; 6:11; 10:22, 44; Hebrews 1:3
Prophecy (“prediction”, etc.)	x3	Luke 2:19; Acts 11:16; 2 Pet 3:2
Word in Scripture (“commandment”, “sermon”, “gospel”, etc.)	x22	Luke 3:2; John 3:34; 5:47; 6:63, 68; 8:20, 47; 12:47; 15:7; 17:8; Acts, 5:20; 11:14; Rom 10:8a, 8b, 17, 18; Eph 5:26; 6:17; Hebrews 6:5; 11:3; 1 Pet 1:25a, 25b
Matter (“object”, “event”)	x7	Matt 18:16; Luke 1:37; 2:15, 51; Acts 5:32; 13:42; 2 Cor 13:1

Table 13: The occurrences and meaning of the noun $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in the New Testament

The category of translation that involves a saying or statement occurs 23 relevant times in the New Testament. Possible translations under this category include “word” (x13: Matt 4:4; 12:36; 26:74; Luke 1:38; 2:29; 5:5; 20:26; 22:61; John 14:10; Acts 2:14; 6:11; 10:44; Hebrews 1:3), “saying” (x2: Luke 9:45; 18:34), (spoken) “matter” (x2: Matt 27:14; Luke 1:65), and “expression”/“statement” (x6: Mark 9:32; 14:72; Luke 2:17, 50; 7:1; Acts 10:22).

The category of prophecy has three relevant occurrences in the New Testament. In Luke 2:19, $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ refers to the prophecy the shepherds heard from the angel of the Lord and shared with Mary. In Acts 11:16 the prophecy of the Lord regarding baptism with the Holy Spirit is referred to. In 2 Peter 3:2 the prophecies made by past prophets are referred to.

The category of Word in Scripture appears 22 relevant times in the New Testament. Possible translations include “commandment” (x1: Hebrews 11:3), “order”/“direction” (x6: John 3:34; 8:20, 47; 12:47; Eph 5:26; 6:17), “speech”/“sermon” (x1: John 5:47), “proclamation” (x2: Rom 10:17, 18), and “gospel” (x12: Luke 3:2; John 6:63, 68; 15:7; 17:8; Acts 5:20; 11:14; Rom 10:8a, 8b; Hebrews 6:5; 1 Pet 1:25a, 25b).

The category of matter occurs seven times that is of relevance. This category involves the sense of a tangible object or event, and possible translations include “thing” (x5: Luke 1:37; 2:15, 51; Acts 5:32; 13:42) and “object”/“matter” (x2: Matt 18:16; 2 Cor 13:1).

It appears that of the 55 most relevant occurrences of $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in the New Testament, it is most used in the context of that which is said or spoken, with the category of Word in Scripture as a close second. The category of matter occurs third-most, while the category of prophecy is not found at all.

4.4.3 The use of $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in Early Christian Literature

The following table presents the most relevant occurrences of $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in Early Christian Literature. From the large number of total occurrences, a select number of 25 have been identified as most relevant. The works of BDAG (2000:742-743) and TDNT (1985:75-76) served as guides in making this selection. See Table 14 below for an overview of this.

That which is said or spoken (“word”, “saying”, etc.)	x23	<i>Barn.</i> 11:8; 16:10; <i>1 Clem.</i> 27:7; 30:5; 2 <i>Clem.</i> 13:3; 15:4; <i>Mart. Pol.</i> 8:3; <i>Hist.</i> 8:83; <i>Poet.</i> 20:9; <i>Nem.</i> 4:6, 94; <i>Pyth.</i> 4:277; <i>Prot.</i> 342e, 343, 343a, 343b, 343c, 343d; <i>P.W.</i> 5.111.3; <i>Phaed.</i> 102b; <i>Crat.</i> 399b; <i>Theaet.</i> 206d; <i>Soph.</i> 262a
Word in Scripture (“commandment”, “sermon”, “gospel”, etc.)	x2	<i>Barn.</i> 10:11; <i>1 Clem.</i> 10:1

Table 14: The occurrences and meaning of the noun $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ in Early Christian Literature

The category of translation that involves a saying or statement occurs 23 relevant times in Early Christian Literature. Possible translations under this category include “word” (x10: *Barn.* 11:8; 16:10; 2 *Clem.* 13:3; *Mart. Pol.* 8:3; *Hist.* 8:83; *Poet.* 20:9; *Nem.* 4:94; *Phaed.* 102b; *Theaet.* 206d; *Soph.* 262a), “saying” (x8: 2 *Clem.* 15:4; *Pyth.* 4:277; *Prot.* 343a, 343b, 343c, 343d; *P.W.* 5.111.3; *Crat.* 399b), and “expression/“statement” (x5: 1 *Clem.* 27:7; 30:5; *Nem.* 4:6; *Prot.* 342e, 343). Some occurrences of “word” are better translated as “verb” (*Poet.* 20:9; *Theaet.* 206d; *Soph.* 262a). These passages deal with parts of sentences, referring to nouns (ὀνόματα) and verbs (ῥήματα). The occurrences of “saying” can also refer to a remark or a phrase (*Prot.* 343a; *P.W.* 5.111.3; *Crat.* 399b).

The translation category of prophecy does not seem to appear in any relevant contexts in Early Christian Literature.

The category of Word in Scripture appears two relevant times in Early Christian Literature. Possible translations include “commandment” (x1) and “order”/“direction” (x1). In *Barnabas* 10:11, ῥήμα refers to the word that the Old Testament believers received, namely the directions God gave them on how to live. In 1 *Clement* 10:1, Abraham is found faithful in obedience to God’s “words” of command.

The category of matter does not appear to have any relevant occurrences. Although some occurrences at first glance seem as though they belong under this category, the best fit in most of these cases were the category of that which is said or spoken.

Of the 25 most relevant occurrences of ῥήμα in Early Christian Literature, it is by far the most used in the context of that which is said or spoken. The category of Word in Scripture appears second-most, but with a mere two occurrences. It appears ῥήμα is not used in any relevant contexts which would fall under the categories of prophecy or matter.

4.4.4 Preliminary conclusions

Based on the discussion above, the following preliminary conclusions can be made:

- In the LXX, most of the significant uses of ῥήμα is in the context of that which is said or spoken. If the LXX served as the Scriptural background for the author of Hebrews 1:3, this would mean that ῥήμα is likely to have been used in the same way in Hebrews 1:3.
- The New Testament includes Hebrews itself as well as other works written in the same period. During this period, ῥήμα was mostly used in the context of that which is said or spoken, with the category of Word in Scripture as a close second. It makes sense that the category of Word in Scripture is common in the New Testament because this category includes the translation of ῥήμα as “gospel”, which occurs very frequently in the New Testament. As the context of Hebrews 1:3 is not inherently soteriological, the author of Hebrews was most likely influenced by the common use of ῥήμα to refer to that which is said or spoken.
- In Early Christian Literature, which was written around the same time as Hebrews 1:3, ῥήμα also occurs most in the context of that which is said or spoken. It was therefore common in that time for ῥήμα to be used in the sense of a spoken word.

An understanding of the use of ῥήμα in the context of the LXX, New Testament, and Early Christian Literature leads one to the preliminary assumption that the use of ῥήμα in Hebrews 1:3 should likely fall under the translation category of that which is said or spoken. This is also represented by the categorisation of Hebrews 1:3 in Table 14.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to form a better understanding of the Greek noun *ῥῆμα* in the context of Hebrews 1:3. This was achieved first by doing a word study on *ῥῆμα* and its synonym *λόγος*. Based on this word study, an investigation was done on the ways in which *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* are employed throughout Hebrews, and the use of *ῥῆμα* specifically in the LXX, New Testament and other Early Christian literature.

From the word study on *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* the following results were found:

- Depending on the context, an occurrence of *λόγος* can be translated as one of the following:
Computation, relation, explanation, inward debate, continuous statement, verbal expression, particular utterance, thing spoken of, or expression.
- Depending on the context, an occurrence of *ῥῆμα* can be translated as one of the following:
That which is said or spoken, prophecy, word in Scripture, or matter.
- *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* were found to be very close in meaning, and sometimes even interchangeable depending on the stylistic usage of the author. The translation categories formed in this section help to determine the correct interpretation of these two synonymous words.

When investigating the way *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* are employed throughout Hebrews, the following results were found:

- In the book of Hebrews, *λόγος* is mostly used in the context of a particular utterance.
- In the book of Hebrews, *ῥῆμα* is equally used in the context of that which is said or spoken and a verbal utterance.
- These results imply that the author of Hebrews was most likely to use the Greek equivalents of “word” in the context of a verbal utterance. In Hebrews 1:3 *ῥῆμα* was provisionally established to be used in the context of a verbal utterance of the Son. By this verbal utterance he sustains the universe, commanding the submission of all creation.

When investigating the way *ῥῆμα* is used in the LXX, New Testament and Early Christian Literature, the following results were found:

- In the LXX, the occurrences of *ῥῆμα* most relevant to this study primarily appeared in the context of that which is said or spoken. It is likely that the LXX served as the Scriptural background for the author of Hebrews. He would therefore have been influenced by this common usage, and it can therefore be assumed that he employed *ῥῆμα* in the same way in Hebrews 1:3.
- In the New Testament, the occurrences of *ῥῆμα* most relevant to this study primarily appeared in the context of that which is said or spoken. The focus text of this study, Hebrews 1:3, forms part of the New Testament. Therefore, the use of *ῥῆμα* for the said or spoken was most common during the time Hebrews was written.
- In Early Christian Literature, the occurrences of *ῥῆμα* most relevant to this study primarily appeared in the context of that which is said or spoken. These writings were written around the same time as the book of Hebrews, and it can therefore be assumed that the author was influenced by this common usage when writing Hebrews 1:3.

The conclusion is clear that during the life of the author of Hebrews, ῥῆμα was most used in the context of that which is said or spoken. It is therefore very likely that the author of Hebrews used it in the same way in Hebrews 1:3.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main research question of this study is “What is the meaning of the phrase *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* in Hebrews 1:3?”. To answer this question, the following questions were answered in Chapters 2 to 4 of this study:

- Chapter 2: Who is the Son according to the book of Hebrews?
- Chapter 3: What is the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament?
- Chapter 4: How does the author employ the nouns *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* throughout Hebrews, and how is *ῥῆμα* used in Early Christian Literature?

In this chapter, the results found from these investigations are summarised. This summary will serve as grounds for reaching a general conclusion to this study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

5.2.1 The Son according to the book of Hebrews

The primary goal of Chapter 2 was to determine the identity of Jesus, the Son of God, according to the book of Hebrews. To achieve this goal, a literature study was done.

It was first determined that Jesus' identity in Hebrews is seen in his unique role of Son and heir of God. This identity is so unique that not even the angels enjoy this close relation to God. The Son as the divine God was established by a few factors. Firstly, the Father himself calls him God and Lord. Secondly, he plays an active role in the creation and sustaining of the universe. Thirdly, he has a uniquely close relation to the Father, as the radiance of God's glory and the imprint of his being (Heb 1:3). Fourthly, he has the divine characteristics of being immutable and unbound by time. Lastly, several comparisons can be seen between the Son and the Wisdom of God, which shows him working in perfect harmony with the Father in all that he does. Establishing the Sonship and divinity of Christ laid the theological groundwork for a discussion of his messianic office.

Finally, the threefold messianic office of the Son was examined. His identity as prophet was determined by the fact that he is the instrument of God's ultimate revelation. The Son as mouthpiece of God is vastly superior to all previous modes of revelation (Heb 1:1-4). His identity as ultimate high priest was determined by the fact that he accomplished salvation and righteousness for all his people. He was himself the worthy sacrifice, providing everlasting purification by this singular sacrifice. His identity as King was determined by the fact that he is infinitely superior (*κρείττων*), specifically to the prophets and angels, and that he is enthroned at the Father's right hand.

5.2.2 The role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to investigate the role of the Son in creating and sustaining the universe according to Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament. To achieve this purpose, a grammatical-historical investigation was done of certain passages in the New Testament.

The investigation of the relevant pericopes apart from Hebrews 1:3 will be discussed first. It is stated in Hebrews 3:3-4 that God is the builder of all things. The Son's implicit involvement in this text is suggested by the background of Hebrews 1:2 and John 1:3, which implies that God creates or "builds" by means of the Son.

It was seen in Hebrews 11:3 that the universe was created through the powerful *ῥῆμα* of God. John 1:1-3 was compared, where *λόγος* is used to refer to the hypostatized Word of God. In Hebrews 11:3, however, *ῥῆμα* refers to the creative command of God. According to Hebrews 11:3, the universe, which was previously affirmed to be created by means of the Son, was made by God out of things which are not seen. The immutability of the Son is affirmed in Hebrews 13:8. The Son is unbound by time. He never changes, which shows how he can actively and continuously preserve the universe.

The Son as agent in creation was seen clearest in John 1:3, which states that all things, without exception, were created through him. The investigation of Acts 17:28 suggested that God enables man to live, move, and have his being in a way that corresponds to the Son's role previously established as sustainer and agent of creation. 1 Corinthians 8:6 affirmed that all things exist through Christ, the Lord.

In Colossians 1:16-17 all things were seen to have been created in and for the Son, while also holding together in the Son. Furthermore, the Son transcends time, he has always existed. In 2 Peter 3:7 the word of God is seen as the preserver of the heavens and earth until the day of judgment. The act of upholding or "preserving" the universe is explicitly linked to the Son in Colossians 1:17. The *λόγος* in 2 Peter 3:7 can therefore be understood as referring not to the Son himself (as in John 1:1), but to the word by which the Son sustains, as affirmed elsewhere in the New Testament.

Finally, from Hebrews 1:2-3 the following was determined: The Son is the ultimate prophet and mouthpiece of God, as well as the agent of creation. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. The Son as Redeemer, being both perfectly God and perfectly man, made purification for sins, after which he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty – the ultimate place of honour. Most importantly, this pericope revealed that it is the Son who upholds all things using the word (*ῥῆμα*) of his power. It was determined that *ῥῆμα* usually refers to a *spoken word*, rather than a written word or idea. In the specific context of Hebrews 1:3, *ῥῆμα* is best translated as *word*, referring to that which is spoken.

5.2.3 The use of *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* in Hebrews, and the use of *ῥῆμα* in Early Christian Literature

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to form a better understanding of "word" in Hebrews 1:3, by observing the way both *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* are employed throughout Hebrews, as well as the use of *ῥῆμα* in the LXX, New Testament and other Early Christian Literature.

The following was determined concerning the occurrences of *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* in Hebrews:

- The noun *λόγος* is most used in the context of a particular utterance in the book of Hebrews. It appears nine times in this context, while twice falling under the category of explanation, and once under the category of a verbal expression or utterance. The noun *ῥῆμα* appears four times in the book of Hebrews. Two of these fall under the category of that which is said or spoken, while the other two fall under the category of Word in Scripture.

- The focus verse of this study, Hebrews 1:3, was also investigated in this section. In this verse *ῥήμα* refers to the utterance of the Son which sustain the universe, thus falling under the category of that which is said or spoken. This powerful utterance commands the obedience of all creation.

The following was determined concerning the occurrence of in the LXX, New Testament, and Early Christian Literature:

- From the large number of occurrences of *ῥήμα* in the LXX, a select number of 38 was identified as most relevant. Of these occurrences, most fall under the category of that which is said or spoken. The LXX likely served as Scriptural background for the author of Hebrews. It is therefore likely that *ῥήμα* in Hebrews 1:3 also falls under the category of that which is said or spoken.
- From the large number of total occurrences of *ῥήμα* in the New Testament, a select number of 55 was identified as most relevant. Of these occurrences, most are in the context of that which is said or spoken. The New Testament includes Hebrews itself as well as other works written in the same period. The author of Hebrews was therefore likely influenced by the common use of *ῥήμα* to refer to that which is said or spoken. The noun was also commonly used for the category of Word in Scripture, but as the context of Hebrews 1:3 is not inherently soteriological, the first assumption seems most appropriate.
- From the large number of total occurrences of *ῥήμα* in Early Christian Literature, a select number of 25 was identified as most relevant. Of these occurrences, *ῥήμα* appears most in the context of that which is said or spoken. This literature was written around the same time as Hebrews. The author of Hebrews 1:3 was therefore likely influenced by the common use of *ῥήμα* in the context of a spoken word during that time.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the main research question of this study, “What is the meaning of *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* in Hebrews 1:3?”, can be answered as follows:

The book of Hebrews reveals Jesus Christ to be the Son and heir of God while also being God himself. He is the superior prophet, ultimate high priest, and supreme King. The role of this Son in creating and sustaining the universe is not only apparent in Hebrews but is proclaimed in various passages throughout the New Testament.

The Son’s τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως (word of power) refers to a verbal utterance by the Son himself. While ῥήμα can denote a single utterance, it is used here as an ongoing, powerful expression that continuously upholds all creation. This spoken word sustains the whole universe in the sense that all creation is in submission to the command of the Son. The Son’s creative and sustaining power is manifested through his ῥήμα, hence the phrase “word of his power”. This ῥήμα is to be used by the Son, as agent of creation, to sustain or to destroy according to God’s will.

At the completion of this study, it is hoped that the results have shed light on the phrase *τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* in Hebrews 1:3. To the modern reader, this phrase need no longer appear peculiar but can instead be seen as contributing to understanding the author’s intended message in Hebrews and how it fits into the broader revelation about Christ in Scripture.

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