

## Hebrews Study Session 4 - 2:1-18

There are two main ideas presented in chapter 2. The first is the conclusion of and the reason for the author's comparison between angels and the Son of God in chapter 1 and the second is to describe the full humanity of the Son of God and why it is important to our faith.

Q: Does anyone remember the main point(s) of chapter 1 from last week? (*the Son is not an angel, the Son is superior to the angels, the Son is the eternal God*)

### [Read Hebrews 2:1-4]

Q: Drawing on the comparison between the Son and the angels, what do you see as the author's main point in this passage? (*If the word of God spoken by angels was firm, how much more then the word spoken through the Son must be. Since the Son is superior to the angels, we need to pay attention to what He says.*)

Let's break it down

1) "must pay closer attention to" - the word "attention" means to not only turn one's mind towards something or someone but to also act upon what was perceived. [Acts 8:6 & Acts 16:14] - The thrust of this word is not just understanding what is said but understanding so that one acts upon that understanding. There is a lack of actions based upon the word of God by the listeners.

2) The author tells them why in the next phrase. "drift away" - this word has several word pictures that are associated with it. It was used to describe a person who gets busy with one thing and while so engaged allows a ring to fall off his finger and he doesn't notice it. It's also used to describe a piece of food slipping down a person's windpipe. Also, it was used to describe a ship that failed to put down a sea anchor and ended up getting blown off course and ending up in the wrong harbor. The thing all of these things has in common is that they show a neglect for something important to the detriment and possibly danger of the person. By being careless a person wanders away or lets something important or valuable slip away.

a) Remember, these people were saved so the author is not speaking about salvation. He uses the word "we". He includes himself in the category with the listeners. (Not that he is drifting away with them but that he is a saved member of humanity who suffers the same weaknesses as those he's preaching to.)

b) Those people in the Old Testament were in covenant with the Lord and now this group of people, including the author are in the new covenant with the Lord.

c) The believers were in danger of drifting away from the message, not drifting away from the Lord. However, to drift away from the meaning and power of the message will lead one to lose the experience of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Just as every law in the Old Testament had a corresponding just penalty, the penalty for drifting away from the Lord is the just loss of the experience of the Holy Spirit in some manner. (This is not the loss of the Holy Spirit, thus the loss of salvation, but rather the loss of the conscious experience of His indwelling in our lives. And with all sin, there is a natural consequence to the sin that goes with it. It's not God "punishing" us but rather it is the essential death nature of sin that brings these

consequences.)

Q: So what you put the “pay closer attention” and the “drift away” together, what is the author saying? (*He’s accusing the listeners of being careless in their faith and being in danger of drifting away from the truth and power of the gospel. They are neglecting their faith.*)

This drifting action described here is all too evident in modern American Christianity. We have become consumers of the faith. We’ve moved from “*What is my responsibility towards God or the Christian community based on the gospel?*” to “*What can God or the Christian community do for me?*” As long as these things seem useful to these Christians, they will participate in the faith. Many maintain a victim attitude whereby they take no responsibility for their own actions. They have lost the “sense of sin” and what sin is and what it does. Thus their faith is very shallow.

VV. 2& 3 make up the main argument he began back in chapter 1.

1) “word” is “logos” - the written word or message. The emphasis is on the message spoken by the angels and not what the angels did.

2) “unalterable” - “fully binding”

3) “transgression” describes a willful violation of the Law where as “disobedience” describes a violation of the Law due to inattention.

4) “just recompense” - rightful penalty or earnings of one’s actions - what is truly deserved.

5) Thus, in the Law there were consequences and penalties for breaking the Law whether intentionally or unintentionally. The Law was fully binding upon all the people in the covenant.

6) In v.3 - “neglect” - to be careless or make light of something.

7) “great salvation” - our salvation is wide in it’s scope.

Q: What are some of the things believers are saved from through the gospel? (*sin, eternal death, hell, life without purpose, darkness, fear, etc.*)

This short passage teaches us some important truths about the gospel. It was announced through Jesus Christ. It was confirmed by those who heard Him. Those first believers were entrusted with the genuine article of the gospel. And God Himself testified to the validity of our great salvation through miracles and spiritual gifts. It wasn’t left to the persuasiveness of preachers to convince others that the gospel was true. They just preached the true message and allowed God to convince others through His actions.

Q: What implications might this have for our witness to the lost? (*It’s not solely upon us. Our job is the proclaim the word accurately and boldly but expect God to work in ways that open the hearts of others. This great salvation is God’s work and we are participants living and speaking the truth.*)

Q: How was the gospel message first spoken to those who became the first Christians? (*through the Lord*)

Q: How was the gospel message confirmed to be true? (*signs and wonders, miracles, gifts of the Holy Spirit*)

The words for signs and wonders always appear together in the New Testament. Together they have the sense of amazing, wondrous, supernatural events which point people to God. They are never meaningless demonstrations of God's power but always carry the sense of attesting that the preached gospel being given is truly from God. The miracles point beyond themselves - never to themselves only.

Q: Does everyone know which spiritual gift(s) they have been given? (*Explain that a spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. It is the way the Spirit shows His presence outwardly through the life of a believer. I Corinthians 12:7*)

Q: If the Law given by angels had consequences for breaking it, what should the listeners expect for neglecting the gospel which they had received? (*we aren't told any specifics but we are told the believers will not escape the consequences, which will be appropriate*)

Q: What are some of the consequences for a Christian sinning? (*NOT losing salvation*)

Now we're going to get to the answer for the question/comment Billy T brought up last week at the end of our study dealing with the spiritual enemies of the Lord and the subjection of the world to Jesus.

### **[Read Hebrews 2:5-9]**

Again, the author pulls out Scripture from the Old Testament to make his point about the Son. In this section we are going to see the incarnation and its importance to our salvation.

### **[Read Psalm 8:4-6]**

In the Old Testament this was speaking about man's placement in the created order. However, here in Hebrews it's speaking about Jesus specifically and His place in the new order. The phrase "world to come" means the new creation inaugurated by the enthronement of the Son. Notice how the author says "one has testified somewhere". The author knows good and well not only who spoke this psalm originally but exactly where it is found in the Scriptures. He uses this to stress that the Word of God is God's Word - the human agent who actually wrote it down is insignificant and not worthy of mention. The fact that God spoke these words is what is important.

Think of the role of angels now, in this world. Here's the Jewish thought on one of the many roles of angels in the world now.

### **[Deuteronomy 32:8, Daniel 10: 20-21, Daniel 12:1]**

According to Jewish thought, one of the roles of angels was that God had placed them over certain nations or geographical areas of the world. We see this in the Old Testament

Scriptures read. The deal is that in the age to come, they will no longer be assigned roles in the government in the age to come.

v.6 - “testify” only in this place is this word used to introduce a quotation from Scripture. It means that what comes next is to be taken seriously. In case you haven’t noticed it yet, the atmosphere of this sermon is intense and serious. And to make his point, the verb is in the aorist tense meaning that the testimony was given in the past but is still in force in the present. What was said in Scripture hasn’t gone out of force.

v.6 - “remember” or “mindful of” - interesting word - it means to remember someone with a view to helping them. The picture was that of remembering someone in need and then helping them out or caring for them.

v.6 - “concerned” - visit with view to help someone out. It goes along with remembering. You go visit a person who is in need to help them out. Someone is moving and needs help so you go visit them to lend a hand. That’s the thought. In this case, it is God seeing that we need help to be free from the bondage of sin and so God, in the person of Jesus Christ, comes to visit mankind for the purpose of helping us out of our quagmire. He wasn’t just concerned in the sense of being worried about us. He was concerned to the point of giving what it took to help us out and restore us to His original design - sinless fellowship with Himself.

Q: In what way did God “remember us”? (*He sent His Son to pay for our sins, to offer us a great salvation*)

v.7 - “little lower” is not talking about rank in this instance. It is speaking about time. A better translation is “for a little while He was made lower than the angels”.

There is a shift that happen in v.7. Jesus, the incarnation of the Son, was made lower than the angels temporarily but was then crowned with glory and honor - the exaltation we discussed last week.

Q: According to v.8, what has been placed in subjection under the Son? (*all things*)

Q: At the end of v. 8, that author states that we don’t see all things subjected to the Son yet. What are these things we don’t see subjected to Him yet? (*negative, harmful, fearful, bad things*)

Remember that the audience are Christians who are considering throwing in the towel on their Christian faith. They have experienced persecution up to a point and see on the horizon more intense persecution coming. Their lives are hard and they experience hardships. So what the author was describing in vv.7-8a was the ideal picture. It is the picture of God’s will that will be. However, the end of v.8 is the present reality of things. In Psalms 8 we see the completed, finished ideal in the future. In Psalm 110, that we looked at last week, we see the current reality. We don’t see everything subject to the will of the Father or the Son right now. Evil is rampant and Christians endure pain and suffering and ostracism. This shows that the subjection of everything under the Son’s feet, the subjection of His enemies is an “already but not yet” proposition. (Similar to Jesus’ teachings about the kingdom of God being already...but not yet.)

Jesus has already been exalted. He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. Yet, His rule has not yet been consummated. Until He returns, it won't be. Evil is allowed to exist and complete its work until the consummation of the kingdom of God. This is why when we pray for the Lord to work a miracle on behalf of someone and the Lord does it, we call it a miracle - it's not natural. But think about it. In the coming kingdom, there will be no enemies of God left. At that time, when evil doesn't rear its head, we won't call it a miracle, it'll just be the way things are - forever. **[I Corinthians 15:23-28]**

Q: Notice in v.9 the name of Jesus is used for the first time in this sermon. Why do you think it is used at this time, in this way? (*Jesus is the name for the human "side" of the Son. The author is stressing the incarnation or human nature of the Son at this point.*)

Remember that these Christians were Hellenistic Jews. They came from a Jewish background and understanding of the Scriptures. So v.9 lets us know that while the Scriptures concerning the Messiah were not fulfilled in the way it was expected that He would fulfill them, the Scriptures were fulfilled.

Q: How were the Scriptures fulfilled? (*in Jesus through His death for our salvation*)

So Jesus was a little lower than the angels for a little while but He now has full supremacy in His exaltation because of His saving work done for us through His suffering death.

Q: Look at the word "grace" in v. 9. Do you see anything unusual in the use of the word "grace" there? (*We usually apply it to the gift God gives to us and has a positive sense. While it carries the positive sense for us, it stresses the "negative" or suffering death that makes grace available to us. Someone once said GRACE is "God's Riches At Christ's Expense" that is borne out in this passage.*)

The phrase "tasted death" means to taste something by putting it in one's mouth. It was a metaphor for coming to know something fully and as it truly is.

Q: Why do you think that this phrase is used in this place? (*Because Jesus truly died. He became fully human and that was proved by the fact that He actually died.*)

So the separation of God from His Son temporarily became essential for grace to be offered to mankind and know God's salvation. There could be no higher price to pay than that of separation of the Heavenly Father, who had enjoyed continued, unbroken fellowship with His Son throughout eternity, from His only Son.

Q: According to this verse, for whom did Jesus die? (*everyone*)

The author is going to clarify a problem that someone might bring up. If Jesus is fully human, when we look at His life as a man and from a man's perspective, there is nothing about him as a man from Nazareth that supports the conclusion that He is superior to the angels. The angels did what they were supposed to do. Jesus died a humiliating death. However, as the

author is going to point out next, THIS WAS GOD'S PLAN. It was Jesus' death that saves. To do this, the author is going to further show the humanity of Jesus by showing His solidarity with the human race or as the author puts it - the human family. VV. 10-18 is a commentary on v.9, explaining it in greater detail so that there is no confusion about Jesus and His role in God's plan and the lives of believers.

### [Read Hebrews 2:10-18]

Q: According to the author, what was fitting for God to do? (v.10 - *to bring many sons to salvation. The phrase "many sons" should be equated with the sum total of all saved people*)

1) "To perfect" - to make perfect, complete or mature. This verb is in the aorist which means that this completion happened fully in the past but is still in effect for us today.

"If one recoils at the idea of God making Christ perfect, he should bear in mind that it is the humanity of Jesus that is under discussion. The writer does not say that Jesus was sinful but simply that "by means of sufferings" God perfected his Son in his human life and death for his task as Redeemer and Savior. One cannot know human life without living it. There was no moral imperfection in Jesus, but he lived His human life in order to be able to be a sympathizing and effective leader in the work of salvation." (A.T. Robertson - Word Pictures in the New Testament)

In other words, suffering, not the resurrection was the means by which God completed or brought to maturity His saving work for mankind. It was completed in the past but that work is available for us today.

2) "author" - this word means just about everything EXCEPT author. It's meaning is really originator or source (and that's how it got translated as author in English) but the way it was used in the ancient world was much more colorful than this. It also means guide, pioneer, trailblazer, prince, captain or best yet "champion".)

a) It was used of Hercules in Greek mythology in that Hercules was called the champion of the people.

b) In this sense it means Jesus was the first in the family, the trailblazer older brother of us all. Jesus is our champion when it comes to making and paving the path for God's salvation for the rest of us. A champion is one who fought in the place of the king thus fought for more than just himself - but for the entire group of people under the king's dominion. He is our captain of our band of brothers who goes before us and leads the fight. Our big brother fought the fight against sin and won so that we can enjoy the benefits of God's grace.

c) This comes from the quote from Charles Spurgeon that Tom C shared with us during the study on this word. *"Now seeing that it is the will of the Lord to lead us to glory by the Captain of our salvation, I want you to be worthy of your Leader. Do you not think that sometimes we act as if we had no Captain? We fancy that we have to fight our way to heaven by the might of our own skill; but it is not so. If you start before your Captain gives you the order to march, you will have to come back again; and if you try to fight apart from your Captain, you will rue the day."* This is a good way to look at Jesus, who is our Captain through the life of faith and our Hero who not only fights on God's behalf but claims the victory which He then shares with us.

Q: According to v. 11 - what is Jesus not ashamed of now? (*to call us His brothers*)

The link between Jesus and those He has saved is holiness. He has made those who are His brothers, holy (sanctified). This verb is in the passive voice which means that it was done to us. It's in the active tense which means it's always happening - it's perpetual/continual. God was the actor and we are the recipients of this sanctification. Once we called upon Jesus to save us, we became holy and will always remain that way before God. As Jesus called upon the Heavenly Father while on earth, we call upon the same Father because we are from the same family as Jesus.

Important note here: none of this is our work. None of it is dependent upon our performance according to the Scripture. Salvation is God's work as is His sanctification of us. He is not ashamed us at any time after our salvation.

### **[Romans 8:12-17]**

Jesus was the Father's only Son until we were adopted into His family by His grace through faith in Christ. This makes us heirs with Jesus to all of heaven for all eternity. While the angels will not play a role in the upcoming government, we, believers, will.

Psalm 22 is a purely Messianic psalm. It describes the suffering of the Messiah in great detail. The author of Hebrews used this psalm to proclaim that Jesus, while human, fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah through His sufferings and now that the work is completed, Jesus and His brothers will all praise God for His salvation.

### **[Psalm 22:22]**

### **[Isaiah 8: 17-18]**

The Isaiah passage speaks of difficulties Isaiah had to endure. He had to trust God to see him through them. Jesus, our big brother, had to endure troubles as well. Now He stands in unity with all of His troubled brothers.

The author then gets to the nitty gritty of the theology here. He explains the reason for the incarnation in the first place. Since we are flesh and blood, Jesus had to become flesh and blood as well. The phrase "flesh and blood" is used twice in the New Testament (Ephesians 6:12). In both cases it deals with our struggle is against spiritual beings, namely, the devil.

Q: In what realm is the devil said to have power? (*in death*)

Q: How did Jesus render the devil powerless? (*by His death*)

Q: In what way have believers been delivered from the power of death? (*in that they no longer fear death nor will they suffer spiritual deaths*)

Q: What is said to be enslaving in v.15? (*fear - specifically the fear of death*)

Q: What are some of the manifestations of the fear of death that we see in our culture?

In a last comparison between the Son and angels, we see (v. 16) that God does not give help to the angels but rather the descendants of Abraham.

Q: Who are the descendants of Abraham based on this passage? (*the spiritual brothers of Jesus, those who are saved by faith in God's grace*)

The word “gives help” translates a word that means to “take hold of” or “to take by the hand”. It’s the action that a rescuer uses to get someone out of a burning building. Jesus did not descend from angels or angelic stock but rather from Abraham to be a help to those who God saved. I like the picture here of Jesus grabbing our hands and pulling us out of the fire or the water or whatever danger we were in before we got saved.

Then the author wraps up this entire section and the reason for the incarnation in vv. 17-18.

1) “had to be made” - “obligated” or “He owed it” - it is a financial term. His great love for mankind led God to obligate Himself to send Jesus, the divine Son, as fully human to earth to live as one of us.

2) By being human Jesus was qualified to become our merciful and faithful high priest. The high priest was the one who offered the sacrifice on behalf of the entire nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement. Now that Jesus had offered Himself in our place, He not only proved Himself to be our high priest but also the perfect sacrifice for our sins. (This theme is just mentioned here but will be picked up and discussed in great detail in later chapters.)

Q: Why was Jesus obligated to be made in the image of man? (*so that He could be a merciful high priest*)

Q: Why was it essential for Jesus to be merciful to be fully human? (*because He could understand completely the trials, hardships and temptations humans face*)

Unlike the human priests, who should have been sympathetic toward other humans, they often were aloof and uncaring about those who they were supposed to serve. Also, they were not always (and in Jesus’ day more often than not were not) faithful to the teachings of God. How many times did Jesus have to reinterpret Scripture for them. “*You have heard it said... but I say to you.*” Jesus gave complete fidelity to the Word of God without corruption. He did this for a reason and the reason was to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Propitiation is another way to say “satisfy wrath” “atone for” or “to reconcile or make peace with”.

Q: According to v.18, why is Jesus able to come to the aid of those in need? (*because He suffered and was tempted as we are*)

Q: What’s the implication then if Jesus came to earth but did not suffer like we did? (*He would not be able to render any aid to us. He would have been like some being who was totally unaffected by the things that affect us - thus not very sympathetic.*)

Q: What is the believer's relationship to temptation? *(As long as we live here, we will face temptation which is suffering to our righteous natures. Yet, because of our big brother, high priest, who is sympathetic and able to rescue us, we don't have to give into the temptation and sin. We have a champion that has won the battle on our behalf.)*

The message of the author of Hebrews is that Jesus went all the way for us. He came to earth prepared to suffer as one of us and He did just that - all the way to His own death so that we could be called His brothers and be brought to glory with Him. So instead of looking to angels and the old covenant, look to Jesus and the new covenant. (Or put another way, Turn your eyes upon Jesus)

Q: Why did the incarnation happen?

Q: How do you think the original listeners to this message would have responded to this sermon so far?

There is a notice here. The warning/admonition/exhortation to pay careful attention to their faith in 2:1-4 is the first of three in Hebrews. Each one becomes more intense. Yet, in each one, Jesus is shown afterwards as the helper to make the Christian life possible.

Q: Are there any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?