

Wednesday Night Hebrews Bible study

Hebrews 2:1-18

04.15.2020

John Piper shares:

We all know people that this has happened to. There is no urgency. No vigilance. No focused listening or considering or fixing of their eyes on Jesus. And the result has not been a standing still, but a drifting away.

That is the point here: there is no standing still. The life of this world is not a lake. It is a river. And it is flowing downward to destruction. If you do not listen earnestly to Jesus and consider him daily and fix your eyes on him hourly, then you will not stand still; you will go backward. You will float away from Christ.

Drifting is a deadly thing in the Christian life. And the remedy for it, according to Hebrews 2:1, is: Pay close attention to what you have heard. That is, consider what God is saying in his Son Jesus. Fix your eyes on what God is saying and doing in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

This is not a hard swimming stroke to learn. The only thing that keeps us from swimming against sinful culture is not the difficulty of the stroke, but our sinful desire to go with the flow.

Let's not complain that God has given us a hard job. Listen, consider, fix the eyes — this is not what you would call a hard job description. In fact, it is not a job description. It is a solemn invitation to be satisfied in Jesus so that we do not get lured downstream by deceitful desires.

If you are drifting today, one of the signs of hope that you are born again is that you feel pricked for this, and you feel a rising desire to turn your eyes on Jesus and consider him and listen to him in the days and months and years to come.

Devotional excerpted from “The Danger of Drifting from the Word”¹

Sections and titles:

2:1-4	Don't neglect so great a salvation!
2:5-9	Jesus, the founder of our salvation
2:10-13	Jesus humbled through suffering, He calls us brothers and sisters
2:14-18	Jesus endured and can help us when we are suffering

The Message translation:

¹ https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-danger-of-drifting?utm_campaign=Daily%20Email&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=78429857&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9PNHxvcLFVu9bokWZUAfZiluz72bk_kOSwEXDA6DyGuvyy5_sGlx-dl96Og6ZwRd3Fhe10PLcrGORrm8Oy-AfGQu5z3A&_hsmi=78429857

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2 It's crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we've heard so that we don't drift off. If the old message delivered by the angels was valid and nobody got away with anything, do you think we can risk neglecting this latest message, this magnificent salvation? First of all, it was delivered in person by the Master, then accurately passed on to us by those who heard it from him. All the while God was validating it with gifts through the Holy Spirit, all sorts of signs and miracles, as he saw fit.

THE SALVATION PIONEER

God didn't put angels in charge of this business of salvation that we're dealing with here. It says in Scripture,

What is man and woman that you bother with them;
why take a second look their way?
You made them not quite as high as angels,
bright with Eden's dawn light;
Then you put them in charge
of your entire handcrafted world.

When God put them in charge of everything, nothing was excluded. But we don't see it yet, don't see everything under human jurisdiction. What we do see is Jesus, made "not quite as high as angels," and then, through the experience of death, crowned so much higher than any angel, with a glory "bright with Eden's dawn light." In that death, by God's grace, he fully experienced death in every person's place.

It makes good sense that the God who got everything started and keeps everything going now completes the work by making the Salvation Pioneer perfect through suffering as he leads all these people to glory. Since the One who saves and those who are saved have a common origin, Jesus doesn't hesitate to treat them as family, saying,

I'll tell my good friends, my brothers and sisters, all I know about you;
I'll join them in worship and praise to you.
Again, he puts himself in the same family circle when he says,
Even I live by placing my trust in God.

And yet again,
I'm here with the children God gave me.

Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.

It's obvious, of course, that he didn't go to all this trouble for angels. It was for people like us, children of Abraham. That's why he had to enter into every detail of human life. Then, when he came before God as high priest to get rid of the people's sins, he would have already experienced it all himself—all the pain, all the testing—and would be able to help where help was needed.

2:1-4	Don't neglect so great a salvation!
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For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. ² For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, ³ how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, ⁴ God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

Observations, notes, inferences and applications (inferences and applications are marked by →)

- This passage starts with either or “therefore,” or “for this reason” in the ESV and the NASB translations. The NIV just jumps right into the passage. Either way, this chapter is continuing on from the previous chapter.
 - Chapter 1 was about Jesus being higher than the angels.
- The author says we must pay attention to what we have heard. What have we heard? Jesus is higher than the angels?
- → So we must pay “more than ordinary” attention to Christ and who He is.
- We must NOT drift away.

John MacArthur in Grace to You Devotional on Thursday, December 20, 2018:

God's Word is the anchor that will prevent people from drifting past the harbor of salvation.

While English explorer William Edward Parry and his crew were exploring the Arctic Ocean, they needed to go further north to continue their chartings. So they calculated their location by the stars and began a treacherous march.

After many hours they stopped, exhausted. After taking their bearings, they discovered they were now further south than when they started! They had been walking on an ice floe that was traveling faster south than they were walking north.

That is similar to the situation people who continue rejecting Christ find themselves in. Therefore Hebrews 2:1 says, "We must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." Why would anyone knowingly reject Christ? He came into the world as God incarnate, died on a cross to forgive our sins, paid our penalty, showed us divine love, and gives us blessing and joy beyond imagination.

The Greek words translated "pay much closer attention to" and "drift away from" both have a nautical usage. The first means "to tie up a ship" and the second can be used of a ship that has been carelessly allowed to drift past the harbor because the sailor forgot to attend to the steerage or chart the wind,

²Peterson, E. H. (2003). *The Message : The Bible in contemporary language* (Heb 2:1-18). Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress.

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tides, and current. Hebrews 2:1 could be translated: "We must diligently anchor our lives to the things we have been taught, lest the ship of life drift past the harbor of salvation and be lost forever."

*Most people don't deliberately turn their backs on God; they almost imperceptibly slip past the harbor of salvation and are broken on the rocks of destruction. Be sure you warn those you know who might be slipping past that harbor.*³

- Verse 2 explains a little more of why: the message declared by Angels: This is the Ten Commandments
 - The audience of Hebrews would have respected Old Testament law and I see the author saying that this was valuable. People faced consequences for violating the law.
- Verse 3 picks up on that: how can we escape? The message declared by angels was reliable. People were punished for violating that law. Now Jesus is higher than angels, what will happen for violating this law?
 - →we are still in the Jesus is greater than angels idea.
 - →now I see the author making inferences: If Jesus is higher than the angels and there was/is punishment for violating that law, what happens for violating Jesus' covenant.
- The author says that the message was declared first by the Lord, it was attested to by those who heard
 - →I believe the author is referring to the message of Jesus
 - Jesus declared the message
 - Attested to by those who heard—the writer may not have been one of the originals. There were many witnesses.
- God also gave witnesses by signs, wonders, various miracles, and the gifts of the Spirit
 - Romans 12, 1 Cor 12 and Eph 4 are about the Spiritual Gifts which the Bible says are for the upbuilding of the church
 - Signs and wonders and miracles were accomplished by Jesus as well as Paul, Peter and others.
 - They are listed all throughout the book of Acts

³ https://www.gty.org/library/devotionals/drawing-near?utm_source=mailerlite&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=read_todays_drawing_near_devotional&utm_term=2018-12-20

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Notice here that miracles are associated with the apostles. Also notice that this could mean an Apostle did not write this because the author puts himself out of the company of the apostles. (Dr Rydelnic believes a woman did not write this Open Line on Moody Radio, January 25, 2020)

- Acts 7:53 says that they received the law ordained by angels
- Heb 10:28 will again talk about the law of Moses
- Heb 10:29 and 12:25 go along with this idea: how can someone escape who rejects the Son.
- Other passages about salvation: Rom 11:14; 1 Cor 1:21; Heb 1:14; 5:9; 9:28

ESV Study Bible note:

Following standard Jewish argumentation (see [9:14](#); [10:28–29](#)), the argument proceeds from the lesser (retributions under the Mosaic law; [2:2](#)) to the greater (the danger of neglecting the greater salvation; [2:3–4](#)).

Heb. 2:2 The message declared by angels is the Mosaic law, which was given by angels (deduced in Jewish tradition from [Deut. 33:2](#); see [Acts 7:53](#); [Gal. 3:19](#)).

Heb. 2:4 God also bore witness. God's witness came through miracles performed alongside the gospel's proclamation, confirming it. The three terms **signs**, **wonders**, and **miracles** overlap in meaning and thus should not be finely distinguished (they appear together in [Acts 2:22](#); [2 Cor. 12:12](#); cf. [2 Thess. 2:9](#); and elsewhere "signs and wonders" are often connected). **gifts**. "Apportionings," "distributions" (Gk. *merismos*) from the Holy Spirit. **distributed according to his will**. This probably refers not just to the distribution of spiritual gifts (see, however, [1 Cor. 12:4–11](#), esp. v. 11) but also to all the works of God in [Heb. 2:4](#); these are works done according to God's will, not of human volition (cf. [Gal. 3:5](#)).

IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:

2:1–4

Rejecting Christ's Word

According to common Jewish thought, any Israelite who willfully rejected the law was excluded from the world to come; according to some teachers, this sin was even unpardonable. In Judaism, deliberate acts always carried more liability than inadvertent ones.

law ***Law**. "Torah" (the Hebrew word behind the Greek word translated "law") means literally "instruction" and "teaching," not just regulations. It was also used as a title for the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, the books of Moses) and sometimes for the whole Old Testament. This commentary uses the translation "law" because it is familiar to readers of most translations, even though the English term's semantic range is much narrower than the Jewish concept.

In a widely recognized Jewish tradition, God had given his law through angels (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Josephus; and Jubilees). (The rabbis preferred to emphasize only the great number of angels present for the Israelites.) The tradition may have some basis in the interchange between God and his angel in Exodus (cf. Ex 3:2), the association of Psalm 68:17 with the Sinai tradition, and especially Deuteronomy 33:2 (more so in the LXX, which declares that his angels were with him on his right).

Because Christ is greater than the angels (Heb 1:1–14), rejecting his word is a more serious offense than rejecting the word said to have been mediated through the angels (2:2). This is a Jewish qal vahomer, or “how much more” argument: if the lesser point applies, then how much more does the greater point apply. Some scholars have suggested a nautical image (a drifting ship) in verse 1, as well as significant juridical language in verses 2–4.⁴

2:5-9	Jesus, the founder of our salvation
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For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. ⁶ But one has testified somewhere, saying,

“What is man, that You remember him?

Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him?

⁷ “You have made him for a little while lower than the angels;

You have crowned him with glory and honor,

Josephus ***Josephus**. A first-century Jewish historian who lived through the war of A.D. 66–70; his works (*The Jewish War*, *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Against Apion*, and his autobiography, the *Life*) are useful sources of information concerning first-century Palestine. Intended for a Diaspora audience, his writings are quite Hellenized.

Jubilees **Jubilees**. A theologically shaped midrashic reworking of Genesis and part of Exodus. It circulated in (and probably derived from) Essene circles in the second century B.C.

rabbis ***Rabbi**. Jewish teacher. Sometime after A.D. 70 the term became a technical one for those ordained in the rabbinic movement, which probably consisted primarily of Pharisaic scribes. (To accommodate customary usage this commentary sometimes applies the term to Jewish teachers of the law in general, although such common usage may have technically been later; it also applies the term to the teachings of Jewish legal experts collected in rabbinic literature.)

LXX **LXX**. The common abbreviation for the Septuagint.

Christ ***Christ**. The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term for “Messiah.” Some Gentile readers, unfamiliar with the Jewish sense of the term, may have taken it merely as Jesus’ surname, a usage that became more common over time.

⁴Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Heb 1:14). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

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And have appointed him over the works of Your hands;

⁸You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

Jesus Briefly Humbled

⁹But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

- In verse 5 I still see this idea of Jesus being greater than the angels. It says: *For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. ⁶But one has testified...*
- God made the world to come subject to someone other than angels
 - →implies that the world to come will be subject to Jesus.
 - →I believe the writer is talking about the end times. The world to come would either be the millennial reign or the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22).
 - In the New Testament times we have this idea of the “already” but “not yet.” We are already saved, Christ has already come, but we are not all the way there yet. This is not only talking about us dying and going to heaven. The “not yet” doesn’t happen until God pours out His wrath on sin.
 - →We as Christians must want and look forward to this day. It will be bittersweet. There will be no more sin; however, the wrath being poured out on sin includes loved ones who never turned to Christ.
 - →Reading the Psalms and the Old Testament prophets we can see passages where the writer yearned for the day when God would have His vindication. Psalm 79: “How long O Lord...”
- Verse 6 brings in the Old Testament quotations.
- It is interesting how the author writes: *It has been testified somewhere. I think he knew the Scriptures so well that he may have known the passage but not the location (looking up a passage would have meant finding scrolls, etc; also, they didn’t have verse and chapters then). In Heb 4:4 he says this again.*
 - Testify means a “solemn witness.”
 - The author is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures as a solemn and faithful witness
- This passage is from Psalm 8:4-6

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- →There is speculation about this passage speaking about Christ or man in general. I believe writer to be applying the passage to Christ.
- →Originally the passage may have been meant for man and woman. However, verse 8 was the same in the original Psalter. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, some 700 years before Christ the author of this Psalm was prophesying about the Messiah. I think that is pretty clear.
- Jesus came to earth as a baby and we had Christ, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, creator, lower than the angels. (John 1:1; Phil 2:3ff).
- Now, everything is subject to Christ (Col 1:15-20).
- Jesus is crowned with “glory and honor.”

Glory or Splendor is the Greek: δόξα, ἡς, ἡ (1) as a manifestation of light *radiance, brightness, splendor* (AC 22.11); (2) as a manifestation of God’s excellent power *glory, majesty* (RO 9.23); (3) as an excellent reputation *honor, glory, praise* (JN 5.44); (4) as a state characterized by honor, power, and remarkable appearance *glory, splendor* (LU 24.26); (5) of a person created in the image of God *reflection, glory* (1C 11.7); (6) δόξα as angelic powers around God *angelic beings, majesties, dignities* (JU8)⁵

Honor: τιμή, ἡς, ἡ basically, the worth ascribed to a person or the value ascribed to a thing; (1) as the recognition of another’s worth; (a) active *honor, reverence, respect* (RO 12.10); (b) passive *recognition, esteem, dignity bestowed* (JN 4.44); concretely, as a position of honor *office, place of honor* (HE 2.9; 5.4); (c) *honorarium, compensation, payment received for service* (1T 5.17); (2) as the value ascribed to a thing; (a) *price, value, price received or paid back* (AC 4.34); (b) figuratively *value, benefit, usefulness* (CO 2.23)⁶

- Verse 8 continues and goes along with Col 1:15-20: everything is subject to Christ
- The writer says that nothing is outside His control
 - →this seems to be fairly powerful—“nothing” is outside His control
- Verse 8 ends touching on the spiritual realm and that “already not yet” idea.

⁵Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. (2000). *Vol. 4: Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker's Greek New Testament library (119). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.

⁶Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. (2000). *Vol. 4: Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker's Greek New Testament library (380). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.

- Right now we don't see everything in subject to Him. We don't see the world subjecting themselves to Christ and we cannot see the spiritual realm; therefore, we don't see them being subject to Christ either.

• Verse 9 goes along with Phil 2:3-11. This is the Gospel in a nutshell, or part of it.

- The author seems to be expanding on the quotations he has already used.
- Jesus lower than the angels. He specifies that he is referring to Jesus.
- The writer repeats and then adds to what he has already written.
 - By God's grace (free gift) Jesus tasted death for everyone. Jesus experienced death so that we don't have to.

ESV Study notes

- **Heb. 2:5** Now (Gk. *gar*, lit., “for”) continues the argument from 1:5–14 (and 2:2–4). The superior son of man (v. 6) has responsibilities of worldwide rule not accorded to angels, the world to come. A common Jewish expression for the future age in which all of God's purposes in salvation will be fulfilled. The author is **speaking** of a future salvation (see note on 9:27–28), though the “last days” have already been inaugurated (1:2).
- **Heb. 2:5–18** The Founder of Salvation. Jesus is shown to be further superior to angels since as Son of Man the world is subjected to him, though this has yet to be fully revealed (vv. 5–9). Jesus' glorious sacrificial suffering and death required him to partake of humanity (vv. 10–18)

The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:

2:6–7. “One has testified somewhere” (NASB) does not mean that the writer has forgotten what part of Scripture he is quoting; this was a way of expressing confidence that the important issue was that God had inspired the words. Philo used similar phrases in this manner. The writer can introduce Psalm 8:4–6 naturally on the basis of the Jewish interpretive rule, *gezerah shavah*, the principle by which one was permitted to link key words or phrases. This text speaks of everything subdued under someone's feet, as had the text he had cited most recently (1:13).

2:9. *In Jewish thought, angels ruled the nations in this age. Jesus had obviously been made lower than God and the angels, but after death he was crowned with glory (1:13); therefore this*

NASB New American Standard Bible

Philo ***Philo**. A first-century Jewish philosopher committed to both Judaism and Greek thought; he lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and held a position of great influence and prestige in the Jewish community there.

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text was not only true of the past Adam and God's people in the future but also had been fulfilled in Jesus. (The author may read "a little lower" as "for a little while lower," which was an acceptable way to read the LXX of Ps 8; he also distinguishes "a little lower" from "crowned with honor," though the lines are parallel in Hebrew. Ancient Jewish interpreters generally read passages whatever way fit best with their views.)⁷

2:10-13	Jesus humbled through suffering, He calls us brothers and sisters
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For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying,

*"I will proclaim Your name to My brethren,
In the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise."*

¹³ *And again,*

"I will put My trust in Him."

And again,

"Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me."

- Jesus was made perfect through suffering. He was not imperfect before. The rest of the passage explains this. See ESV note below.
- All things exist by Jesus
 - →this has been a continuing idea in Hebrews. The author is strongly emphasizing the Lordship of Christ.
- There is a phrase, "In bringing many sons to glory." It seems that phrase goes along with Jesus' suffering. Jesus suffered in order to bring us to glory.
- Verse 11: He who sanctifies is the Lord. Those who are sanctified would be us.
 - →to be sanctified mean to be "set apart for a purpose," "to be made holy." From the moment of our salvation we are being sanctified. This means that God is continually setting

LXX **LXX**. The common abbreviation for the Septuagint.

⁷Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Heb 2:9). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

us apart for His purposes. He making us holy, He is making us godly. This is a process that we are in until we die.

- Verse 12: Jesus calls us brothers and sisters. That is amazing and to these first readers this would have been even more amazing.
- Psalm 22:22 is quotes
- Isa 8:17-18 is quotes

ESV Study Note:

Heb. 2:10 he, for whom and by whom all things exist. This is God the Father, who acts to “make perfect” the “founder of their salvation” (Jesus). **many sons**. The followers of the one unique Son of God are now also called “sons,” for they are adopted into the glory of the newly redeemed human family (see “brothers,” [vv. 11–12](#); and “children,” [v. 13](#); also [12:5–8](#)).

Especially Jesus' suffering of death ([v. 9](#), see [vv. 14–18](#)). The concept of making **perfect** is applied elsewhere in Hebrews both to Jesus himself ([5:9](#); [7:28](#)) and to his work in sanctifying his followers ([10:14](#); [12:23](#)). In saying that Jesus was made perfect, the author is not suggesting that Jesus was sinful (cf. [4:15](#); [7:26](#)) but that as he lived his life, his maturity and experience deepened, yet always with full obedience to the Father. As a human being, he needed to live his life and obey God (which he did perfectly) to become the perfect sacrifice for sins.

2:14-18	Jesus endured and can help us when we are suffering
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¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

- Through death Jesus was able to destroy the devil
- We are flesh and blood so Jesus took on flesh.
 - → Jesus did this for us. It is all about God and the reason He did this is all about us.
- Jesus is not helping the angels, but us (verses 15-16). We have a fear of death, or we should. Jesus is here to conquer that fear.

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- Slavery: verse 15 has that word. We are slaves to sin, but Jesus conquered that
 - We could also say that under the Old Testament system we would be slaved to a law.
- The offspring of Abraham would be all Jews, but through Christ we are grafted in.
- Verse 17: this continuing the idea began in verse 14 that Jesus had to be a human in order to be our high priest and in order to be a sacrifice for our sins.
- Propitiation: this has the idea of satisfying wrath on something, in this case God's wrath on our sin.
- Jesus was tempted and can identify with us.
- Romans 8:15 deals with slavery versus adoption.
 - We are adopted into Christ's Kingdom, into God's Kingdom
- Heb 4:15ff will deal with the idea of Jesus as the high priest who can sympathize with our temptations and weaknesses.
- 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 talks about Jesus as the propitiation for our sins