



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

HEBREWS LESSON 2

In last week's lesson, we were reminded that God spoke to His people through very different ways throughout the ages, but Jesus was His final Word. Jesus is superior to the prophets and the angels. Here in chapter 2, we see the author continue with that thought, but at the same time warn them to avoid slipping away from the faith. In chapter 1, we witnessed the majesty of Christ, and here in chapter 2, we see His humanity. Sometimes it's easier to understand and relate to His divinity more than His humanity. I agree with what Max Lucado said in his book God Came Near. He wrote, "To think of Jesus in all His humanity, well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It's much easier to keep His humanity out of the incarnation ... He's easier to stomach that way. There is something about keeping Him divine that keeps Him distant, packaged, predictable. But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't. Let Him be as human as He intended to be. Let Him into the mire and muck of our world. For only if we let Him in can He pull us out."

First Day

In chapter 2, the author continues his thoughts on angels in the first four verses. Notice the word "therefore" in verse 1. This means "because of all he said in chapter 1, we need to ..." "take heed to his exhortation.

1. Read Hebrews 2:1-18. What's the author saying? What's his main point? What facts do you find?
2. Can you find any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

3. "Who" is the main topic? Notice His titles in 1:5, 2:3, and 2:9.
4. How would you describe the author's tone in this chapter? Is it one of joy, anger, warning, etc.?
5. Is the author asking anything of his readers?
6. Are there any new thoughts or ideas for you in this chapter? What new things did you learn about Christ? (Or reminders of things you hadn't thought about recently.)
7. What immediate application can you find for yourself upon first reading?

We'll end here for today. This chapter is very rich with exciting truths about Jesus. Let's remember to pray and ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and understanding so we can fully grasp all He has to teach us. May you not allow yourself to "drift away" from the things you've heard and the truths you know.

Memory Verse of the Week: "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Hebrews 2:17-18

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Try writing it on a 3x5 card and putting it on your dashboard.

1. Read Hebrews 1:1-18, focusing on verses 1-4. What is the author warning us about? (This is the first of five major warnings in the book of Hebrews, each designed to prevent a specific form of unbelief.)

The phrase "**drift away**" means "to flow by" or "slip away from." Stedman writes, "It describes the carelessness of the mind which, perhaps occupied by other things, is not aware it is losing ground. Plato used this word to describe something slipping away from memory, and Plutarch of a ring slipped from a finger. Some see it as a nautical term that describes a ship that gets loose from its moorings. The danger highlighted is that of a great loss occurring unnoticed." If we use nautical language, it's a ship whose anchor has broken loose from the ocean floor and is dangerously drifting away.

The writer is warning the early believers to pay more attention to what they know so they don't gradually slip away, denounce the Gospel, and lose its influence on their life.

2. How can we "slip away" from our faith so gradually that we almost don't notice it? What can cause this?

3. How can neglect, apathy, ignorance, or laziness play a part in that?

When our anchors get lifted, we are susceptible to undertows! In Mere Christianity C. S. Lewis said, "As a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?"

Kent Hughes gives some suggestions of things that can cause drifting. Do any of these describe you?

1. **Years:** Many who were at one time professing Christians drifted away from their earlier selves. The years have carried them away from their devotion. Many have not disowned Christ, but have drifted far from their earlier faith, and often their children have no interest or knowledge of Christianity.
 2. **Familiarity with the truth:** For some, the truth becomes too familiar; no longer "dazzles" or intrigues them. They become bored with their faith and desire to "move on."
 3. **Busyness:** The cares of this life can cause us to be distracted, or can insulate us from the stupendous excellencies of Christ, causing us to begin a daily drift.
 4. **Opposition:** When we drift because of years, familiarity, or busyness, opposition can easily shipwreck us.
4. Take a moment and look at your life. Have you drifted? Are you still excited and growing in your faith, or have you allowed time to make you drift, or even stand still? Spend time with the Lord and see what He wants you to do about it.
5. How can we be "intentional" about our faith? How can we guard ourselves from drifting?

I read this prayer by Robertson McQuilkin and wanted to share it with you. In "Let Me Go Home Before Dark" he wrote, "I fear the Dark Spectre may come too soon ... or do I mean too late? That I should end before I finish, or finish, but not well. That I should stain Your honor, shame Your name, grieve Your loving heart. Few, they tell me, finish well ... Lord, let me get home before dark." Lord, help us to finish well.

In verse 1, the writer reminds them to pay attention to what they've heard from the apostles, prophets, and the Son Himself. Now he approaches the subject of angels again.

Angels played some part in the giving of the law. Both Paul (Galatians 3:19) and Stephen (Acts 7:53) acknowledge this. In the midst of all the thunder and lightening that was happening on Sinai, God the Father spoke through an angel who dictated to Moses. (Deuteronomy 33:2 and Psalm 68:17 give a vague reference to this.) But although God spoke through the angel, then through Moses, it was still His Word and still binding. (2:2). In fact, when angels brought a message, you could depend on it being carried out just as was stated, as in Genesis 19 when two angels announced that Sodom would be destroyed! But still, the author doesn't understand how anyone would prefer the ministry of angels, who delivered God's message, and who only helped to mediate the giving of the law, to the salvation available through His Son Jesus! (Hebrews 2:3-4) The angels "brought" the message, but Jesus brought "salvation." "Salvation" is found seven times in Hebrews, more than in any other New Testament book. It refers to the doctrine of redemption in Christ.

The Christian revelation is unique in three ways. The author tells us it was announced by the Lord Jesus Himself (vs 3b), who was the Divine and Incarnate Son. It came directly from Him; therefore, it is unique in *origin*. It is unique in *transmission*. Salvation was "confirmed to us by those who heard Him (vs 3c). It is unique in *effectiveness*. God the Father testified to it and joins in the witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will (vs 4). The "signs and wonders" pointed to the Almighty Hand of God. Miracles showed the powers of God beyond human ability. What's awesome is that the authority from which the Gospel comes includes all three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

So here's what these verses are saying, in the words of Kent Hughes: "If the word of the law that was mediated by angels was so binding that every infraction was punished, then how much more accountable are those who have the word of salvation direct from Christ's lips, plus the confirmation of eyewitnesses, plus the testimony of signs, miracles, wonders, and gifts? Thus, the weighty question of our text, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" God was in Christ and in the Gospel, and therefore this message of salvation was to be heeded!

6. According to verse 3, are there consequences for ignoring the Gospel?

Over and over the author warns his readers not to turn away from the Living God (3:12) and writes that it is "dreadful to fall into the hands of the Living God (10:31), for our God is "A Consuming Fire" (12:29). Kistemaker writes, "Neglect of the Word does not appear to be a great sin; yet the writer, by contrasting this sin with the disobedience of people in the Old Testament era, teaches that ignoring God's Word is a most serious offense. Because God has given us His full revelation in the Old and New Testament, it is impossible for us to escape the consequences of disobedience or neglect."

7. What is your attitude towards the things of God? Do you have a desire for the Word? Do you pray in the Spirit? Are you in awe of His greatness? Are you concerned about drifting away? Remember, He is a jealous God. He wants ALL of you. Does He have it?

Tomorrow we'll move on in our chapter, but for now, spend some time with the Lord. Ask Him to show you if you're drifting at all. And then set your anchor down deep in Him!

Third Day

What's your verse?

1. Read Hebrews 2:1-18. Reread verses 5-9. What is the main point of this section? According to verse 5, are angels going to rule the world to come?

What "world" is the author referring to? Most believe that he is speaking about the Messianic kingdom, the kingdom that is coming where Jesus will rule and reign with the redeemed! An entirely new condition will prevail, as Christ, with the saints, will rule in harmony! (Angels have not ruled the universe in the past, and they will not rule in the future.) Man was created to rule with Him, but sin entered the world and messed things up!

2. Remember the one angel who did try to rebel against God and set up his own kingdom? Read Isaiah 14:12-17. What was his name? Explain what happened.

The writer has been trying to comfort and exhort his readers during the difficult times they are facing. Now, in this section, he reminds them what God's intention for man really is. The author quotes from Psalm 8 where David is overwhelmed by the greatness of God. As he was contemplating all that God had done, he began to wonder what God had planned for man, being so small and puny. The entire Psalm speaks of the glory that God gave to man.

3. Hebrews 2:6-8 is quoted from Psalm 8. Read this Psalm and write any other facts or thoughts you find that add additional color to this section. What was God's original purpose for man?

It appears that the Psalmist is astonished at God's intention for man, although it had been spelled out in Genesis 1:26-30. Man is "lower than the angels" in that they have a temporal body which limits them, yet not spiritually or of importance. Snell writes, "Psalm 8 addresses humanity's lofty status as the crown jewel of God's creation. Out of all God's earthly creatures, people were given the responsibility of protecting God's creation and the dignity of reflecting God's image. The Psalmist doesn't just want us to grasp the truth, he wants us to feel his tone. Man was made to have dominion over everything in the world. But, sadly, man does not. Because mankind sinned and fell short of God's intent, however, things changed."

4. What, or who, is our hope, found in verse 9? What does this verse tell us? How was God's original intention accomplished?

It's interesting that for man to be made "slightly lower than the angels" is an amazing thing, yet for Jesus to be made "a little lower than the angels" was the depth of His humiliation. He literally spoke them into existence. But He didn't become an angel; He went lower than that. He became a man.

5. How does verse 9 stress His humanity? (Philippians 2:8-10) How did suffering and death bring Him glory and honor?
6. Who did Jesus do this for? (Romans 5:17, Ephesians 2:6, John 3:16) Does the "grace of God" extend to everyone?

William Barclay says that "In this passage there are three basic ideas. (1) God created man, only a little less than the angels, to have mastery over all things. (2) Man, through his sin, entered into defeat instead of mastery. (3) Into this state of defeat came Jesus Christ in order that by His life and death and glory He might make man what he was meant to be."

The word "taste" in verse 9 means "to partake fully." Jesus tasted death, experiencing it in its full horror and humiliation. "He came under the penalty of sin so He could remove it." (Stedman) Because He suffered, He is now exalted. Because He subjected Himself to the limitation of humanity, He is now crowned with glory and honor.

7. Jesus made salvation available for everyone. Does this mean that "all people" will be saved? Does this verse teach a universal salvation? (Romans 1:16; 10:8-11)
8. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 6:23. Why is "salvation" called a "gift"? Have you accepted this "gift"? When? (If there's time, be ready to share about when you "opened your gift"!)

J. Vernon McGee wrote, "Christ's humiliation accomplished two things: (1) It brought glory and honor to the person of Christ; and (2) it procured man's salvation by making man's salvation possible. Christ took humanity to Heaven, and there is not only a Man in glory, but there is a glory in that Man!"

That's it for today. Take some time to thank the Lord for the free gift of salvation. Thank Him for saving you from hell; thank Him for tasting death for you; thank Him for granting you eternal life!

Fourth Day

What's your verse?

All of creation needed a new leader; someone who could restore God's original design for people and restore the full wonder of Psalm 8. Hebrews 2:10-18 shows us how Jesus became that leader!

1. Read Hebrews 2:1-18. Focus on 10-13. What is the main point or thought of this section?

Let's define a few words before we go any further. The word **"author"** means "captain, leader, champion, and pioneer." "It contains the idea of supremacy, personal participation, and originator. He blazed the trail of salvation that we can now follow." (Hughes)

The word **"perfect"** means "perfectly equipped or qualified" for a task.

2. In light of the above definition, how is Jesus the "Author of our salvation"?
3. How does verse 10 tie in with Colossians 1:16-18?
4. Why was the cross most "fitting" for Jesus, and for us? What does that mean?
5. Nestled in the middle of verse 10 is the heart of the Father for His people. What's the purpose of the cross?

Some commentators point out that there is no reference to the love of God in Hebrews. That may technically be true, but we see God's heart of love in every chapter. He longed to bring "many sons to glory." It was love for the human race that drove both the Father and the Son to choose the cross.

In verse 11, "sanctifies" means to "make holy." The author is saying that both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. He emphasizes "shared humanity" "Both Christ and the human race come out of one man: Adam. Jesus and all humanity share the same human ancestor. Jesus Christ was 100% homo sapien, as are all descendants of Adam. But His relationship to humanity was different than that of any other man, because He imparts holiness to those who are in Him, the second Adam. Sin came to all humanity through 'one man:' Adam. But righteousness came through the 'one man:' Christ (Romans 5:12, 19)." (Hughes) So, He is not ashamed to call us "brothers."

6. Why does the fact that we have Christ's nature in us, and the fact that He became fully human, help us to identify with Him?

7. The believers he was writing to were most likely afraid, growing weary, and becoming distant. How do you think being reminded about the depth of Jesus' love for them would encourage them? How does knowing He will not be ashamed to call us "brethren" minister to us and challenge us to continue on in our faith?

To continue using this family imagery, the author quotes three different Old Testament passages to prove his point. Remember that to his audience, these passages were quite familiar to them.

8. First, in verse 12, he quotes Psalm 22:22. What does he say?

Psalm 22 is considered the "Great Psalm of the cross." It denotes the humiliation of Christ, including the seven last words of Christ on the cross. But in verse 22, we read His exaltation! It reflects the praise of the Resurrected Lord as He shares with His brothers and sisters the glories of God's grace. The author then quotes Isaiah twice: 8:17 and 18. Verse 17 reflects the common sense of dependency which children share towards God, and verse 18 shows us the relationship of children as all equally under the care of one Father. All three of these references are showing us that Jesus Christ and Christians are brothers! "These two texts, in their original setting, were part of a prophecy of an event yet 100 years in the future, and beyond this, reached to the coming of the Messiah both in His first and second coming. To apply fragments of such prophecies to the Hebrews' circumstances may seem strange to us, but this is fully in line with the use of the Old Testament by all the New Testament writers." (Stedman)

9. The author is reminding them that they have a "shared faith" (vs 12) and a "shared dependence" (vs 13) with Christ. How does this personally encourage you? How does this whole "family imagery" speak to your heart?

I know this chapter is a little difficult. Although a bit hard to understand, the truths are profound and are worth the digging! Hang in there; don't give up. Continue to pray for understanding and wisdom on how the Holy Spirit wants to apply it to you!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 2:1-18, focusing on 14-18. What is the main thought of this section?
2. As a man, Jesus died, partaking of "flesh and blood." What two things were defeated by His death?

3. Not only was there defeat, there was deliverance. From what?

4. What are some reasons that people tend to fear death?

Because of His death and resurrection, we don't have to fear! He has "rendered the devil inoperative" and "annulled" his power! He was able to die for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21) and Christ "redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...." (Galatians 3:13)

5. What does Paul say about this in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 and Romans 8:35-37?

In verses 17-18, the author gives us the first glimpse in this letter of Jesus as our High Priest. He is our mediator, our intercessor, the propitiation (substitute) for our sin. This idea will be developed more fully in 4:14-10:18, so we will address it later in our study. The one thought, though, that is addressed in this text is one we don't want to overlook. It wasn't enough for Jesus to simply associate with us, He had to understand us.

6. Explain the significance of verse 18 in your own words.

7. How can Jesus help YOU when you are tempted? Are you asking for His help?

Jesus knows how strong temptation can be. He personally understands the dynamics of temptation and has emerged victorious over it! William Willimon once said, "When we face temptation, Jesus is able to say 'that reminds Me of the time ...'" Jesus can identify with you. He sympathizes with you; He feels with you, He understands you. And because of that, He can help you. He knows exactly what help we need; and He can give it. It's not the angels He helps, but you and I, the descendants of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16, Galatians 3:29).

8. Are you looking for help in something, or someone, other than Jesus Christ? He is your Merciful and Faithful High Priest. He is your Helper that "bears the scars" of sympathy. Will you trust Him today?

