



“Jesus is greater”

Hebrews 1-2. Rev. Bruce Stanley

Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

LISTEN!

Do you pay attention to Jesus?

The book of Hebrews is a book about Jesus. It's about who he is, what he's done. It's a book that calls us to pay attention. To listen. To focus on him.

Ill - Last week as I was reading as I was catching a train into the city, and I almost missed my stop. I drifted off.

Hebrews is a book that's like that person next to you on the train that gives you a gentle shove to tell you that you're at your station. But Hebrews doesn't just give us a gentle shove. It takes hold of us and shakes us and says: “Are you paying attention to Jesus?”

That's what this book is about, and it's the focus of these opening chapters.

(Verses 1-4)

Hebrews 1 opens with these 4 great verses.

God spoke in the past through his prophets. In the Old Testament. But TODAY, he spoken to us by someone much greater. He's spoken not through a prophet, but through his Son, Jesus. And who is this Jesus?

Verse 2 – he is the heir of all things. Everything is his. And he created all things.

Verse 3 – he is the radiance of God's glory. The exact representation of God's being. He is the imprint of God on earth. He is the exact character and being of God.

And He sustains all things in this world.

And what has Jesus done?

Verse 4 – he has provided purification for our sins. He has made us clean in the sight of God.

He is not just a prophet. He is, verse 4, **superior** to the prophets

Throughout Hebrews, Jesus is held up as superior to all – He's greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than any priest, greater than any sacrifice, greater than any temple. And therefore, Jesus is the one we must pay attention to above all others.

GREATER THAN THE ANGELS

In the rest of chapter 1, Jesus is compared to the angels. He's greater than them! Now, I know we probably don't think that much of the angels, but at the time this was written, many people, and even some today, often worshipped the angels. Angels are powerful beings, important messengers of God. They carried out God's judgment on the earth. But Hebrews is a reminder that Jesus is even greater than them.

How? (verses 5-8)

Verse 4 – he's superior to the angels.

Verse 5 – he's the Son of God – no angel was ever called a son!

Verse 6 – he is worshipped by the angels.

Verse 7 – The angels are his servants.

Verse 8 – a BIG statement here – *About the Son he says "your throne O God will last forever and ever."* Jesus is called God. And he will reign forever.

Jesus is greater than the angels.

So... Chapter 2 says:

PAY MORE CAREFUL ATTENTION!

Because of who Jesus is, creator, sustainer, Lord of all, God himself, and because of what he's done, purifying our sins, pay attention to him!

(Verse 1)

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."

III – In year 11 at school, I remember sitting an important Maths exam. I had actually studied. I was ready for this. I was anxious. Nervous. Worried. But ready to go. As we began, I opened the paper and furiously started answering all the questions. It was a tough test. A long test. It took all my concentration to get through it all. And I JUST finished in time.

Behind me was sitting Steve. At the end of the test, I turned around to ask Steve how he went. To see if he managed to get through the whole test. And as I turned around, I was a little surprised. Steve wasn't worried about the test. He wasn't anxious. He wasn't nervous. Steve was asleep. Throughout the whole test. He hadn't answered one question.

He drifted off.

Why? It wasn't important to him. He paid no attention.

It is possible for Christians to drift. To lose their concentration. To forget how important Jesus is. This "drifting" the writer is talking about is like drift wood – gliding away, floating off, like a piece of dead wood along the river.

This drifting is a lack of focus. A failure to pay attention.

It is easy to drift. Why? Because of the world's distractions? Yes. Because of the desire to please ourselves, to go after power and money and self satisfaction? Yes. But what that all comes down to is sin. Sin is the great blinder. Sin is when we listen to the soothing and easy hum of the world and drift along gladly following what everyone else does. Sin is when we focus on doing our business with the world and take our attention away from doing business with Jesus.

(Verse 3)

“How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

God has testified to this salvation! He gave us signs. And miracles. He showed his power. And he has given us gifts. He has given YOU gifts. When we drift, when we stop paying attention to Jesus, we stop paying attention to the great salvation God has given us. We stop paying attention to his great signs. **And** we stop paying attention to the gifts he has given us.

I think this is a really instructive verse for us. One of the signs that we are drifting, that we are not paying attention, is that we stop using our gifts. God’s gifts, whether it’s preaching teaching, hospitality, administration, music, welcoming – whatever those gifts are, are a testimony to his salvation, a testimony to the work he is doing in us and through us. God gives us gifts as a testimony to our salvation. Our gifts are a sign that he is at work in us. When we drift, we may also find we neglect the gifts God has given us. We ignore them.

We have such a great salvation! How can we ignore that? How can we ignore the signs and miracles of God? How can we ignore the gifts he’s given us?

So...

In our Christian lives, as we plod along each day, struggling with sin, how do we keep our attention on Jesus? How do we ensure we do not drift?

There is only one way – by paying more careful attention to Jesus. By paying attention to **who** he is and **what** he has done.

Which brings us to the rest of chapter 2.

(verses 6b-8a)

This is a quote from Psalm 8. It’s about us. Humanity. It says that God thinks about us. We’re important to him. He is mindful of us humans. He made us rulers over his creation. But because of sin there is something wrong with the way we rule over creation. There is sin and death. And they upset the whole order of creation. They are a sign that something is wrong. Verse 8b – “Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.” Everything is NOT subject to the rule of humanity. So what do we see?

Verse 9 – “But we see Jesus.”

There is suffering and sin and death in our world. **But** we see Jesus. Who became one of us. Jesus is the perfect man. He is the one who suffered in our place, took the punishment for our sins. The author of salvation, Jesus himself, suffered death. For us. On our behalf. There is something wrong with creation, BUT we have Jesus.

Verse 14: "Since the children (that's us) have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants."

Jesus helps us. He died for us. Not for the angels. For us. What a GREAT salvation we have! That the author of salvation became one of us, to suffer death for us. What a great salvation. That God became man and suffered for us and died for us.

How can we take our attention off Jesus and what he has done for us?

Do you pay attention to Jesus?

What are we being called to here? To pay MORE careful attention to what we have heard. To the gospel.

How do we do that? We pay more careful attention to Jesus – to who he is and what he has done.

Who, or what, has our attention to in this world?

Where is our focus? Where does all our energy go? Our time? What dominates our thinking? What influences our hearts and minds?

Is it Jesus? Because if it is **Jesus** who has our attention, we will NOT drift. We will NOT float along. If our attention is on Him, we will serve him tirelessly with our gifts, we will give generously and cheerfully, we will love sacrificially. And how can we not do those things if our attention is held by the one who suffered death so we might escape death?

What a GREAT salvation we have.