

JESUS, THE GREAT SALVATION
(PAY THE MOST CAREFUL ATTENTION)

Hebrews 1:1 - 2:18
Key verse 2:1

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

Thank God for giving us this great opportunity to study the book of Hebrews during the GLEF 2022. While the author is unknown, this book was written to the Jewish Christians who, at that time, were facing both persecutions and temptations. And this letter strengthened their faith in Jesus. This letter emphasizes **the superiority of Christ**, urging the audience to know and believe that Jesus is greater than ALL things and all people. Through studying this book for the next 7 days, we, like the early Christians, may pray to fix our eyes on Jesus who is the pioneer and perfecter of faith (Heb 12:2).

Today, I urge you, my brothers and sisters, to pay your most careful attention to the first two chapters. The author begins the letter with a powerful statement about Christ that he is the Son of God, the Word of God, and the appointed heir of all things. He declares that Jesus is the Creator God, the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of God. He tells us that Jesus is much superior to the prophets and the angels. There simply is no one greater, higher, stronger, and wiser than Jesus. And this great Jesus brings us the great message of salvation. The message of salvation is the gospel message that you and I have heard. It is not a message with a new idea or concept. It is the message of Jesus who came to this world, died for our sins and defeated the power of sin and death. The author urges us to pay a special attention to this message so that we can be fully restored in our relationship with Christ Jesus. Let us pray that God may help us to pay the most careful attention to listening to the word of God today. Amen.

I. Jesus is superior to prophets and angels (1:1-14)

Let's read verse 1 together. **"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways..."** The author begins the letter with the statement of how God used to speak to His people in ancient times. The ancestors here are the ancestors of faith such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, as well as Moses and David. God revealed Himself again and again to the Israelites over many centuries through these prophets. They were the messengers of God. They delivered God's message of warning, repentance, love, and mercy. However, we do not yet find the full revelation of God in the Old Testament. That is because the Old Testament testifies that something new was yet to come with the repeated prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Verse 2 reads, **"...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."** The last days refer to the new era that began with the coming of Christ. From this time on, God

has spoken to His people through His Son Jesus. God spoke through him, and Jesus' words are the same as God's words that made the universe. This is why Jesus' words have so much power to even change people's lives. Through Jesus, God revealed Himself fully. Through Jesus, we can fully know and understand the heart of our Father God, His unconditional love, His pain, and his determination for our forgiveness. Jesus said to Philip in John 14:9 saying, **"Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"**

Verse 2 also says that God appointed Jesus as the heir of all things. The whole world belongs to Jesus. Even a little donkey that Jesus' disciples had no idea about belonged to Jesus and was ready to serve him. Jesus was also present at the Creation. All things were created by him, through him, and to him. John 1:3 says, **"Through him, all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."** Muslims and Jews display a respect for Jesus, yet, only as one of the prophets. But Jesus is not just a prophet. Jesus is the Son of God and the Creator God! He is worthy of our worship and honor. Amen

Look at verse 3. **"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."** All the glory of God is made visible in Jesus. Jesus is the perfect and complete image of God, not a cheap replica but a 100% authentic and original image of God. He sustains all things with his powerful word. Furthermore, through his death on the cross, he offered the atoning sacrifice and cleansed our sins once and for all. No one was able to, but Jesus cleansed us completely from our sins so that we can serve God in freedom and righteousness. Jesus not only died, but rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and now he is seated at the right hand of God. He is our glorious King who will, one day, come again in the clouds of heaven as our righteous judge.

Verse 4 says, **"So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."** Here the writer comes to a resolute statement that Jesus is MUCH SUPERIOR to the angels. You might ask, "Why is the author suddenly talking about the angels?" It seems a bit odd, doesn't it? It was because Jewish people regarded angels very highly as one of the most spiritual beings. In the Old Testament, the law was given to them through angels because they served as God's messengers. Angels, as bearers of the divine will, spoke to the servants of God like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and Daniel. So the Jews believed that it was a special revelation when an angel talked to a human being. Jewish rabbis developed an intricate system of angelology. They taught that each person had their own guardian angel (Mt 18:10). And this sometimes went out control so that point that they started to pray to angels and even worshiped them. (Col 2:18). The author wanted to clarify that Jesus is not the one to be compared with angels. To support this claim, in verses 5-14, the author quoted Old Testament as the reference to why Jesus is MUCH SUPERIOR to the angels.

- 1) *Jesus is superior to angels based on his sonship (5-6).* Though angels are spiritual beings, they are created beings as servants of God. God never called them sons. However, God calls the Messiah “my Son” (Ps 2:7; 2Sa 7:14). As the Son, Jesus is in very nature God and shares the same attributes as God.
- 2) *Jesus is superior to angels based on his everlasting kingship (7-9).* Angels are God’s servants according to verse 7. But about the Son, God said, **“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom”** (8; Ps 45:6). God proclaims the Messiah’s kingship. He has an eternal throne. While the kingdoms of the world rise and fall, the Messiah’s kingdom is everlasting.
- 3) *Jesus is superior to angels based on his eternal nature (10-12).* All created things will change and perish like a garment. Therefore, putting our hopes in these fading things will only lead us to disappointment. But Jesus remains the same because he is the Eternal Creator God. Hebrews 13:8 says, **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”**
- 4) *Finally, Jesus is superior to angels because he is the Sovereign Ruler (13-14).* The author concludes this chapter with his quotation of Psalm 110:1: **“To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”** After Jesus finished his salvation work, God exalted him to the position of power and glory. Jesus is the ruler over everything, including the angels, whom he created.

Now we know for sure that Jesus much superior to the angels and why it is so. Once again, we give thanks to God for sending us His son Jesus, through whom we can see and learn God, especially through **his words**. Jesus indeed reveals God’s love and will through his powerful words. When I was lost in my sin and shame, Jesus came to me and spoke his words to me through John 8:11, **“Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.”** He spoke to me through **John 4:13-14**. **“Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life”** Jesus spoke his words to me and changed me from directionless and hopeless sinner to a man with clear direction and purpose to live for His glory. Has Jesus spoken to you personally and changed your life? Jesus is God and his words that created us can also change us. May God continue to speak to us through Jesus, and may we respond to His words with obedience and faithfulness. Amen

II. Jesus, the great salvation (2:1-18)

Let us read 2:1, our key verse today. **“We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”** “Therefore” is a reference to what we just have learned from chapter one, concerning the true identity of Jesus who is the Son of God, the words of God, and the most superior being. In this

verse, the author delivers the *first of five warning messages* of his letter. Let us read this verse one more time. **"We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."** What does "paying the most careful attention" mean? Deuteronomy 6:5 well explains the kind of attitude we must have in paying the most careful attention. It says, **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength."** Paying the most careful attention is like loving God with all my heart, soul, and strength. It does not mean to hear the word of God passively, but to hear with an attentiveness and a learning mind. It does not mean to hear only with our ears, but to obey His words practically.

Have you loved someone so much that you wanted to give whatever it took to hear their words? Have you loved someone so much that you would do anything for that person, even sacrificing yourself and abandoning your pride? The author challenges us to truly consider what we should care about, love, and treasure. God urges us to pay the most careful attention to hearing him, loving him, and understanding His heart. Exodus 34:14 says, **"Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."** Our God is the jealous God and rightfully so because he made us.

Why should we pay such attention to hearing God's words? Verse 1b says **"so that we do not drift away."** If we do not hear and hold on to his words, we will certainly drift away. Drifting away is a sailing term that if a ship is not securely tied to the dock, it can drift away from a safe harbor. Whether the waters are calm or rough, there is always an undercurrent that is moving. It causes the ship to drift away gradually and aimlessly until you realize that the ship is in dangerous waters and wrecked! The ship should always be securely tied to the dock. In the same way, if we do not pay careful attention to God's words, we can drift away in the tides of worldly ideas, devil's temptations, and our sins, which always circulate within us (1Pe 5:8).

Let us look at verses 2 and 3a: **"For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?"** Here, the author explains that the message that was spoken through angels—that is the Law—was very seriously received. Whoever violated or disobeyed the law was justly punished. Then how about the message of great salvation, which was spoken by the Lord himself? If it is from the Lord, who is superior to the angels, how much more seriously and obediently should we receive this message? Today, God sternly warns us to hear the message of the great salvation. It is the message of the gospel that Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead. If we ignore this, there is no escape for us, only judgment.

Let us read verses 3b and 4. **"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 by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."** It describes how this message of salvation *originated* and why it is *so great*. It was first announced by Jesus himself: **"The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"** (Mk 1:15) It was confirmed by those who heard him, that is, the apostles and many witnesses. They

testified to it by their transformed lives. Fearful, sorrowful, selfish people became courageous, joyful, and sacrificial. It was not just a few but numerous people from various ethnic groups and diverse backgrounds. It was not just in one generation, but down through the generations until now.

How did Jesus accomplish this great salvation for us? Let's look at verses 6 to 8a: **"But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet."** Jesus, the Son of God, humbled himself for the sake of our salvation. He was crucified like the most despised criminal on the shameful cross. Jesus became lower than the angels, from the perfect God to a complete human being, to be with us for the sake of accomplishing *so great a salvation*. But after His resurrection, God exalted Him and He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty.

Now, let us read Verse 10 together, **"In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered."** Here we learn God's true intention of salvation. God's ultimate purpose is to bring many sons and daughters to glory. Through his suffering and death, Jesus became the pioneer of our salvation. A pioneer goes into an unknown territory and makes a way for others to follow. Jesus opened the way to God for us. He goes in front of us and marks out the way that leads us to salvation and glory.

What other blessings does Jesus give us? First of all, we have a new identity as members of God's family with Jesus (11-13). Verse 11 says, **"Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters."** The words "of the same family" means "having the same Father." This means that Father God is Jesus' Father and our Father. We are children of God and Jesus is our big brother. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters.

Second of all, Jesus breaks the devil's power and frees us from the fear of death (14-16). Let's read verses 14-15. **"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of 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."** Since we have flesh and blood, Satan can threaten us with the fear of death and enslave us. To set us free, someone had to break the devil's power. And Jesus did it! By his death, he broke the power of death. By his death, Jesus broke the devil's grip on us and set us free. The devil has lost his claim on us. Jesus bought us at a huge price and we belong to him.

Look at verses 17 and 18: **"For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help**

those who are being tempted." To accomplish this great salvation, Jesus was made like us, fully human in every way. In this way, he became our High Priest, who is merciful to our weakness, and faithful to our unfaithfulness. He is the good shepherd who knows us and guides us to both salvation and glory.

Why is Jesus' salvation so great to me? Because it saved me my sin and death. Apostle Paul confessed in 1 Timothy 1:15 saying, **"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst."** Apostle Paul was right except for when he said, "I am the worst sinner" because I know this for sure that I, Joseph Lee, am the worst sinner. Even though I am the worst sinner, Christ came into the world to save me. Praise Jesus who saved me and many others like me although we never did anything that deserved his salvation. Going back to Hebrews 2:6, this verse moves us because it well shows God's heart towards us. **"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?"** "What is mankind," tells us how undeserving and insignificant we are, yet, God's love reached each and every one of us. Although I am a man of insignificance because of my great sin, God was mindful of me and cared for me. He remembered me and saved me from my sins through the blood of Jesus.

Knowing Jesus' great salvation, what should I do now? I should pay the most careful attention to hear and obey God's words. In recent years, I can honestly say that I have not paid a good attention to God. Although it was always my prayer topic to work hard in everything for the sake of Christ, I was slowly getting influenced by the world. And my main interest turned to secure social security and the well-being of myself and my family. As I worked as the manager of 510 Hamilton Street apartment and KBG Somerset, as a staff of NJUBF, as well as the conductor of another private orchestra, my pride and arrogance grew and grew. And slowly but surely, I was losing my grip on the word of God. I was drifting away from the anchor of Jesus, captured by the idealistic view and value of the world, which focused solely on being materially successful. I repent for my complacency and selfishness that I lost a heart of a shepherd that considers and loves one soul. I repent that I was a proud and self-righteous sinner who wanted to convince myself that this message of salvation is for everyone but me. After all, it was God's perfect will and purpose that I finally hear this message.

Instead of listening to the words of the material world and my sinful desires, I pray to listen to the word of God with all my heart, soul, and strength. I pray, despite the busy schedule every day, that I can give God my priority through gathering daily bread every day, writing a faithful and repentant testimony, studying and teaching the word of God, and fighting a good fight to obey one word of God. Please pray for me to be fully restored in my deep relationship with Jesus once again. Please pray for me to be a shepherd and a Bible teacher prior to become anyone else. Jesus' salvation is also *great* because this salvation reaches all people. It does not only save one specific group, type, or race but all people. So, let us pray that we can bring out this message of salvation to our family, friends, and many lost and wondering souls in the campuses of Rutgers and Bonn Universities.

Through chapters 1 and 2, we have learned who Jesus is. He is the Son of God, the word of God, the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of his being. There is no one greater than Jesus. Even the greatest prophets and angels are His servants. **This Jesus** humbled Himself and took upon Himself the punishment of death to purchase eternal salvation for us. We all have heard the message of the great salvation. What are you going to do now? Are you going to ignore it? Let us pray that God may lead us to accept, hold fast, and obey the Word of God so that we do not drift away. Let us decide to stop ignoring God's words and rather hear and obey them. Amen.

Key verse 2:1 "We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for teaching us the true image of Jesus Christ. Although Jesus is God, He humbled himself to come down to the lowly earth, to be with us, and to die for our sins in order that you may accomplish this so great a salvation. I ask that you may help us to be faithful and attentive in hearing your words every day. Not only during the GLEF, but in our daily lives. Please continue to work through the Holy Spirit through the words of Hebrews, to teach us Jesus our High Priest, pioneer and perfecter of faith. Thank you for giving us this message, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.