

I WILL PAY ATTENTION

LISTENING FOR GOD THROUGH

HEBREWS 1:1—2:4



SUMMARY

God created us to live in intimate fellowship. Adam and Eve experienced that kind of relationship with Him and each other until they sinned. Genesis 3 records the events. Satan came in the form of a snake and lied to Adam and Eve. He implied that God had misled them by telling them that sin would kill them. They chose to believe the snake and ate the forbidden fruit. Their distrust and disobedience has been passed on to the entire human race.

God's solution was to begin revealing the truth about himself to our fallen race. His prophets were the first ones to proclaim God's message. Finally, Jesus came as both the message and the messenger. Anyone who wants to know what God is like can look to Jesus. By paying close attention to Jesus and His message, you will begin to experience the intimate fellowship with God you were intended to enjoy.

PREPARATION ✝ FOCUS YOUR THOUGHTS

List three people that you go to for advice.

Why do you pay attention to these people?

What traits do these people have in common?

READING ✝ HEAR THE WORD

The Book of Hebrews seems to have been written to Jewish believers in Jesus who were tempted to turn back to their old religious practices. The author is not identified, but he obviously knew a great deal about Judaism. To read Hebrews seems more like you're reading a sermon than a letter. Its theme is the superiority of Jesus. It challenges believers to follow Him faithfully. In this opening passage the author makes the statement that we must pay attention to Jesus.

In this study text you will see the following terms.

Prophets: These were men and women who proclaimed God's message to His people, particularly in Old Testament Israel.

Glory: This word refers to the brightness and the weight of God's obvious presence. The Lord's glory filled the Tabernacle when Moses dedicated it (Exod. 40:34).

Angels: These spiritual beings are God's messengers and servants who help His people. The author of Hebrews implies

that they delivered the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. So do Paul (in Gal. 3:19) and Stephen (in Acts 7:53).

Drift: This word is used to describe boats or ships without an anchor. They simply float away with the waves.

With these concepts in mind, read Hebrews 1:1—2:4 aloud. If you are participating in a group study, have one person read the text aloud.

MEDITATION ENGAGE THE WORD

Meditate on Hebrews 1:1-4

The author contrasts the message of the prophets and the message of the Son. How was Jesus both the message and the messenger? What advantage does that give Him over the prophets? Why?

In what ways has God spoken to you? Which seems to be His favorite means of communicating with you? How do you know when God is speaking to you, and what He is saying? How do you respond?

List the traits and actions of the Son mentioned in these verses. How do these traits and actions compare to those of God? What do the findings show you about the relationship between Jesus and God?

Which of these traits or actions means the most to you today?
Why are they significant to you?

Read the quote by Rick Warren. Do you think he means Jesus is God's last message? His best message? His ultimate message? Or His only self-revealing message? Explain how you came to that answer.

God's glory is best seen in Jesus Christ. He, the Light of the world, illuminates God's nature. Because of Jesus, we are no longer in the dark about what God is really like.

—Rick Warren

The author of Hebrews tells us the Son is seated at God's right hand in heaven. What does that tell us about His position and authority? What does it say about His work of providing cleansing from our sin? How does your relationship with Jesus reflect His position in heaven? How has His work changed your life? What is Jesus' position in your own life?

Meditate on Hebrews 1:5-14

The author repeats the question "to which of the angels did God ever say . . . ?" in Hebrews 1:5 and 13. What is the suggested answer to these questions? Why do you think the author repeated the question in a different way? How does this

question support his argument about the Son being superior to the angels?

What does God say about the angels in Hebrews 1:7? How is that different from what He says about the Son in Hebrews 1:8-12? What do these statements tell us about Jesus?

Read what John Wesley wrote about angels. How does this statement compare to Hebrews 1:14? What is suggested about the relationship between angels and Christians?

John Wesley wrote that angels minister before God and are “sent forth to attend to men.”

—Explanatory Notes on the New Testament

Why do you think angels and prophets might have been distracting to these Jewish Christians? Why would people be tempted to follow angels instead of Jesus?

What kinds of religious ideas can distract you from faithfully following Jesus? Why? How can you resist that temptation?

Meditate on Hebrews 2:1-4

The author tells us “we must pay more careful attention” to the message Jesus brought. What is the danger of not paying attention?

What happened to those who ignored the angels' message?
 What is the implied answer to the question in Hebrews 2:3?
 How do you feel about the author using that kind of motivation in a call to pay close attention to Jesus? Why?

The author indicates that Jesus delivered the message that demands close attention. Since only a few people met Him face-to-face, how can His message be confirmed to us? How has God testified to the authenticity of Jesus' message in your life?

Read Matthew Henry's quote. In a world that believes all religions lead to God, what provides the foundation for your faith in Jesus? What keeps you from drifting away in the current of this so-called tolerance?

It was the will of God that we should have a sure footing for our faith, and a strong foundation for our hope in receiving the gospel. —Matthew Henry

Read the observation about spiritual uncertainty on page 19. In what ways has God used insecurity and doubt to draw you into a deeper relationship with Jesus? What, if any, questions are you struggling with today?

Spiritual uncertainty is like the silent red light on the instrument panel of an automobile. It flashes its warning to tell us the oil is low and there is imminent danger to the motor. Under these conditions the very lack of assurance for which our hearts hunger is one more of God's gifts of grace to us. —A. F. Harper

PRAYER ASK AND LISTEN

Seek the face of God. Ask, “Lord, what are You saying to us today?”

Thank God for sending Jesus to purify you from sin. Listen for the Spirit’s assurance of your salvation.

CONTEMPLATION REFLECT AND YIELD

In what areas of your life do you need to pay more careful attention? Why?

How does the warning in this passage affect your desire to stand firm in your faith?



GROUP STUDY

- What are your thoughts on angels? As a group, discuss what comes to your mind when you think of angels.

- In what ways is Jesus superior to the angels?
- Knowing that the angels worship Jesus, what should our response be to Him?
- What does this chapter say about Jesus?
- When and how did the message of Jesus bring salvation to you?
- Find a quiet place. Pray, “Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening.”