



HEBREWS

.....
MARTINE. MAYER

LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY

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Living Way Bible Study, Inc.
16218 E. Olivemill Rd. La Mirada, CA 90638
562.947.2005 888.383.8119
info4LWBS@aol.com
www.livingwaybiblestudy.org
 facebook.com/livingwaybiblestudy

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LWBS is a practical course of study with a special emphasis on the application of God's Word to the life of the individual. While emphasizing practical application, LWBS presents each book of the Bible as the holy, inspired, Word of God, the confessional position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Our purpose is to help equip believers to live joyfully in God's redeeming love and to share with others God's plan of salvation.

It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study to help you grow in your knowledge and appreciation of our God and His Word. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* 2 Peter 3:18.

STUDY STRUCTURE

LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

- 1. PERSONAL* – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS* – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE* – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE* – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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HEBREWS

MARTIN E. MAYER

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AUTHOR INFORMATION

MARTIN E. MAYER



LWBS Courses: *Genesis*

Joshua

Great People of the Old Testament

Philippians

Hebrews

Son of Rev. Martin E. Mayer, past President of the Nebraska District

Graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1936

Served Congregations:

Ft. Lupton, Grand Junction, Denver, CO

Wausau, WI

Minneapolis, MN

Layton, UT

Assistant at Concordia Lutheran, Cerritos, CA, in his retirement

Radio speaker on the So. California Lutheran Program

Called to glory June 2008

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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King James Version

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Let us note that the epistle to the Hebrews is regarded in literary circles as a book of excellence, a literary gem. We in the church agree, and we regard it as something even more — the inspired Word of God.



We are all on a journey, one far more involved than a two-week vacation trip. It is a journey through life. We know that we are going to reach our home eventually because the Lord has promised that to us. It is a joy to know that we are on the way and that He travels with us and guides us. Along the way, He allows us to have some very joyful experiences, which will bolster us in our faith. We hope He has prepared such an experience for us as we begin the study of the great Epistle to the Hebrews.

We discover the general theme of this epistle when we turn to the very last chapter, Hebrews 13:20–21. “And now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he who became the great Shepherd of the sheep by an everlasting agreement between God and you, signed with his blood, produce in you through the power of Christ all that is pleasing to him. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (*The Living Bible*).

The author tells us that his purpose in writing is to fill our hearts with peace, reminding us that we can have that peace because Jesus as our Savior fulfilled the work of our redemption, and completed this by rising from the dead. It is this knowledge that equips us as we journey through life, so that we joyfully do those things that are pleasing to the Lord. In all of this, we seek only the honor of our wonderful God.

As we begin this journey through Hebrews, it is important for us to learn the background for its writing. For our study, we will not move along verse by verse, for that would be unending. The epistle is so rich in its thoughts that it will be sufficient for us to gain an understanding of the main points that it wants to teach us. If possible, I would suggest you compare *The Living Bible* (paraphrase) since it expresses the thoughts so clearly.

TO WHO WAS THE EPISTLE ADDRESSED?

While this is not definitely stated in the epistle, it is obvious as we read the entire book that it was addressed to people who were of Jewish background. The epistle makes mention of many Jewish ceremonies and practices which only Jewish people would be able to understand. Without the knowledge of these, a non-Jewish believer would have a very difficult time with much that is revealed in this book.

WHO WAS THE AUTHOR?

The author does not name himself in the book as was normally done in the other epistles. The majority of the students of the Bible believe that the author was Paul because the doctrines stressed are the same as those that Paul emphasizes in his epistles. These are the very doctrines with which he, a strict Jew, had wrestled with after his conversion on the road to Damascus. There are those who think Paul wrote the text in Hebrew, for this epistle certainly would have to be written in Hebrew to serve the people for whom it was intended. They think Luke translated it into Greek, which is the text we have, which was incorporated into the Bible. They believe this because of the excellency of the language, for Luke was a noted scholar.

There are other suggestions also. Martin Luther thought the author was Apollos, the learned Greek convert to Christianity, who also had made a detailed study of the Jewish religion. Still others think that it could have been written by Barnabas, the great man of God who was Paul's companion on his first missionary journey, and who certainly was very much concerned with the matters dealt with in this book. Whoever the author may have been, the epistle definitely shows the influence of Paul.

We should remember that Paul was not popular in Jerusalem. On the one hand, he was viewed as a traitor by the Jewish leaders. On the other hand, his advocacy of the Gentiles did not sit well with the Jews who had become Christians. Both facts might be reasons why the name of the author of this epistle is not given.

WHEN WAS THIS EPISTLE WRITTEN?

The epistle itself causes us to conclude that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem under the Roman Emperor Titus in AD 70. If Paul had anything to do with its writing, it would have been during the span of AD 61–63. The presence of Timothy is mentioned, and we know that Timothy was with Paul during his final imprisonment.

About this time, James, the Lord's brother, who had risen to the position of leader of the Church in Jerusalem, had been martyred. This was a devastating blow to Christianity in Jerusalem. This epistle could have been written to encourage these people by showing them that they were on the right path, and that they should cling to their faith in Jesus.

The real purpose of this book was to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin, to show the fulfillment of all of God's prophecies in the Old Testament, and to tell both Jew and Gentile how to have peace with God and eventually live with Him in heaven.



WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THIS EPISTLE?

The real purpose of this book was to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin, to show the fulfillment of all of God's prophecies in the Old Testament, and to tell both Jew and Gentile how to have peace with God and eventually live with Him in heaven. Contrary to all Jewish thinking, this epistle made it clear that it was not the things that people did which made it possible for them to be reconciled with God. Only the blood of Jesus was able to cleanse them from all their sins.

Pointing the reader to salvation in Christ is the purpose for all the Scriptures. But now we want to be a little more specific about Hebrews. One of the purposes certainly was to prepare the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the cataclysmic destruction of their city by the Romans. They already had an inkling that it was going to happen because Jesus had clearly predicted it. One day as He went out of the temple, one of the disciples said to Him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down" (Mark 13:1–2).

Luke reports even more clearly the words of Jesus as He looked out over the city and wept over it. "For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children with you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:43–44). These people had no idea how terrible this holocaust would be.

With the destruction of Jerusalem would come also the complete demolition of their beloved temple. While this would be terrible for Jews generally, it would have a very traumatic effect on the Christian Jews because even though they knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the sacrifices, they still centered their worship to a great degree on the temple rituals.

The epistle was to show the Jews that all the temple rites had lost their significance in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Once Jesus had made the sacrifice for sin on the altar of the Cross, there was no longer any reason for the customary sacrifices that were made in the temple — nor even for the ceremonies that accompanied their major festivals of the Passover, Yom Kippur, and Hanukkah.

The Jews also needed to realize that the Christian religion was not to be centered in one place, and it was definitely not intended only for the Jewish people. Jesus had commanded, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). And again, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). They did not need the temple any more to fulfill their spiritual obligations, but they did need Jesus, the Savior from sin. He was the Savior for the people of the whole world to be worshipped wherever His followers gathered.

In many ways, the epistle to the Hebrews is a counterpart to the great epistle to the Romans, which has meant so much to theologians of all ages. Think of the effect that Romans had on Martin Luther, and you can just imagine the joy that Luther had when he studied Hebrews.

- Romans was written to bolster the faith of Gentile Christians, and to give them a solid foundation upon which to build their faith.
- Hebrews was written to fulfill the same

purpose for those of the Jewish faith who had turned to Christianity.

- Romans specifically teaches that Jesus Christ is the Lord and King of the whole universe, and is to be honored as such.
- Hebrews declares Jesus to be the Messiah who was promised to the Jewish nation from the time of Abraham. He must be honored and adored even though He was crucified on the cross, because He still lives as the Lord of heaven and earth and now sits at the right hand of the Father.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let us note that the epistle to the Hebrews is regarded in literary circles as a book of excellence, a literary gem. We in the church agree, and we regard it as something even more — the inspired Word of God.

The manner in which this book is written presents its message in a very logical way, well thought out by its author. We should probably not think of this epistle as a personal letter, answering the questions and needs of a specific people, such as Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians and others. Hebrews, rather, was a well-prepared presentation such as might be offered at a conference with every word carefully weighed and used for a specific purpose.

With this information, we are ready to begin our study of this great epistle. We pray it will greatly strengthen us in our faith and make our precious Savior even dearer to us.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

HEBREWS 1:1-14

With prayerful hearts, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read Hebrews 1:1-14.

1. According to your notes, what was the purpose for writing the epistle to the Hebrews?

Hebrews 1:1-3

2. In what ways and by whom did God speak to people in Old Testament times?

3. Through whom has God made His final revelation?

What exalted position does Jesus have? _____

4. In Hebrews 1:3, what four things does the author tell us about the person of Jesus?

Hebrews 1:4-7

5. What added distinction does Jesus have according to verse 4? _____

6. Originally, what possibility existed for the angels? (2 Peter 2:4) _____

7. How does that contrast with Jesus? (1 John 3:5) _____

8. Why do we believe that God’s angels do not sin? (Matthew 18:10)

9. In dealing with the angels, what did God never convey to them?

10. For what purpose do the angels exist? (See v. 14 also)

Hebrews 1:8-9

11. How does the Father address the Son in verse 8?

12. We need to examine the word “righteousness.” (Romans 10:1-4, 3:21-26). What is the righteousness of God? (Matthew 6:33)

13. What attitude of Jesus was particularly pleasing to God?

14. What was the purpose of the anointing with oil? (Exodus 28:41; Leviticus 21:10–12) In Jesus' case, why would it be an "oil of gladness?" (Psalm 45:6–7)

Hebrews 1:10–14

15. In writing to Jews, what point does the author want to emphasize? In verse 10, what are we told that enables us to conclude that "heavens" refers to the universe?

16. Give the prediction that God makes about the world. How does that agree with what ecologists are saying today?

17. In this changing world, what comforting fact remains?

18. With what thought does the chapter conclude?

19. Mention one thing you learned about Jesus that might be new to you.

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We must know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only Savior of the world that is lost in sin. This basic truth gives shape and meaning to everything else the sacred writer tells us in this epistle.



The story is told of Sir John Browning, who found himself in the harbor of Macao. There on a hillside stood a beautiful church, large and elaborate. One day a typhoon swept through the harbor and demolished that church. Only one wall remained standing and on top of it was a cross. Days later, he was on a ship in the harbor and again a storm arose. The ship floundered and he was swept into the water. He had all but given up when suddenly there was a flash of lightning, which gave him a view of the church wall and the cross. That view gave him the courage to swim on and he reached safety. In gratitude, he penned the words of the well-known hymn:

*In the cross of Christ I glory, tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.
When the woes of life o'ertake me, hopes deceive and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me; Lo, it glows with peace and joy.*

This story introduces us so well to the book of Hebrews. We turn to the opening chapter in our study, where the author gives us the key to this fascinating epistle:

We must know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only Savior of the world that is lost in sin. This basic truth gives shape and meaning to everything else the sacred writer tells us in this epistle.

JESUS BRINGS GOD'S FINAL MESSAGE

HEBREWS 1:1-2

In Old Testament times, the Lord spoke in different ways to those prophets He had chosen to reveal His will to the people. In some instances, He actually spoke face-to-face with them as He did with Moses from the burning bush, or later when Moses stood on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:4, 19:20-21).

To others, He spoke by means of visions or dreams. The prophet Ezekiel, for example, had many such visions (Ezekiel 11:24). Ananias in Damascus saw a vision and in it learned that he was to minister to Paul (Acts 9:10). Later, when Paul and Silas did not know where they should serve the Lord, God gave Paul a vision that led them to Macedonia (Acts 16:9). By means of a vision, the Lord revealed to Peter that Gentiles were to be included in the kingdom of God (Acts 11:5).

As time went on, God revealed more and more of His plans for the salvation of sinful mankind to these prophets until they had a good idea of what God planned to do for them. We think of the prophet Isaiah and the beautiful things he revealed to us about the coming Messiah, even though he lived seven hundred years before Christ was born (Isaiah 7:14 and Chapter 53).

The author goes on to say "in these last days," God has spoken to them through Jesus Christ whom he calls "the Son of God." Jesus has complete knowledge of all things, for it was through Him that God created the whole world. Recall the words with which John begins his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God...all things were made through him" (John 1:1-3). Being the Creator, Jesus certainly knew everything possible about our world and about the people He had placed upon the earth.

THE PERSON OF JESUS DESCRIBED

HEBREWS 1:3-9

We are told that Jesus shines out in all of God's glory, for all the things that Jesus did showed Him to be the very God. Think of all the different miracles He performed, the stilling of the storm at sea, the feeding of the masses of hungry people, the healing of the sick (even lepers), the raising of the dead (including a man who was already four days in his grave). In Jesus, God has indeed visited His people (Luke 7:16).

According to the author, in Jesus, God also regulates all things in our universe. It is important in this connection that we always keep in mind the promise that Jesus has given us, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus, who is the Ruler of the universe, is the one who died to cleanse us from all our sins. Truly, this is a mystery of mysteries. God, who cannot die, dies for us, something that is entirely against His very nature. But having died, Jesus rose again and with that assumed fully again His position of King of kings and Lord of lords over all things that He had created.

The next point the author makes is that Jesus is far superior to any angels who were also among the beings He created, and which God later sent out as His messengers to His people. Certainly, the Lord did reveal some wonderful things through His angels. We think of the things that were revealed to the Virgin Mary and to Joseph, her husband, concerning the birth of Jesus. We think also of what the Easter angel revealed at the tomb of Jesus: "He is not here! He is risen!"

What Jesus reveals to us far exceeds all this for He is the Son of God. Recall what Jesus said to Nicodemus, who came to Him by night, "We speak of what we know, and bear witness

*God has many good things to say about the angels,
and He bestows on them special abilities.*



to what we have seen” (John 3:11). To no angel, according to verse 5, has God said, “You are My Son; today I have begotten You” (GWN). But God said it to Jesus and gladly called Himself Jesus’ Father saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

According to verse 6, when Jesus came down to earth, God told the angels to worship Him, and we remember the multitude of angels on the fields of Bethlehem the night of our Savior’s birth singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14). This is one of the great proofs that Jesus is God, for in the First Commandment we are told that we shall worship only God, and yet God tells us to worship Jesus.

God has many good things to say about the angels, and He bestows on them special abilities. Our imaginations can run rampant. We picture that angel entering the fiery furnace into which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been cast because they refused to worship an idol; or we read of the angel that closed the lions’ mouths when Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den; or we think of that angel who led Peter out of the Jerusalem prison.

But the Father calls Jesus God (paraphrasing verses 8 & 9), “Your throne will last forever, and what is more, everything you say will always be right and true, for it is in your nature to love only right things and to hate all things that are wrong. The result will be you are going to be able to bring great gladness to the hearts of people, something which no one else, not even any of the angels, can do.”

Surely we know that this is true, for we have stood in spirit beneath the Cross of Jesus. We know that He has earned complete forgiveness for every sin that we have committed. Consequently, we are perfectly at peace with God. We can look forward with joy to that day when we shall be with our wonderful, loving Father in heaven. This peace we have is something many people long for and cannot find because they seek it without Jesus. We are living in an age when the devil has blinded the eyes of people so that they cannot see the truth even when it is right in front of them.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF JESUS TO HIS CREATION

HEBREWS 1:10-14

Beginning at verse 10, we are told what the Father said to Jesus, and we note that He calls Jesus “Lord.” The Father tells Jesus at the beginning, “You made the earth and the heavens (the universe in which we exist). But all these things will perish and disappear into nothingness. Read 2 Peter 3:10 and Matthew 25:31-46.

After the destruction, Jesus will remain. The time will come when God sees that His world can no longer serve His purposes and there will be no reason for Him to concern Himself with a world that has become an irritant to Him, and so He will replace it. We do not know how God will do this, but this we do know. He will take those who serve Him into His eternal Kingdom, there to live and reign with Him forever. Through all of this, our Jesus will always remain the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

Coming back to the angels once more, the author says in verse 13, “And to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?’” The answer is obvious: To none of them, for the angels are merely ministering spirits that are sent out to help and to care for those who will be saved. God’s angels cannot save these people, for only He who died on the cross can do that. But they can help and protect the believers in Jesus as they continue their struggle through life.

We feel convinced that the angels, God’s ministering spirits, have to work overtime to care for and protect us in the days in which we are living. Because the dangers are so great, our streets are virtually a battleground. The devil seems to be on the loose today, and his purpose is to destroy us in any way that he can. He has discovered that man’s greatest weakness is his lust for money and for sex, and so he really works

on that — “Like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8-9). We need protection under the wings of the angels, so that the Lord can strengthen us in our faith, and we may be able to resist the devil as he attempts to gain control of us.

CONCLUSION

From the first chapter of Hebrews, we draw some strong conclusions. Surely, we have to become convinced that Jesus is the perfect revelation of all things that God wants us to know, and that there will be no further revelations. There are still many things that we would like to know, but if we need to know them now we can feel sure that they are revealed somewhere in the words of Jesus. If not, we will simply have to wait until we get to heaven. This, of course, militates against the many religions today who claim to have received new revelations.

Jesus is the final revelation, and He said to us, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6 RSV). Again, He said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). Paul knew all this so well when he said to the jailer at Philippi, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). Peter, too, was aware of this truth when he said to that poor cripple at the gate of the temple, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” except, of course, the blessed name of Jesus (Acts 4:12).

Paul summed up the basic truth that Jesus taught us when he wrote to the Ephesians:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

PERSONAL APPLICATION

HEBREWS 2:1-8

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and bless you as you study this section of Hebrews.

Review

1. Mention two ways in which Jesus was superior to the angels.

2. According to your notes, what makes so many of the modern cults wrong at the very outset?

Hebrews 2:1-5

3. With what admonition does the author begin Chapter 2? What will be the result if we do not heed that admonition?

4. In John 5:39-40, what does Jesus say can be found in the Scriptures?

5. How can we apply these verses to our lives?

6. In verse 2, what word describes the message spoken by the angels? What happened to the people who disobeyed the words of the angels? (An example: Genesis 19:15-26)

7. In the opening words of verse 3, what question is asked? In these verses, who is spelling out the detailed plan of salvation and how is it dispersed?

8. How could those who heard these messages of the Gospel know that those who witnessed them spoke the truth?

9. How can you show from verse 4 that no one can control the power of the Holy Spirit according to their desire?

10. What gifts does the Holy Spirit give according to 1 Corinthians 12:7-11? What is the purpose of these gifts? (1 Corinthians 14:12)

11. In contrast to the angels, what power is given to Jesus?

Hebrews 2:6-8

12. The quotation is from Psalm 8:4. To understand we need to see a contrast here between man and Jesus. If God is so concerned about mere man, what must He think about the Son of man, who is Jesus?

13. In what way was Jesus made a little lower than the angels?

14. Even in His humility, what position did Jesus occupy?

15. How did He show that? (John 1:14, 20:30-31)

16. Give the words that tell who has final control over everything.

If this is true, why does evil still exist in the world?

17. Tell something new you learned about Jesus from this lesson.

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The future of the world is not in the hands of angels, but it is given into the control of Jesus, who is indeed the King of kings and Lord of lords.



When you make a long trip, you usually obtain the necessary maps and ask people who have made the same trip to make suggestions as to where to go and what to see. You want the best possible information so your trip will be easy and safe.

On one trip that my wife and I took, we were certain that we needed to take a particular highway because it was the best route. We came to a fork in the road and chose what we thought was the road we wanted to follow only to discover that it was no longer a hard-surfaced road but a dusty winding rough road through the mountains. The scenery was beautiful and so we continued, but it took us longer and later we wondered why we had not checked our map more carefully.

Our lesson today brings this thought into the spiritual realm. We need the illumination the Holy Spirit can give us as we travel through our lives. God has provided illumination, but we must follow His guidance. In fact, God has even provided a guide for us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

WE MUST LISTEN TO JESUS

HEBREWS 2:1-5

The Living Bible introduces this second chapter with the words, “So we must listen very carefully to the truths we have heard.” We are encouraged to listen to the words of Jesus and take note of the things that He has revealed to us, for it is easy to drift away from basic truths.

We see this happening with many of our churches today in their approach to the Scriptures. These churches do believe in Jesus as their Savior, but they get so involved with social issues that they are sidetracked and see only what they believe to be the solution to these problems. In the process, they often exalt themselves above the Word, and force upon other people things that God does not say in His Word. That is why the writer says that we should “pay much closer attention to what we have heard.”

In verse 2, a strong encouragement is given reminding us that every message God delivered to man through His angels proved to be true. Even more surely must everything Jesus told us be true. The author adds a sobering thought: those who refused to listen when the angels gave their message suffered severe punishment.

What makes us think that we can escape such punishment if we are indifferent to the great salvation that our dear Savior worked for us through the years of His holy life here on earth, His terrible suffering, and finally His awful death on the cross? While Jesus was here on earth, He explained fully His plan for our salvation. When He ascended into heaven, He made sure that there would always be those who would continue to explain it to us, so that we could indeed believe.

We have to marvel that in this constantly changing world there is one thing that has remained absolutely the same. People have discovered new approaches to life in every area of human endeavor. But when it comes to eternal life, there is no other way than the one offered to us by Jesus when He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). There is only one thing that we can say to anyone, “You must believe in Jesus as your Savior from all of your sins, or else suffer the consequences.” If we firmly believe it, is that so difficult to say? It is the greatest act of kindness we can do for another person.

Verse 4 deserves special attention. God has always confirmed the truth that these messengers brought by allowing miracles to happen. The greatest of these was the conversion of hopelessly lost sinners to a life of faith and trust in God. In the book of Acts, note how many miracles are recorded in the first year of the Christian Church in Jerusalem. Just think of it, fifty days after they had crucified Jesus, three thousand people bowed their knees before their Savior and were baptized in His name, dedicating their lives to His service. Now that’s a miracle!

We could tell you many wonderful stories from our own ministry. My younger brother was sent by our church to be one of the first missionaries to the Philippine Islands after World War II. He was sent to the Island of Mindanao, to the city of Cagayan de Oro. As far as they could determine, his family and the owner of the Ford Garage were the only white people in this city. He began his work by starting a Sunday school in the basement of the house they rented. By the time they left ten years later, there was a thriving congregation of two hundred communing members and a beautiful church building. That is a miracle! These miracles prove that the message spoken by faithful witnesses is the truth, for God works through their words to save souls for eternity.

A second story comes from my own experience. One evening I was in my church office getting ready for a meeting when the telephone rang. I picked up the receiver and heard a frantic voice saying: “Operator, find a minister for me. I am about to commit suicide!” I introduced myself, found out where the woman lived, and went to see her at once. The result was that she received Jesus as her Savior, her life was saved, and we trust she was used in the service of the Lord.

These miracles prove the truth of the Gospel even more than healings, speaking in tongues and unusual prophecies, which are often paraded before the public. Let us rejoice when we see these things happening in the church today.

Of course, the whole purpose of the Christian ministry is to tell the good news of the Gospel, to teach and make disciples of people and to help them prepare for life in the hereafter. The life they live now has the purpose of glorifying God and preparing them to enjoy the bliss that will be theirs eternally.

Verse 5 tells us that the world to come is not under the control of angels. The Gospel was entrusted to people, so that the Holy Spirit, through them, might reach out to others. For that reason, He has distributed varied abilities to different people that will be useful in building the kingdom of God.

Think, for example, of Simon Peter, standing before that huge throng on Pentecost. He preached a powerful sermon for which he had made no specific preparation, quoting freely from the Scriptures to support what he was saying. How was all this possible? Because the Holy Spirit was using him as a tool to bring the Gospel to many people.

So often, we think of that woman at the well of Samaria to whom Jesus ministered. Of all the people in the city, she was the most unlikely candidate to become a disciple of Jesus. Yet Jesus touched her heart and, as a result, she became a powerful witness to the Savior in her city, and many believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

THE DOMINION OF THE WORLD IS GIVEN TO JESUS

HEBREWS 2:6-8

Remember that this message was written for Hebrew Christians. The Jewish mind was always thinking of the Messiah as a mighty earthly ruler. The author is showing these people that even though they succeeded in getting Jesus crucified, yet in the end He is going to have dominion over them and the entire world.

The author begins this thought by quoting from Psalm 8:4: "What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" The psalmist asks, "What is mere man that you are

so concerned about him? Who is this Son of man whom you hold in such high honor?" This Jesus, he says, was made a little lower than the angels, and surely He was for He came down to earth to be born a human baby in the stable at Bethlehem. He had a human body that the angels do not have. He was subject to earthly conditions and affected by human passions, of which the angels are free.

Yet the future of the world is not in the hands of angels, but it is given into the control of Jesus, who is indeed the King of kings and Lord of lords. For a while, during His sojourn here on earth, Jesus appeared to be a little lower than the angels, yet following His resurrection, He is crowned with all glory and honor.

According to verse 8, the Father has now put Jesus in charge of everything. Nothing is excluded. What a joy it is for us to know that our loving Savior is in complete control of everything! This can only be for our good, because He proved his love for us by suffering and dying on the cross. We can truly believe Romans 8:28, "... all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

We may be discouraged by what is happening in the world. At times, it appears that the Lord has given over the control of all things to the forces of evil, and that there is little hope for the children of God. This has seemed true throughout history, but in the end, the Lord will triumph, for all His enemies will be trampled under His feet. We think often of those who are living ungodly lives and glorying in the terrible things they do. We feel sad for them for we know that in eternity, we will do the glorying, and they will be in unspeakable torment.

The author of Hebrews has thus established the foundation on which this study rests. Jesus was the Messiah to whom the whole Old Testament pointed. Jesus is the very Son of God, and, as such, He is the one Savior of the whole world. Now having established that, the author can expand on his theme. We look forward to it.