

Thought for Sunday 2nd May 2021
Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Hebrews 2:1-18

In this second chapter, again, we see the writer quoting Old Testament passages, this time from the Psalms and Isaiah. But having talked about angels, and how Jesus was not an angel, my N.I.V. bible heads up this passage; *‘Warning to pay attention.’* When we realise that Jesus is no angel but is the Son of God, then we have to take heed of these words, as it says in verses 2 and 3; *‘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? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.’* And it goes on in verse 4 to throw more weight on this; *‘God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.’* The writer is trying to affirm everything that is written about in the four gospels because it; *‘was confirmed to us by those who heard him.’* The twelve ‘called’ disciples mainly, but there were many who became disciples, having heard and seen Jesus in real life. The writer wants us to take seriously what the New Testament writers are saying about this Jesus. Whoever wrote this epistle knew about Jesus and wanted others to believe in him the way they did. We see scripture being used to affirm what the writer believed, I guess as any preacher would. When I preach, and you could say these Thoughts for Sundays are mini-sermons, they are the basis of what I preach from the pulpit, and as I know you may be sitting at home reading these thoughts, I am also aware that you have the time to check out what I am writing, so I have to make sure I am right. I am also not going to write other people’s thought, unless I give them the credit. What we see in verse 5 is that Jesus didn’t come for the angels, Jesus came for us human beings, so whereas Angels could be ranked above humans, Jesus became like a human being, v7; *‘You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet.’* Yes, the writer is quoting the Psalmist, Psalm 8, but it in recognising that prophecy has been fulfilled. The writer to Hebrews goes on to say v8; *‘In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him.’* And that includes the angels. When Paul wrote to the Philippian church, in chapter 2 he affirmed what we have just read; *‘being in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.’* What both writers are saying is that even angels must bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Every knee. In verse 10 the writer again emphasises that Jesus was and is divine. He came from heaven, having been the one through whom everything exists, but that he came to bring back to himself through his death on the cross, or as the writer says; *‘so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.’* That last word sums up why Jesus came, he didn’t come for the righteous, he didn’t come for the holy, he didn’t come for the nice people, although he did come for all of those, Jesus came for everyone. And I am glad, because I am a sinner, but a reassured sinner when I read Ephesians 2:5; *‘it is by grace you have been saved.’* and Ephesians 2:8; *‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.’* The very first sermon that was preached at Cophthorne Chapel on 17th September 1827, not by me I add, was based on Romans 1:16; *‘I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that*

brings salvation to everyone who believes:’ and the writer to Hebrews reminds us; *‘Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.’ And again, ‘I will put my trust in him.’* So as Jesus is not ashamed of us, no matter how bad we feel we are, we should be willing to say, *‘I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes:’* I wonder if there are times when we prefer to keep our faith to ourselves? I have heard people say that their faith is a very personal thing, they don’t want to put it on to other people. But that very person you are hiding it from, could be the very person that needs to know of God’s grace, God’s forgiveness, God’s love. Remember John 3:16 *‘whoever believes’* but if people aren’t given the opportunity to hear of God’s grace from you, who will they hear it from? the fact that you love God, I pray means that you are aware of God’s love for you, and if it’s for you, then be assured that it is not only for you but it is for everyone, including that person that you are wary of sharing God’s love with. As it says in verse 16; *‘it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.’* That is you and me, verse 17, *‘for this reason he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way.’* And because of that as this chapter ends; *‘he is able to help those who are being tempted.’* You may think you are not being tempted, but if you are not telling, or showing God’s love to others, then you are being tempted, tempted to not do something, tempted not to share God’s love, tempted not to share the eternal promise you have been given, the promise to all who believe that Jesus is God’s son, who came to bring all who believe in him to, as Jesus says in Luke 23:43, *‘Paradise.’* Amen.

Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take;
proclaim Christ Jesus, saviour, Lord, and king,
that all the world his worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
he will in grace respond to all who call:
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of his word?

Go forth and tell where still the darkness lies;
in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts let no one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!
go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
go till all nations his great name adore
and serve him, Lord and king for evermore