

## **Deadly drifting!**

Hebrews 1.1 – 2.4

In May 2008 The Pacific Star took a group of tourists out on a diving trip off Hayman Island in North Queensland. It all seemed to go well until they got back to the docks at 3 in the afternoon. And they discovered they were TWO SHORT.

You might remember the coverage. The divers' names were Alison Dalton and Dick Neely. And they spent the night out there. Floating in the high seas and shark infested waters. Fortunately for them. Next day....a plane spotted them floating about 8 nautical miles from where they'd initially been.

Now most of the stuff in the media was about WHO WAS TO BLAME... Maybe counting numbers BEFORE they got back would have been a better idea. But the divers weren't totally blameless either. See Dick and Allison were briefed along with everyone else. Don't go out of the lagoon where the boat's moored. But they did. They ignored warnings by the dive operator, they drifted away from the boat. They're lucky to be alive.

Cathy and I went on a similar trip out to the barrier reef in August. And I can tell you at the briefing ....we hung on every word. We kept well within the boundary ropes. And there was no way we were about to get more than about 2 minutes away from that boat. No way we were going to be left drifting in the middle of the ocean.

Now the book of Hebrews is written in the first instance as the title suggests.... the Hebrews. But particular Hebrews. It's written for people from a Hebrew background who'd become Christians. And PARTICULARLY... Jewish Christians who were tempted to go back to their Jewishness. And in doing that....give up on.... or at least sideline Jesus.

You could say I suppose, Hebrews is a kind of briefing to them to say. Whatever you do. Stick with Jesus. Stick with Jesus because of who he is. Stick with Jesus because of what he's done. Stick with Jesus for the sake of the reward if you can make it to the end. Stick with Jesus because of the tragic result of not doing that.

And here in the first part in particular....is the warning about drifting away. And if you've got your bible open. It's the first verse of chapter 2.

**Hebrews 2:1** We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not DRIFT AWAY.

Now if you want to mine Hebrews for it's doctrine. You'll do pretty well. The divinity of Christ. The HUMANITY of Christ. Those sorts of things. The atonement. Lots of stuff...but that's not the point of the book. The POINT IS..... to see Jesus clearly. To see who he is. To see what he's done. So you'll stick with him. So you won't drift away.

Now....as you glance over chapter 1 you'll see... the picture isn't divers with their flippers flipping away to the nice coral over in the next bay. The picture's this. It's Christians. People who've heard the news about Jesus. Who've shared the faith.

Who are Drifting back, or TEMPTED...to head back to the rituals and the practices of the temple. Drifting back....to the laws of Moses. Handed down by God through angels. With the priests and the sacrifices. And you get into the detail in a few chapters.

But if you want a single sentence summary of the message of Hebrews, it's this. **Jesus is better.** So don't turn back. Over these next few weeks you'll see it unfold. You can read ahead if you'd like to. Be a great idea. Jesus is better. we'll see it spelt out. In terms of the past traditions of Israel. But time after time, the theme is the same. **Jesus is better...** than what came before.

So don't drift away...by going back.

And even though you and I come to it from a different angle. Because we're not ex Jews. It's the same message. Whatever it is you've left. To follow Jesus. Don't go back. Because Jesus is better.

Now the briefing starts...and never really moves away from. The person of Jesus.

Lets look at verse 1.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 1:1** In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> 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.

And if you've spent a bit of time in the old testament. You might even remember the stories from Sunday School. The stories about God speaking to people in a dream. Or a vision. Or out of a cloud. Or on one occasion. By a hand that just sort of appears and starts writing on a wall.

All sorts of impressive ways. God's spoken to his people.

And. If you're a Jew it's genuinely impressive to be able to point to the Jewish law as God's word to you. Because it is.

And the writer says. It's true. It's great. God's spoken. In the past. Through different people in all sorts of different ways. But the point is. Now, in these last days. Verse 2. He's spoken to us by his Son.

It's not that those words in the Old Testament weren't God's words. The writer says no they were. But now. We're hearing those words.....from the Son. Which is impressive for the reasons you're about to hear.

Now..... there's a reversal happening here. Because on the face of it.... the angel who just appears out of the blue all glowy and shiny. That's pretty impressive. And when you see it happen like that in the old testament. The angel usually just goes BAM! And the person's usually cowering in fear. They have to be defibrillated afterwards. Because of the sudden, majestic, other-worldly appearance of the being.

I guarantee you. If you can convince people an angel turned up at the bus stop with a message from God. They'll be all ears. Angels are almost as popular as

vampires at the moment. And if you can get a book out there about it. Well, chaching. The money will come rolling in.

Even a vision's going to get you a bit of spiritual kudos around the place.

But here's the thing. The writer says. That's the way God did things back in the old days.

before he revealed himself **once and for all in his son**. In the past God spoke in various ways. "But in these **last days**," verse 2... "he's **spoken to us by his son**."

Who is far from inferior. And keep reading. Here's the resume. **The son**, Jesus, he's the one who **inherits all things**. This is the **son** through whom **God made the universe**. And then he sent him to earth. Clothed in **humanity** like us. But even so..... the **exact representation of God**.

You want to know what God's like? Well, get this. Verse 3:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the **exact representation** of his being; So Jesus doesn't just bring us the message. He's the image.

He's exactly like **God is**. He does what God does. He's the one who by his word holds **everything together**.

Now I don't know what sort of picture of Jesus is in your head. But if it doesn't include these sort of things....maybe it needs to be updated. Log on...get the update.

Imagine. Being able to say.....someone just making conversation. Comes up. What've you been doing? Ohh...the usual. Upholding the universe.... How 'bout you?

But that's exactly what Jesus does. And apart from that. Second half of verse 3. Apart from creating and sustaining the universe. As you do.

After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. <sup>4</sup> So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

Here's Jesus' credentials.

And yet these Jewish guys are saying, ah, no. Let's go back to the **old ways**. Let's go back to the **rules and laws** of the Old Testament. Because you know what? **They were given to Moses by an angel. Twice!**

Now I can understand how you might make the mistake. Jesus is typically the sandal wearing blue eyed long haired soft skinned subject of portraits.

Tough to know exactly what he looked like. But regardless of the colour of his eyes . Jesus was a man. He didn't look that majestic. He took on a human body. He WALKED around the place he didn't LEVITATE. He got dirty feet that needed washing. And died a particularly brutal human death.

Now we're going to get to this in chapter 2. It's true. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels.

But Verse 4 says after he died and rose, it was **very clear**:

So he became as much **superior** to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

Compare him to whoever you like. Jesus is way better. Which is the point of the rest of the chapter from verse 5. As you compare.

I mean. God never called **an angel** his son, did he? And verse 6, Even when Jesus comes into the world. That little baby born in a cow shed. Let the angels worship him. Is what God says of him. Or, down there in 13. to which of the **angels** did God ever say, **sit here on the throne beside me.**

If you think angels are more impressive than Jesus. You've underestimated Jesus by a long long way. It's a total mismatch.

You might have seen the ad on TV where there's a game of backyard cricket and the dad comes roaring in to bowl like a man possessed. And as the camera pans around .. you see he's bowling to his five year old son. It's a no-contest.

And if you're comparing Jesus with angels. It's a bit like that. It's a total mismatch. Jesus is far superior.

And at the same time....you may have over-estimated the angels as well.

Do you know what angels are? Verse 14. Angels are serving spirits. Sent to serve **us**. Not necessarily even greater than us. Much less overshadowing Jesus. "Are not

all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" **Yes, they are.**

So let's be crystal clear.

But what's the point? I mean, why all this stuff about angels?

Well the point is. From the start of chapter 2. The point is. Don't drift away from Jesus. It's great when you come across a therefore. It's like a beacon. Here's the point.

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

See in the past God spoke in all sorts of different ways....and the angels are tied up in that. Along with the rest of what's in the book of Hebrews. But in these last days.

And that's the days you and I are in as well. In these last days. He's spoken by his own Son. The one who's so much superior and greater than them.

It's like when the principal walks into the room. So you'd better pay attention.

See he's not downplaying the role of angels. Because, they were God's messengers. And lookout if you ignored what they said.

But here's the point. Verse 2 chapter 2. If the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,

How much more. How much more...the words of the one whose name is so much higher than theirs.

<sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

This is a fairly ominous warning.

There's a saying we sometimes. Don't get on your high horse. In other words. Don't think you're all high and mighty. Don't talk down to me. But because of who Jesus is. Even his gentle words to come and follow him come down from the highest of heights.

And you might have easily skipped over it in verse 3 the writer says. The high and mighty Son. The Son the heir of all things, creator and sustainer, radiance and exact image of God.

He's not just the one who announces the words how we can be saved. He's the one who's done the work.

After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

He left his place in heaven. To be made lower than the angels. To walk the streets of Palestine and be strung up as a sacrifice.... To purify us and make us acceptable. And it's done. And he sits down at his place.

No doubt about it. It's a great salvation that's on offer here.

Declared by God's son. Spoken by him. Paid for by him as well.

The other side of the coin. How will we escape. If we ignore it?

, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

If even the disobedience of the angels message was punished justly?

You know it's surprising there's not all that many atheists out there really. But if you can convince yourself that God's a old wooly haired pushover who'll stand for anything. You don't really need to be. Everyone loves a cuddly God.

Unless you've really understood what sin's like. You won't get... that God won't stand for it. But the cross is a pretty fair warning that he won't.

Hebrews 10 has one of the clearest warnings in the bible.

**Hebrews 10:31** <sup>31</sup> It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

So whatever you do. Don't swim away from the boat. Don't drift away from Jesus. Because it's a great salvation that he's bought and paid for with his own blood.

Pay close attention...to what you've heard. Lest you drift away.

These Jewish Christians, if you keep reading in Hebrews. What they're doing.

They're drifting away by turning back to their old laws and their old **priests** and all that **Old Testament** stuff that was supposed to **prepare them for Jesus**. **Hebrews says later on those things are shadows of the real thing in Jesus.**

**And so by doing that. By turning back to those things. They're neglecting the great salvation of Jesus.**

**And there's no shortage of religiosity around these days either. It's a real danger.**

**All the bells and smells and rituals. That can be so far removed from Jesus.**

**But that's not the only danger.**

You'd wonder why those divers did what they did. Maybe they overestimated their own abilities? Maybe they were just too attracted to what was out of the boundary? It's hard to know.

Why would people drift away from Jesus?

I have a friend. Christine. She was a committed Christian. Youth group, bible study.

Walked the walk. Talked the talk. Started seeing someone who wasn't a Christian. It's all right she said. He'll come to church.

He didn't. And she left. As far as I know. Hasn't come back. She didn't set out for that to happen. It's just that our desires can be so strong. And you start paying attention to something or someone else...and you drift away from Jesus.

Another Christian guy. Called Ross. One of the leaders of the pathfinders group that led me to Jesus. I heard he had some conflict in the church. Ross has walked away from church. And Jesus.

Where's the temptation for you to **turn back? To drift?**

I wonder if all kinds of other things are somehow getting in the way? And you're taking your eyes off **Jesus?**

You see it happen. All kinds of ways. You take out that mortgage that's slightly **too big**. Because you need everything **now**. And then you're too busy chasing **overtime** or working the second job to get together with your Christian friends at church. Or too tired. Or you've had to move **so far away** from your church family to buy your **dream home** that your church family is just a **distant memory**. And before you know it, **so is Jesus**.

You see it when a Christian teenager hooks up with a non-Christian boyfriend. Or girlfriend.

And you see it when **hard times come**. Some kind of suffering. And you say, **How can God put me through that?** As if you've been thinking that following Jesus is somehow a guarantee of everything going **well for you**. That's a big issue in Hebrews. They're finding there's a **cost involved** in being Christian in the Roman empire. And they're under threat.

You even see it with Christians who start looking for **more from God** than just **Jesus**. Start looking for the new prophecy and the new word and the fresh

revelation and **fresh touch of God**. Not realizing that every **new thing** like that is just a way of going backwards. Losing sight of the fact all those things are second rate when God has **spoken to us by his son**.

Can I ask you this morning, this is a positive exhortation. **pay attention**. Chapter 2 verse 1. Pay **more careful attention** to what you've heard. So that you're not another one - who drifts away...back to what you would have been before. Who just a little bit of a time starts to see other things as more important than **sticking with Jesus**.