

Christ is Superior to the Angels
Hebrews 2:2-3
Part Seven

We once again return back to our study of Hebrews, where an unknown author, in an attempt to strengthen the faith of a group struggling Hebrew Christians living in Rome, wrote to them about the superiority of Christ.

So how did the author see Christ as superior? First of all, the author of the Book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets in Hebrew 1:1-4.

So how else did the author of Hebrews see Christ as superior? The author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the angels in Hebrews 1:5-2:18. This is the section we are presently studying and we have broken this very large section into four parts.

We have now completed our examination of that first part, where the author of Hebrews explained Christ's superiority to the angels in Hebrews 1:5-14. So, what did the author explain within these verses?

The author of Hebrews, quoting the Old Testament, explained that Christ alone should be considered uniquely God's Son and thus superior to all others including the angels (Hebrews 1:5). We saw this in **Hebrews 1:5.**

The author of Hebrews, quoting the Old Testament, explained that because Christ was being worshipped and served by angels, He should be considered superior to all others including the angels (Hebrews 1:6-7). We saw this in **Hebrews 1:6-7.**

The author of Hebrews, quoting the Old Testament, explained that because Christ is eternal, Christ should be considered superior to all others including the angels (Hebrews 1:8-12). We saw this in **Hebrews 1:8-12.**

The author of Hebrews, quoting the Old Testament, explained that because Christ is seated at God's right hand, He is superior to all others including the angels (Hebrews 1:13-14). And we saw this in **Hebrews 1:13-14.**

So after the author of Hebrews had explained the superiority of Christ in **Hebrews 1:5-14**, what did he do next? After the author had explained the superiority of Christ, he then sounded a warning (Hebrews 2:1-4).

The first part of the warning is an exhortation (Hebrews 2:1).

The second part of the warning is an attempt to get the readers not to minimize the threat of judgment if they ignored the exhortation (Hebrews 2:2-3). Let me read for you **Hebrews 2:2-3** and see if this is not so. “**For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, (3) how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?**” So was the author, in these verses that we just read, attempting to get his readers not to minimize the threat of judgment if they ignored the exhortation that he had just given them in **verse 1?** Yes! Absolutely! This is exactly what he was doing.

So how did the author in **verses 2-3** attempt to do this? How did he attempt to get his readers not to minimize the threat of judgment if they ignored the exhortation? He did this by arguing: “If ‘A’ is true, then how much more concerned should we be about ‘B’?” Or in other words, “If **verse 2** is true, in respect to the certainty of judgment for those who had transgressed or disobeyed the word spoken through angels, then how much more concerned should we be about neglecting the word of salvation that was first spoken through Christ?” And of course the answer would be “far more concerned.”

So now we know how the author attempted in **verses 2-3** to get his readers not to minimize the threat of judgment if they ignored the exhortation in **verse 1**, and it is these verses that we will be examining this morning.

So, what is my hope for this message? My hope is that as we gain a more complete understanding of the truths contained within this particular argument in **verses 2-3**, we will again purpose ourselves to heed the exhortation in **verse 1**. Thus assuring us that we will not be one of those professing believers who at judgment will tragically discover that we have indeed drifted past the safe harbor of salvation, or in other words that we will not be one of those professing believers who at the judgment will hear these words from Christ, **“Depart from me you worker of iniquity I never knew you.”**

So is it important for us to heed the exhortation of **verse 1** “**to pay much closer attention to the things that we have heard**”? Absolutely! And the importance of this will be driven home even further by the author this morning in **verses 2-3**.

So now let us now begin to take a closer at these verses and we will begin with **verse 2**. “**For if** [now here comes the first part of the argument] **the word spoken through angels proved unalterable and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we ...**”

And then the author goes on to present the second part of the argument. But before we go on to examine the second part of the argument we must first of all make sure we understand the first part.

So how does the first part of the argument in **verse 2** begin? It begins with this phrase, “**For if the word spoken through angels**.”

So, what is the author referring to when he referred to the “**word**”? When the author referred to “the word” spoken through angels, he was speaking of the Mosaic Law (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19).

How do we know this? We know this because this was the commonly held view among the Jews at the time of the writing of this epistle.

So where did this belief come from? The belief that God had used angels, as His intermediaries to communicate the Mosaic Law to Israel, could very well have originated in **Deuteronomy 33:2** where the LXX reads “**... angels were with Him at His right hand.**”

But regardless of where this belief originated, we know for a fact that this was the belief of the Jews at the time of the writing of this epistle based on the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus and even more importantly the New Testament Scriptures, where this belief was put forward as fact, both in **Acts 7:38** and **Galatians 3:19**. So how did the author of Hebrews describe the word spoken through angels?

The author of Hebrews described “the word,” or in other words “the Mosaic Law” as “unalterable.” So let us continue to read **Hebrews 2:2** and see if this is not so. “**For if the word spoken through the angels** [or in other words the Mosaic Law] **proved [What?] unalterable...**” So, what does this word mean?

The word “unalterable” (BEBAIOS) is a technical term implying legal security. It qualifies something as valid with the additional connotations of being trustworthy, dependable, reliable, and firmly established.

So, what else did the author tell his readers about the word spoken through the angels? Let us continue to read **verse 2** and what does it say? **“And every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty.”**

So not only did the author tell his readers that the word spoken through the angels was unalterable, or in other words legally secure, but he also told them that every transgression and disobedience of it received a just penalty.

The word “transgression” (PARABASIS) means to step across the line as a willful act.

The Mosaic Law drew many lines in the sand, just like many parents have drawn many lines in the sand, but there certainly is a big difference between most parents and the Mosaic Law. And what is that difference? If a child steps across a line that a parent has drawn, they may or may not receive a just penalty. If a person under the law stepped across a line that the Law had drawn, they most assuredly would receive a just penalty. There was no doubt about it. This is why the author said to them, **“and every transgression ... received a just penalty.”** But it was not just every transgression; it was also every disobedience.

The word “disobedience” (PARAKOE) carries the idea of deliberately shutting one’s ears to the commands, warnings and invitations of God.

This is a little different emphasis. The word used to translate “transgression” communicates more of an active rebellion than the word translated “disobedience,” which communicates more of a passive rebellion, but in both cases it is still rebellion, whether it is more active or more passive. So whether or not the rebellion against the Mosaic Law was active or passive, the one rebelling against the Mosaic Law could always be assured of one thing. They could be assured of a just penalty.

God has never taken sin lightly, and certainly this was the case under the Mosaic Law for every sin had a prescribed just penalty and those penalties

were exacted. For major offences the law prescribed the death penalty, for lesser offences restitution.

This applied to sinful actions resulting from neglect, which can be seen in **Exodus 21:29** and **Exodus 33:34**. This applied to sinful actions resulting from ignorance, which can be seen in **Numbers 15:27**. And certainly it also applied to sinful actions done willfully, which can be seen in **Numbers 15:30**.

So we have now finished **verse 2**, which not only provided his readers with the first part of his argument or the lesser part of his argument but which also has now prepared the way for the second part of his argument, or in other words the greater part of his argument. And he will introduce the second part of his argument by asking his readers a rhetorical question.

So now let us continue to read our passage and see if this is not so. “**For if the word** [or in other words the Mosaic Law] **spoken through angels proved unalterable** [or in other words legally secure and binding], **and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty** [which his readers knew was in fact true], **(3) how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?**” So did the author introduce the second part of his argument, or in other words the greater part of his argument by asking his readers a rhetorical question? Absolutely!

And what would have been the expected answer to this rhetorical question based on what he had already shared in **verse 2**? The expected answer is there would be no escape! It would be impossible!

And why would it be impossible for someone to neglect so great a salvation and still escape based on our context?

If every transgression and disobedience of the Mosaic Law spoken through angels received a just penalty, then we can even be more assured that neglecting the message of salvation spoken through Christ will as well.

The word “neglect” (AMELESANTES) speaks of apathy and not caring enough about something.

May God give us the grace to understand that if we are a professing believer,
we cannot neglect our great salvation and at the same time be assured that
we are in saved.