

Christ is Superior to the Angels
Hebrews 2:3-4
Part Eight

I believe that the Bible teaches us that we are sinners and we deserve death. I believe that the Bible teaches us that we deserve to be eternally separated from God. But I also believe that the Bible teaches us that God so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son into this world, as His sacrificial lamb, so that His Son or in other words the Lord Jesus Christ, through His death, might satisfy the debt we owed to God because of our sin. And once Christ had paid that debt of our sin or in other words once He had completed His atoning work, a door was opened to heaven through which any person desiring to be set free from sin and its consequences could enter, by grace through faith, if they so chose, into the very presence of God, where they would hopefully from that day forward worship Him in spirit and truth. I believe that Bible teaches all these things. And I hope that you as a professing believer do as well.

We were not saved from nothing to nothing; we were saved from something to something. We were saved from sin and all of its consequences so that we, in entering into the presence of God, might continuously give our lives up to Him as an offering to the praise of His glory.

This is what I am striving to do with my life, and this is what I hope that you are striving to do with your life.

And if we are striving to live our lives in this way, we can be assured that we are in fact saved and therefore have escaped judgment. But if we are not striving to live our lives in this way, we should not deceive ourselves that we simply by a profession of so-called faith have escaped judgment. And why is this?

There are various reasons that could be given to this question, but there are a few reasons that hopefully will come particularly alive for us this morning as 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). This warning is contained in **Hebrews 2:1-4** and consists of three different parts. So, what was the first part of the warning?

The first part of the warning is an exhortation (Hebrews 2:1). So let me now read for you **Hebrews 2:1** and see if this is not so. **"For this reason** [referring to Christ's superiority to angels, detailed for us in **Hebrews 1:5-**

14] we must [not maybe, not might, but we must, do what? We must] **pay much closer attention** [not a little bit closer attention but much closer attention] **to what we have heard.**”

And what had the author and his readers heard? Based on **verse 3** it would have been the message of salvation. And why would the author have been exhorting them to pay much closer attention to the message of salvation? The verse goes on to tell us. **“So that we** [the author as well as his readers] **do not drift away from it.**” Or in other words, would not drift away from the message of salvation and thus its safe harbor.

And this thought was driven home even further last week as we moved from the first part of the warning, which was the exhortation, to the second part of the warning. And what is the second part of the warning?

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). And how did he do this? Let us now go back to our text but this time I will not only read **verse 1** but also **verse 2** and the first part of **verse 3**. **“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?”**

And of course the answer to that rhetorical question would have been, “We won’t escape. It would be impossible.”

So was the author in this section of verses attempting to get his readers not to minimize the threat of judgment if they ignored the exhortation in **verse 1**? Absolutely! So why would this threat of judgment be so great if a professing believer chose to neglect so great a salvation after they had professed so-called faith in it? This question brings us to the third part of the warning and to our message this morning. So, what is the third part of warning?

The third part of the warning is an explanation for why it would impossible for a professing believer to escape judgment if they ignored the exhortation, or in other words if they neglected so great a salvation (Hebrews 2:3-4).

So why is the author interjecting this explanation at this point within his warning? He is trying to get his readers to reflect on the reasons why they had made a profession of faith in the first place. Hoping that in doing so, they might better understand why neglecting so great a salvation after they have professed faith in it should call into question the genuineness of the faith that they have professed.

So, what is the author's explanation for why it would be impossible for a professing believer to escape judgment if they ignored the exhortation in **verse 1**, or in other words if they neglected so great a salvation, as indicated in **verse 3**? It is a three-fold explanation.

First of all, it would impossible for a professing believer to escape judgment if they neglected so great a salvation, because the message of salvation had been first spoken through the Lord (Hebrews 2:2-3).

So let us go back to **Hebrews 2:3** and see if this is not so. **“How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord”** So did the author indicate by these words that one of the reasons why it would be impossible for a professing believer, who was neglecting so great a salvation, to escape judgment was because the message of salvation had been first spoken through the Lord? Yes! He did!

So in what sense had the message of salvation been first spoken through the Lord? Although the message of salvation had been prophesied in the Old Testament, the beginning of the gospel's proclamation in clarity and fulfillment came with Christ. This is what I believe the author meant when he said that the message of salvation had been first spoken through the Lord.

So, what was the author's point? The author's point was that if every transgression and disobedience of the Law, spoken through angels, received a just penalty as we saw in **verse 2**, then of course it would be impossible for any person to think that they could escape judgment, if they chose to neglect the message of salvation that had been first spoken through Christ.

Why? It would be impossible for them to escape judgment, not only because He, as the Son of God, was far superior to the angels, but also because the message that He had delivered was far superior to the message that had been delivered through angels.

So that is the first part of the three-fold explanation why a professing believer will not escape judgment if they neglect so great a salvation, or in other words the message of salvation. So, what is the second part of this author's three-fold explanation?

It would be impossible for a professing believer to escape judgment, because after the message of salvation had been first spoken through the Lord, it was then confirmed by those who had heard Him (Hebrews 2:3).

So let us continue to read **Hebrews 2:3** and see if this is not so. **“After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard [or in other words those who had heard the Lord].”** So did the author in this verse, in addition to what he already indicated, communicate to his readers that if the message of salvation was neglected, after it was confirmed by those who heard Christ, that it would be impossible for those who had chosen to neglect that message to escape judgment? Yes! I believe he did.

Neither the author nor the recipients of this letter had directly heard Christ preach the message of salvation, but the author is now telling his readers that though they may not have heard that message from Christ, it was a message that was confirmed for them by those who had heard Christ.

So who were these people, who had heard the message of salvation from Christ, and then subsequently confirmed it to the author and the readers of this epistle? Those who had heard the message of salvation from the Lord and then confirmed it would have been primarily, but not exclusively, the apostles (Luke 1:2).

The disciples of Christ, who had witnessed His life, His death, and His resurrection, such as the apostles, were not passive. They were active. They were reaching out to their families, friends, and acquaintances, and even strangers, speaking to them about their first-hand experience with Christ.

And God used their personal eyewitness testimony to confirm, to assure, and to guarantee those who had heard their eyewitness that not only the message that they had proclaimed had come from the Lord, but that it was also true.

So is the eyewitness testimony of credible witnesses a powerful thing in confirming, assuring, or guaranteeing the truth of something? Absolutely! Eyewitness testimony of a credible eyewitness is extremely powerful. And this fact was true then and it continues to be true even today.

So, what was the author's point here in this context? The author's point is if a professing believer chose to neglect so great a salvation after it had been first spoken by Christ, and then in addition to this had been confirmed by those who had been with Christ through their eyewitness testimony and the proclamation of the message that they had received from Christ, that professing believer should not expect to escape judgment just because they had made a profession of faith.

Why? Because there is no evidence of the faith that should have been generated when the message of salvation had been confirmed to them by those credible witnesses who had been Christ and who had shared with them the message of salvation that they had received from Christ.

So this is the second part of the three-fold explanation for why a professing believer should not expect to escape judgment if they neglected so great a salvation. So, what is the third of this three-fold explanation why a professing believer should not expect to escape judgment if they neglected so great a salvation?

It would impossible for a professing believer to escape judgment if they neglected so great a salvation because God testified with them (or in other words these eyewitnesses) through signs, wonders, miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 2:4).

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 2:4** and see if this is not so. **“God also testifying with them [in other words those who had been with Christ and had received the message of salvation from Christ], both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”**

So, what do we see here? Not only were those who had heard the message of salvation, directly from the Lord, confirming that message to those who heard them by their eyewitness testimony and their proclamation of the message, but God was also testifying **“with them”** concerning the

truthfulness of their message by signs and wonders, by various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will.

So, what is the significance of these various words and phrases that the author used to describe the supernatural activity of God that surrounded the proclamation of the message of salvation that God used to testify with these eyewitnesses?

The word “signs” (SEMEIOSIS) focuses on the meaning of the miracles.

The word “wonders” (TERASIN) focuses the astonishment that is produced by the miracle.

The word “miracles” (DUNAMESIN) focuses on the power displayed by the miracle.

The word “gifts (MERISMOIS) of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” focuses on the gracious distribution of His gifts throughout the church. This would not have been referring just to any kind of gift, but more specifically to the miraculous gifts that were distributed by the will of the Holy Spirit to certain individuals, who had responded to the message of salvation that had been delivered by these credible eyewitnesses of the life of Christ and the saving message that was first spoken by Him.

This was an incredible time in church history. The message of salvation that had been first spoken by the Lord was now being proclaimed by those who had been with Him. And as they went out in the power of the Spirit to proclaim that message of salvation that Christ had given to them God was testifying with them concerning the truthfulness of their message, by giving them ability to perform miracles. And not only were they given the ability to perform miracles, but even certain ones among those who received their message were being given the ability to perform miracles by the Holy Spirit according to the will of God.

So has this time of miraculous activity associated with the coming of the salvation message, that was first spoken through Christ and then proclaimed by those who heard him to those who were willing to receive the message from them, continued or has it ceased? The answer is that it has ceased. Why?

The passage tells us. The miraculous activity that we have been talking about here was all about the confirmation of the message of salvation as it passed from Christ to the disciples, who had been with Him, and then on to those who had been reached by those disciples who had been with Christ.

But once the message of salvation had been confirmed, in the way it described here in this passage, it was no longer necessary for the message of salvation to continue to be confirmed for it already had been confirmed, and that confirmation has been recorded for us in the Scriptures that we now have in our possession and this is the same pattern that we see throughout Scripture when God is delivering a particularly important message. He consistently would testify with those messengers that what they were sharing was true through miraculous activity.

So, what was the third reason why professing believers should not expect to escape judgment if they neglect so great a salvation? The third reason is because God had testified with those initial eyewitnesses who had been with Christ and who had received the message of salvation from Christ through miraculous activity.

So will those professing believers, who choose to neglect so great a salvation once it has been confirmed in the way that this passage describes it has having been confirmed by credible eyewitnesses and testified to by God Himself, escape judgment? No!

Why? Because those who profess faith in this great salvation are not showing evidence of having taking possession of it. For if they had taken possession of it, a salvation that was first spoken by Christ and then confirmed by credible witnesses and then testified to by God Himself, it is not an empty message. It is a real living message. It is a life-changing message.

May God give us the grace not to think that we can escape judgment if we neglect so great a salvation after it was first spoken by the Lord and then confirmed to us by those who heard as God testified with them of its truthfulness through miracles.