

Review

Remember that we understand the thematic statement of Hebrews is that God tells us we must have persevering faith in Jesus in order to be saved. What we are saying is that the message of Hebrews:

- is the very Word of God;
- is that we must believe in Jesus;
- is that the kind of faith we express must be the lasting, growing kind; and
- is the only option for us if we wish to be saved from sin.

Through the book, God wishes that we will move into more maturity in our faith, and that we will understand there are severe consequences for those who refuse to cross the threshold of true belief.

1. Background from 1:5-14

Angels are mentioned in these verses because they held a prominent place in the thinking of many Jews. We will look at the details of this another time, but we can say for now that angels appeared from the earliest points of Biblical history; they were revered but not generally worshipped by Jews. They came to be seen as intermediaries in prayer and as intercessors in the inter-testamental period. Among other people, they were not worshipped. The Sadducees went the other direction and denied the existence of angels (Acts 23:8)! Today the response about angels runs the whole gamut from unbelief to preoccupation and near worship.

What is clear is that angels have always been seen as the second-ranking beings behind God, with man falling to third place. Where does Jesus fit into that ranking? Hebrews argues that He is above the angels, leaving only one category—deity! Of course, someone will say that there is another category—lower than God but higher than angels. But this is preposterous in light of texts like Romans 9:5, John 12:36-41, 2 Peter 1:1, and Titus 2:13.

Hebrews draws this conclusion by quoting from and correlated several OT texts. The conclusion is the following:

1. Christ is the Son of God. The angels are not. See 1:5.
2. Christ is to be worshiped by angels. Angels are servants. See 1:6-7.
3. Christ is the very essence of God. The angels are not. See 1:8-9.
4. Christ is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The angels are not. See 1:10-11.
5. Christ is permanent and unchangeable. The creation is not, not even the angels. See 1:12.
6. Christ is exalted at the right hand of God. The angels are not. See 1:13-14.

Having indisputably proven this much, Hebrews moves on to a very important conclusion. If Jesus Christ is so great as to be God, this requires something about our response to him.

2. We Must Listen to the Salvation Message Because of the Messenger, v. 1a

This is like when the boss five levels up steps into the building to make an announcement. He means business, particularly because he did not delegate the task to some lower-down. He is setting a new direction, addressing a major problem, or something of that serious nature. What he says makes a big difference in your job. If you don't listen or heed what it is said, there would be big trouble.

In the same way, the Bible tells us that we must so much the more pay attention and heed what we have heard, namely what was "spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:2). God did not send one of his ministering spirits (1:14) to convey the message of salvation. He sent His Son, on equal par with Himself, to convey the message.

The message is this: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He fulfilled the entire Old Testament Law, died for all sinners, was buried, rose again from the dead, and asks us to believe in Him as Lord and Savior. If we do choose to acknowledge that we are sinners, turn from our sins and follow Jesus, then we are and will be saved. That's what it means to trust Christ to be saved.

But the greatness of the messenger is not the only reason we should listen. The text gives us another big reason: there are grave dangers if we do not listen.

3. We Must Listen to the Salvation Message Because of the Danger of Drifting Away, v. 1b

The image of drifting away is a forceful one. If we do not listen, it is like we are in a boat and neglect to cast our anchor or tie up the ropes to the dock. Soon the tide will come in and lift up the boat and cause it to drift, perhaps far out to sea and far off course. With no connection to land and no point of anchor, it will be lost.

So the person who does not pay attention to what Jesus did and said will be effectively lost at sea. They will not be able to come to a point of safety if they ignore His word.

4. We Must Listen to the Salvation Message Because of the Danger of Judgment, v. 2-3a

In verses 2-4, the author uses a "lesser to greater" style of argument. If the lesser thing is certainly true, then the greater thing will be even more certainly true. The lesser thing is that whatever the angels said held true. Every time someone ignored what they said, a just retribution or penalty was doled out. Consider a couple of examples:

- Zechariah, John the Baptist's (future) father, did not believe what Gabriel said (Luke 1:19-20) and he was stricken with muteness for about 10 months.
- Lot's sons-in-law were destroyed, and he was nearly killed also because of his hesitation to obey the angelic messengers regarding the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:12-26).
- In Acts 12:21-23, King Herod (Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great who killed the babies in Bethlehem) was killed by an angel of the Lord because of his arrogance.
- When King David's heart was lifted up in pride, he took a census of his army. In response, God doled out judgment and used an angel to do so (1 Chronicles 21:15).
- Angels were present at the giving of the Mosaic Law but the religious leaders in Stephen's audience had not paid attention to that Law (Acts 7:53). They were liable for the curses laid out in the law for disobedience to it, and those curses were exercised many times in Israel's history.

That's what happens when angels bring a message from God. It is even moreso the case when Jesus speaks: the judgment is even more certain and devastating if the message is neglected.

Really the danger of drifting away and the danger of judgment amount to the same thing. If you drift away, you must be ready to receive the penalty for sin—eternal death.

5. We Must Listen to the Salvation Message Because It is a Great Message, v. 3b

The message of salvation is the most important message there is. It tells of a way to go from death to life; from sin to righteousness; from "in Adam" to "in Christ;" from guilty to pardoned; from an enemy of God to a friend of God; from bondage to sin to real freedom; from God's displeasure to God's favor. The transformation that is made in one's life upon being saved is enormous. It changes your outlook on right and wrong, on what you spend your time doing, your desires, indeed everything. In short, it saves you from sin and death. That is a great thing!

6. We Must Listen to the Salvation Message Because It Was Confirmed by Witnesses, v. 3c-4

Not only did Jesus bring the message, but it was confirmed, first of all, by the apostles. They were "those who heard Him." They were eyewitnesses of the majesty and ministry of Jesus Christ, and they testified to that effect throughout the rest of their lives (2 Peter 1:16).

Second of all, God Himself testified the same confirmatory message by sending special miraculous gifts by means of the Holy Spirit. Signs and wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit were all sent to authenticate the apostolic messengers and their message. Consider for example:

- The very raising of Jesus from the dead by the Father is a sign and wonder. That confirms his message (Eph. 1:20; 1 Peter 1:21). No one else has ever been raised from the dead like that.
- The miraculous healing of a lame man in Acts 3:6-9;
- The instant deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5;
- The miraculous delivery of Peter from prison in Acts 12;
- The raising of the dead by the apostles like Peter in Acts 9:40.

Conclusion

What is left to be said? If Jesus spoke, and the apostles and God Himself confirmed the message, and if even angelic messages were steadfast in their accomplishment, then there is nothing else we can do but to hear the message of Christ and believe upon Him.

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