

Hebrews 2:1-3a

Hebrews 2:1 (NOTES)

Note: I may inadvertently refer to the author of Hebrews as the Apostle Paul. This is a habit I developed through my own belief about the epistle's author and my experiences in teaching Paul's letters. If find it useful to refer to a book's author, but since we don't truly know the author Hebrews, my brain automatically plugs in Paul without really thinking about it. Please forgive the error. We, of course, do not know for sure who wrote the Book of Hebrews. I confess I have only a few reasons myself for believing the author to be Paul. And, I understand that there are reasonable and learned people who have different views on the question. I don't mean to push the point, or force my view on you. It is not an essential question of Christian doctrine. There is room for debate within the Body of Christ. We should be charitable in such diversions of viewpoints.

- "For this reason"-in other translations, "therefore." EXCURSUS In the interpretation of Scripture, there are rules. We call the discipline of interpretation *hermeneutics*. Among the rules of interpretation is the importance of grammar. We cannot overlook or change the grammar, syntax, or tense of a passage of Scripture to accommodate a particular interpretation. We take it as it is written in its original language, and we seek to understand what the author intended to impart to His original audience. This is the grammatical-historical approach to hermeneutics. "Therefore," thus, refers to the prior chapter's point: Jesus is superior to the angels.
- The author has been arguing that Jesus is superior to the angels. He has been using quotes from the OT to make his point. He is dealing with them on their own ground. This letter is to the Hebrews, the Jews. There is no means by which the Jews could be convinced of Jesus' superiority over the angels other than their own Scriptures. Moreover, the Scriptures to which the author refers were written centuries before the Incarnation of Christ. In them were the prophecies that Jesus now fulfills. This demonstrates the transcendence of God-He is outside the time domain, knows all things, and can accurately predict all things. Isaiah 46:10
- "we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it" - Since Jesus is superior to the angels, we must pay closer attention to what He has said. Jesus is our Creator. He has rights over us. We ignore Him at our peril.
- What has Jesus said that we need to listen to? The Gospel - the good news that our sins can be forgiven and that we can inherit eternal life, if we turn from our sin and trust in Him. Failure to pay attention to what He has said will lead to drifting away from what He has said. The more we ignore the Gospel, the less likely it is to accept it because, in a sense, we are hardening our own hearts to it. If we harden our hearts, God may seal it closed permanently.
- At the Exodus of the Jews from bondage in Egypt, God brought 10 plagues against Egypt. After each of the first 4 (water to blood, frogs, lice, and flies), Pharaoh hardened his own heart. But, after the 5th plague (death of the livestock), God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he could not repent and let God's people go. Thus, Egypt endured all 10 plagues, ending with the night of the original Passover when God sent the destroyer to take the life of the first born of every household in Egypt, including Pharaoh's first born son. There is a period of Grace, then comes God's judgment. Exodus 9:12, 11:5, 12:23

- God considers ignoring the Gospel a criminal offense. It is the only unforgiveable sin. It's called blasphemy of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the person of the godhead who convicts us in our hearts of our sins and opens our eyes to our need of salvation. Matthew 12:31-32

Hebrews 2:2 (NOTES)

- "if the word spoken through angels" - This is a reference to the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and issued the Ten Commandments, God was surrounded by 10,000 angels. Moses spoke of this in a message he gave to Israel just before his death. Deuteronomy 33:2
- "proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense" - The law God issued to Israel through Moses was unalterable, and justice was meted out through it, first by Moses, then by the judges he appointed. Exodus 18:13-27

Hebrews 2:3 (NOTES)

- "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" - If the OT law was ordained by angels, and Jesus is superior to them, how much more important is the message of His Gospel, and of how much surer judgment will we be subject if we ignore the salvation available to us through that Gospel message? Romans 2:4-8
- If the OT law could not be changed and was certain in its judgments, then there is no wiggle room in the Gospel. On Judgment Day, there will be no negotiating with God, no arguing or reasoning. Hebrews 10:26-31
- Coach Massey at Eisenhower High School once taught me this lesson. One day, during my junior year, I had been dipping Skoal and spitting out the classroom window. One of the girls sitting near me squealed "Eeeeeoooh, that's gross!" The teacher looked in my direction, figured out what was going on, and sent me to the principal's office. I sat outside Coach Massey's office running through my defense options and waiting for my turn. I hadn't been there two minutes, and I heard pop! pop! pop! from his office. The door opened, and a kid came out rubbing his behind. I was used to talking my way out of trouble, so I walked in and started talking. He asked for my hall slip, and I handed it to him. Coach Massey was about 6' 3" and 250 lbs. I was about 5' 10" and maybe 150 lbs. He read the slip and said, "Grab the desk." I said, "But, wait, I ..." and, Coach Massey said "Grab the desk, son." I tried to protest, but he just took hold of my shoulder and pushed me down toward the edge of his desk. I reached out to catch myself, and the next thing I heard was pop! pop! pop! Suddenly, my rear end was ON FIRE - it felt like a blow torch had lit me up. No discussion. No negotiating. No defense. That is what Judgment Day will be like for the billions throughout the ages who've neglected the salvation available through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- "escape" - What is it we hope to escape by our faith in Christ? The wrath of God. Hell, yes, but not just hell. Hell is only a component of the wrath of God. Hell is necessary, real, and eternal. Matthew 25:31-33, 41, 46, Mark 9:47-48, Luke 16:19-31

- God's wrath includes not getting eternal life, not enjoying perfect health, not having all your needs met forever, not experiencing a sinless existence, never knowing peace, not spending forever with Him. For the person living in a state of rejection of Christ, God's wrath is already upon him, even while he lives. His sin eats at him. He has no peace. He spends his nights worrying about losing everything, and his days fighting to keep it all. He is the enemy of God and will never enjoy His presence or love. John 3:36, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Matthew 12:30, Romans 8:7
- "so great a salvation" - What is so great about God's salvation? It's free. It does what we cannot do for ourselves, that is, pay the penalty of our sin on our behalf. It protects us from God's wrath. It shows us how good God is - how merciful and gracious He is. It gives us eternal life. It wipes away all our tears, heals us of every affliction, and gives us the peace that no one can know in this life. It gives us forever with God, with no shame or fear in His presence. It perfects us and gives us a perfect existence for all eternity. 1 Corinthians 2:9