

## ~ THE GREAT SALVATION ~

The profound statement about the superiority of the revelation spoken by Christ, in Hebrews two, is based upon the description of the Son in the first chapter. Notice first that Christ is superior to the prophets. They were spokesmen for God, He is God; they told about God's creation, He is the Creator; they described the magnificence of God, He is the express image of God; they predicted the suffering Servant, He purged our sins by His own death; they foretold that the seed of David would sit on his throne, He sits on the throne of David (Hebrews 1:1-3). Christ is then declared to be superior to angels because the Father called Him His Son, and commanded angels to worship Him. Also, the angels were simply ministering spirits, the Son is the King who will rule until His enemies become His footstool (1:4-14).

After showing Christ's superiority over the prophets and the angels, the writer said, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard him" (2:1-3).

### **The Word Through Angels**

Notice first that the word spoken through angels refers to the Old Covenant. Stephen said the Jews have "received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it" (Acts 7:53). Paul said that the law was "appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator" (Galatians 3:19). The writer of Hebrews said that law was weak and unprofitable and made nothing perfect (Heb. 7:18,19). He further said "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second" (8:7). When God, through Jeremiah, predicted a new covenant, that implied the old covenant would grow old and pass away (8:13).

Although the word spoken through angels was the lesser revelation, under it "every transgression and disobedience received a just reward" (Hebrews 2:2). The word transgression means stepping across a line, or going beyond what is authorized. The word disobedience first meant imperfect hearing, then careless hearing and finally unwillingness to hear. It refers to a deliberate closing of the ears toward God's word which had been delivered through angels.

### **The Word Through Christ**

Just as the Son is greater than the prophets and angels, the word spoken through Christ is greater than the word spoken through angels. The writer says the "great salvation" was first spoken by the Lord and was confirmed by those who heard Him. Jesus "has become a surety of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7:22), which was "established on better promises" (8:6) and was dedicated "with better sacrifices" than the old (9:23). When Jesus instituted the memorial supper, He said "this is My blood of the new covenant..." (Matthew 26:28). This covenant was given through Christ, who is

superior to angels, and was dedicated with His blood, which is superior to the blood of animals.

Jesus lived under the law (Galatians 4:4), and taught people to obey it, but there were words “first spoken by the Lord” that were different from the words spoken through angels. He told Nicodemus that a person must be “born of the water and the Spirit” in order to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). He told Pilate “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), and gave instructions about how those in the kingdom were to treat one another (Matthew 18:15-18). These things spoken by the Lord, and other things He revealed through the Spirit (John 16:12,13) are superior to the covenant given through angels.

### **The Greater Responsibility**

The writer appeals to the history of God’s people under the Old Covenant as a warning to those who live under the New. The question, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” should be a sobering warning. If they received a just reward for violating the lesser covenant, how dare we assume that we will be guiltless if we transgress the greater revelation? We must be wary not only of transgressing the things dedicated by the blood of Christ, but also of neglecting them. William Barclay commented on the expression “drift away,” “For most of us the threat of life is not so much that we should plunge into disaster, but that we should drift into sin. There are few people who deliberately and in a moment turn their backs on God; there are many who day by day drift farther and farther away from Him.”

The “great salvation” is superior to the message spoken through angels, because it came through a superior Messenger. The writer of Hebrews, reasoning from the lesser to the greater, implies that we have a greater responsibility because we have a greater revelation, “therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard.”

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