

Text: Heb 2.2-3

Our author wrote to Hebrew Christians who contemplated turning away from Christianity in favour of their old ways, the ways of Judaism.

At least, that is our understanding as we read through the book. These Christians seem to have considered Judaism as a means of still worshipping the true God and escaping the troubles that were coming because of Christianity.

After all, the true God gave the Old Testament, and Judaism was an approved sect in the Roman Empire, unlike Christianity.

As Hebrews opened, the superiority of Christ is the proposition (Heb 1.1-4).

From there, the superiority of Christ's revelation is established by exposition (Heb 1.5-14).

Now our author calls on his readers to pay close attention to Christ: he has the words of life!

The thought reminds me of the occasion described in John's Gospel where many of Jesus' followers turned away from him because of hard things he said.

Jn 6.67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

Peter responded:

Jn 6.68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

The theme of paying close attention to Christ continues in the next few verses, but our author ratchets it up a notch (or three)...

Read Heb 2.1-4, text 2-3

Proposition: The revelation of the Son offers escape from the just penalty revealed by the law. There is no other way out of our trouble.

I. Inescapable bonds of angelic revelation (2)**A. "Dueling" revelations****1. In the prologue****a. God spoke in the prophets (1.1)**

b. God has spoken in the Son (1.2)

2. In this section

a. Word spoken through angels (2.2)

b. Salvation spoken through the Lord (2.3, also see “pay attention to what we heard” (2.1)

The author is setting up a comparison between these two words, which will continue through the epistle.

This kind of argument is a Rabbinic argument (with fancy names) but in English is called, “light and heavy”

- You start with the “light” example (“the Law”)
- You finish with the “heavy” example (“the word of Christ”)

B. The word spoken through angels – what is it?

1. The same word spoken through the prophets

2. How did the word of the prophets (the OT Law, the OT revelation) become “the word spoken through angels”

a. There is a mention of “ten thousand of his holy ones” in the company of the Lord on Sinai (Dt 33.2)

b. It is mentioned also on Ps 68.17, which the Rabbis picked up

c. Then we have confirmation in the NT

1) By Stephen (Ac 7.53)

2) By Paul (Gal 3.19)

3. The word spoken by angels = the Old Testament

a. The angels are very high creatures, far above men in power

b. The word coming through them is very important

But remember, the OT = the “light” part of the argument as the author speaks

C. The character of the word spoken by angels

1. Unalterable

- a. Word used here means “solid, reliable, trustworthy”
- b. Ancient metaphor “standing firm on its feet”
- c. There is a legal sense where the word means, “guaranteed,” as when something is sold with a certificate of authenticity

So this “light” thing, the revelation, is authentic, guaranteed, solid, reliable, *unalterable*...

2. Retributive

- a. Every transgression and disobedience punished
 - 1) Transgression = overstepping the OT demands
 - 2) Disobedience = ignoring the OT demands
- b. Both kinds of sins receive their “just penalty”

Heb 10.28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*.

- 1) Nadab and Abihu overstepped their place in God’s law

Lev 10.1-2 ¶ Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

- 2) The sin of Baal-peor (Moab, under Balaam’s counsel)

Dt 4.3 “Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.

We could multiply examples in the OT

But remember: this is the “light” argument ... the “heavy” argument is coming.

II. Elevated imperatives of the Son's revelation (3)

A. No imperatives spoken, but implied

1. First, the word "so great salvation" equals "the word of the Son"

- a. Notice "it was at first spoken through the Lord"
- b. Notice also that the Law provides no salvation, only bondage
 - 1) Unalterable
 - 2) Implacable
 - 3) Exercising justice

2. Most people have a very shallow view of the Law

- a. They will protest, often, "I'm a good guy, I haven't murdered anybody"
- b. This is very like the comparisons Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount

1) You have heard, "You shall not kill"

Everyone says, "Yeah, I'm good on that."

2) Jesus says, "But I say to you do not hate. Do not be angry."

Wait a minute now you've gone too far! Who are we arguing with here?

Jesus says the Law means your anger makes you guilty.

Remember, the Law is the "light" part of the argument

- c. The law reaches much farther than we think, and there is no escape: "all have sinned"

3. The word of the Lord includes a way of escape

- a. It was first spoken by the Lord

Jn 3.17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

b. It was confirmed by those who heard the Lord's word

I take this to be the apostles, primarily

Ac 16.30-31 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

c. The word of the Lord proclaims salvation (three-fold)

- 1) The believer has been saved (past)
- 2) The believer is being saved (present)
- 3) The believer shall be saved (future)

All this hope is bound up in the word of the Lord ...

Now, I want you to be clear: this is the "heavy" part of the argument (even though it might seem light)

III. Inescapable consequences of neglect (3)

A. The logic of the two revelations

1. If the Law unalterably produces just penalties if you ignore or disobey...
2. What does the Gospel produce if you refuse the salvation offered?
3. What does the Gospel produce if you set aside the Gospel way for something lighter, something easier?

If the Law is "light," and it produces just penalties, what kind of penalties come with setting aside the word of the Son?

B. Again and again the message of the New Testament is one of the free offer of salvation and the warning of judgement

1. To the church in Pergamum, the Lord says

Rev 2.16 Therefore **repent; or else** I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

2. God doesn't force men to believe, but he calls them to believe while warning of judgement

a. Paul's gospel, positive side:

1 Cor 15.1-4 ¶ Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.³ ¶ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

b. Paul's gospel, negative side:

Rm 2.14-16 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,¹⁶ on the day when, **according to my gospel**, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord is *heavier* than the Law.

C. Refocus: the message to the Hebrews

1. They were not rejecting Christ, but neglecting Christ

“We can still believe in Jesus; we’ll just go back to practicing Judaism so we can *be safe*.”

2. The warning for them is: don't make Christ light and the Law heavy, that's exactly backwards

Conclusion:

Proposition: The revelation of the Son offers escape from the just penalty revealed by the law. There is no other way out of our trouble.

The fact is, if we aren't under Christ, we are under the Law. The Law condemns us. We have no hope, without Christ.

I urge you, if you have never trusted the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, make today the day.