

School of the Word
Hebrews
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HEBREWS 2:1-4

Sequence

- ▶ The case for Apollos as the author
- ▶ Hebrews 2:1-4
- ▶ In the letter as a whole
- ▶ The sequence/structure of the argument
- ▶ Commentary
- ▶ For us today?

Apollos

- ▶ Apollos: a Jew from Alexandria in Egypt
- ▶ Significant in the Acts: 18:25-19:7
- ▶ Made a big impression in Corinth
- ▶ Later: bishop of Crete (Jerome)
- ▶ Much later: Luther argued he was the author of Hebrews

Acts 18:24 A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent speaker, arrived in Ephesus. He was an authority on the scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord and, with ardent spirit, spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the Way [of God] more accurately. 27 And when he wanted to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. After his arrival he gave great assistance to those who had come to believe through grace. 28 He vigorously refuted the Jews in public, establishing from the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus.

- ▶ Apollos is a Jew and knows Judaism very well
- ▶ He is from Alexandria, the home of Philo
- ▶ He knows the LXX really well
- ▶ He learned from others, as did the author of Hebrews
- ▶ He proved from Scripture that Jesus was the Messiah
- ▶ He was extremely well-versed in rhetoric
- ▶ He had been a follower of John the Baptist, a stern teacher of morals
- ▶ Hebrews talks of “baptisms” — perhaps Apollos has more than one initiation in the Gospel
- ▶ “Those from Italy” would suit Priscilla and Aquila, with whom Apollos had contact.

Hebrew 2:1-4 (NAB Revised)

Heb 2:1 Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away. 2 For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. 4 God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the holy Spirit according to his will.

In the letter as a whole

- ▶ 1:5-14 The Son, superior to the angels
- ▶ 2:1-4 Invitation to pay attention (a mini exhortation, providing a link)
- ▶ 2:5-18 The Son, lower than the angels

Sequence / structure

- 2:1 introduces the exhortation
- 2:2-4 A long conditional sentence
 - “If” — meaning “given that”
 - step 1: rhetorical question and “a fortiori” argument
 - step 2: first generation of witness
 - step 3: God has confirmed the witness

A. For if the word (logos) announced through angels proved firm (bebaios),
 B. and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense,
 B* how shall we escape (punishment) if we ignore so great a salvation?

A* Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed (ebebaiōthē) for us by those who had heard. (Heb 2:2–3 NABRE)

Hebrews 2:1

Heb 2:1 Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away.

- Lit. “because of this”, but quite strong, so “therefore” is good.
- “This” = the whole presentation in 1:1-14.
- Attend/pay attention: use often in Matthew to mean “take care” or “beware” of “look out.”
- “All the more” is a frequent idea in the letter. Cf. 7:20–22; 9:13–15; 10:28–29.
- “What we have heard” = taking us back to 1:1-4.
- “Carried away” = perhaps a nautical metaphor, “drift away” (NRSV, NET, NJB) “drifting from our course” (REB).
- Cf. This we have as an **anchor** of the soul, sure and firm (Heb 6:19 NABRE)
- Notice the writer says “we”, including himself in the danger.
- Risk: not heresy etc, but laxity, carelessness, loss of attention.

Heb 2:2 For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?

- Notice the link word “for” — a conclusion is being drawn.
- “If” = really an affirmation.
- The argument: “from the lesser to the greater.”
- Word here seems to point to Moses (Ex 19-31).
- Proved firm: Heb 2:2-3; 3:14; 6:19; 9:17; 13:9 (adjective/verb).
- Exodus says God gave the tablets of the Law to Moses.
- But: a tradition grew up that it was mediated by angels.
- Notice: “transgression and disobedience.”
- Disobedience - lit. parakoē, setting aside hearing.
- Commandments and covenants always imply blessings and punishments.

And he said to the angel of the presence, “Write for Moses from the first creation until my sanctuary is built in their midst forever and ever. And the LORD will appear in the sight of all. And everyone will know that I am the God of Israel and the father of all the children of Jacob and king upon Mount Zion forever and ever. And Zion and Jerusalem will be holy.” (Jubilees 1:27–28 PSEUD-CW)

And the angel of the presence, who went before the camp of Israel, took the tablets of the division of years from the time of the creation of the law and testimony according to their weeks (of years), according to the jubilees, (Jubilees 1:29 PSEUD-CW)
 Cf. Gal 3:19; Acts 7:30, 38, 53

“Forty years later, an angel appeared to him in the desert near Mount Sinai in the flame of a burning bush.” (Acts 7:30 NABRE)

Hebrew OT (MT)	Greek OT (LXX)
Deut 33:2 He said: The LORD came from Sinai and dawned on his people from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. With him were myriads of holy ones; at his right hand advanced the gods.	Deut 33:2 And he said: The Lord has come from Sina and appeared to us from Seir and hasted from Mount Pharan with myriads of Kades; at his right, angels with him.

Heb 2:2 For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, 3a how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?

- v. 3a: a rhetorical question expecting that answer “we will not escape.”
- Cf. See that you do not reject the one who speaks. For if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much more in our case if we turn away from the one who warns from heaven. (Heb 12:25 NABRE)
- Ignore: lit. to neglect.
- The argument is from *pathos*, i.e. by touching the feelings.
- Salvation: cf. 1:14.
- Regularly: a better salvation (Heb 6:9; 2:10; 5:9; 9:28).
- Conversely, a reward at the end of time. Cf. Heb 9:28 and 10:25.

Heb 2:3b Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard.

- Notice the link word “for” — a conclusion is being drawn.
- Originally: lit. start / archē meaning source as well
- Notice: salvation is *spoken* by the Lord.
- Lord: i.e. Jesus the Lord.
- Thus the audience is one remove (at least) from ministry of Jesus and the first witnesses.
- Confirmed: lit. ebebaiōthē.
- Human witnesses are important to Hebrews.
- Cf. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us (Heb 12:1 NABRE).
- Deut 19:15 says two witnesses are required. Here we have the Lord and those who heard him. An “impressive” third witness is to come.

Heb 2:4 God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the holy Spirit according to his will.

- Lit. co-testimony of God.
- “Signs and wonders” in the OT: Ex 7:3; Deut 4:34, 6:22; Ps 135:9; Jere 32:20-21; Neh 9:10.
- “Signs and wonders” cf. Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22; John 4:48; Acts 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12; Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; 2 Thess 2:9; Heb 2:4.
- “Power” cf. Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14, 36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 10:13, 19; 19:37; 21:26–27; 22:69; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:22; 3:12; 4:7, 33; 6:8; 8:10, 13; 10:38; 19:11.
- “Power” cf. Rom 1:4, 16, 20; 8:38; 9:17; 15:13, 19; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:4–5; 4:19–20; 5:4; 6:14; 12:10, 28–29; 14:11; 15:24, 43, 56; 2 Cor 1:8; 4:7; 6:7; 8:3; 12:9, 12; 13:4; Gal 3:5; Phil 3:10; 1 Thess 1:5.
- Variety of gifts: 1 Cor 12 and 14.
- Thus, a three-fold witness is brought to bear, confirmed in the experience of the listeners/hearts of the letter.

Hebrews 2:1-4 (NAB Revised)

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And so..

1. The many-splendored portrayal of the superiority of the Son in 1:5–14 is a clear reminder that Christian life and thought begin in doxology. But following the liturgy comes the “Therefore,” and 2:1–4 supplies the first of many in Hebrews. In this regard the writer is not unlike Paul, who, having concluded Romans 1:1–11 with a burst of praise (Rom 11:33–36), begins chap. 12 with “Therefore.” There is always a “Therefore.”
2. One has to be impressed by the strength of the writer’s case for the message of the “great salvation.” Note the source of the message (God); the superiority of the messenger (Christ); the unbroken tradition of the word (God-Christ-his hearers-us); and the corroborating testimony from God (signs, wonders, miracles, gifts of the Holy Spirit). And in view of this forceful reminder of what was theirs as inheritors of salvation (1:14), one has to be a bit surprised that the condition addressed was that of inattention, neglect, indifference, drifting.
3. That there could be apathy toward the gospel may seem unbelievable to the newly baptized, but the fact is that this condition has plagued the church from the first century. Among the seven deadly sins, the ancients saw fit to list *ακηδία* akēdia, usually translated “sloth.” The word means “unconcerned,” “uncaring,” “uninterested.” The writer will mount repeated campaigns against this passivity.

Conversation