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How Shall We Escape If We Ignore So Great a Salvation

The First Warning - 2: 1-4

The Danger of Neglect: Intellectually convinced Jews

How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation DIG: What did the writer to the Hebrews do in the midst of his discussion of angels? Who is this warning to? Ultimately, how do people end up in hell? Who is a person actually rejecting when they reject Yeshua Messiah? Do they deliberately choose to go there, or do they drift into hell? What are the two key Greek words in 2:1? Define them both and explain their significance. Explain how the angels were instrumental in bringing the Torah to Isra'el. What were the gifts of the Spirit referred to in 2:4? What was their special purpose?

REFLECT: In what ways do you, or people you have observed, neglect their salvation? Why is it difficult to appreciate and pay attention to the Word of God as we should? Do you know of anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God who has come into the world to save sinners from hell, but has not crossed the line from knowledge to faith? Are you praying for them? Have you invited them to your place of worship? Have you challenged them to go the extra step?

The best way to reinforce your progress in fulfilling God's purposes in your life is to keep a spiritual journal. Write down insights and life lessons YHVH teaches you about Himself, about yourself, about life, relationships, and everything else. Record these so you can review and remember them. The reason we must pay careful attention to these life lessons is that we forget them. Reviewing your spiritual journal regularly can spare you from a lot of unnecessary pain and heartache. We remember what we record.⁴¹

We are living in a time when truth does not seem to count for much. The intellectual climate is summed up by the popular bumper sticker, "My karma ran over your

dogma.” In other words, “Don’t get hung up over matters of doctrine or truth. Feeling good is all that really matters.” This may sound inclusive, tolerant and attractive, but it is a far cry from the attitude of the biblical writers, to whom such an attitude is a recipe for disaster.⁴²

In **Hebrews 13:22** the entire letter is referred to as **a message of exhortation**. Hence, it requires a response. So as his teaching on the superiority of **Christ to angels** warms the writer’s heart, he inserts a moving invitation. And like all good invitations, it includes both exhortation and a warning - what to do and what happens if you don’t do it.

The opening verses of **Hebrews 2** contain the first of **five warning passages (to see link click [Ag](#) - The Audience of the Book of Hebrews)** interspaced throughout the book - often, as here, in the middle of a teaching on one of the superiorities of **Messiah**. It is as if the author could only go so far without stopping to make an appeal, “Now what are you going to do about this?” A person can know all the truth there is to know about **Jesus Christ**, but if they do not step over the line from knowledge to faith, they will end up in hell for all eternity.⁴³



How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation (2:3)? To whom is this warning directed? It cannot be to believers. We can never be in danger of **ignoring our salvation** - in the sense of not receiving it - since we already have it and cannot lose it (see the commentary on **[The Life of Christ Ms](#) - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). We can neglect spiritual growth and discipleship, but we cannot neglect **salvation**. Nor can the warning be to those who have never heard the gospel, because they cannot **ignore** something they don’t even know exists. So the warning must be directed to those unbelieving Jews, who were intellectually convinced of the Good News, but who failed to receive it for themselves.

But if the warning is to unbelievers, why does the author speak of **we** and **us**? Does he include himself among the intellectually convinced but uncommitted? Is the author saying that he himself is not a believer? No. The **us** means that he includes himself among the Jews who had heard the gospel message. His willingness to identify himself with this Messianic congregation did not mean he was in the same spiritual boat as they were. There were weeds among the wheat (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ev - The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds**). It's as if the writer is saying to the intellectually convinced, "All of us who have heard the gospel ought to accept it." The underlying message is really, to reject **Yeshua Messiah** is to reject **God**.⁴⁴

We are given three reasons to receive salvation. The character of Messiah: If **Christ** is just another **angel**, there is little reason to take **His** gospel seriously. But because **He** is **God's Son** and **much better than angels (1:4)**, **we must therefore, pay the most careful attention (2:1a)**. The Greek word for **pay attention**, *prosechein*, is a nautical term. It was used to indicate holding a sailing course or securing an anchor. There is a danger, the writer argues, but there is also a remedy. To avoid **drifting** off course you hold onto the gospel wheel of the ship. To avoid **drifting away** with the current you drop your anchor of **God's Word** in the sea of chaos and situation ethics.⁴⁵

Drifting away happens on its own without much effort on our part, but staying on course requires real effort. **We must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away** (Greek: *pararuomen*, a word that occurs only here in the New Covenant). This is another nautical term describing a ship that has sailed off course, or a ship in harbor that has slipped its moorings. In other contexts it is used to describe something that slips our minds. One of the key ideas here is that this **drifting** away is something that happens largely unnoticed. While it is happening the changes are imperceptible; only later do its consequences show **(2:1b)**.⁴⁶ Most people do not dive headlong and intentionally go to hell. They **drift** into it. **The Word of God**, however, never **drifts**. The harbor of salvation is **Jesus Christ**, and **He** never changes. Salvation is always available until the time when someone **drifts** past the harbor of grace. How many people have been so close only to **drift away**? **Drifting** is so quiet and easy, all you have to do is nothing.

By the time **Hebrews** was written, countless **Jews** had heard the gospel, many directly from an apostle. No doubt, many were favorably impressed with the

message, even intrigued by it. **They** thought about it; but most rejected it. **Yeshua's** warning: **Listen carefully to what I AM about to tell you (Luke 9:44)**, can apply to the entire gospel. It must get inside of us and make a change in our lives. It is not enough just to hear it. That is only the beginning, as we are reminded: **Pay attention to what I say, turn your ears to My words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body (Proverbs 4:20-22)**. When you hear **the Word of God**, make it yours.⁴⁷ Do not **drift** past **it**, for that has eternal consequences. Accordingly, the unbelieving **Jews** in the midst of the persecuted Messianic community were urged to act and to step over the line of mere knowledge - to faith.

The certainty of judgment: Next, **the Spirit of God** points out the reason why the readers should **pay attention** to the character of **Messiah**. **For since the Word was spoken through angels was binding (2:2a)**. Nowhere in the TaNaKh is there a clear statement that Moses received the Torah **through angels**. There are, however, two passages in the TaNaKh that hint at that possibility (**Deuteronomy 33:2** and **Psalms 68:17**). Even though these passages do not clearly state it, this teaching was a part of **rabbinic tradition**. Now and then the B'rit Chadashah confirms a rabbinic teaching and this is one of those cases (also see **Acts 7:53** and **Galatians 3:19**). **The LORD** used **angels** in the divine work of revelation, including the Torah. **For since the Word spoken through angels** has proven to be sure and firm, how much more will this be true of the revelation that came by means of **the One** who is superior to **angels: the Son!**

And every transgression and disobedience received its just judgment (2:2b). **The Torah**, as the first readers of **Hebrews** well knew, is full with examples of judgment. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moshe and were swallowed up into the earth (**Numbers 16:32**); Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire (**Leviticus 10:2**). Achan disobeyed by taking that which was devoted to destruction and was stoned along with his whole family (**Joshua 7:25**). And the whole generation of Israelites who did not trust **ADONAI** were made to wander forty years in the wilderness before dying in the desert (**Numbers 14:33**).⁴⁸ However painful the temporary physical **judgment** is, it pales in comparison to the eternal punishment that awaits unbelievers. **Yeshua Himself** said: **Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28)**.

Hell is a very real place. The B'rit Chadashah calls it eternal fire (**Matthew 25:41**), where **the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48)**. It is called **a lake of fire that burns with sulfur (Revelation 19:20), a bottomless pit or abyss (Revelation 9:11, 11:7 and others), outer darkness where there is continual weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 22:13), and black darkness (Jude 13)**.

The principle seems to be, the greater our light, the greater is our responsibility, and the greater will be our punishment if we fail in our responsibility (**Luke 12:47**). It may well be that the different stages of punishment in **hell** are not so much a matter of objective circumstances as of subjective awareness of the pain and separation from **ADONAI**. This is parallel to the varying degrees of reward in heaven (**Dani'el 12:3; Luke 19:11-27; First Corinthians 3:14-15; Second Corinthians 5:10**). To some extent, the different degrees of punishment reflect the fact that unrepentant sinners will be given over to the evil desires of their hearts. The misery they will experience from having to live with their own wickedness, will be eternally proportionate to the degree of awareness of precisely what they were doing when they chose evil. Tyre and Sidon were terribly guilty of unbelief and disobedience, and throughout the Bible Sodom and Gomorrah typify gross ungodliness and immorality. But none of these were as guilty as Capernaum, or Bethsaida or Chorazin (**Matthew 11:20-24**) because these three not only had the light of the Torah, but the very light of **the Messiah Himself!** But for unbelievers, the person who knows and understands the gospel, but **drifts** away from it, will experience extreme punishment.

Two Greek words are used here for sin: **transgression** (*parabasis*) and **disobedience** (*parakoe*). Transgression means to step across the line, as a willful act. It is an overt sin of commission - of intentionally doing something we know to be wrong. Disobedience, however, carries the idea of deliberately shutting the ears to the commands, warnings and invitations of **ADONAI**. It is the sin of neglect, of omission - doing nothing when we should do something. One is active and the other is passive. Both are willful and both are serious, but the punishment for the sin is **just**. **God** is often accused of being unjust when **His** punishment seems to be out of proportion to the sin committed. But **YHVH**, by **His** very nature, cannot be unjust. In the Dispensation of the Torah, **He** punished severely those who were determined to live their lives without **Him** and to defy **Him**. **He** removed them from among **His** people for the sake of the righteous of the TaNaKh. **His** judgment on the people of Isra'el was sometimes severe because they had been given the Torah as a guiding

light.

Punishment for unbelievers is always related to the light of **God's Word**. **ADONAI** has set up a stream of blessing and a stream of cursing in this life (**Deuteronomy 28:1-68**). It applies to both believers and unbelievers. The more one obeys **His Word**, the more they will be blessed. If an unbeliever is basically an honest person, faithful to his or her spouse, works hard is honest and doesn't cheat or steal, their life can experience **the Lord's** blessing because, either knowingly or unknowingly, they are obeying **God's Word**. They still aren't saved, but their lives will go smoother. But if a believer is unfaithful to his spouse, is lazy at work or doesn't work, lies, cheats and steals to get ahead, his life will be miserable and he will experience the cursing of **God** (see **Psalms 37** and **73**) because he is disobeying **God's Word**. Believers do not lose their salvation, but their lives will be in constant turmoil. And if a believer drags **God's** name through the mud long enough, the Bible tells us that he will not only be **handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved**, but he will also face the judgment of loss of rewards in heaven (see the commentary on **Revelation Cc - For We Must All Appear Before the Judgment Seat of Christ**).

How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first declared by the Lord, was confirmed to us by the apostles who heard Him in person (2:3). When **Yeshua** first preached the gospel, **He** also did something that made it even more believable. **He** said: **Even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father (John 10:38)**. When **He** claimed to be **God** and then did things that only **God** could do (see the commentary on **Isaiah G1 - The Three Messianic Miracles**), **He confirmed His** divinity, and, consequently, the truth of **His** message. On the day of Shavu'ot **Kefa** reminded **his** hearers that **Yeshua the Nazarene was a man demonstrated to you to have been from God by the powerful miracles and wonders and signs He performed (Acts 2:22)**.

ADONAI gave similar confirming signs through the apostles, the first preachers of the gospel other than **Christ Himself**. Many of their listeners no doubt said, "Why should we believe them? There have always been a lot of false teachers around. How can we know that these are true?" For that reason **the Lord confirmed** that these men were really **His** apostles by giving them the ability to do the same things that **He** had done during **His** earthly ministry - **the powerful miracles and wonders and signs**. They raised the dead and healed many diseases and

afflictions, and as a result, **YHVH** confirmed their ministry.⁴⁹

The conformation of God: As if this confirmation were not enough, **Ha'Shem** also gave the apostles special gifts of **the Holy Spirit. While God also bore witness to it with various signs, wonders and miracles, and with gifts of the Ruach HaKodesh that He distributed as He chose (2:4 CJB).** There are many **gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12, First Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:8).** But **the gifts** referred to here were **miraculous gifts** for the sake of **confirmation (Second Corinthians 12:12; Romans 15:19; Acts 14:3 and 19:11-12).** Such gifts as prophesying, a word of knowledge, healing, miracles, tongues and interpretation of tongues all ceased with the apostolic era (**First Corinthians 13:8**). These confirming gifts have no need to exist today, and the age of **signs, wonders and miracles** ended with the passing of the apostles.⁵⁰

When **Jesus** and **His** apostles healed, they healed instantly. There was no waiting for restoration to come in stages. They healed with a word or a touch, without prayer and sometimes even without being near the afflicted person. They healed completely, never partially. They healed everyone who came to them, everyone who was brought to them, and everyone for whom healing was asked by another. They healed organic diseases from birth and raised the dead. Today anyone claiming the gift of healing should be able to do likewise.

We must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard, the writer to the **Hebrews** exhorts, **so that we do not drift away.** These words are as relevant today as they were when first written. We should fear to be separated from the anchor of **God's Word**, or to have any other hand on the wheel of our lives than **the Captain** of our salvation. To **drift away** is ultimately to invite the **judgment** that **Ha'Shem** will inflict on those who neglect **His** saving message of **Yeshua Messiah.**

The writer to the **Hebrews** says that **God bore witness to** the gospel in the apostolic age **with various signs, wonders and miracles.** We are not to go seeking after **signs and wonders,** but there is a **miracle** that happens today in the lives of those who hold fast to the message of **God's Word.** It is the miracle of a changed life - a changed mind and a changed heart, changed attitudes and changed behaviors - changed into the likeness of **God's Son, Jesus Christ.** This is the wonder by which **YHVH** conveys **His Word** to the world today, believers enlightened in truth, purified in holiness, settled in peace and energized in love. This is the eternal life that begins today in the lives of those who believe and do not



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drift away. As **ADONAI** does this in you, through **His Word, He** will use the miracle of your life to communicate **His** message in **Messiah** to others.

This is **God's** "karma," which runs over the dogma of this world's unbelief, so that many will believe and be saved, no longer **ignoring so great a salvation**, and therefore escaping the wrath that is sure to come on all who are merely intellectually convinced about the truth of **Jesus Christ.**⁵¹