

The Hebrews Initiative:
So Great A Salvation!
Hebrews 2:1-4, 14-18

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Text Introduction: We are in a series that we are calling the Hebrews Initiative. It is an important journey. Though not exactly the same, our circumstances are similar to that of the original recipients of Hebrews. As such, it is my prayer that this study will provide significant encouragement to us to persevere in this post-Christian and at times anti-Christian world in which we find ourselves living.

If you have just joined us today, you are right on time. This is just our second week, so join us for the next 10 and let's journey together.

Last week, we examined chapter 1 in some detail. We learned from this anonymous author to the Hebrews that "It all starts and ends with Jesus." That is, in Jesus, God revealed Himself to us, represented Himself to us, and reconciled us to Himself.

We have come now to chapter 2. Immediately in our reading, you will notice the word "therefore" which draws us back to chapter 1.

Text: We must, therefore, pay even more attention to what we have heard, so that we will not drift away. ²For if the message spoken through angels was legally binding and every transgression and disobedience received a just punishment, ³how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. ⁴At the same time, God also testified by signs and wonders, various miracles, and distributions of gifts from the Holy Spirit according to His will.

¹⁴Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through His death He might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the Devil— ¹⁵and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. ¹⁶For it is clear that He does not reach out to help angels, but to help Abraham's offspring. ¹⁷Therefore, He had to be like His brothers in every way, so that He could become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For since He Himself was tested and has suffered, He is able to help those who are tested.

Introduction: Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons are psychologists. Together they wrote a book titled, *The Invisible Gorilla*. The book was the product of their research whereby they asked people to watch a video and asked the people to count the number of times that individuals in the video passed around a basketball. The subjects of the research were to count the number of passes. In the middle of the video, the researchers had a man come out appearing in a full body gorilla costume, thump his chest, and nine seconds later walk out of view. Are you ready for this? Half of the people who viewed the video did not see the gorilla. When asked about the gorilla, the typical response was something like, "Did I see what?" When reshown the video, the typical response was to accuse the researchers of switching videos on them.

It is amazing what we miss when we don't pay attention. That is why the writer of Hebrews says, "We must therefore pay even more attention to what we have heard."

You notice the phrase in verse 3, "such a great salvation." With those words we find our starting place this morning. Indeed, in Jesus, we have a great salvation.

Many consider the book of Hebrews to be one of the most complex books in the New Testament. Our unfamiliarity with the Old Testament sacrificial system is probably one of the issues that makes this a difficult book. We can make the book much easier to understand if we consider the context of the original letter. The Book of Hebrews was written to encourage Christians to persevere in their faith in the midst of persecution. Even though the recipients of the letter were victims of persecution, the call of the author is for them to persevere in their faith. Nothing, even persecution, should detract them from following Christ. Salvation through Christ is and was so superior to every aspect of their former religion, Judaism, that they would be fools not to persevere in their commitment to Christ. The primary thrust of the book is to show how Jesus is superior to several things so very familiar to them. Christ is superior to the Angels. (1-2) That seems odd to us that someone might think Christ less than the angels, but that would not have been odd at all to them. In addition, Christ is superior to Moses and Joshua. (3-4) Moreover, Christ is superior to Aaron's Priesthood. (5-7) And, finally, Christ is superior to the Mosaic Law. (8-10)

With that outline, we see "The Conclusion of Christ's Superiority." Why would anyone even be thinking about turning away from Christ? Why would they not endure and persevere in their faith and calling? Even though the persecution is not pleasant and even threatens lives, isn't Christ superior in every way to the law?

Such superiority demands and deserves our highest praise and allegiance.

A great salvation depends upon a great Savior which demands a great surrender.

A Great Savior

Chapter 1 reveals His Divinity. I don't want to take you back through all of that this morning, but suffice to say, chapter 2 is dependent upon chapter 1. Chapter 1 forms a foundation to see chapter 2. This, by the way, is one of the beautiful reasons to study whole books. We get the full picture.

Chapter 2 reveals His Humanity. Jesus being fully divine and fully human make Him a unique and great Savior.

Some Evidence of the Humanity of Jesus

- His Birth—The first chapters of the Gospels tell us of His birth. The Gospels tell us of His brothers and sisters. The Gospels give us His family's genealogy. All of that speaks to His humanity. Here in Hebrews, we see his humanity conveyed in verses 9 and 14, for example. Jesus was made lower than the angels for a short time. Jesus took on flesh and blood.

- His Life—He suffered. What better evidence to indicate that someone truly was human than to identify through suffering?
- His Death—The agony of the cross is depicted pointing to His real death.

In the midst of this kind of argument about a great salvation comes the development of Jesus being a great Savior. Here in chapter 2 is a tremendous picture of the humanity of Christ. If we are going to get the full picture, we must consider the humanity of Christ alongside the Deity of Christ.

One of the early Church fathers helps us to do this. Chrysostom, the great church father, put it in a beautiful paragraph, and I want to read it to you: 'I do not think of Christ as God alone, or man alone, but both together. For I know He was hungry, yet I know that with five loaves He fed 5000. I know He was thirsty, and I know yet that He turned the water into wine. I know that He was carried in a ship, yet I know that He walked upon the sea. I know that He died, yet I know that He raised the dead Himself. I know that He was set before Pilate, and I know that He sits with the Father in His throne. I know that He was worshipped by angels, yet I know that He was stoned by the Jews.'

Conclusion: Nobody ever really doubted His humanity.

But, what is the point? Does it matter that Jesus was fully human? The answer for us is a resounding “YES!” The point of all theology is practical. There is great application in the fact that He became man. His becoming man shows us our great salvation!

A Great Salvation

What makes our salvation great? Here, we get at least these four reasons.

- Victory over Death
- Victory over the fear of death
- Victory over Sin
- Victory over temptation of sin

So, there is forgiveness of sin, but the possibility to be free from sin.

A Great Surrender

So what? Hebrews 2:1, “We must therefore pay even more attention to what we have heard so that we will not drift away.”

In which direction would you say that your relationship with Christ is going?

Are you spending time with Him and His Word?

Are you neglecting spiritual disciplines?

Are you being obedient to that which He has called you to do?

A great Savior and a great salvation demand a great surrender.