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## *Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews*

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### ***Hebrews 2:1-4: “Listen to Christ!”***

**General idea:** Jesus Christ is supremely greater than all. Thus, we are called to fervently listen, know, and carefully apply what we are taught from the Word as well as from other godly sources. The Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ is an imperative reality. If we do not hear it, we will not know it, and then we cannot apply it; the result will be our drifting away from His precepts and call. Thus, we will miss the vital knowledge and the opportunities He has for us. God uses various ways to deliver His Truth—from angels to His written Word, and through the Word of the Son. His Word is valuable beyond measure and the truth for our lives. We must also be aware of the cost of disobedience, because missing His message means we miss Him and His call and His opportunities. Our call includes not letting good knowledge and opportunities waste away. Even though our salvation is secured, as Christians we should never be indifferent to His precepts and call. God’s message is true, it has been verified, and it stands the test of time and scrutiny, even shown true by miracles.

**Contexts and Background:** This passage begins a series of five cautions that exhort and encourage us to pay attention to God’s Word, including correct, godly teaching. These five admonitions start here: one—to hear Him; then, in the following passages through chapter three: two—see Him; third—trust Him; fourth—believe Him, and fifth—obey Him. Then, they are repeated (Heb. 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29). These are the “basics” for discipleship and growing in our Lord. These are also seasoned with severe warnings such as when we do not fear and trust in God, we damage our call and bring chaos to ourselves and others around us.

The recipients of this Epistle were a misguided church who thought angels were supreme and that their messages were binding and infallible beyond that of the Prophets and even Christ. This teaching was not from the Torah or Writings. It was a first century heresy infecting both Jewish and Christian groups. Why is this so important? So the role of Christ is not confused with the role and purpose of angels who are inferior and so people in the early church and today will not compromise Christ’s status to appease others. Thus, Hebrews makes it clear that Christ is *All in All* and His Word is far more infallible and binding than angels or anything else. The author uses a classic Jewish writing technique of the *lesser to the greater* (“*qal vahomer*” or *how much more*) while using images of Sinai to bring his point home to those whose faith and knowledge of Christ was slipping away. This is confirmed by the first eyewitnesses, primarily the apostles, who had given their word that the message is true and then it was authenticated by signs and wonders (Heb. 3:12-14; 4:1, 11; 5:11-12; 6:11-12; 10:22-25; 12:1-13, 25-29). The basic message for us is to trust in Christ, not in His creation or even His messengers. And in so doing, He will

send us angels to serve us when we need them, and we may never even be aware of it (Deut. 32:43; 2 Sam. 7:14; Psalm 2:7; 97:7; Acts 13:33).

### **Commentary, Word and Phrase Meanings:**

- *Careful attention.* This implies *to hear the gospel of His redemptive work and then to grow deeper.* It is a call that is universal, that all Christians should pay close attention to the teachings of the Word. The responsibility of the believer is to learn and partake of His precepts, given to us because God cares; we should respond with reverence and gratitude. Even as rejecting the message of God's messengers was a severe offence, rejecting Christ's message is a far greater offence and carries with it penalties that last for eternity.
- *Drift away/let then slip.* The Greek *pararreō* occurs only here in the New Testament, and means being careless and neglectful, like having something precious slip away such as a ring from a finger that is then lost forever. It was also a nautical term for a ship that breaks anchor, tossed by the seas and wrecked because of the negligence of the crew. This is not about being forgetful, but about allowing our foolishness to carry us away. The warning is that our apathy and sluggishness will cause us to drift away from the Word of God and His wondrous precepts and call as well as the opportunities He has for us (Prov. 3:21).
- *Binding/reliable.* A legal term meaning *beyond just a witness.* This is truth; it is absolute and binding. The combination of Hebrew, Nautical and judicial language was a very powerful argument covering all the bases—that Christ is the greater revelation. Many people in the early church were taking their new faith for granted because they thought grace was a license for apathy and irresponsibility.
- *Spoken/declared.* In context, this infers that angels are important and have a valuable and active duty, and are even involved in giving us God's Truth. This theme is from The Old Testament as angels may have helped give Moses the Law at Sinai. Jewish tradition also taught that God used His angels to deliver the law to Moses and the Prophets, "He came with myriads of holy ones." (Deut. 33:2) Although in the Old Testament, this use of *holy ones* meant the Jews as God's Holy possessions (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 16:19; 28:8). The author uses this argument to make his point here. Moreover, Jesus is the ultimate declaration of Truth (Ex. 3:2; Psalm 68:17; Acts 7: 38, 53; Gal. 3:19; Col. 1:15-17).
- *Just punishment/retribution/recompense.* Means having a good wage or reward; here it is a negative, meaning not being allowed to receive it. Those who refuse God's decrees are liable for their actions and have no right to partake of His blessings; furthermore, God has the right to purge them from His presence, although by grace He usually does not. In Old Testament times, people were purged from the Temple and the community for gross violations of the Covenant;

some were even stoned to death. Jewish teaching also foretold that such people were evil and banned from Heaven (Deut. 17:2-7; 32:2; Psalm 68:17; Heb. 6:6; 10:28-29, 35).

- *Ignore such a great salvation.* Meaning that the gospel is superior to the law and it is futile and foolish to disregard it. Christ is the Ultimate Victor who gives us salvation; it is given by His Work and none of our own. However, our deliverance can be missed and slip away—not our salvation once we receive Christ, but all of our rewards because we skipped His instructions, missed out on opportunities, and traded our trust and obedience for indifference and waywardness (2 Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:1).
- *Salvation.* Means we share in Christ's triumphant domination. Here, it refers to our inheritance as God's adopted children and our reward in the glory to come in Heaven's eternity. Because of this great fact, we have no fear of death or the life to come after; rather, it is a forward hope and a freedom as the ultimate wrath, punishment, and fear are gone for us (Luke 12:31-32; 22:29-30; Heb. 1:14; 4:16; 10:22; 12:28; 13:15-16)
- *First announced by the Lord.* Here, it is confirmed and made known to us. We are called and empowered by the Spirit to know and proclaim His Truth so the world can have an example to lead them to Him.
- *Who heard.* Means this is confirmed to us by those who heard Christ firsthand. This is also a term meaning to sit at a masters feet and learn. We do this by sitting at the feet of our Lord with diligence, perseverance, and discipline. Christianity is grace and free, but our growth takes time and work so we can be our best for His highest. The Apostles bore witness to Christ and have told and written it all down for us so we can "hear" it too. This witness helps us to know Him and then make Him known by our witness. There is a responsibly implied to hear and to obey as the following passages testify (Acts 1:21-22; 10:39-41; 1 pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:15).
- *Signs, wonders and various miracles.* Refers to God's confirmation as He used supernatural activities beyond our limited knowledge and comprehension to prove His point and demonstrate His Word. They were also used to show the authority of the Apostles and those sent by God such as Stephen who healed people who were sick beyond current medical knowledge. This was the authentic witness and proof of God. Signs are never pointed to themselves or the human performer; rather, they point to the Person and Work of Christ (Acts 2:4-12, 22, 43; 3:7-9, 11-12, 16; 4:30; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:4-12).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Many people have their opinions of who Jesus is. As Reformed or Evangelical Christians, we are sure we know who Jesus is. He is clearly spelled out in our creeds and confessions, perhaps preached on Sunday and studied during the week. But, who is He really to you? Is the world's interpretation the same as yours? Is He a mere man? A prophet? A mad man? A liar, fraud, or imposter? Is He truly our LORD, or is He a convenience or a compartment of our life, or even just a puppet for us to get our way with God? If you really think this through, you may be surprised what you find, because how you live out your Christian life is a true reflection of who Jesus is to you. What we do with His spoken and written Word will determine how we are to ourselves, others, and to the world, as this mindset fuels our faith and our maturity. It will also decide our composure and contentment and be the main inspiration for our growth in Christ and our relationships with those around us. If we ignore His voice and shirk our responsibilities, we forfeit so many of His wonders and the enjoyment of life in Christ. Allow Christ to weave and thread His Life, Truth, and Way in and through you; there is no better way. So, are you serious about your faith and His Word (Gal. 5; Heb. 12:25)!?

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

***Additional Questions:***

1. Have you ever lost something that was very precious to you that slipped away and was lost forever because of your or someone else's neglect? How did you feel about it? How is this like not paying attention to God's Word or godly instructions?
2. How has His Word been valuable beyond measure and true for your life? How can it be more?
3. Rejecting the message of God and His messengers was a severe offence, and carried with it penalties that last for eternity. So is this fair? How, and why?

4. How is Jesus Christ displayed in your life as supremely greater than all? How can He be more? What gets in your way of His Way?
5. What does it take for you to listen, know, and apply carefully what you are taught from the Word? What have been some good, godly sources for you? How can you make better uses of them?
6. How can your life be of more worth, having a purpose that will resound throughout eternity? How does this passage show this to you?
7. Who is Jesus to you? What have you done with this knowledge? Do you see, feel, and know His Divine Fullness? Do you realize that through Christ, we have everything that is important and effectual for eternity? What can you do to make this more effectual?
8. Why does God go all out to show Christ's LORDSHIP and rule both to us and to the entire universe?
9. What does it mean to your daily faith that Jesus is infinitely superior to any created being or thing? So, why did some people in the early church as well as some today seek to compromise Christ' status to appease others?
10. What has happened when you may have let good knowledge and opportunities waste away? What can your church do to inspire and challenge its people to take more of a hold on biblical precepts?
11. What can Christians do to better pay close attention to the teachings of the Word? How do our apathy and sluggishness cause us to drift away from the Word of God and His wondrous precepts and call? What can you do to make sure you do not miss the opportunities He has for you?
12. How and why is it our responsibility as believers to learn and partake of His precepts? How can it help you to understand that God cares and empowers us? How will you react and respond to His Word from now on? How can your reverence and gratitude for who and what Christ did help you in this quest to grow deeper in Him?