

THE PERFECT SAVIOR (HEB 2: 9-18)

We're in a study of the Book of Hebrews. "Jesus Christ: Above All Else" – which is really what Hebrews is about. The writer uses the O.T. scriptures (remember, the N.T. had not yet been written) to remind Jewish believers who were experiencing a crisis of faith of WHO Jesus is. But we have pointed out that the recipients of this letter would also have included some unbelieving Jews as well as what I call "fence-straddlers." These are Jews who intellectually agreed that Jesus probably was their Messiah, the One foretold of in the O.T., but who had never committed themselves to Him. The writer of Hebrews explains why the new covenant that Jesus mediated between us and God is BETTER than the old covenant that was mediated by angels at Mount Sinai. This whole argument for the superiority of Jesus above all else is laid out throughout Hebrews and we're going to see this as we go thru this book.

In Chapter 1 Jesus is introduced to us as the promised Messiah, the Son of God, the heir and ruler of all things. He's the Creator and Sustainer of the entire world. He's the brightness of God's glory. He's the exact image of God. Jesus is greater than the angels. None of the angels, as awesome as they are, were ever referred to by God as "My Son." But Jesus WAS in Psalm 2 and Psalm 89. Not one angel was ever promised that they would have a kingdom that would last forever. But Jesus WAS in Psalm 45. In fact, the writer of Hebrews emphasizes that it is the angels will worship HIM (Jesus) and quotes Psalm 97.

In Chapter 2 we saw that we human beings were made lower than the angels. This wasn't the way it was originally. It was a result of the Fall in Genesis Chapter 3. Originally we were created in the image of God. We were given dominion over the earth – to rule the earth and to represent our Creator. But part of the curse from Adam's sin was that our dominion was taken away from us. It was temporarily handed over to Satan whom Jesus refers to in the Gospel of John as "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). That's the Bad News. But the Good News is that God

loves us – you and me – us mere mortals, sinful creatures that we are, and God desires not only good for us, but the best for us. He doesn't want us to remain in our lost, sinful condition. When Adam sinned and mankind fell, God had a plan of redemption already in place. God's plan provided THE way for fallen humanity to be restored back to God and once again be given dominion over the earth. This will happen NOT in this world. It will all happen in the world to come (Revelation 20, 21 and 22). That promise was made, NOT to the angels, but only to redeemed humanity – "to the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:18, 27). So, although we humans may be lower than the angels right now, TODAY, Jesus said that in the world to come we will be "equal to angels" (Luke 20:36). In Revelation 3:21 Jesus (talking to the seven churches of Asia Minor) promises that we, the redeemed, the conquerors, the overcomers, will sit with Him on His throne and rule. It's an amazing promise and we as faithful followers of Jesus Christ eagerly look forward to it.

So, how is all of this possible? How can we go from our lowly, sinful, fallen, helpless, lost state (creatures that are lower than the angels) to being "crowned with glory and honor" (Psalm 8), How is it that we can have our destiny as rulers of the earth re-established? The answer to that question comes in the passage we'll be in this morning, Hebrews 2:9-18. Let me give you a sneak peek. God's redemptive plan has nothing to do with what we do for ourselves, but it has everything to do with what Jesus did for us. Let's begin (where we left off last week), Hebrews 2:9.

READ Hebrews 2:9 (point out that from here to the end of the Chapter the writer will be talking about Jesus – Question 6 on your sheet)

Jesus "was made lower than the angels." But, unlike us, this was not the result of sin. Jesus became lower than the angels voluntarily when He left the glory of heaven, came to earth, was born and became a man. He took on human flesh, an action which is sometimes referred to theologically as His "humiliation." For 33 years Jesus did what no angel ever did. He came to earth, was born of a woman, and dwelt among us day in and day

out. Paul eloquently describes this in Philippians 2:6-8: "Though He (Jesus) was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped..." He didn't cling to His rightful position and all the privileges and honor due Him as God. Paul goes on: "But [Jesus] emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself..." Thus the term "humiliation." And what did Jesus do when He came? He became "obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Ray Steadman says that "Jesus came to live in order that He might die." Hebrews 2:9 says, "so that by the grace of God He (Jesus, God's Son) might taste death for everyone." Jesus died for us! Paul goes on in Philippians 2:9-11... "Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name..." The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is "crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death."

This is remarkable! This is almost unfathomable! Frankly, even though I've heard this message many times during my life I still cannot fully wrap my mind around it. To think that the God of the universe (Jesus, the Son of God) would willingly leave heaven, become a man and suffer and die for us! US!! Romans 5:8 says that God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. How can it be? But that is what the Bible says that God did to save you and me. Amazing!

The writer of Hebrews told us back in Chapter 1 that Jesus made "purification for sins" (v 3). Every good Jew knew what that meant. It meant that Jesus dealt with the sin issue. Under the old covenant, in accordance with the Law given to Moses, "purification for sins" was done thru the blood of an innocent animal sacrificed on an altar. And now here in Chapter 2 we see HOW Jesus made purification for sins. He did it thru HIS OWN blood, His sacrificial death on the cross. This idea will be repeated again and again throughout Hebrews.

The rest of the chapter 2, v 10-18 describe Jesus as our perfect – this is Question 8 on your sheet – as our perfect SAVIOR. Why do you and I

and the rest of humanity need a savior? Why? Because we can't save ourselves from the penalty of sin. We are sinners. There is no way we could ever achieve the righteousness that God demands by our own efforts. We can't pay the huge debt that we owe. We are helplessly, hopelessly lost. We need a savior. We need divine intervention. OK, but why did Jesus have to become a man in order to be our Savior?

READ Hebrews 2:10-13

Here we see that Jesus became what we are. This was all part of God's plan of redemption. Jesus took on human nature. And thus He relates to us; He understands us; and He sympathizes with us.

V 10, some translations say "Author of salvation." The ESV uses the word "founder" which is closer to the original Greek meaning. Jesus began something. He opened the family of God to us. Jesus, the Son leads us into the presence of God His Father. "It was fitting," it suited God's purposes, it was His plan all along for Jesus to bring "many sons to glory." And how did Jesus do this? Through His suffering. The writer of Hebrews will explain later that Jesus is an understanding high priest (Ch 5); that Jesus became an example for us to follow (Ch 5 and 7). He can relate to us. We could see Him with our own eyes. He wasn't just some mysterious ghost or abstract concept. We could carry on a conversation with Him. He wasn't an impersonal voice over an intercom or an image on the screen. Jesus became flesh and blood and dwelt among us. He became one of us. By the way this is the answer to Question 12 on your sheet.

V 11, "Sanctifies" means to make righteous or holy. Jesus established perfect righteousness FOR us. This is a righteousness that is not our own but that is imputed to us. You've heard the term "imputed righteousness." This means that it is credited to our account whenever we place our faith in Jesus and what He did for us. Because He made the deposit into our account we get the benefit. We are made holy before God. That is our position in Jesus Christ because of what He did for us. He is our perfect savior. His righteousness makes us holy and allows us to come to God.

READ Hebrews 10:10, 12 and 14. Jesus became the single sacrifice for sin, offered for all time once for all people. Jesus is the "one source" of our sanctification that v 11 talks about. This makes Him the perfect savior.

The last part of v 11 and then v 12 give you the answer to Question 9 on your sheet. Jesus calls those of us who are saved what? "Brothers." The writer of Hebrews quotes here from Psalm 22 (a messianic psalm) where the Son is talking to the Father. As Jesus' "brothers," we are joint heirs with Him (Rom 8:17). It's interesting that during His earthly ministry Jesus didn't refer to His disciples as brothers. It wasn't until after His death and resurrection, until after the sin issue had been dealt with, that Jesus called His disciples His brothers. In John 20:17 after His resurrection he meets Mary Magdalene outside the tomb and He tells her to "go to my brothers..."

V 13 quotes Isaiah 8 where the prophet expresses His trust in God. One of the things that stands out about Jesus during His earthly ministry and we see this throughout the Gospels is how much time He spent talking to His Father in prayer. In His human nature, while He was a man on this earth Jesus experienced many of the same things we do. He was tempted. He felt sorrow. He felt anguish. He felt the pain of losing someone He loved who had died. He felt rejection. We see Jesus in turmoil in the Garden of Gethsemane the hours leading up to His betrayal. He got exasperated. He at times became angry. If Jesus needed to trust His Father and rely on Him, how much more do we who are often weak, ignorant, emotionally unstable, misguided, and short-sighted need to trust and rely on God. Jesus is our perfect savior because He relates to us on many levels.

READ Hebrews 2:14-15

Jesus conquered our greatest enemy – Satan. He also conquered our greatest fear – death. Question 10, Jesus' death and subsequent resurrection conquered what or who? – Satan and death. The word "destroy" in v 14 literally means to render as inconsequential. Satan stands as the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev 12:10), but because of what Jesus did, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ

Jesus" (Rom 8:1). And as for the fear we have of death, READ 1 Cor 15:55-57. Jesus is our perfect Savior because He defeated Satan and death and rendered them powerless over us.

READ Hebrews 2:16

"Helps" literally means to pull to safety. The idea here is that Jesus rescues or saves – the whole concept of salvation. It's not angels who need saving, but us humans. Remember the writer is addressing a mostly Jewish audience so the term "offspring of Abraham" is used to connect to this audience. The Jews would clearly understand the point here, that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the O.T., who would be descended from the lineage of Abraham. And sure enough, He was! And He came to help, to save us! Us Gentile believers are also the offspring of Abraham – the spiritual offspring. This is a point Paul makes in his letter to the Galatians.

READ Hebrews 2:17-18

READ Hebrews 4:15

Jesus is our great High Priest. He's merciful and faithful. Jesus is our perfect Savior because He became one of us and sympathizes with us. He is our perfect Savior who made propitiation for our sins. Question 11, Jesus' work of "propitiation" satisfied God's requirement for sin. He is our perfect Savior because of who He is and what He did for us on the cross.

When we studied the Gospel of John I had a lesson on "What the Death of Jesus Means to Us." [See handout]. At this point in our study of Hebrews I think it would be helpful to remind ourselves of the significance of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Whenever you hear the term "the blood of Jesus" it refers to Jesus' **death** on a **cross**. There is a parallel made in Hebrews between the blood shed by Jesus on the cross once for all and the blood shed by sheep and goats on an altar under the old covenant. READ Hebrews 9:22. This is the whole O.T. concept of atonement for sins. "Atonement" means to satisfy

God's holy requirements. And that's what Jesus did. For us Christians, N.T. believers "the atonement" refers to what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross. Five things that the death of Jesus on the cross did for us...

1. Substitution – Christ died in our place; 2 Cor 5:21 on our behalf, His righteousness imputed to us, not our own righteousness; 1 Pet 3:18 for our sins, the just for the unjust, once for all, satisfying God's justice; Rom 5:6-8 Christ died for us, the ungodly, demonstrated His love for us.

John Stott has a great quote about substitution from his book "The Cross of Christ." He says, "The essence of sin is we human beings substituting ourselves for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for us. We put ourselves where only God deserves to be; God puts Himself [in the person of Jesus] where we deserve to be."

2. Redemption – The act of paying the ransom or purchase price for something. 1 Cor 6:19-20 bought with a price, we are not our own; Mark 10:45 Jesus, Son of Man, gave His life a ransom for many – He paid the ransom price; Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law; Eph 1:7-10 Christ freed us from the consequences of sin (condemnation). This was all part of God's plan and purpose! "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe!"

3. Propitiation – Satisfying the holy wrath of God against man's sin. God's wrath is pure and holy. His purity is too intense to ignore evil (Rom 1:18). He cannot pretend it's not there or that it doesn't matter. Rom 3:23-25 passed over the sins previously committed. This was demonstrated in the last judgment on Egypt where God spared the firstborn of households that had the blood; Heb 2:17 emphasized why Jesus had to be a man, made like his brethren, human for human to satisfy God's requirement. In Hebrews we see Jesus as both our faithful and merciful High Priest (2:17) But not only is He our High Priest, He is also the perfect sacrifice for our sins (9:11-14) Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for sin once for all (Heb 10:10); 1 John 2:2 He satisfied God's wrath against the sins of the whole world.

4. Reconciliation – Re-establishing a right relationship with God. Romans 5:10 once we were enemies of God alienated from Him, but because of what Christ did, we can be forgiven and have fellowship restored. Eph 2:14-16 says that through the cross He “put to death the enmity” between us and God; Col 1:19-22 God reconciles man to Himself by offering pardon so that we can be at peace with Him. In all other religions man reconciles himself with God. The God of the Bible takes the initiative with us by offering pardon and friendship to all who trust Him.

5. Justification – Legal term meaning to be declared righteous (imputed righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, not our own). Rom 5:1, 9 having been justified we have peace with God, saved from God’s wrath – all because of what Jesus did; Gal 2:16 we are justified by faith in Christ – it’s all about what Christ did on the cross, not what we do in our own human effort; Titus 3:4-7 justified by His grace and mercy and made heirs.

Not just being handed a “Not Guilty” verdict – we are actually vindicated and declared righteous. The fact is we ARE guilty, but because of Jesus we get all the benefits that a perfectly righteous person deserves.

Jesus, our perfect Savior, the perfect Son of God died in our place. He paid the price that we could not pay ourselves. He satisfied God’s holy anger against our sin. He restored a right relationship between us and God. Finally, because of Him you and I are declared righteous before a holy God.

As we go thru Hebrews in the next few months all of these concepts will be made clearer.