

The Superior Son

Hebrews 2:5-12

INTRODUCTION

- A. In 2006, a New York city judge allowed Jose Luis Espinal to legally change his name to Jesus Christ.
1. Following the decision, Espinal said he was “happy” & “grateful” that the judge approved the change.
 2. He also said that he was moved to seek the name change about a year prior to the decision, when it dawned on him that, “I am the person that is that name.”
- B. While Mr. Espinal’s audacity strikes us as sacrilege, it’s also intriguing, for Jesus Christ did the opposite.
1. He was encircled with the praise of heaven, but he laid that aside to take up humanity.
 2. In heaven, the Lord Jesus could not be touched by disease or temptation or death, but he gave that up to suffer and die as a man.
- C. The Hebrew Christians to whom our text is addressed seem to have had difficulties grasping the Incarnation of Jesus.
1. Some of the Jewish Christians seem to have decided to give up on Christianity because Jesus had become a man.
 - a. It was he who created man; the Creator could not become the creature.
 - b. It was he who had promised to bless Abraham with many descendants; he could not become a descendant of Abraham.
 - c. It was he who heard the prayers of man; he could not become a man & offer prayer.
 2. Yet, of course, a fundamental tenet of Christianity is that God became man in the form of Jesus Christ.
 - a. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:1, 14).
 - b. Jesus “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:7-8).
 3. In this morning’s passage, the author of Hebrews takes up the theme of the incarnation of Christ to demonstrate to the Hebrew Christians the purpose for which God became man.
 - a. These Christians seem to have been thinking, “Look, if God became a man, that means that this ‘Christian’ God isn’t as great as we thought he was. We’re going back to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”
 - b. The author demonstrates in the first two chapters that Jesus’ incarnation does not take away from his deity.
 - 1) It is Jesus who is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (1:3).
 - 2) Jesus became “as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs” (1:4).
 - a) Angels, of course, are a higher class of created beings than man.
 - i. “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor” (Ps 8:4-5).
 - ii. The author of Hebrews applies this passage to Jesus, but in its original context in the Psalms, the idea is man in general. Notice that the psalmist says that man has been made a “little lower than the heavenly beings.”
 - b) If man is lower than the angels & Jesus is above the angels, that must mean that his incarnation did not remove his deity.
 - c) It also seems quite possible that the Hebrew Christians were involved in the worship of angels.
 - i. The Colossian Christians were: “Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind” (Col 2:18).
 - ii. In demonstrating Jesus’ superiority to the angels, the author of Hebrews could be saying, “You have this all backwards. You’re worshiping angels when you need to be worshiping the Son.”
 - 3) In this morning’s text, the author begins his discussion of Jesus’ incarnation by again demonstrating Jesus’ as superior to the angels & then moving to show why he became man in the first place.
 - a) This morning, we wish to see the great superiority of Jesus.

- b) We shall see the SUPERIOR SON as A SUBDUING SON, A SUFFERING SON, & A SHARING SON.

A SUBDUING SON, vv 5-8

- A. "Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, 'What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.' Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."
- B. The Father has not subjected the coming world to angels.
1. The age to come certainly refers to eternity, for Jesus referred to the coming age as eternity.
 - a. "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Mt 12:32).
 - b. An even clearer example occurs at Mk 10:29-30: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."
 2. How will the Father subject the world to come to Jesus?
 - a. That's an intriguing question when you realize that Jesus will relinquish the throne after the resurrection: "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" (1 Cor 15:24).
 - b. If Jesus will hand the kingdom back to the Father, how will all things be subdued to him in the age to come?
 - 1) In that age to come, all shall acknowledge Jesus Christ's rightful place:
 - a) "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).
 - b) In the age to come, everyone shall acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ—those who propagate immorality shall acknowledge Jesus as Lord; every evil man who has ever lived—Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Adolf Hitler—shall acknowledge that Jesus is Lord; you & I, whether we've truly acknowledged that sovereignty in this world or not, shall acknowledge Jesus as Lord in the age to come.
 - 2) Also, no one shall enter eternal life except through the Son.
 - a) He is the only way to the Father: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).
 - b) Without faith in his Messiahship, we shall die in our sins: "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins" (Jn 8:24).
 - c) It is he who shall judge all mankind: God "has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).
- C. Jesus is A SUPERIOR SON, for he is a subduing Son—the world to come is subject to him.

A SUFFERING SON, v 9

- A. "We see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."
- B. The author says that we do not yet see everything in subjection to Jesus.
1. "See" here carries the nuance of "experience" or "exist."
 2. The idea is that it isn't yet the case that everything is subject to Jesus.
- C. What we do currently see is Jesus "crowned with glory and honor."
1. It was Jesus—and no angel—who "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3).
 2. Therefore, it is Jesus—and no angel—who is worthy of worship.
- D. The reason Jesus currently has this "glory and honor" is "because of the suffering of death."
1. "The suffering of death" is certainly one reason Jesus became the Incarnate Son of God, for God cannot die.
 2. We are all aware of the often intense suffering that takes place at death.
 - a. We have all been heartbroken to see dear loved ones suffer intensely in their final hours.

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- b. Yet, I do not believe that we have ever seen suffering comparable to Jesus' suffering.
 - 1) In the Garden, Jesus, "being in an agony . . . prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Lk 22:44).
 - 2) From the cross, "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).
 - a) I am confident that as some have faced death they have felt abandoned by God; yet, not a single person who dies in Christ is ever abandoned by God!
 - b) Yet, Jesus indeed was—Hanging at Golgotha for the sins of the world, he was suspended between heaven & earth without the Father's comfort.
- E. Philip Yancey, a well-known Christian author, tells of his wife's working at a nursing home.
 1. Janet, Yancey's wife, works with an Alzheimer's patient named Betsy. Every week Janet introduces herself, and every week Betsy responds as if she's never seen her before.
 2. After a few weeks of volunteering at the nursing home, Janet learned that Betsy has retained the ability to read.
 - a. She has no comprehension of what she is reading & will repeat the same line over & over, like a stuck record, until someone prompts her to move on.
 - b. But on a good day she can read a passage straight through in a clear, strong voice. Janet began having her read a hymn at a woman's class each week.
 3. One Friday the senior citizens, who prefer older hymns they remember from childhood, selected "The Old Rugged Cross" for Betsy to read.
 - a. "On a hill far away stands an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame," she began, and stopped.
 - 1) She suddenly became agitated. "I can't go on! It's too sad! Too sad!" she said.
 - 2) Some of the other ladies gasped. Other stared at her, dumbfounded.
 - 3) In years of living at the nursing home, not once had Betsy shown the ability to put words together meaningfully. Now, obviously, she did understand.
 - 4) Janet calmed her: "That's fine, Betsy. You don't have to keep reading if you don't want to."
 - b. After a pause, though, she started reading again, and stopped at the same place.
 - 1) A tear made a trail down each cheek.
 - 2) "I can't go on! It's so sad!" she said, unaware she had said the same thing two minutes earlier. She tried again, and again reacted with a sudden shock of recognition, grief, and the exact same words.
 4. Finally, when Betsy seemed tranquil, Janet led her to the elevator to return her to her room.
 - a. To her amazement Betsy began singing the hymn from memory. The words came in breathy, chopped phrases, and she could barely carry the tune, but anyone could recognize the hymn.
 - b. As Betsy continued to sing, new tears fell, but Betsy kept going, still from memory, gaining strength as she sang.
 - c. Somewhere in that tattered mind, damaged neurons had tapped into a network of old connections to resurrect a pattern of meaning for Betsy.
 - 1) In her confusion, two things only stood out: suffering & shame. Those two words summarize the human condition, the condition she lives in every day of her life.
 - 2) Who knows more suffering & shame than Betsy? For her, the hymn answered that question: Jesus Christ.
- F. Jesus suffered in death "so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."
 1. The idea that it was the grace of God that caused Jesus to die sets Christianity apart from every other world religion.
 - a. In other world religions, man needs to try to do something to appease the gods & earn their favor.
 - b. Of course, it is not possible for us to appease & earn the favor of the true & living God.
 - c. Therefore, God graciously gave us his Son to die in our place.
 - 1) "It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief" (Is 53:10).
 - 2) "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).
 - 3) It is God himself who stepped forward & provided the sacrifice for sin because man was powerless to do so.
 2. Jesus tasted "death for everyone."
 - a. "To taste death" means "to experience death." Therefore, Jesus experienced death for everyone.
 - 1) Therefore, it is he who has the power over death: On Patmos, Jesus told John, I am "the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev 1:18).

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- 2) Therefore, Jesus has the ability to bestow eternal life: Jesus told Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn 11:25-26).
- b. Because Jesus went before us & tasted death, we have no reason to fear death: Jesus came to “deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Heb 2:15).
- c. Jesus Christ has tasted death. He has overcome death. I, therefore, because Jesus is a suffering Son have no reason to fear death.

A SHARING SON, v 11

- A. “He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers.”
- B. Jesus & his disciples “all have one source.”
 1. The King James reads as the literal Greek: “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.”
 2. The idea is obviously that both Jesus & his people have the same Father.
- C. Because we & the Son of God have the same Father, Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers.
 1. The Lord shared in our humanity; he gave up the glory of heaven to come & live as a man.
 2. The author of Hebrews says as much at verse 14: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”
- D. There are two very important implications in Jesus’ sharing with us in our humanity.
 1. The first is that Jesus lost something he can never fully regain.
 - a. Jesus, of course, was as much God on this earth as he has been from eternity; he continues to be fully God.
 - b. However, prior to his conception in Mary’s womb, Jesus was **only** God; now, for all eternity, he is both man & God.
 - 1) “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tm 2:5).
 - 2) I am personally convinced that Jesus laid down some level of glory & honor at his conception that he cannot regain.
 - c. Think about the implications of that! Jesus loved me enough to give up some level of glory & honor that he can **never** recapture. Oh, the great love of God!
 2. The second implication is that since Jesus became our brother, we are children of God. If he is the Son of God & he is our brother, we must also be children of God.
 - a. “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (1 Jn 3:1).
 - b. Parents bestow on their children blessings they do not give others.
 - 1) “Which of you, if his sons asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt 7:9-11).
 - 2) “The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever” (Jn 8:35).
 - c. Because Jesus became our brother & made us children of God, the Father can bestow his richest blessings upon us—the forgiveness of sins & eternal life. Do you know those blessings this morning?