

HEBREWS
Jesus, Our Empathetic Brother Heb 2:5-18

EX: sandwich sign at the math building UGA to promo Josh McDowell
It is intimidating to take a stand alone for Christ.

The audience of Hebrews knows the situation in far greater detail than we do.
Christians were being marginalized and persecuted by the culture.

The Romans saw Jesus as a weak bloody man who died on a cross. He couldn't compare to the strong heroic gods of the Roman pantheon.

The Jews saw him as cursed – he died on a tree- an OT picture of God's judgement.
"You are turning your back on Moses for that?"

The Hebrews Christians were feeling overwhelmed and were losing courage to stand firm. They were tempted to return to the ways of Judaism – the practices, laws, and rituals they were used to. The author writes to strengthen their resolve to hold fast to Christ by reminding them of who Jesus is and why Jesus came.

We'll be looking at the last part of chapter 2 this morning and tonight (even more)

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

5 For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.

6 But one has testified somewhere, saying, Psalm 8:4-6

"WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM?

OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?

7 "YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS;

YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR,

AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

8 YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET."

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But we have not yet seen all of this take place.

9 but we do see Jesus—who for a while was a little lower than the angels—crowned now by God with glory and honor because he suffered death for us. Yes, because of God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone.

10 For it was fitting that God, who made everything for his own glory, should allow Jesus to suffer, for in doing this he was bringing vast multitudes of God's people to heaven; for his suffering made Jesus a perfect Leader, one fit to bring them into their salvation..

11 We who have been made holy by Jesus, now have the same Father he has. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers 12 saying,

"I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN,
IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE." Ps 22

13 And again,

"I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM."

Isaiah 8:17-18

And again, "BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME."

¹⁴ Since we, God's children, are human beings—made of flesh and blood—he became flesh and blood too by being born in human form; for only as a human being could he die and in dying break the power of the devil who had the power of death. ¹⁵ Only in that way could he deliver those who through fear of death have been living all their lives as slaves to constant dread.

¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

I could have chosen any number of titles from this passage:

Empathy – the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

Jesus, our empathetic High Priest

Jesus, our empathetic suffering savior

Jesus, our empathetic sanctifier

Jesus, our empathetic King of Glory and Honor

Jesus, our empathetic Deliverer

I chose Jesus, our empathetic Brother because that idea resonates throughout this section v. 10,11,12,13,17

Hebrews tells us that Jesus is superior to everything else – Moses, Covenant, The Prophets- and anything else we would look to for security, meaning, and significance.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the exact representation of God, so if we want to know what God is like, just look at Jesus.

But what specifically does this passage tell us about God, as seen in Christ?

Hebrews shows that the divine nature revealed through Christ is one of humility and condescension. (voluntary descent from one's rank or dignity in relations with an inferior)

As believers, we worship a God who is willing to come down and take on the place of suffering. Even though all things are subject to Christ, he subjected himself to taste death and suffering to bring many sons to Glory. We see that Jesus (verse 14) partook of the same flesh and blood as us so that he could deliver us from our fear of death and slavery.

In chapter 1 and here again in chapter 2 the author is dealing with the question of Jesus being Superior to Angels. Show of hands, HONESTLY, how many of you have had that issue as a burning question in your minds this week?

It was a big issue to the audience of this sermon letter. First Century Judaism had a certain preoccupation with angels. The OT scripture available to them gave a place of importance to angels. The unknown author of this letter is putting it all in perspective for us.

In the first sermon of this series I mentioned that Hebrews brings the OT AND NT together. It sheds light on the connection and continuity of the biblical story line.

** - The bible is not a random collection of moral sayings or good advice. It is not a collection of laws that God has given to make sure that we don't have any fun in life.

The Bible is one long unified story made up of different types of writing to people in different situations in different eras and centuries – YET IT IS ONE STORY.

The storyline of the Bible is that of creation, fall/brokenness, and then God's work in redemption and restoration of what he has created. There is a movement toward an end and that is the world to come – v.5 This is a reminder that we need to live with the end in mind.

We may not wake up every morning wondering who is going to be subject to Angels or not subject to angels in the world to come but for the author of Hebrews this is an important topic -v.5

Scripture refers to this world to come in different ways, whether it's the “new heaven and new earth” or the “new creation”, or as it says, here the world to come. V.5

To drive home his point about where God is taking the world the author quotes from Psalm 8 although he doesn't quote the entire psalm. He uses v.4-6 of Psalm 8 as his springboard.

He makes the point that while mankind is small and seemingly insignificant considering the vast expanse of the universe God has placed us in a position of great honor and even a place of having dominion over the works of his hands.

Have you ever had a moment where you were overwhelmed by the size of the universe and how small you are?

EX: non-believer as a college freshman – Legion field on campus, looking at the stars and feeling small.

EX: years later at a CCC staff retreat- looking at the heavens and a similar feeling, but this time with awe at the grandeur of God and the reality that He would give me any thought at all. HE DID, AND HE DOES. And He does for you too.

Psalm 8 tells us that we are here to have a purpose in the grand storyline of God. We are called to dominion in a place of honor that God has given us.

This also resonates with Genesis creation account of God creating man male and female in his image instructs them to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over the created order. There is purpose in the world and we as humans created in the image of God are woven into the fabric of God's purpose for the universe.

It's God's purpose that we would take the gifts and talents that he has given us and use them to reflect who he is through our work and relationships and stewardship and exercise godly rule or Dominion in this world that he has created. We're here to work and flourish and take the built-in resources that God has given and use them for the greater good and his glory. We are called to reflect the image of God who is creative by using creativity to accomplish good things.

The words rule, dominion, and power tend to not land well with us when we hear them. Why is that??

Something has gone wrong

V.8...

You might call it a case of “arrested development” because of the fall. We were given the commission to the stewards and co-rulers with God, but something has happened to create disorder and chaos in our relationship with God and one another. As a result, we do not yet see all things subjected to him, that is humanity, v. 8

We have negative associations with power and authority because of the abuse that has enter the world as result of sin. We know the expression, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” SO TRUE.

EX. We see this played out in world history with tyrants and wartime atrocities that have happened ever since the beginning of humanity. It only took 32 verses from Gen 1:31 to 3:7 for rebellion to set in through a cosmic power grab by Adam and Eve. By Gen 4:8 we have the first homicide. That's on one end of the spectrum and on the other end is the simple abuse of power that happens in the sandbox between three and four-year-olds. Every sandbox, every nursery, every children's church and SS are filled with potential Hitlers or Hitlerettes.

As Dr Krabendam would say, "Vipers in covenantal diapers."

In contrast to man's failure, we see Jesus, who was humbled for a time to accomplish salvation through his death.

Through Jesus we learn what it means to be truly human in a way that reflects God's glory and nature? Verse 9 as Jesus is introduced as the new model for humanity. Jesus turns things upside down.

From 1:1 we know the author is talking about Jesus, but 2:9 is the first actual mention of His Name.

The author presents Psalm 8 through the Jesus lens and shows us what the true humanity is to be all about. Jesus is crowned with Glory and Honor, but how did he achieve that? Through the suffering of death in obedience.

Jesus is the founder of our salvation and the Greek word is Archegos or champion or HERO. The word is used 4 times in the NT- Acts 2x; Hebrews 2x – only used of Jesus.

HE IS THE PIONEER OR TRAILBLAZER OF A NEW THING. Rom 8:29

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

Hercules was an ancient Archegos, whose story would have likely been known by the hearers of this letter. And Jesus referred to as a founder and hero flips the picture of what the ancient view would have been. Hercules was mighty because he crushed his enemies. Jesus shows another way. The Christ storyline is he comes and vanquishes death by dying. He conquers rebellious sinners by dying for them.

Every day we face situations which bring us to a choice between following the path of a Hercules or of Jesus. We can choose the path of beating our opponent with a club or walking in the humility of Christ. You can see it in aggressive behavior or in passive aggressive behavior.

** SIDE ROAD...You can see it even in a three-year-old. If you cross his or her will you may get a tantrum. That child wants to be the boss, and if you let him you are doing him, yourself, and everyone else a disservice. **

Jesus is the pioneer of a renewed humanity of those who are being healed by God's grace.

Not only that but, Jesus is not ashamed to be associated with us and to call us brothers.v.11

Jesus the new human seizes power and conquers his enemy by submitting himself to death itself. He laid death in his grave. This is the death of death in the death of Christ.

Jesus gains honor and Glory by giving up his life and dying for those who are in rebellion against God. This is totally counterintuitive to human experience. Although at times you will see stories where the hero gives up his life and those are the stories that are the most gripping.

EX: A Tale of two Cities. Sydney Carton takes the place of Charles Darnay at the guillotine

Jesus is our EMPATHETIC BROTHER who is our Champion and SAVIOR.

EX: “my brother can beat up your brother” – some of us have very conflicted relationships with a brother or brothers. The image of Jesus as a brother may not land well with you.

Jesus is the perfect big brother you always wanted.

- “Nothing closer to God on earth than a good big brother” – if you had one, or were one, you might agree.

A good big brother is someone you feel safe with. He’s got your back. He “gets you”. Jesus does.

He understands temptation SO We are more surprised by our sin than Jesus is.

We may be more offended by the sin of others than Jesus is.

God sent Jesus because He loves us enough to save us and to sanctify us. V.11

Following Christ is dying to self and we must be willing to be confronted a million times between here and glory, knowing that God is for you not against you.

We must be willing for God to expose us over and over so we can be met by His grace. He has created a place for us to go when we need grace and help – THE THRONE OF GRACE 4:16

Our fear may not be so much of being exposed by God but being exposed to others.

We may have confidence in the love of God, but we’re not so sure about the love of others.

Being met by His steadfast love should make us humble, grateful, and sympathetic to others.

JESUS OF THE SCARS – our empathetic Brother

by Edward Shillito

**The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.**

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