



GOD AS MAN

Hebrews—Chapter 2

Study 3

Remembering God's Love

What we have learned in Hebrews 1 is that Christ is God the Son. This biblical teaching reveals God alone as the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of the human race (see Hebrew 1:3). The sovereign God of the universe is not only our Creator but also our Redeemer, because He has personally taken responsibility for the ultimate consequences of our evil. This teaching of the Bible is the central truth of the gospel. It stands alone as a powerful revelation of the infinite gift of God's love.

Hebrews 2 opens with encouragement from Paul to give "more earnest heed" to the things they have heard.

"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away" (Hebrews 2:1).

The word for "heed" in Greek is "prosecho," and the meaning rendered here is "to bring near," "to bring a ship to land," "to attend to one's self," or "to apply one's self to." There is a warning here. The Hebrews were vacillating about the things Jesus said. Paul was concerned that they needed to give "more earnest" heed. Paul was concerned about apathy and carelessness among the believers.

When we become careless in our spiritual lives, we can "drift away" from God. Consider a small boat safely drifting near the shoreline of an ocean inlet. Imagine a tidal current pulling that boat, causing it to "drift away," far out into the ocean where the waves become large and dangerous in an area of shark-infested waters. This might illustrate Paul's concern for the Hebrews, don't let yourselves drift aimlessly away and neglect the great gift of salvation:

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (Hebrews 2:3).

It may be that more people neglect the gospel of Jesus than reject it outright. Rejection is more obvious, but neglect is more difficult to discern and, therefore, more dangerous. In love, God encourages us to see our true spiritual condition, and to choose Jesus Christ to reign in our hearts as Savior and Lord.

The Justice of God

Hebrews 2 flows out of chapter 1. It is concerned primarily with explaining how God accomplished redemption. Simply put, it explains that in order to die for the sins of the human race, God must become a part of the corporate body of humanity, for divinity cannot die (see 1 Timothy 6:16). It also underscores the idea that God cannot maintain that He is just, at least not in the eyes of the universe, if His mercy ignores the just consequences of evil.

"For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" (Hebrews 2:2-4).

Paul's first point in these verses is that transgression and disobedience receive a just recompense. This is no arbitrary act but the actual consequence that disobedience brings. Sin leads to death (see Romans 6:23). We have sinned, and we should die. But God in mercy has forgiven our sin—not by pretending that we have not sinned or by forever laying aside His justice against sin. Instead, God has done the only thing possible in order to be both just and merciful without undermining either. He has mercifully and justly suffered the consequences for our sin Himself (Romans 3:24-25).

NOTES

"God having provided something better for us." —Hebrews 11:40

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The Incarnation of God

Yet, on both an ethical and physical basis, God cannot remain God, a separate, immortal entity and at the same time assume our guilt. He must in fact become one with the fallen race, a part of the corporate body of humanity, fully identified as us and subject to death. Only then can God ethically and justly receive the consequences of humanity's evil. Hebrews 2 explains just how God did this as it succinctly summarizes the creation/redemption story:

"For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying:

'What is man that You are mindful of him,
Or the son of man that You take care of him?
You have made him a little lower than the angels;
You have crowned him with glory and honor,
And set him over the works of Your hands.
You have put all things in subjection under his feet.'

"For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we do not yet see all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:5-9).

These verses offer us one of the most succinct, complete histories of the creation, fall and redemption of the human race found anywhere in the Bible. A little lower than angels, man was made in the image of God, crowned with glory and honor (Genesis 1:26-27). With Adam as the prince, mankind was given dominion over every living thing on the earth (Genesis 1:28). Sadly, humanity gave up this dominion when Adam and Eve chose to obey the words of the deceiver over the words of God (Genesis 3:1-6). They listened and believed Satan's lies about God's character—that God was selfish and restrictive. In yielding to Satan, mankind became the servants of Satan and he then became the prince of this world (Romans 6:16; John 12:31).

The history of our world, the pain, sorrow, destruction and death, bears true witness to the rulership of Satan. But it doesn't end there, a God of love could not let us be lost to evil without a fight. And so we see Jesus, who was made like us, a little lower than the angels, but for a specific purpose—to taste death for everyone.

The Captain of Our Salvation

Don't miss this crucial summary. The entire plan of salvation hinges on our understanding why Jesus was made a man. We already know from Hebrews 1, that Jesus is God the Son. We understand from Paul's clear statements that Jesus is the express image of God's person. But now we are to consider that Jesus is also fully human. Jesus, the Son of God, now becomes Jesus, the Son of Man. Consequently, He can justly be the "Captain of our salvation."

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10).

The Captain of our salvation means that Jesus Christ is the "author, leader, pioneer, prince" of the human race. Christ in human form perfects humanity—He is the embodiment of a perfect human. Therefore, in Christ, the human race is perfect before God. In Christ, humanity has corporately suffered the full consequences for all of our sin: "For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

It is imperative for both mankind and the unfallen universe to understand just how God can both forgive the human race and at the same time maintain the justice of His character. Justice, in order to be just, must be served upon the human race itself. The requirements of justice, however, can only be fully met by God Himself, as it is His character that demands it. Only God can fully satisfy His justice, yet only man ought to. God did not cause the sin problem, humanity did. However, only in the second Adam, Jesus Christ, may we find salvation. Only in Him both the "could" and the "should" are fully united (John 14:6).

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The remaining verses in Hebrews 2 are dedicated to establishing the humanity of Christ as a foundational understanding of the gospel:

“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: ‘I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will sing praise to You.’ And again: ‘I will put My trust in Him.’ And again: ‘Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.’ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:11-18).

Throughout these verses, we see three ideas bound together like cords of a rope, which form a rope of faith that when grasped will swing us over the abyss of sin directly into the eternal presence of God Himself. The first of the three is the completeness of Christ’s humanity, as He is made a little lower than the angels:

- 1) Christ is one with those He sanctifies (Hebrews 2:11).
- 2) He is not ashamed to call us His brethren (Hebrews 2:11).
- 3) He, also, Himself, likewise partakes of the same flesh and blood as humanity (Hebrews 2:14).
- 4) He took on Him the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16).
- 5) In all things He was made like us (Hebrews 2:17).

The second cord of this faith-rope is found in understanding the reason for Christ’s amazing humility. He became a man in order to destroy the devil and deliver us from death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Death is not only our enemy, it is also God’s (1 Corinthians 15:12). Fear of death has brought humanity into bondage, but Christ has brought freedom from this fear by destroying death. He did this by taking our death decree upon Himself. We are no longer the lawful captives of Satan. Our guilt has been justly punished—satisfied by God Himself. We have been emancipated from our bondage to the devil by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that in Christ humanity has been:

- 1) Ransomed (1 Timothy 2:6)
- 2) Redeemed (Galatians 3:13)
- 3) Bought (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- 4) Set free (John 8:32, 36)
- 5) Released (Isaiah 42:7).

Finally, Christ became a man, because in redeeming mankind justice required death, but God cannot die. It was through death that death was to be destroyed, but in all His creation God alone is immortal (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16). Therefore, God became a man so that He could die for us as one of us. And in dying, Jesus conquered death, for it was not possible that death could maintain its hold upon so great a love as God laying down His life for us. Jesus is the answer to the deepest needs of the human race. He is our mercy, justice and deliverer, “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Summary

Three beliefs taught throughout the Bible are brought together succinctly in Hebrews 2. Christ became a man like us so that He could ethically receive the just penalty we deserve. He died for us and as one with us and, thereby, delivered us from the bondage and power of fear, death and sin. In taking our humanity upon Himself forever, God the Son has spoken to us in the love language of physical touch. So Paul has, in Hebrews 1 and 2, introduced both the better God and the better man in the person of Jesus Christ—a personal God who loves each one of us selflessly.