



Sunday School Lesson for June 13, 2004.
Released on: June 9, 2004.

Study: Hebrews 2:5—18 Jesus Took Away Our Sins
Questions and answers are found below.

TIME: About A.D. 67
PLACE: Unknown

Hebrews 2: 5—18

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8 Thou hast 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 see not yet all things put under him.

9 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 should taste death for every man.

10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus is the cure for all of mankind's ailments. Just as the physical body—due to the first Adam's "original sin" in The Garden of Eden—can become diseased through various causes and needs medication and therapy in order to get well, so too the spiritual body can become diseased from all the cares of a sinsick world and need the healing power of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Hebrews points to Christ as the supreme and sufficient "medicine" that mankind needs to become whole—both physically and spiritually; an establishment that Christ is all. Through Jesus' ultimate sacrifice of himself on Calvary's Cross, those who are His can proclaim that they too have "died to sin" and can anticipate a bodily resurrection when He returns—an eternal promise that only an Almighty God can give. Thank God for Jesus!

CHRIST'S SUPERIORITY (Hebrews 2:5—9)

1. Why does God value man so much (Hebrews 2:5—9)?

It is a well known fact that some people worship angels. But we are not to be like the false teachers in Colosse who encouraged this worship (Colossians 2:18). We are not to practice those things that the world deems as "religious." God made man "a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7)," and gave him stewardship over all that He created because of His love for man. Here the writer of Hebrews makes reference to an Old Testament scripture (Psalm 8:4—6). Man, on the other hand, was created for the exclusive purpose of worshipping God. Christ, not the angels, is the great Ruler, and to Him belongs all of our adoration and praise... not angels or anything else that He has created.

By making man in His own image, God greatly honored him and cause him to reflect His glory. Man was crowned with dominion over the world (Genesis 1:26—28). Of course, due to sin mankind has proceeded to make a mess of its responsibilities, and man's glory has been marred and hidden to a great extent. As the perfect and sinless Son of man, Christ brings man to the place of glory and honor that God intended for him. Christ is the King and has dominion over all creation.

CHRIST BECAME MAN TO TAKE AWAY SIN (Hebrews 2:10—13)

2. Why was it fitting that Christ be sent to suffer?

We cannot know for certain why the biblical author singled out the Father's act of sending His Son to suffer as an act that "became him," or was fitting. Of course, every act of God would seem inappropriate to his Jewish readers. Perhaps nothing expresses the heart of God more than that which shows His concern and love for His creation.

The Jewish leaders' concept of what the Messiah would be like and what He would do led them to reject Jesus because He did not fit their preconceived pattern. But we ourselves are sometimes guilty of defining what we think God is like or what we think He "ought" do in given situations. We may assert, for example, that a loving God would not send sinners to Hell, but that assertion flies in the face of clear Biblical teachings to the contrary. Rather than projecting our own opinions on God, we would be wise to allow the Scriptures to speak for God's attributes and attitudes.

"The captain of their salvation" refers to Christ. The word for "captain" here can also be translated "author" (Hebrews 12:2) or "pioneer." All of these capture the idea that Jesus is the creator or producer of salvation for those who come after Him in seeking it. In this capacity Christ is more than just an example for others to follow. He is also the One who created the trail.

A vital part of our captain's task was to be made "perfect through sufferings." This does not mean that Christ was ever less than morally perfect. Rather, the idea of "perfect" here is to "make complete." Under the law, God required the sacrifice of animals for sin. But that was only a temporary solution (Hebrews 10:4). Now under the new covenant God requires the suffering of His Son to deliver us from our sins. This is the sense in which the Son was "made complete" or "perfect." We may find this concept difficult to understand, but this is another example where we should accept the wisdom of God rather than depending on our own wisdom.

3. How does Christ identify Himself with His people (vv. 12 and 13)?

In short, because the children of God and the Son Himself are from the same Father (ref. John 20:17), Jesus can call all believers His "brethren." This is a blessed fact to consider! We are one with Christ. We have been adopted into His royal family. Not only is Christ the Leader of the church's praise of the Father (Hebrews 2:12), but by His life He also set the perfect example of putting complete trust in Him. By placing Himself in such a situation, He was identifying Himself with other believers, who must also live by faith.

Furthermore, Christ's example of faith made Him like a father figure to His spiritual brethren (v. 13), thus further emphasizing the familial relationship He has with His people. The "children" who have been born of God are the responsibility of the elder Brother to whom they have been given (see John 17:6, 9–11, and 24).

WORK OF DESTRUCTION (Hebrews 2:14–16)

4. In what sense did Christ's sacrifice destroy Satan (v. 14)?

Our struggle with Satan is a spiritual struggle (Ephesians 6:12). But because we are "partakers of flesh and blood," Satan directs many of his attacks upon us through the flesh. Thus if Christ was to be tempted "in all points ... like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15), it was necessary that He join us in the flesh.

Through His physical death and resurrection, Christ destroyed the power of death wielded by the devil. For this reason Paul can hail Christ's resurrection with these triumphant words: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

5. How does the fear of death make man "subject to bondage (v. 15)?"

The fear of death can be a tyrannous instrument of coercion... death is indeed the king of terrors to those who recognize in it the penalty of sin. But because Christ paid the penalty for man's sin when He died and then rose victorious from the grave, the believer need not let his life be ruled by the fear of death. He has been set free and has eternal life in Christ.

People dread the idea of being in slavery or "bondage." For many, death is the most feared slave master—feared because its bondage seems so final. But because

of our Lord's victory over the devil, we can view death as a defeated enemy. Christ is now the One who holds the "keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18).

6. Who are "the seed of Abraham" in verse 16?

This term "the seed of Abraham" refers to the spiritual children of Abraham—that is, the ones who like Abraham, have placed their faith in God (see Genesis 3:7, 29). The author of Hebrews might have used this expression because the recipients of this letter were primarily Jewish believers.

The author pointed out that Christ did not come as an angel (Heb. 2:16). When Jesus was born, He came as a human—specifically as a Jew in "the seed of Abraham." In Genesis 12:3 God had promised that through Abraham "all families of the earth [would] be blessed." Christ was the offspring of Abraham who would bring that blessing. Everyone who has faith in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, is like-wise a son of Abraham (Gal. 3:7, 27). Christ died to become the Saviour of all those who would have faith in Him. Jesus came as "one of us"!

POSITION OF HIGH PRIEST (Hebrews 2:17, 18)

7. In what way was Christ a "High Priest (v. 17)?"

It is worthy to note that this is the first time the title "High Priest" occurs in the Hebrews, and the first time it is applied to Jesus Christ in the Bible. Because Jesus wanted to save the children of Abraham, He had to become their "faithful" and trustworthy "High Priest." In order to be their Priest, He had to become one with them in every respect. A major theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Christ's priesthood to the priesthood under the Mosaic Law (see Hebrews 7:19—8:1). By becoming Man, God the Son could be the priestly Mediator between God and man (see 1 Timothy 2:5).

That Christ would even bother to come to earth as a man shows that He is "merciful" (Hebrews 2:17). And because of what He experienced, He could identify with and understand the struggles that man faces. As to being "faithful," Christ demonstrated that by His obedience even unto death.

8. What does it mean that Christ's death was made a "propitiation (v. 17)?"

When the high priest stood before the altar in Old Testament times to offer up the sacrifices, he was bridging the chasm between God and humanity—the separation that had been created by sin. Under the terms of the new covenant, Christ serves in a similar but infinitely more effective capacity.

Christ's making Himself a "propitiation" refers to the satisfaction of the claims of a holy and righteous God against sinners who have broken His law. Christ appeased God's righteous wrath by dying on the Cross in our place (see Romans 3:21—26). Although completely perfect and sinless, Christ voluntarily submitted to the penalty of sin, His agonizing death on the Cross. This voluntary sacrifice of Himself for our welfare satisfied the justice and holiness of God. The benefits of His sacrifice are applied to all who place their faith in Him. This "reconciliation" between God and humanity was not cheap, however. The cost to Christ was His suffering and death on the cross.

CONCLUSION

We live in a world where suffering abounds. Suffering may be physical, but often the more serious and sustained suffering we endure is emotional and spiritual in nature. None of us enjoys suffering, and we go to great measures to avoid it. Modern science has made great strides in producing medicines or developing techniques that eliminate or at least alleviate much of our physical suffering. Psychologists and counselors have also developed strategies that reduce emotional suffering. With all of these resources available to us, we are able to avoid a great deal of suffering in our daily lives.

Since we are so concerned about avoiding suffering, we are always amazed when anyone chooses to suffer. As a result, we applaud those who heroically risk pain and suffering for some great cause. Examples include soldiers serving their country or someone risking his or her life to save another from danger.

If these people are worthy of our praise, how much more we should stand in utter amazement that our Lord should leave His Heavenly throne and come into this world to suffer humiliation and the cross for us! Also amazing is the fact that after God has sent His Son into the world, many continue in rebellion against Him (John 1:11). Sometimes ignorantly, but more often knowingly and arrogantly, we have defied Him. And yet our Lord came and "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

PRAYER

Most gracious Father, we lift up our voices in prayer to You, knowing that You have provided for our every need. We especially thank You that You have given us Jesus Christ as our great high priest, enabling us to become reconciled to You. In His name we pray, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

By the grace of God, Christ has tasted death for every one of us.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In our lesson next week we will see how we are called to be an obedient and faithful people once we become part of the family of God. Obedience must follow salvation if we are to please God. Read Hebrews 3:12—4:13 in preparation.

Lesson Summation by Kimbley Yamada Baker-Richardson.