

Hebrews 2B (2014)

A teacher in a Sunday school class was teaching children about salvation by grace alone. So she asks the class, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale, and give all the money to the church, would I get into Heaven?"

The children correctly answered, "No!"

Pleased with their response, the teacher decided to test them a little more. She asked, "If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would I then get into Heaven?"

Again, they correctly answered, "NO!"

"Well," she continued, "then how can I get into Heaven? In the back of the room, a five year-old boy shouted, "First, you gotta be dead!"

- Chapter 2 of Hebrews is all about the need to be dead to get to Heaven
 - Specifically, this chapter is the writer's explanation for why the Lord of all Creation had to take a form less than angels and die as a man
 - As we have already learned, the stumbling block for the early Jewish Church was their inability to grasp how Jesus could be greater than an angel, yet He appeared in a form lesser than angels
 - The superiority of Christ and His message was a tough pill to swallow, given that his frail, human body was crucified by their Roman enemies
 - This storyline of Jesus contradicted their expectation of a conquering, all-powerful Messiah Who would come to rule a Kingdom on earth
 - So, as we discussed last week, some Jews in the early Church still thought angels were more majestic and more important than Christ
 - And therefore, they saw the Law of Moses as a more important message than the message delivered by Christ

- In short, some Jews in the early Church were still relying on their Jewish heritage for salvation, rather than on the grace of the New Covenant
- They had not yet embraced Christ as Lord; they were unbelievers
- This concerned the writer, prompting him to issue that warning at the beginning of Chapter 2
- Having warned them to pay closer attention to the message of Christ, he now proceeds to explain why it was that Jesus came to earth in such a lowly form, as a man determined to die
 - And like before, the writer returns to the Old Testament Scriptures to prove his point
 - Before we look at his argument, let's take a moment to appreciate the writer's methodology
 - The writer always works from the Bible (the OT) to make his case
 - He backs up his argument by finding the Scriptures that say what he is saying
 - Equally importantly, the writer uses the Scriptures in context, in the way they were intended to be understood
 - He doesn't take them out of context
 - Simply put, the writer's point is the Scriptures' point as well
 - This is the way all of us should approach apologetics
 - Apologetics simply means the process of making reasoned arguments in justification of religious doctrine or viewpoints
 - Proving that what you believe is true
 - The Bible is to be our proof
 - Not our experiences
 - Not our feelings
 - Not our heritage or family history
 - Our testimonies are a source of edification for the believer – not proof to persuade the unbeliever

- Those things might add a personal touch to our arguments, but they do not prove anything
- If you want to be able to defend your faith before others, then you must become a student of the Bible
 - You can't just read it, you have to remember it and understand it
 - Notice the writer of this letter is quick to grab quote after quote of the OT to support his teaching of Christian doctrine
 - And almost certainly, he didn't have scrolls of the OT next to him to consult
 - More than likely, he had memorized most or all of the OT, which was customary among rabbis in Jesus' day
 - Today, we have access to tools and technology that make it easier to locate Scripture without memorizing the entire Bible, but that doesn't substitute for an intimate knowledge of what's in the Bible
 - Have you ever watched two Christians arguing over Scripture or doctrine, yet neither really understands the Bible?
 - I've seen this too often, and to borrow an old saying, it's a battle of wits between unarmed men
 - We can't expect to fulfill our role as an ambassador for Christ if we aren't willing to learn the job properly
 - And the training manual for representing Christ is the Bible
 - You can't rely on what I say or any other teacher says
 - Hopefully, you learn something from teachers, and ideally, their teaching will help guide you in your own studies
 - But listening to me or anyone else isn't a substitute for regular personal study of the Bible
 - As Peter tells us:

1 Pet. 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a **defense** to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

- This writer was obviously ready, and so now, he begins to explain the necessity of Christ becoming lower than angels for our sake

[Heb. 2:5](#) For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.

[Heb. 2:6](#) But one has testified somewhere, saying,
 “WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM?
 OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?”

[Heb. 2:7](#) “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;

[Heb. 2:8](#) 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 now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

- The writer introduces a quote from Psalms 8, by saying that angels are never appointed to rule over the Kingdom to come
 - Instead, the psalmist says it will be ruled by the Son of Man
 - The Son of Man is a Messianic term found in Dan 7:13-14

[Dan. 7:13](#) “I kept looking in the night visions,
 And behold, with the clouds of heaven
 One like a Son of Man was coming,
 And He came up to the Ancient of Days
 And was presented before Him.

[Dan. 7:14](#) “And to Him was given dominion,
 Glory and a kingdom,
 That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
 Might serve Him.
 His dominion is an everlasting dominion
 Which will not pass away;
 And His kingdom is one
 Which will not be destroyed.

- By drawing our attention to the Messianic term “Son of Man”, the writer proves that the Messiah was to be a man, born of a woman
- And yet, this same Messiah would rule over the very Creation He had become a partaker of

- In this psalm, the psalmist raises exactly the same question that the writer's skeptical audience was asking
 - How could God give such regard to a mere man, to Christ in human form?
 - If the Son is to be so powerful, and His message so important, then why did he appear in such a lowly way?
 - This is exactly the problem that these Jews in the early Church were struggling to answer
 - Their answer to this dilemma was to conclude that Jesus wasn't as important as an angel
- But the psalmist answers the question very differently
 - He declares in v.7 that the Father made Christ to be a little lower than the angels, but only for a little while
 - The "short time" is the time Christ spent as a man walking the earth
 - During that time, Jesus was no less God, yet He willingly took the lesser form of man to please the Father
 - But then, the psalmist concludes that Jesus' time living lower than angels will give way to an eternity of glory and honor
 - He will rule over the Creation
 - And all things will be in subjection to Christ
 - Even the angels
- Just to be sure we get the point, the writer adds in v.8, that when the Father says all things are going to be subject to Christ, He means *everything*
 - There is nothing in Creation that isn't, or won't someday be, subject to the Lord
 - As Paul says elsewhere in Scripture, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Christ one day
 - Every unbeliever, every demon, even the antichrist and Satan himself will one day bow in subjection to Christ, according to Scripture

- Those bows will not come as a matter of faith, but as a result of Christ's authority and power
 - All of this will come true, despite Christ's choice to assume a place lower than the angels for a time
- This is an example of the problem of our perspective
 - Men can't properly assess God's plans from our vantage point
 - The Pharisees of Jesus' day couldn't accurately assess His importance by what they saw during His brief time on earth
 - And neither can we appreciate the coming glory of the Kingdom and the peace it brings on earth by observing the world around us today
 - In fact, you can't know what God is willing to do for you tomorrow based on what He has done today
 - Our perspective is too narrow
 - We are bound by time and limited understanding
- So instead, we must rely on the Word of God and on faith in what it says, rather than relying on our sight or our own understanding

Prov. 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart

And do not lean on your own understanding.

Prov. 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He will make your paths straight.

Prov. 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;

Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

- If we rest on what the Bible says, then we can see the world and appreciate history with eyes for eternity
- Just as the writer says, we do not yet see Jesus ruling the world, but that doesn't mean it isn't coming
 - But just because we don't see it, doesn't mean it isn't to happen
 - It's just as sure now as it will be on the day we see it come to pass
 - Our perspective isn't adequate to appreciate that truth
 - Fortunately, we don't have to rely on perspective

- Instead, we rely on the Word of God
- So what was to be gained by sending Jesus in this lowly form? The writer explains

[Heb. 2:9](#) But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

[Heb. 2:10](#) For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

- So in answer to the question, why did Jesus need to become lower than angels, the writer begins with this explanation
 - First, in v.9, we see Him (Jesus) who was made for a while lower than the angles and by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone
 - This involves (requires) death
 - Then, in v.10, the writer says it was fitting for Him to perfect the Author of their salvation through suffering
 - This is a potentially confusing statement
 - So let's define some terms at this point
 - The "Him" is the Father
 - The Father is the One Who drove the plan of redemption
 - The writer says it is fitting for the Father to do what He did
 - The word for "fitting" in Greek means "to be clearly seen"
 - In other words, as we understand what happened in the light of OT Scripture, we can clearly appreciate why the Father did what He did
 - That leads us to the next Person mentioned: the Author
 - The Greek word the writer uses for "author" is a compound word, made up of two different Greek words
 - Originator + leader (or pioneer)
 - This is a reference to Jesus, of course

- Jesus is the originator of our salvation and the pioneer of salvation
 - He was the first man to die and resurrect to glory
 - He made a way available for all who would follow by faith
 - So He is the originator and pioneer
- How was Jesus the author of salvation?
 - The writer says Jesus became the Author by being perfected through suffering
 - The word “suffering” refers to Jesus’ tortuous death
 - Not just the suffering that preceded the cross
 - Also His physical death as well
 - This was Jesus’ suffering
 - So then, what does the writer mean when he says Jesus was *perfected* by suffering?
 - “Perfected” is the Greek word *teleioo*, which means “being brought to an end” or “accomplished”
 - So Jesus’ suffering brought something to an end
 - It didn’t make Jesus perfect – He was already perfect
 - It accomplished something that could only be accomplished through His death (v.9)
 - Finally, the salvation Jesus obtained was intended for a certain group (“their” salvation in v.10)
 - This group is the brethren of Christ, the children of God
 - Those men and women who are saved by faith in Jesus
 - The rest of the answer comes in the following verses

Heb. 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,
Heb. 2:12 saying,

**“I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN,
IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.”**

Heb. 2:13 And again,

“I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.”

And again,

“BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

- Jesus took on the same form as those He was called to save
 - He called them brethren, that is, Jesus could truly call men and women His brothers and sisters
 - From Psalm 22, the writer shows proof that the Son was expected to come in the form of mankind
 - He would be the Father’s representative among men and women
 - And He calls these brethren His children, whom the Father has given to the Son
- So now we’re getting to the heart of the answer of why Jesus was made lower than angels
 - First, He came as a man in obedience to the Father
 - It was the Father who made Jesus lower than angels
 - It wasn’t a reflection of Jesus having less honor
 - It was a purposeful and fitting choice of the Father
 - Secondly, Jesus was made lower so He could experience suffering
 - Jesus needed to enter into a sinful Creation in the form of man so He could experience the suffering common to all men
 - Including experiencing death itself
 - These are things Jesus never could have experienced had He remained as He was in Heaven
 - Thirdly, He humbled Himself in this way to author a salvation for you and me
 - He came for His brethren, His brothers and sisters
 - Which required that He lives as they do

- Finally, He authored our salvation by perfecting, by bringing to an end to, something that stood in the way of our salvation
 - What did Jesus bring to an end through His suffering?
 - What was accomplished?

Heb. 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

Heb. 2:15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Now we get to the key issue, the heart of why Jesus had to become human
 - It's a matter of flesh and blood and death and the devil
 - All the children of God share in flesh and blood
 - The Greek word for "share" means "to participate in"
 - The human experience is an experience of flesh and blood
 - We're not angelic beings; we're made in a different way
 - And so Jesus took the same form as His brethren, so that He could solve a problem that is unique to flesh and blood
 - And that problem is the problem of death
 - And death itself is the result of sin

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man **sin** entered into the world, and **death** through **sin**, and so **death** spread to all men, because all **sinned** –

- Flesh and blood experiences physical death because all flesh lives under the curse made necessary because of sin
- And the author of sin is the devil himself
 - All who sin share in the same fate as the devil
 - That common destiny leads to fear of death, and that fear produces a kind of slavery
 - All mankind lives in fear of death and what follows, and that fear is so great, it's all consuming

- Whenever we're driven by our fears, we become a slave of the one who produces the fear
 - We no longer make our decisions or set our priorities based on reason, much less according to the Spirit
 - Instead, we go wherever we can, do whatever we must, to avoid the thing we fear
 - If we fear financial ruin, we become fixated on money
 - If we fear rejection, we avoid relationships
 - If we fear insects, we never go camping
 - If we fear sharks, we stay away from the beach
 - But if we live in fear of death, there's no easy solution
 - Because we are all born sinful, our conscience is forever aware of our jeopardy before a just and holy God
 - That awareness leads to fear of dying and judgment
 - And this leaves us at the mercy of the enemy, who is masterful at manipulating our fears
 - The unbeliever is forever at the enemy's disposal, as he leads them further astray by manipulating their fear of death
 - He lies to the unbeliever, saying death is the end of everything, so there is no God and no judgment to fear
 - Humanism, evolution and atheism are the result
 - And rampant hedonism is the natural response
 - He lies by saying death is too horrible to consider, so it shouldn't be discussed
 - Leading unbelievers to never confront death head-on
 - Pretending that if they ignore their dying bodies, they can think they will live forever
 - He lies that death means we should get everything we can while we can
 - The best comes now, so make the most of now

- Greed and selfishness is the result
- Most of all, the enemy lies, saying that everyone goes to Heaven, so death is not a problem to solve
 - It's just a mystery
 - So don't give your life and your sin a second thought
 - You're good enough as you are
- Jesus came to suffer as a man so that He could take our place in death
 - He brought to an end our fear of death so that we would no longer be susceptible to the manipulation of an enemy who himself is subject to that same penalty
- As Paul writes in Philippians

[Phil. 2:5](#) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
[Phil. 2:6](#) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
[Phil. 2:7](#) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
[Phil. 2:8](#) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- When His suffering was done, He rose from the grave, promising His brethren we would be sanctified in the same way
 - If you have placed your trust in Jesus Christ, then the devil has been rendered powerless over you
 - You do not share his fate and punishment
 - That punishment fell on Christ instead
 - That's why Jesus was made lower than angels...so that He could die in your place
 - So now, you are free to live for Christ without fear of death and with no regard for the enemy's lies
- You can live-out the rest of your days, knowing that death simply ushers you into glory as it did Christ
 - So what's there to be afraid of?

- Do you fear death? Why? Of what harm is death to you, Christian?
- Why do you give back to the devil the victory that the Lord won for you?
- Why do you live as though death brings a penalty? A penalty that Christ already took upon Himself?
- The devil knows you won't suffer a penalty, but if you still live in fear, he's happy to use it to neutralize you on the spiritual battlefield
 - Christians who live in fear of dying, or who are preoccupied with matters of death, will become so distracted they can't serve God
 - They will waste days and brain cycles focused on the wrong things
- Let's not live that way. Let's live with eyes for eternity
 - Consider what follows death and live every day to make the most of that future
 - Your Lord humbled Himself to grant you that victory