

Hebrews 2

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Date: 16 December 2014

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[0 : 0 0] You sit down. It would be great if you could get a Bible and turn to Hebrews chapter 2. A couple of years ago, around this time of year, quite a mature believer in our old church said to me, Stuart, I understand that Jesus is God. I get that. I don't really understand what it means for Jesus to be a man.

I don't really relate to that. And I think she was, as I say, she was a mature believer. I think probably she was speaking for a lot of us. And we're so used to talking about Jesus as God on earth that we don't really grasp what it means for, if we ever could, for the eternal Son of God to become a man. So that's what we're going to be looking at over the next couple of Sunday mornings. We all know the stories of angels and shepherds. What is the significance of all that? What is the significance of the incarnation of God taking on human flesh?

And so we're going to be looking at Hebrews chapter 2, which probably of all the Bible is a chapter which focuses so much on Jesus in the flesh, God becoming a human being.

So this week we're going to look at him as our Jesus, our representative and restorer. And next week, God willing, we'll see him as our brother, our champion, our priest. This letter to the Hebrews is written to a bunch of Christians from a Jewish background, but they were struggling with their faith.

[1 : 2 5] They were considering chucking in the towel and just going back to Judaism and leading this Christianity business. It's just too much like hard work. And I suspect if we're honest with ourselves, while we may not come from a Jewish background, perhaps among us today, there are those of us who wonder, is it really worth it?

Is it really that great with the struggles in the Christian life? Well, the writer to the Hebrews wants us to see it is that great. And so he starts by showing us this big picture of who the eternal Son of God is.

Those words we read earlier in chapter 1, verse 2, that he's the one through whom all things were created. He is the one who angels worship, chapter 1, verse 6.

He's the radiance of the glory of God. He's so much better than the angels. That's the whole point of chapter 1. Then we get to chapter 2. Look at verse 3 for a moment. See what he says about this great salvation.

How will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? The salvation that Jesus has won for us. Now what is salvation? It's a very Christian word, isn't it?

[2 : 3 0] We use it so often and so easily. If you look it up in a dictionary, it says salvation is an act of saving something from harm or destruction. But even then, what does that mean?

Let me try to illustrate it like this. Sometimes we can think about salvation and think it's the same as salvaging something. But it is not. You may remember, when was it?

It was a couple of years ago now, three years ago now. That huge ocean liner, huge cruise liner, the Costa Concordia, right aground and sank off the coast of Italy. Well, there is now a salvaging operation going on.

What does that mean? Well, it means that earlier this year, at great expense, they lifted the wreck up from the seashore to the bottom of the sea. They towed it 200 miles up the coast to Genoa. Now it's a port in Genoa being salvaged. Which means essentially it's being destroyed. They're going to recycle the metal that they can and everything else goes. That's salvaging.

[3 : 2 7] Just trying to rescue what is still of some use and recycle it. I mean, salvation for the Costa Concordia would look like going down to the seabed, raising it up, bringing it back into port and then kind of remaking it somehow.

So it could float again. That would be salvation. But a great salvation, if you could do it for Costa Concordia, would be to go down, raise it up, turn it into port and then make it renewed completely. With all the beauty, all the seaworthiness that once it had. And not only that, a great salvation would be to make it unsinkable. So it could never be destroyed again.

As we turn to Hebrews 2, we find out that the eternal Son of God has become man. To work a great salvation. To take what is broken, to bring it up, make it new so that it is now unbreakable.

And perfect forever. That's what he has done. That's what this chapter is about. Let's look at verse 5 as we start the section that was read to us earlier.

[4 : 33] The psalmist is quoting, the writer is quoting from Psalm 8. So he says this, Now it's not to angels that God subjected the world to come of which we're speaking. This great salvation is a world to come.

We don't have it all yet. It's a world to come. But what's it like? Well it's been testified somewhere. What is man that you are mindful of him? And so he goes on. He goes back to use Psalm 8.

Written about what the world was like originally. To show us how Jesus fulfills it. So what we're going to do now is look at what Psalm 8 originally meant. See how the writer uses it to show how Jesus fulfills it.

And then more briefly ask the question, So what difference does it make for us? What difference does it make for us? So that's where we're going. And the first point is going to, or the second point is going to take more or less forever. Just warn you that now if you're taking notes.

So, Psalm 8. What is Psalm 8 all about? Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. That's how it begins. And then rejoices in God's care and attention for mankind.

[5 : 36] And really it's a poem, a song, rejoicing in all that God had done in Genesis chapter 1. Where he makes men and women in his own image. Crowned with glory and honour as God's image bearers in the world.

Set to be rulers over God's world. That's the crowning with honour as well. So God said, Genesis 1.26, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over the livestock. And over all the earth. That's what the Psalm is celebrating. What is man? What are we little creatures?

That God should love us so much and give us such responsibility. So it celebrates the dignity God gave us and the responsibility he gave us. Crowned with, you're made in lower than the angels, but crowned with glory and honour.

Verse 7. But as we look around at the world today, we see, don't we, it's not the same as it was in Genesis chapter 1. Yes, we're still made in God's image. But the world is not perfectly under our rule anymore.

[6 : 40] Just over this weekend, they've been fixing new climate change agreements in Lima, haven't they? Worried about what man is doing to the environment around us. We see in the news, mudslides in Indonesia are killing people.

We know we live in a world that is no longer perfectly under human rule. But in a creation that is now often hostile to human existence. Why is that?

Well, in a nutshell, it's because the first man wanted to be God. The first man wanted to be God. So if you read on through the story of Genesis, in chapter 3, we read men and women rebelling against God.

God had put some trees in the garden. He said you can eat the fruit from all these trees, but not this one tree. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And Satan crept into the garden, disguised as a snake, and said, Genesis 3, verse 4, He said to the woman, You will not surely die.

God said you'll die if this happens, but you will not surely die. God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. See the temptation?

[7 : 48] You see the attraction? They wanted to be like God. They weren't content with being made in God's image. They wanted to be God themselves, defining good and evil for themselves. That's the human story, isn't it?

Every one of us wants to be God, naturally. He wants to be in control of our own lives, our own destinies. And the result? The result was disaster. Death enters in the world, the beautiful creation unravels, and the world becomes hostile to us.

Just as when a nation suffers in unjust, bad government, so society falls apart. Look at Syria. Look at Iraq. So the world, being no longer ruled by beings doing what God wanted, but by being ruled by those who turned away from God, the creation unravels, suffers the consequences of bad human leadership.

So the world is broken, in a sense. Now what do you do when something breaks, when something you own breaks? You can either just chuck it out, forget it.

Or you can make do. The lock on our back door is not working right now, it's actually locked shut. Which is quite good, because no one else can get in, but it means we can't get out.

[9 : 03] But you know what? It's wet and horrible outside, so we don't really care right now, so we'll just make do. We won't worry about it. So you make do, you can just throw things away, or you can decide to fix it.

And our great God, in his mercy, in his commitment to the world he made, has decided not just to make do with our rebellion, not just to bid us all like we deserve, but to come and fix what we broke. As one writer put it, God does not make junk, and he does not junk what he has made. He is committed to his world, committed to his people. So he's chose to fix the problem, from the inside as it were.

The problem began, with a man wanting to be God. The problem is solved, by God becoming man. Coming down, to fix what we broke. And so that's how the psalmist now, the writer of the Hebrews rather, uses Psalm 8.

He says, we don't see this perfect world God made, but we do see what God has done, in Jesus. So let's have a look now, secondly, at how he applies, this psalm to Jesus. Look at verse 7 for a moment.

[10 : 06] In a sense, he breaks down Jesus' life and ministry, into three parts. Verse 7, humiliation to begin with. You made him for a little while, lower than the angels.

Secondly, exaltation. You crowned him with glory and honour. And finally, putting everything in subjection, under his feet. The final triumph. Humiliation, exaltation, then the final triumph, when we see his exaltation.

So we're going to run through, those three stages. Of the incarnation, of Jesus, the son of God, becoming flesh. He unpacks those a bit more, in verse 9. Look at what he says, in verse 9.

We do not see the world, in subjection, to human beings, or to Jesus, right now. Verse 8. But, we see him, who for a little while, was made lower than the angels. Namely, Jesus, crowned with glory and honour.

This is the first time, in the book, the writers use, the name Jesus. He's told us about, the eternal son of God, made in God's image, the glory of God, the exact imprint, of his being, of him being worshipped, by the angels, being greater than the angels.

[11 : 18] And now he uses, his human name, Jesus. This eternal God, in his humility, becoming lower than the angels, to be worshipped by him.

Those who were worshipped, by the angels, now coming, to take care of the earth. Coming to do, Adam and Eve's job, the one who upholds, the universe, by the word of his power. Verse 2. Now coming, to live as a man, among us.

A couple of years ago, Prince William spent, I think a night, out on the streets, living as a homeless person, identifying with them, to highlight their need.

That was a, wonderful thing for him to do. He didn't need to do it. Great thing. But the eternal son of God, didn't just identify with us, for a night. But after that moment, in Bethlehem, where he was born as a baby, for all eternity, he bears human flesh, now renewed human flesh, on the throne of heaven, as the resurrected one.

But that journey, that started in Bethlehem, continues forever. He so strongly, identifies with us. And he comes to do, what Adam failed to do. He comes to make amends, to sort out the damage, that was done by the first man.

[12 : 32] And to see that, a bit more clearly, I want us to go back for a moment, so I don't leap around a bit, to Luke chapter 3 and 4. So if you can turn back to page 859, if you're using one of those black church Bibles, to Luke chapter 3.

I want us to see how Luke, also, as well as the writer of the Hebrews, presents Jesus, as the man who's come to do, what Adam didn't do. So Luke chapter 3.

The context here, we want to see Jesus has been born, he's been baptised, the voice has come from heaven, saying this is my beloved son, with you I am well pleased. And Luke 3 verse 23, we begin with Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about 30 years of age, being the son, as we suppose, of Joseph, the son of Heli.

And then we get a genealogy. And what do most of us do when we hit a genealogy in the Bible? Glaze over and flip over it as quickly as possible. That's right, isn't it? That's what we do. But look careful, well don't look too carefully at this one, because you look down, you see Luke does something that Matthew doesn't do, he traces Jesus all the way back, yes, through David, verse 31, through Jacob, verse 34, and Abraham, verse 34, and he keeps going back, he goes back to Noah even, verse 36.

And verse 37, to the Methuselah, who's lived for a long time, back in Genesis 5. And look where he takes it back to you, verse 38. The son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

[14:02] There's a contrast between two sons of God, isn't there? The son announced at the baptism, my beloved son. And the first one made in God's image, made in God's likeness, who in a sense was God's son in his likeness, Adam.

But what did Adam do? In the garden, he fell into temptation and disobeyed. What does Jesus do? Where does Jesus go next? What does it say at the top of chapter 4? What's the headline there? The temptation of Jesus. As Adam was tempted in a garden, as Israel was tempted in the wilderness and failed, now we get Jesus, tempted in the wilderness. And what happens to him? Chapter 4, verse 1. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, he was hungry.

See, Luke wants us to see the contrast. What Israel had failed to do, what Adam had failed to do, what now the Son of God, the eternal Son in human flesh, comes to do. We're going to look very briefly at these temptations and want us to see, as Luke wants us to see, the humanity of Jesus, but also the victory of Jesus in Adam's place.

[15:14] So first of all, he resists the temptation to use divine power for his own ease. Do you see that? Verse 3. The devil came to him and said, if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.

Of course, we see Jesus' humanity here. God cannot be tempted. James chapter 1, verse 13. We also see his humanity in the days, hungry, like we get hungry. Like some of you, by the time I finish this morning, will probably be hungry, and at least want your tea and biscuits at the end of the servants.

Well, Jesus was hungry. But you see his humanity, he restricts himself. He doesn't use his divine power to make bread for himself and make life easy. Rather, as the one who's made lower than the angels, he submits to his Father's will, submits to the restrictions of just being a human being.

For the second temptation, verse 5, the devil took him and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment in time and said to him, to you I will give all this authority and their glory for it has been delivered to me and I will give it to whom I will.

But what human and what man particularly is not tempted by power and prestige and honour. And yet the man Jesus resists that temptation.

[16:30] He's not going to take the shortcut of fatal worship to the devil but the long way of costly obedience to the Father so that he can get the honour and glory of the nations.

And look at the third temptation, the temptation to test God. Verse 9, the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, if you are the son of God throw yourself down from there for it is written he will command his angels concerning you.

What was the temptation? The temptation to put God to the test. It's never okay for human beings to put God to the test. If you look through the Bible you find it's a good thing when God puts humans to the test as you put Abraham to the test it resulted in Abraham being blessed.

But it's never good for us for mere men to test God to test whether he is true to his word. It's not even okay for the incarnate son of God to test his father.

See in his human nature Jesus had to learn to trust his father just as you and I are men and women boys and girls need to learn to trust the living God who makes great promises to us.

[17:41] So you see Jesus' humanity in these temptations but you notice also the victory. He does not give in. He does not give in. And there's a bit of a parallel with the way Adam was tempted in the garden isn't there?

The first temptation is to do with food. Well Adam succumbed when he and his wife saw fruit that was pleasing to the eye and good to eat. The second temptation was for God like authority. What did the serpent say to Adam and Eve in the garden? Eat this you'll become like God. What did Satan say to Jesus? Worship me and I'll give you all the kingdoms of the earth. You can be like God. Again Jesus resists claiming that for himself. And also the temptation to put God to the test.

Satan's first words to Eve did God really say? Did God really say you died? Is that what God really said? You test him to see if that's true. Yet Jesus does not put God to the test.

[18 : 45] He will not throw himself off the temple to see if the angels catch him. The very points at which Adam failed the new Adam Jesus our new representative the son of God succeeds.

And what did he have to resist Satan's temptations with? What does verse 1 tell us? Chapter 4 he was filled with the Holy Spirit and how did he meet each temptation?

He quoted the word of God back at Satan. See he resisted with the resources that we have. He resisted as a man in his human nature filled with the spirit armed with the word of God what every believer has as we battle temptation today.

Well this is the first part of this humiliation that he was made lower than the angels made a human being subject to all our temptations and difficulties. If you want to turn back to Hebrews or get on with that passage back to page 1002 if you're a church Bible Hebrews chapter 2 So he was made a little lower than the angels and then we see his ultimate humiliation there if you look down to verse 9 we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels namely Jesus crowned with glory and honour why?

Because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone death he took on flesh so that he could die he tasted death for all of us not just a sip of the cup but he drank it to the dregs so that we do not need to drink it death is not natural in God's world death is an enemy an intruder that's how the Bible tells us death came as a result of Adam and Eve's rebellion the sin of the first man brought death into the world but this sinless man comes who does not give in to temptation who does not deserve death but drinks the cup of death for us so there can be new life and why?

[20 : 49] verse 9 is by the grace of God through Adam death came into the world through Jesus the sinless one who drinks death death can be done away with he dies as our representative so that we can have life see this is the great salvation this is the great salvation all the consequences of sin being taken by the sinless one who lived the sinless life so this salvation could come all that's been the humiliation but don't worry we're getting on to exaltation now verse 7b actually look back to verse 9 the fuller account he'd been crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death our first parents Adam and Eve were in a sense crowned with glory and honour being made in God's image being made to rule his world but that was marred by their sin by their rebellion still human beings are still in God's image still have great dignity we don't have all the honour we had but now Jesus comes into the world and he is the only he's only the second man created in perfect fellowship with

God as God intended created without sin the man Christ Jesus and yet he takes death for us he's raised to new life with glory and honour to restore the blessings that Adam and Eve lost to restore the dignity and the hope that was lost through their sin but how do we know he's exalted in glory and honour now how do we know that we know it because the tomb is empty don't we we know it because of the resurrection we cannot we cannot just speak about Christmas we have to speak about Easter as well don't we because that tomb is empty he's raised to new life he's now reigning in glory and honour at God's right hand the apostle Paul puts the contrast between Jesus and Adam like this 1 Corinthians 15 verse 21 for as by a man came death by a man has come also the resurrection from the dead for as in Adam all die so in Christ all should be made alive so in the end there are two types of human beings there are those who are on

Adam's team and those who are on Jesus team those who are still on Adam's team the team we're naturally born onto will inherit the death that comes through him those who by grace through faith are on Jesus team he is our captain we will go his way inheriting life so that's the exaltation the leadership and the rule that human beings are supposed to exercise is now entirely with Jesus who rules on our behalf who rules as our king but we don't see that rule completely manifest yet do we we still see sin and pain and death in the world we still see many people who will not bow to king Jesus who will entrust themselves to his gracious rule the kingdom has not yet fully come so after

the exaltation sorry after the humiliation that has happened the exaltation which is now the present experience that Jesus is raised Jesus is reigning there's still one final stage his return in triumph and that's what's described in verse verse 8 first line of verse 8 putting everything in subjection under his feet you know in psalm 8 it was only the living beasts the cattle the fish of the sea the birds of the air that were under the rule of

Adam and Eve but the writer of the Hebrews sees that for everything to be restored absolutely everything will be put under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ so he goes on verse 8 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 but one day we will one day the man who is on the throne of heaven will come back as judge of all and everything will be put right the kingdom will fully come all who have turned from living for themselves to seek his forgiveness to seek life will be forgiven will be forgiven will enjoy the glory and honour that Jesus now has his humiliation his past his exaltation his present the final victory is still to come that's how psalm 8 meant originally that's how psalm 8 is fulfilled by Jesus the new

Adam the new representative of the new race final question so what does the incarnation mean for us what does this matter why should we celebrate Christmas not just the way the rest of the culture does well let me put it like this first if the second person of the trinity if the eternal son of God had not become a human being what would we still have well we'd still have a creation that is imperfect for us with death disease disasters we'd still have to pay for our own sin because no other man would have taken our place we'd still face death and judgment we would still not have any hope but that is not the state we're in is it because actually the eternal son of God has come has lived as a human being on this earth lives now as an exalted human being in heaven so what difference does that make well let me try and sum it up very briefly in about two minutes say three things to think about afterwards and talk about over lunch this

[26 : 32] Jesus ministry as a real man gives us a pattern to follow a hope to cling on to and a reason to worship a pattern to follow a hope to cling on to and a reason to worship so a pattern to follow what was the pattern of Jesus' life humiliation and then exaltation he went down and then was raised up most people around us have this faith that life will just keep on getting better don't they that is as one political scientist put it the faith of practical men and women who believe they have no religion I love that line practical men and women who believe they have no religion have this faith that life will just keep getting better that's why there's astonishment in the last couple of weeks that government levels of public services might go back to 1930s levels of investments now forget any political points about that what's the outcry it looks like life isn't going to keep on getting better that challenges the deeply held faith of every natural western human being but what does a Christian know a Christian know that that is not the pattern of life the pattern of life is not that it keeps getting steadily better but that there is humiliation followed by exaltation we serve now glory comes later we suffer now glory comes later because that's what Jesus did he gives us a pattern to follow secondly he gives us a hope to cling to we have a hope in the present don't we as Jesus went into the wilderness and had to do battle with the devil who tempted him what resources did he have he was filled with the spirit and he had the word of

God we have those resources too by God's grace more or less in coming weeks as we look at Jesus as our priest we have the same resources to deal with the temptations we face so we have hope in the present we also have hope for the future we have this great salvation the creation that was wrecked and ruined has been brought up by the Lord Jesus been made new been made so that we'll never be subject to failure again a real world that is the Christian hope not merely heaven heaven is good heaven is what we get when we die but there is something even better beyond it the new creation when heaven comes back down to earth when Jesus comes to reign and everything sad becomes untrue to steal a line from Tolkien for a moment the Christian hope is of a real physical life in a real physical world no longer scarred by sin and selfishness and death and disease we don't have the hope of a Buddhist nirvana we have something much better something solid something real so we have a pattern to follow a hope to cling to in the present and for the future and finally a reason to worship the triune God has not given up on us that's the message of the incarnation isn't it we broke his world he hasn't binned it he hasn't ignored it he's worked to restore it God does not make junk and he does not junk what he has made he's so committed to his creation that the eternal son of God became a part of that creation came down to lift us up to the heights God had planned for us the first Adam wanted to be God so he messed up the world the second

Adam the son of God became man to fix what Adam broke so because God the son became and he became a man as our representative and restorer and tasted death for us we must trust in him for hope in the present for a pattern to follow for hope for the future we can trust him because he lived with us and lived for us let's pray a man a man a man a man a man a man a man a man a man a man a man a man