



4: Our Humble High Priest (Hebrews 2)

Hebrews understood humans were made in the image of God, but wrestled with the Christian claim that God became human. *But a crucified messiah?* This was inconceivable. Today we discover the significance of both the life & death of our Humble High Priest.

teachingnotes

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* All Scripture is from CSB (Christian Standard Bible)

Catch the Context:

Despite the power and mystery concerning the creatures we call ANGELS, Jesus is BETTER. Angels are God's messengers and servants, but Jesus is God's Messiah and Savior. Angels worship Jesus because angels were created by Jesus! And, every knee of every human and every angel will bow before the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 2:1

For this reason, we must pay attention all the more to what we have heard, **so that we will not drift away**.

The writer of Hebrews has a legitimate concern for his audience - that they might **drift away** from the truth, as a boat drifts away from its anchor OR as the vessel drifts off the course that would otherwise bring them home.

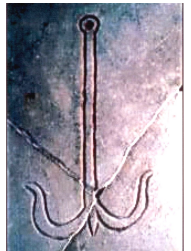
What IS that firm foundational truth they should not drift away from? Jesus is God the Son, who put on skin to become our sinless sacrifice & our Humble High Priest. Church historian Henry Chadwick notes the early church used sea symbols to remind them of these truths.¹

✓ **FISH**, a 5 letter term in Greek (*ichthus*), was a coded acronym for "**Jesus Christ God's Son Savior**."

- **I** = iota - *ĭēsous* (**Jesus** in Greek)
- **X** = chi - *Christos* (**Christ**) [side note: Xmas - the "x" is short for "Christ"]
- **Θ** = theta - *Theou* (**God's**)
- **Υ** = upsilon - *Yios* (**Son**)
- **Σ** = sigma - *Sōtēr* (**Savior**)



✓ The **ANCHOR** became a powerful symbol to the early church, found in paintings and on Christians' coffins, showing that Christians were anchored by Christ, our great and HUMBLE HIGH PRIEST, and not adrift for eternity.²



❓ Why do people drift away?

- ✗ Some of us are **bombarded by skeptics who question the claims of the Scriptures**.
- ✗ Some of us drift when we are **lured away by seductive sin**. Is it any wonder that we don't sense the presence and power of Jesus when we continue to live for the things that Jesus died to pay for?
- ✗ Sometimes we drift away because **we are tempted to remove Jesus from the throne of our hearts and replace Him with someone or something** in His place (our spouses, our children, and material possessions).

TAKE YOUR OWN NOTES HERE

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, vol. 1, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 81.

² Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1967), pp. 278, 279.

While the 1st century recipients of this letter faced some of the same struggles, these Hebrew Christians also faced opposition and persecution from those who wanted them to walk away from Jesus and return to their past beliefs and behaviors - to go back to the types and shadows of the Old Covenant...

- Go back to sacrificing animals for their sin *RATHER THAN* recognize that Jesus is the only & ultimate satisfying sacrifice, offered once and for all time.
- Go back to relying on the imperfect priests who played the part of mediator between God and people, *RATHER THAN* recognizing Jesus as perfect High Priest
- Go back look for a future messiah *RATHER THAN* recognizing Jesus as the promised Messiah and King who reigns forever & ever.

Challenging the Hebrew audience to get back on course by comparing the Old Covenant message to the superiority of the New Covenant message.

The Jewish people believed that God had given His Old Covenant commands to Moses through angels.

Acts 7:38 He [Moses] is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness, with **the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai**, and with our ancestors. He received living oracles to give to us.

Most Jewish people took the commands of God from Moses through angels very seriously.

Hebrews 2:2-3a For if the **message spoken through angels was legally binding** and every transgression and disobedience received a just punishment, how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

God's Old Covenant commands were expected to be obeyed, and when they weren't, **disobedience received a just punishment.**

- Capital punishment was commanded by God for those who disobeyed or blasphemed His Name (Lev 24:14-16; Num 15:32-36). Capital punishment was the legal judgment for **murder** (Gen 9:5-6; Num 35:16-21), **adultery** (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:24), **incest** (Lev. 20:11-14), **bestiality** (Ex 22:19), **homosexual activity** (Lev 18:22; 20:13), and **perjury** (Zech 5:4).³
- Sometimes God bypassed the judicial system and brought powerful plagues to punish the disobedient (e.g. poisonous snakes (Num 21:4-6)).

The implied conclusion: If God punished those who disobeyed His commands given to Moses through angels, then how will God react if we disobey what He has **spoken by the Lord**" Jesus?

God offers us **a great salvation** (mercy, love, forgiveness, & restoration). But if we **neglect** God's offer, how can we **expect** to escape God's judgment?

Hebrews 2:3b-4 This **salvation** had its beginning when it was **spoken of by the Lord**, and it was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. At the same time, God also testified by signs and wonders, various miracles, and distributions of gifts from the Holy Spirit according to his will.

What's the author's point? God has given evidence that salvation is found through **the Lord** Jesus alone.

- The words and works (teachings and miracles) of Jesus proved that Jesus was **Lord** over all.
- Jesus enabled His apostles to perform **signs and wonders** and **various miracles** backing up what they taught about Jesus.
- *Beyond the apostles*, God empowered the other followers of Jesus to carry out His work by the **gifts from the Holy Spirit** (see Acts 2:1-12; Rom 12:6-8 and 1 Cor 12:4-11).

TAKE YOUR OWN NOTES HERE

³ George Guthrie, Hebrews, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 92.

Hebrews 2:5-8a For He has not subjected to angels the world to come that we are talking about. But someone somewhere has testified: *What is man that you remember him, or the son of man that you care for him? **You made him lower than the angels for a short time; You crowned him with glory and honor and subjected everything under his feet.*** [Ps 8:4-6]

This quote comes from **Ps 8:4-6** and is speaking about the human beings in general, saying that:

- Mankind is **made a little lower than angels for a short time**, but not for all time (humans judge angels - 1 Cor 6:3).
- God created people in His image and has **crowned** human beings **glory and honor**. Further, God gave human beings dominion over the earth and its creatures (Gen 1:28-30), hence **subjected everything under his feet**.

The author ultimately applies Ps 8:4-6 to Jesus

2:8b-9 and subjected everything under His feet. For in subjecting everything to Him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him. As it is, **we do not yet see everything subjected to Him** [that day when every knee bows before Jesus]. But we do see **Jesus—made lower than the angels for a short time** so that by God's grace He might taste death for everyone—crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death.

Jesus, the One whom angels worshiped in heaven, came to earth as a human, and was **made lower than the angels for a short time**. *While mankind is made the image of God, now God is made in the image of man.*

WHY would God do this? So that **He might taste death for everyone** - *Jesus was made lower than angels for a brief time so that He could make payment on the Cross for people created in His image!*

Many Jewish people expected and appreciated a human Messiah (Mt 2:4-6), but most of them couldn't swallow the concept of a crucified Messiah. A crucified Messiah was a stumbling block for them (1 Cor 1:23), since they had been taught the Messiah would never die (Jn 12:34).

How did they miss all the passages that point to Jesus' sacrificial death?

- ✗ Just like us, their leaders tended to *highlight* the passages they **LIKED** while *dismissing* what they found **DIFFICULT**.
- ✓ It's **ONLY** by the death of Jesus that we could be given eternal life.

Hebrews 2:10 For in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was entirely appropriate that God—for whom and through whom all things exist—should make **the Pioneer of their salvation** perfect through sufferings.

Make the Pioneer...perfect? "Perfect" carries the idea of **completeness** or **wholeness**, that Jesus has now fully and completely accomplished the mission.⁴ Further, despite facing temptation & persecution as a human being, Jesus proved to be **perfect through sufferings**.

Hebrews 2:11-13 For the One who sanctifies⁵ and those who are sanctified all have one Father [lit "all from one"⁶]. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying: *I will proclaim Your Name to My brothers and sisters; I will sing hymns to You in the congregation.* [Ps 22:22 - 1000 year old prophecy of Jesus crucified] Again, *I will trust in Him* [Is 12:2]. And again, *Here I am with the children God gave Me.* [Is 8:18]

Jesus is **not ashamed** to call those He has made holy "**FAMILY**"!

- 🕒 The implication of what this means in context. **The Hebrew audience is in danger of drifting away** from the good news. The author reminds them that Jesus has made sanctified (set apart) them and made them **HOLY**, by suffering on their behalf. Jesus is **not ashamed** to call them His family and neither should they be ashamed of Him!

TAKE YOUR OWN NOTES HERE

⁴ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 1161.

⁵ NET, NIV, & NLT translate "sanctifies" as "makes holy".

⁶ Scholars debate whether "all from one" refers to God, Adam, or Abraham, whether the common focus is spiritual origin or common humanity.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that **through His death** He might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil—and **free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.**

Jesus lived in **flesh and blood** just like us. Fully human, yet fully God, Jesus lived a perfect life, never lusting, never stealing, never gossiping, never using dirty language, always loving God & loving people, speaking the truth, and then **through His death**, destroying the powerful hold of the **devil**, and freeing us from the **fear of death**.

☀ **Kent Hughes** speaks of what the 1st century Hebrew audience feared:

No one had yet been martyred for his or her faith, but the fear of death had its icy fingers around many trembling hearts...Such fear was immobilizing—like a deadly cobra's stare upon its prey—and some in the church were experiencing the paralysis of bondage through their fear of death.⁷

The resurrection of Jesus proved that death was just a bump in the road. The One who rose from the dead will raise US from the dead! If we must give our lives for Jesus, we will open our eyes to our resurrected Savior!

Our Humble High Priest

Hebrews 2:16-18 For it is clear that He does not reach out to help angels, but **to help Abraham's offspring**. Therefore, He had to be like His brothers and sisters in every way, so that He could become **a merciful and faithful high priest** in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. For since He himself has suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.

Jesus didn't die **to help angels**, but **to help Abraham's offspring** - people who would follow in his footsteps to BELIEVE GOD and OBEY GOD.

Jesus is a **merciful high priest** because He has experienced life in human skin, facing persecution & temptation. And He did all this, to offer MERCY to you!

Jesus was the **faithful high priest** precisely because He didn't give in to temptation and made atonement - payment - for the sins of the people.

This is our Humble High Priest who is able to help those who are tempted - US! Jesus *KNOWS* what it's like to live the human life, face the frustrations and temptations. And **He is our HUMBLE HIGH PRIEST**, the One who says, "Come to me you who are weak and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." (Mt 11:28)

Where does this find YOU today?

• **GRATEFUL, STRUGGLING, or CONSIDERING?**

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: Alan & Christy Androski (464-1428), Steve & Debbie Bass (673-7952), Tim & Joni Hughey (464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (464-6717), Jim & Derita Pinkard (464-6188), Fain & Linda Poppell (464-1282), or Tom & Martha Waddail (973-0011).