

Hebrews 2:10-18

May 23, 2021

Here is a little background information on what I shared last week regarding authorship, the audience, etc. Just more fun stuff for you to consider.

The author identified neither himself nor the people he was writing. However, the content of the book, including the frequent references to the Hebrew Scriptures, makes it clear that he was writing to Jewish Christians who were tempted to leave the Christian church and revert to Jewish worship.

There were a number of reasons why these Jewish Christians might have been tempted to return to Judaism:

- Families and friends surely pressured them. This could have taken many forms—expressions of disapproval, shunning, disinheritance, etc.
- They would have missed the elaborate rituals and furnishings of the Jewish Temple and the synagogues. Christians didn't have church buildings in those days, but met in the homes of fellow Christians. Compared to Jewish worship, Christian worship must have seemed spare—even poor. ANY THOUGHTS?
- Those who had enjoyed special status in Judaism would miss the prestige and influence that they once enjoyed. Luke tells us that “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Whether they could have become Jewish priests again is open to question, but some would likely be tempted to return if they thought that would be a possibility.

The author spends the first ten and a half chapters of this thirteen-chapter book (1:1 – 10:18) emphasizing the superiority of Christ and the new covenant to Moses and the old covenant. In chapters 1-2, he focuses specifically on the superiority of Christ to angels.

So here we go with Chapter 2 and more about Jesus superiority over long held Hebrew beliefs and traditions.

Hebrews 2:10-13. Death crowned with glory and honor

10. For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many children to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11. For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12. saying, “I will declare your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

10a “For it became him

“Him” refers to the Father rather than the Son. The Greek word for “became” means “it is becoming” or “it is proper” or “it is fitting.” The author mentions that, because the author is writing to Jewish Christians he/she wants to reaffirm that what happened to Jesus was in accord with God’s plan of salvation.

10b. “for whom are all things, and through whom are all things

“Whom” refers to the Father rather than the Son. Paul uses this same phrase in Romans 11:36, where it clearly applies to God. The point is that the Father is God of their history, and it is he who makes the Son perfect.

10c. “in bringing many children to glory

Glory is characteristic of God, and refers to God’s awe-inspiring majesty. God shared this glory with Jesus. Jesus’ glory was revealed at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36) and his death and resurrection (Luke 24:26).

Now we learn that God also shares his glory with many children Christ has saved.

10d. “to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings

The author of our salvation is Christ. God made Christ perfect through Christ’s suffering on the cross.

11. “For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brothers

The Greek word for sanctifies (sanctify, make holy) is closely related to the word usually translated “saint” in the New Testament. A saint is someone who has been sanctified or made holy.

The New Testament uses the words “holy” or “saint” to speak of ordinary Christians (Acts 9:13, 41; Romans 1:7; 12:13; 15:26; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1, etc.). We are saints, people made holy by the grace of God and set apart for a Godly purpose as stated later in our studies “*sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ*” (Hebrews 10:10).

And so the Son is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters.

12. “saying, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers’

This comes from Psalm 22:22, regarded by the early church as messianic. That psalm begins with the words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1)—words that Jesus spoke from the cross (Mark 15:34).

12. “In the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise

The Greek word usually translated “church” (now congregation) means “those who are called out.” That is how Israel thought of itself—called out to be the people of God. The church continues that tradition under the banner of Christ.

Once again, these words come from Psalm 22. The psalm has moved from despair to praise.

In the Hebrews verse, Jesus is declaring the Father’s name to his brothers—to those whom he has sanctified and made holy.

13a. “Again, ‘I will put my trust in him

According to most commentaries, this is most likely a variation of Isaiah 8:17, which says, “I will wait for the Lord.”

13b. “Again, ‘Behold, here I am with the children whom God has given me’

This is an adaptation of Isaiah 8:18, which says, “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me.” In its original context, Isaiah was identifying himself with the children of Israel.

The author of Hebrews has the Messiah identifying with those whom God has given him. Last Sunday as I read the scripture for Pastor Lara’s sermon, I realized that vs. 13 in Hebrews is closely related to the words I read in John. This is often referred to as the High Priestly Prayer. Just something for you to consider.

“I revealed your name to the people
whom you have given me out of the world.
They were yours, and you have given them to me....

I pray for them. I don’t pray for the world,
but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

All things that are mine are yours, and yours are mine,
and I am glorified in them” (John 17:6, 9-10).

Hebrews 2:14-15. He partook of our flesh and blood

14. Since then the children have shared in flesh and blood, he also himself in the same way partook of the same, that through death he might bring to nothing him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15. and might deliver all of them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

14a. “Since then the children have shared in flesh and blood, the he (he is most likely Jesus) also himself in the same way partook of the same

A more literal translation would be, “Now since the children have flesh and blood in common.” I prefer the literal translation because, for me, it speaks of the commonality of the human condition. We share the strengths and weaknesses inherent in our flesh and blood bodies. In the end, we share death—the great leveler.

Think about this idea of how Jesus shared our human condition, beginning with his birth in a stable and the manger that cradled him as a newborn. Born before the advent of modern medicine, he had no access to a trained obstetrician or a well-equipped hospital. His parents had to bundle him up in the middle of the night to flee to Egypt to escape murderous Herod. During his ministry, he walked many dusty roads—no limousines or private jets for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. No indoor plumbing. No air conditioning. No bodyguards.

And his death was terrible—as terrible as death can be. (DID YOU SEE “THE PASSION OF CHRIST”?)
THOUGHTS...

14b. “that through death he might bring to nothing him who had the power of death, that is, the devil

A more literal translation would be, “...so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death, that is, the devil.” I say that, but there is something really impactful about someone being “brought to nothing.” HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THAT THOUGHT?

I mention the literal translation, because “destroy” is not only a more faithful translation, but it is also more graphic. Jesus didn’t come just to take the devil down a notch or two. He didn’t come just to sap the devil’s power. He came to destroy (BRING HIM TO NOTHING) the devil, the one “who had the power of death.”

15. “and might deliver all of them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage

Jesus came to deliver us from the fear of death and the bondage that fear and death impose.

We still die, of course. But through Christ we have the hope of resurrection and life eternal—life with God—an eternal life which we begin in the present day and time.

Jesus said it well in his High Priestly Prayer discussed above, “This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ” (John 17:3).

Hebrews 2:16-17. Made like his brothers

16. For most certainly, he doesn’t give help to angels, but he gives help to the seed of Abraham. 17. Therefore he was obligated in all things to be made like his brothers, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people.

16a. “For most certainly, he doesn’t give help to angels

As noted above, the author emphasizes throughout chapters 1-2 that the Son is superior to angels. In this verse, the author is emphasizing that the Son didn’t come to earth and die on the cross to help angels. He came to save people.

16b. “but he gives help to the seed of Abraham

The allusion is to Isaiah 41:8-11, where God, through the prophet, speaks of “Abraham my friend,” and promises, ““You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you away. Don’t you be afraid, for I am with you.”

Keep in mind that the author is writing to Jewish Christians, so they would identify with “the seed of Abraham.” They would consider themselves sons and daughters of Abraham.

I BELIEVE THIS THOUGHT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT NOT ONLY FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE, BUT FOR ALL OF US TO KNOW AND CONSIDER TODAY.

Christ came to save, not just those who are descendants of Abraham by blood. As Paul says elsewhere, “Know therefore that those who are of faith, the same are children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7).

- Jesus' genealogy includes two Gentiles, Ruth and Rahab (Matthew 1:1-17).
- He ministered to Gentiles (Matthew 4:25; 8:28ff; 15:28).
- He spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven being "like a dragnet, that was cast into the sea, and gathered some fish of every kind"—I BELIEVE THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT REFERENCE TO GENTILES INCLUDING EVERY ONE OF US...(Matthew 13:47).
- Matthew reports a Roman centurion saying, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).
- Jesus concluded his ministry by telling his disciples, "Go, and make disciples of all nations" (28:19).

17a. "Therefore he was obligated in all things to be made like his brothers

RATHER THAN REPEAT WHAT I WROTE BEFORE...See the comments on verse 14 above.

17b. "that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people

Jewish law established an elaborate sacrificial system to atone for the sins of the people. The high priest was responsible for the administration of the sacrifices. He alone was permitted in the Holy of Holies (the dwelling place of God)—and only on the Day of Atonement.

Christ assumed the role of "a merciful and faithful high priest"—the ultimate high priest.

17b. "to make atonement for the sins of the people

In my study for this verse, I found that word translated here as "atonement" is also translated "propitiation" or "expiation"—words calculated to put people sleep in my opinion—but the distinctions among them are worth noting.

THE FOLLOWING NOTES ARE FOUND IN THE WRITING OF VICTOR PFITZNER IN THE "ABBINGTON COMMENTARIES ON HEBREWS.

ATONEMENT has to do with making amends for sins or repairing the spiritual damage caused by sins. It also has to do with restoring relationships that were broken by sin, and in particular the relationship that we enjoyed with God prior to the introduction of sin into the world. Our sin broke that relationship, because God is holy and expects us to be holy as well (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15).

Our sin, therefore, creates a conflict for God as to whether he should (or might) dismiss us totally.

So, in keeping with God's holiness which demands that we be punished and his love which demands that we be reconciled, God devised a process by which he can make us holy once again so that he might receive us into full fellowship.

This process is known as substitutionary atonement, meaning that God will accept a substitute to absorb the punishment for our sins and "atonement" meaning that we can be restored to full fellowship with God. Christ's death on the cross became the ultimate sacrifice.

Some people interpret PROPITIATION to mean appeasing the wrath of God by offering a sacrifice. They believe that it is inappropriate to use the word propitiation in relationship to God, because they understand God as gracious and loving, not wrathful, and not requiring sacrifices to appease his anger.

EXPIATION, on the other hand, involves the removal of sin or the forgiveness of sin.

Most Christian scholars today favor the words atonement or expiation rather than propitiation.

Hebrews 2:18. Because he suffered temptation, he can help us

18. For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

18 a. “For in that he himself has suffered being tempted

We find the story of Jesus’ temptation following his baptism in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). However, we should regard those as accounts of his initial temptation. If he was tempted as we are, Satan must have tempted him on a regular basis. Luke seems to confirm that, saying, “When the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him until another time” (Luke 4:13).

18b. “he is able to help those who are tempted

For me, this brings to mind Alcoholics Anonymous, whose recovering members (those not currently drinking) reach out on a regular basis to help struggling alcoholics (those who are currently drinking). The recovering members are able to relate to the struggling alcoholics, because they have been there and done that. They know the temptations, the excuses, and the deceptions—and aren’t easily taken in by the things that alcoholics say in their own defense or the promises that they make.

I don’t want to press that metaphor too far, however, because AA involves *drunks* helping *drunks*. The situation with Jesus is different. He has been tempted as we have been tempted, but he didn’t acquiesce. He is a *sinless* man helping *sinful* people.

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The Lord bless us and keep us;
The Lord make his face to shine on us
The Lord be gracious to us
and give us peace.

Numbers 6:24-26