

Easter 2025

Good morning, everyone. Today is Easter Sunday and we gather to especially commemorate the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I welcome those who may be new with us. We are a teaching church, and our emphasis is on studying the Word of God. Each week we take a passage and study its grammatical and historical context to understand what God is trying to say to us in his Holy Word. However, we are not content to just know the text intellectually; we want it to change us and through the power of God's spirit, transform us into the likeness of his Son. It is in that vein that we open our text which is Heb 2:9-18.

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.^[a] ¹² He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."^[b] ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him."^[c] And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."^[d] ¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them,^[k] fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

These passages are a summary of the Easter message, and in these next few minutes, I want to show you why Christ came to earth, and to see five things Jesus was and is because he died.

- a. Christ our Substitute, vs 9.
- b. Christ our Salvation Captain, vs 10.
- c. Christ our Sanctifier, vs 11-13.
- d. Christ our Satan Conqueror, vs 14-15.
- e. Christ our Great High Priest, vs 16-18.

Christ our Substitute, vs 9.

Vs 9, But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Verse 9 notes initially that Jesus *was made lower than the angels for a little while*. In the hierarchy of created beings, angels are at the top, then man, then the animal and plant kingdom. Christ was and is the creator of all things. So, here is one of the great mysteries of the Godhead. Christ the creator, becomes Christ the created. Christ the creator inhabits and chooses to dwell in human flesh to be lower than the angels for a brief time. Jesus was made man. By becoming man, Jesus did not cease to become God, nor did he lose his Divine nature. But for a while, he humbled himself and assumed human flesh.

As Phil 2:6-8 states, *Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

And why was he made a man? As the verse notes: *for the suffering of death*. Christ became a man to die. God had pronounced judgement on sin. Far back in Genesis 2:17 he had warned Adam and Eve that to eat of the tree of Good and Evil would result in death. They had no reference for this word, but they knew to eat of the tree violated God's Word. Yet they ate it. And they then found out what death meant. Physically they started to deteriorate. Relationally their fellowship with God was cut off. Their soulish nature changed so that it became rebellious, obstinate, and selfish, and since we derive genetically from Adam and Eve, we inherited these same predilections. As creation was under their authority, it too was cursed against its will and now brings forth thorns and thistles. Ezekiel said *the soul that sins dies*. Paul said *the wages of sin is death*. We know we are all sinners because we all die.

But this is why Christ came. As the verse notes, *by the grace of God, he tasted death for everyman*. The motivation for Christ to come was Grace. We did not deserve a substitute. We did not deserve to be loved; We did not deserve to be saved! But God loved us so much he wanted to save us from all our folly. Christ became our substitute. *He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God* (2 Cor 5:21). *Without the spilling of blood there is no remission of sin* (Heb 9:22) so Christ willingly poured out his blood, his life, for us.

Note verse 9 states Christ *came to taste death for everyman*. Christ experienced death just as we do. The difference is at his death, He absorbed all the punishment for all the sin of the entire world. God's wrath, God's judgement, God's righteous anger at sin was poured out on Jesus while he hung on that cross. God treated Christ on the cross as if he (Christ) lived your life. And it was all done so you did not have to bear that judgment for yourself. As Romans 5:6-10, *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!* 1 P 1:24, *He himself bore our sins in his body on a cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.*

This is why Christ, as the verse notes, is *crowned with glory and honor*. Because he came as our perfect substitute and willingly, lovingly, graciously, died and bore God's wrath for your sin, so you did not have to. Christ death was sufficient for you and all your sin. The only question left is whether you believe it and apply his sacrificial death to your life.

Christ our Salvation Captain, vs 10.

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

This is one of my favorite passages in scripture. Note first God's desire. He desires *in bringing many sons and daughters to glory*. God's longing is to save us. As 1 Tim 2:4-6 notes, *who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.* ⁵ *For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.* 2 P 3:9, *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* Peter notes in Acts 2:38, *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Note secondly God's destination for us: it is glory! This is not the world we live in. God has a better place he wants to bring us to. Jn 14:2-3, *My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?* ³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.* When talking of the great people of faith in Heb 11, the author states in Heb 11:16 *Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Thirdly, note God's design. *It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.* The word *fitting* means suitable, or the idea of a right plan. It was right for God, suitable for his holiness, suitable for his wisdom and his justice, for his power and his purpose, suitable for his love and his grace, that as the creator of the universe, he should make Christ the pioneer of our salvation. The word pioneer is also translated captain. It is the Greek word *archegos*. It speaks of someone who opens fresh territory or leads to a new place. It speaks of someone who opens a new door to a new way of life (think of the invention of a new product or medicine that transforms the way we live (think cars, electricity, computer chips, anti-biotics, etc.)). The verse is saying Jesus was the first explorer or the captain, whom we follow, to a new life; and here is the important part: he leads us there through his death. He leads us (as the verse notes) to glory through his death. And here is also something to note. Salvation is just not the forgiveness of sin. It is to bring us into a new world, a new existence, of glory. As John MacArthur notes, "And Jesus blazed the trail into that newness of life, and He did it by being perfected through suffering. God made His Son for a little while lower than the angels, brought Him down into the realm of humans, so that He could do what no angel has ever done or will ever do: die, die in our place as our substitute. And by that death become the perfect leader, the perfect trailblazer, the perfect pioneer, the perfect general, the perfect sovereign, who would open the path of salvation, and lead us to God and to eternal glory."

Christ our Sanctifier, vs 11-13.

Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.^[a] ¹² He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."^[b] ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him."^[c] And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

Now we see another astounding truth. Not only does Hebrews tell us Christ is our substitute, and he will lead us to a new life, he now declares we are made holy. When you place your faith in Christ, he credits his righteousness to your account. God now looks at your life and sees you are now clothed with the righteousness of Christ. He declares you positionally holy. God treated Jesus on the cross as if Christ lived your life, now, as a believer, God treats you as if you lived Christ's life. God declares you righteous, perfect, and holy in his sight, because of Christ's death. Heb 10:10, *And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* Heb 10:14

We all know we are not in practice what we are in position, but everyday God experientially works in us to close this gap. But positionally I stand before him clothed with the Righteousness of Christ. This is why Heb 10:14 states, *For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.* Verse 10 then quotes three OT verses which anticipated the relationship we would have as believers with Christ. Before I quote them, do you realize Jesus never referred to his followers as brothers till after the resurrection. He called them disciples, followers, dimwits—but only after resurrection Sunday when he appeared to Mary did, he tell her, *go tell my brothers* (Mt 28:10).

- a. The first verse is Ps 22:22, *I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.*
- b. The second is Isa 8:17, *I will put my trust in him.*
- c. The third is Isa 8:18, *here am I and the children God has given me.*

Each notes the new relationship God intended for us through the death of his Son. As Christ trusted God, so we trust him, and through this trust (faith) we become God's children, hence Christ call us his brothers and sisters, and He (Christ) is delighted to be with the children (us) God has given him (see also Jn 17:6 and Jn 17:24). The author is declaring that as believers, now before God, we enjoy the same family position and relationship as his Son, the Lord Jesus.

Christ our Satan Conqueror, vs 14-15.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Death is the great fear of man. So much so that we have pushed it as far as possible from our everyday lives. In the past people died among us. We did not have hospice houses, nursing homes, or large hospitals. People died at home. Today that is usually not the case.

So, why are we fearful of death? Two reasons: it is the end of what we love and know: and second, it implies judgement. As scripture says, we are appointed once to die and then the judgement (Heb 9:27).

Way back in eternity when Satan rebelled against God, God pronounced a judgement upon him. He was ultimately to be cast out of heaven and would be confined to eternal fire. Then, in Gen 1 and 2, man was created and given dominion over the earth. We were to steward God's creation as his regent. Adam and Eve were warned of evil but did not heed. Satan entered the Garden, tempted Adam and Eve, and when they chose to join Satan's rebellion against God, death entered the world. Death and everything about it are of Satan's doing. Death is the antithesis of creating. God spends Gen 1 and 2 creating; bringing life; and Satan spends most of his existence destroying and killing. Death is his dominion and when Adam and Eve fell, that dominion entered the world. Satan usurped their regency, and he wields the power of death over mankind. Satan desires to hold men in captivity till death, for then there is no escape, and men will face the same judgement as he. This is what it means when the verse says, Satan wields the power of death. He holds it over each one of us; so much so, the author describes us as a being in slave to our fear of it.

But now, see how great our God is. Seeing that humanity has flesh and blood, God chose to share in our humanity, face death on Satan's own ground, suffer death, and bear the judgment we were to face; and in so doing, Christ broke the power of death Satan holds over us. Through Christ's death we are brought new life!!! Christ has set us free. As Paul notes in 1 Cor 15:55, *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"*^[1] ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Christ our Great High Priest, vs 16-18.

¹⁶ *For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.* ¹⁷ *For this reason he had to be made like them,*^[1] *fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.* ¹⁸ *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Lastly, Christ is our great high priest. Angels do not need help because they are perfect beings. Now I noted earlier Christ has stamped us with his righteousness and we are positionally declared holy in God's sight. But experientially we still sin. Our old nature, though neutered, still is a problem. We still live in a world anti-thetical to Christian norms and values. Satan himself roams the earth seeking to destroy us. So, we need help every day! We face temptation every day. If you think about it, if there were no temptations we would not need help. But we do face temptation, and here we have Jesus Christ, who as man faced the temptations we face, and so is able to help us in our time of trial.

Conclusion,

- a. Is Christ your substitute?
- b. Is Christ your Pioneer or Captain leading you to a new life in glory?
- c. Has Christ declared you righteous and can you claim him as your brother?
- d. Are you afraid of the judgement of death and live in fear of its inevitability?
- e. Do you have a Divine High Priest to whom you can pour out your earthly concerns and be assured of a divine advocate, divine sympathy, divine understanding, and divine help?

