

Living in the in-between

Introduction

The times we live in now are in between two great events, Jesus First and Second comings. The first we know well, Jesus, the eternal God took on human flesh and became a man. He lived a perfect and holy life and then willingly laid down his life to take upon himself the penalty of sin. He rose again, ascended and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and is now reigning as His kingdom advances across the earth.

In our own lives we also are in process. If you have chosen to follow Jesus, you have been made a new creation, but you are also still struggling to overcome your sinful flesh, dealing with a broken world, and a physical body that outwardly is wasting away. Yet, we don't do this alone. Not only do we have the hope of victory in Jesus, we have an active high priest who was made like us, can sympathize with us, and help us in our struggles.

Summary

- Jesus was the creator of the angels, then took on the form of man, a little lower than the angels.
- All things are under Jesus authority, but we don't see the reality of that yet.
- Only by being made as a man could Jesus take our penalty of sin, which was death.
- Jesus' death breaks the power of death, and frees us from the fear of death
- He calls us brothers and sisters, and can go between us and God
- He can sympathize with us and help us when we are tested

Pay attention to Jesus, the Truth

Heb 2:1 So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. 2 For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. 3 So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? 4 And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose.

The chapter begins with a strong warning to recognize and heed the gospel of Jesus because it was delivered by God himself! Jesus, the son of God delivered the truth, and God confirmed the message through miracles, signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Spirit that persist even today.

Sometimes you hear the question, Well, why Jesus? Why the Christian Bible? There are so many options out there for religions and “holy books”, why this one and not the others? Is it just a matter of preference, like what flavor of ice cream you like?

First, you need to recognize that different faiths make different, exclusive claims. When you dig down below the surface level, not even very far down you realize that Christianity, and Hinduism, and Buddhism, and Islam, or whatever other flavor can’t all be true at the same time. One example: the Koran, the Islamic “bible,” says that Jesus never died on the cross, that he wasn’t God himself, but just a man, and that there is no sure way to be saved.

Second, you look at the claims each makes and whether they are true or not. Hebrews chapter 2 is saying Jesus was God himself, telling us the truth. (Islam, coincidentally, was “revealed to Mohammed” supposedly by an angel.) But Jesus himself, God delivered this message of salvation to us himself! And confirmed this by various signs and wonders.

The apostle Paul also said this when speaking to the Greek philosophers at the Areopagus in Athens, Greece when he spoke of the resurrection and said:

Acts 17:30 “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. 31 For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

My first point today is that we can have confidence in Christ as our savior because he was God himself announcing the truth, and he proved it by rising from the dead.

Jesus, the Man, our Founder

Remember last week, Kirk talked about in Chapter 1 that Jesus was the creator of the angels and is in all ways greater than angels.

Heb 1:4 This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

The rest of the chapter tells us about the importance of the humanity of Jesus.

Heb 2:5 And furthermore, it is not angels who will control the future world we are talking about. 6 For in one place the Scriptures say, “What are mere mortals that you should think about them, or a son of man that you should care for him?”

7 Yet for a little while you made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. 8 You gave them authority over all things.”

Here we see that Jesus was made lower than the angels, but God has crowned him with glory and honor. Verse 8 continues:

Now when it says “all things,” it means nothing is left out. But we have not yet seen all things put under their authority. 9 What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position “a little lower than the angels”; and because he suffered death for us, he is now “crowned with glory and honor.” Yes, by God’s grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. 10 God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader¹, fit to bring them into their salvation.

Let’s unpack this here.

1. Jesus was given all authority because he was willing to suffer death for us.

Remember that when Jesus rose from the dead and before he ascended into heaven:

Mat 28:18 Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

Php 2:7-11 When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. 9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. But we do not see everything under his authority yet.

This is the reality we live in today. We believe by faith the testimony of those who saw the risen Christ that he is alive. Those who surrender to his authority know what it means to experience the risen Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit living in us. We experience the comfort of his love, His wisdom and direction. The mysterious ways he works in and through our lives.

Yet we all experience an incomplete, not yet full salvation.

- We know we are saved.
- We know that one day we will receive new, incorruptible bodies.
- We know that one day we will see Jesus face to face and be able to free from the power of sin.

¹ Archegon – archetype, author, captain, prince

But we also experience the difficulties of living in a fallen world.

- We have loved ones die
- We struggle with sickness or our bodies falling apart.
- We are tempted and sometimes choose to sin and face those consequences
- or even the impact of the sins of others.

The good news, the great news though is this is not the end of the story. Yes, we may die before Jesus returns to put an end to death and usher in perfection, but we are on the way and growing closer to that every day we live, and we see that in verse 10 here.

3. Jesus has made the way for us to have complete fulfillment of our salvation.

God chose to bring many children into glory.

Jesus is the archetype who will bring us into salvation. This is translated various ways:

- perfect leader
- pioneer
- founder
- author
- captain
- trail-blazer

The idea is that Jesus, by entering the world, suffering death for us, and rising again, founded the Christian faith for us. One commentator compares the idea to that of a Navy Seal who infiltrates behind enemy lines to clear the way for others to mount an attack. We'll see in the rest of this chapter how this plays out.

My second point this morning is that Jesus is the founder of our faith, the one who both opened the way for salvation for us, and actively leads us in completing the mission of salvation.

Jesus, our Brother

11 So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. 12 For he said to God, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among your assembled people."

13 He also said, "I will put my trust in him," that is, "I and the children God has given me."

Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters. Let that sink in.

Jesus, the one who created everything we see. The one who created the angels, every universe, every molecule. The one who added humanity to his divinity and walked the earth. The one who died and rose again for our sins is NOT ASHAMED to call us his brothers and sisters.

Wow.

*14 Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who **had** the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.*

Importantly, as was already mentioned last week only by becoming a human could Jesus die in our place. **Why did Jesus have to die?**

Some might ask why this was necessary. Couldn't God have forgiven us without the death of Jesus? God is just and the one who justifies us.

- He chose to give us free will so that choosing to sin was an option for mankind.
- God is Holy, and sin cannot exist in his presence
- His justice, an attribute of his perfect nature, must be satisfied.
- We want God to deal with sinful things. To deal with those who do evil things.
- God declared that those who go their own way and choose wickedness must die.
- God also chose to establish the way by which we are saved from our sin.
- By Jesus willingly taking our place, and God pouring out that penalty upon him, Jesus broke the power of the devil.

Jesus set us free from the fear of death! Jesus took the power of death away. **How did the devil hold the power of death to begin with?**

Only because he was operating within the boundaries God established.

God said that sin requires death. The devil, who knows what sin is, could wield that against people. But Jesus made the way of escape. He breaks the power of the devil and sets us free!

Not fearing death is good. But it still gets better.

Now this isn't to make light of what is for all of us, the biggest issue we will ever face in our lives. All of us have a date on the calendar that only God knows when our life will end and we go to stand before God, alone, to give an account of our lives. Without Jesus taking all of our sin, all of our guilt, all of our wrath, that all of us owed, that none of us could pay, we would all rightly be very fearful of that day.

Yet, as humans, we tend to live in the day-to-day and can easily put off worrying about eternity till some other day. It's doubtful we ever really think about it.

So what about today? What about the things we deal with day to day? This is where the idea of Jesus as our leader, our trail-blazer, our Navy Seal comes into view.

*16 We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. 17 Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, **so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God**. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. 18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.*

My third point this morning is that Jesus can lead us with mercy and compassion because he knows what it is like to be human.

What does it mean that Jesus is our High Priest?

- A High Priest is appointed by God to come before him
- He must offer sacrifices, both for himself, and for those he represents
- He then offers prayers and makes requests to God on behalf of the people
- Under the old covenant this was only done once a year.
- Now Jesus does this continuously for us.

Jesus did this perfectly, and as we'll see later in Hebrews, offered himself once for all for us. But now, because his sacrifice perfectly paid for the debt of our sin, forever, he remains in the presence of God interceding for us.

What does interceding mean? It means to stand in the gap between God and man. Some examples in scripture.

- Abraham tried to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah and his nephew Lot. He was negotiating with God that he spare the cities if 10 righteous could be found.
- Moses interceded successfully for the Israelites when they made the golden calf in the desert, pleading with God to not destroy the nation.
- Daniel prayed to God for mercy for the nation of Israel and sought God's restoration of to the land.

So too Jesus now is doing this for each one of us.

18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

Jesus came to earth, God himself taking on human flesh announced salvation to the world through himself, his sacrifice, and the power of his resurrection. He broke the power of death and set us free from the fear of death. And while we go through this life – struggling with sin, dealing with the fallen world, dealing with our own physical deterioration, Jesus goes through it with us.

This is how we live in the time in between. We trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross and we await his triumphant return to make all things new.

- We know that Jesus understands our pain.
- He understands our weakness.
- When we pray, we know he hears us, and is actively advocating for us.

For Us! This is another part of the incredible good news of the Gospel.

Not only are our sins forgiven.

Not only do we no longer fear death.

Not only do we look forward to resurrected, perfected bodies forever together.

We have a perfect friend to walk with us in this life. We have the God of the universe able to speak to us. To help us overcome sin. To be comforted when we lose a spouse or another loved one. To provide for us when our job situation goes sideways. To help us build our friendships, our marriages, our families on solid and stable foundations.