

THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST

Hebrews 2:14-16; 1 John 3:8

Intro: I remember as a young man just starting out in the ministry that there was a great deal of discussion among theologians, and would-be theologians, as to which was the greater, which was the more important, the birth of Christ or the death of Christ. It really was a ridiculous discussion except for the fact that it focused attention on these two great events in the life of our Lord here on earth. The birth of Jesus led to His death. It was for the purpose of dying that He was born. And so it was in order to die that he became Man. The Eternal took on Himself that which was temporal. The infinite God became finite Man. The Son of God became the Son of man. He Who was perfect righteousness was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He Who knew no sin was to be made sin for us. The Word Who was with God and Who was God, was made flesh. He Who was the image and likeness of God was made in the likeness of men. He Who was the Master of the universe became a servant Who was obedient unto death. He Who was infinitely greater than angels was made lower than the angels. It is clear from all human history that there never was a person like our Lord before He came, nor will there ever be another throughout all eternity. And it is unthinkable that any person would recognize these contrasts about our Lord Jesus Christ (and others which could be mentioned) and yet not inquire into the purposes for which He came. There surely had to be reasons of the greatest importance for the Lord Jesus Christ to come to earth as a Man, not ceasing in any way to be God, and yet becoming in one Person a real and perfect human being.

The Bible does not leave us in the dark on this subject. In fact, the whole message of Scripture is designed to explain for us the incarnation of the Son of God. There is not just one reason, but several, even though we can say that there are two reasons which stand at the top of the list of reasons, and that all other reasons flow from those two.

The first reason our Lord came was to finish what God had been doing from the time of creation. We have this referred to in Hebrews 1, and verse 1. God has spoken at various times in and different ways. What has He been speaking about? Primarily He has been speaking about Himself. He has made Himself known in many different ways. He did this even in creation itself because “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa. 19:1). But He has done this primarily in the Scriptures. However, all that we can learn about God

in the OT, as glorious as it is and as perfect as it is, is incomplete. It was not until the Lord Jesus Christ became a Man that the revelation of God was finally complete. He has spoken to us in His Son, or as Heb. 1:2 can be translated, He has spoken to us in such a One as His Son. As great as the revelations of God are in the OT, they are not complete. Jesus Christ came to complete that revelation. And so if we want to know God, we can see Him in His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, God manifest in human flesh. No treatment of the incarnation would be complete which did not include this, that Christ came to reveal God to us.

But the Scriptures also make it clear that our Lord had another great purpose in coming to the earth in human form, and I have been speaking of this for the past two Sunday. We have it stated in 1 John 3:5,

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;
and in him is no sin.

He came to take away our sins, and He was qualified to do that because, as the Apostle John said, "In him is no sin." He came to bring us salvation. He came to pay our penalty. He came to die in our place. He came to deliver us from our sins. This is the Gospel. This is the good news. He came to do what we could never have done for ourselves, and what we could never have done for each other.

This is what was read to us in our Scripture reading. I am referring to Heb. 2:9, 10. (Read.) Our Lord was born to die. He tasted death for every son He would bring to glory -- not just bring to heaven, but whom He would bring to glorification. He paid the penalty for our sins in full. And He paid the penalty for all who had believed on Him up to that time, and for all who would believe on Him to the end of time. And the resurrection of Christ is confirmation that God has accepted His work on our behalf.

However, I want to move ahead from this point to two other purposes God had in sending His Son into the world as a Man, two other purposes which are related to our Lord's work on the Cross. I want to take up the first of these today, and we will reserve the second for next Sunday, the Lord willing.

The purpose that I want to consider with you today is the one we find in verses 14, 15, and 16. (Read.)

This purpose is described by two words: "destroy" and "deliver." You have the first of these in verse 14; the second, in verse 15. Verse 16

points out that the Lord did not do this for angels, but He did it for those who are “the seed of Abraham” -- and we will see what that means as we go ahead today.

But let us look first into:

I. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DEVIL (Heb. 2:14).

The first part of verse 14 describes the incarnation of Christ. Since we were partakers of flesh and blood, He took part of the same, meaning that He became a human being, born, as we know, as the Son of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was not born a sinner; He was born as a perfect human being. As we learned from 1 John 3:5, in Him was no sin.

He partook of our humanity without partaking of our sins. At the Cross He was charged by God with our sins, but He had no sins of His own. So the expression here in Heb. 2:14 simply means that He became a true, a real human being. The Creator became like His creatures, but let me repeat, except for their sin.

When Christ went to the Cross He went to satisfy God’s righteousness concerning our sins. God could not have been righteous in dealing with our sins if He had just decided to overlook them. He had to punish sin. But instead of punishing each of us for our sins, He punished the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins. But He also did something else by His death. Through His death He destroyed the Devil who had the power of death. We have this same teaching in 1 John 3:8,

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Let us see what this means.

Now we know that the Devil is not dead. So he did not die as a result of the death of Christ on the Cross. And we know that he is not powerless. He continues to cause the worst of troubles in human lives. “Devil” means accuser; his other name, Satan, means an adversary. In 1 Pet. 5:8 Paul called him, “your adversary the devil,” when he wrote,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

So we know that he still has power, that he is still our enemy and a threat

to our lives. What did the Apostle in writing Hebrews mean then when he said that Christ by His death destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil?

Perhaps I can best answer that by referring to another passage which speaks of the relationship which we as believers now have with sin. Please turn to Romans 6:5, 6. This word “destroy” is used in verse 6. But let me read both verses:

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, **that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin** (Rom. 6:5-6).

The expression, “the body of sin,” refers to our sin nature. Now we know that our sin nature is not dead. We as believers can still be tempted, and we are responsive to sin. More than that, we know that we can sin and that we do sin. What did Paul mean, then, that since we were crucified with Christ, and “our old man,” the old nature, was crucified with Him, “the body of sin” has been destroyed? He explained it in the last statement of verse 6: “that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

“Destroyed” does not mean that it no longer exists, nor that it does not have power. But it means that the power which sin once had over us before we were saved, has now been broken. We still can sin, but we do not have to sin. Sin is no longer our master as it was before.

Now let’s apply this to our text. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He not only died to save us from our sins, but He died to save us from our Enemy, the Devil. He once dominated our lives. We were helpless under His control. He is “the god of this world.” But Jesus Christ died to save us from our slave master, the Devil.

When Paul was writing in his second epistle to Timothy, he gave Timothy this instruction which is absolutely essential for us to remember when we witness to others about Christ. Listen to what he said, and particularly how Paul ended his exhortation. I am reading from 2 Tim. 2:24-26:

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He died not only to save us from our sins, but He died to deliver us from the bondage of the Devil. He still tempts us. He still seeks to ruin us, to get us to dishonor the Savior Who died for us. But He is no longer our Master, and we do not have to do what he wants us to do. The Devil's power was broken, and His ultimate doom was sealed when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross. The only way that people can be delivered from their sins and from their sinning, is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. As our Lord said in John 8:34, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." And then he added two verses later, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

The reason people sin, and go on sinning, even though they can see that it is ruining their lives, is because they are slaves to sin and can no more set themselves free than a Roman slave could set himself free from his Roman master. The only way we can be set free from our sins, and kept free, is by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and then learning to walk in daily fellowship with Him. We don't like to call our sins what they are. And consequently many people spend their lives trying to put out little fires of habit and refuse to believe that the Devil is a real person, that he is a slave master, and that he refuses to let anyone loose until Christ sets the sinner free.

This is wonderful truth, but it is truth which is not really being taught today -- even in many churches. Pastors turn their people over to psychiatrists, or to some professional counselor, instead of taking people to the Word of God to show them that Christ died not only to forgive sinners, but he died to set sinners free from the bondage, the tyranny, of their sins. The Devil is a slave master, and so are our sins. Christ in His death on the Cross died to set us free from both. This is a part of the purpose of Christ's birth which is rarely told. And yet it is in our Christmas carols.

Listen to the third verse of ***God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen***:

'Fear not then,' said the angel, 'Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour of a pure virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in Him from Satan's power and might.'
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Oh, the great victory which Christ won on the Cross! That which the

Devil engineered to destroy the Son of God, was the very work which was to seal his own doom.

But let me go on to my second and final point:

II. DELIVERANCE FROM FEAR OF DEATH (Heb. 2:15, 16).

“The wages of sin is death” -- spiritual death, which is separation from God; physical death, which is what we experience when we die -- the separation of the soul from the body; and eternal death, which is hell, eternal separation from God. Sin brought death, and the fear of death. And the Apostle John has told us that “fear hath torment” (1 John 4:18).

But what is it that gives death its sting? And I am speaking especially now about the fear of physical death because most people’s thoughts don’t go beyond that aspect of death. We all know that we are going to die -- unless for us as believers in Christ, He should come first. But what gives death its sting? Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 15:56 that “the sting of death is sin.” But when the Lord saves us from our sins He takes the sting out of death. We know then that to depart is to be with Christ, and that is far better than anything that we have here. Death is the gateway for believers into glory. Oh, we don’t relish the idea that we are going to die, but a believer in Christ feels altogether different from the person who does not know the Lord. We have been delivered from our spiritual death, and we know that for us there will never be the possibility of eternal death because in Christ we have eternal life.

What bondage there is for the unbeliever in facing even physical death. It can take the joy out of life. People like to stay so busy, and they try to keep having so much fun that they won’t have time to think about it. But they do think about it, and it is a bondage to them. And that is what God intends that it should be. He can use that, and often does, to cause people to cry out to Him for mercy and forgiveness. And that is when people’s hearts are being opened by God to the message of the Gospel -- “That Christ died for our sins...” (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

You see, there are two things that God brings to bear upon the hearts of sinners to show them that they need God, and that they need help beyond what they can do for themselves. One is the bondage and unhappiness that we experience in sin, and the other is the fear of death. Both of these are feelings we try to conceal, but we know that they are there. And we know that nothing we have done can get rid of them. There is only One Who can take them away, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. So, if Christ

is not your Savior, come to Him today, put your trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins, and let Him bring the peace and joy that you have sought in your sins and in the world, but have never found. Jesus Christ died so that sinners could be forgiven, and so we could have the very life of God in us to strengthen us to do His will, which is where real joy is to be found.

Let me close by saying just a word about verse 16.

Christ did not come to earth as an angel. He did not take “on him the nature of angels.” He did not come to die for angels. There is no salvation for angels. He took upon him “the seed of Abraham.”

Here the Apostle was taking us back to the promise of salvation given to Abraham in Gen. 22:18:

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

And then Paul quoted from the Genesis passage in Gal. 3:16:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Thus, the promise of a Savior which was given to Abraham was a promise of the incarnation, that the Redeemer would be a human being, a descendant of Abraham, as our Lord Jesus Christ was.

Did Abraham understand this? He evidently did because our Lord said this in John 8:56 speaking to a group of Jews:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

This should make us realize that OT saints understood more about the coming of the Redeemer than we usually give them credit for understanding. And how exactly God stands by His Word. The prophecies of Christ give us one of the strongest proofs that we have that the Bible is the Word of God.

Concl: There is a message here for every believer, and there is hope for any of you who have not yet received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior.

For those of us who know the Lord, how thankful we should be not only

on Christmas Day, but every day, that the Lord Jesus Christ has not only saved us from our sins, but that He has saved us from the Devil, and from the bondage of our sins. And along with that He has delivered us from the bondage that goes with the fear of death. We know that not only is the Devil a defeated Enemy, but that death is also. And we rest in Him Who has the keys of death and the grave. We have a hope in Christ which not even death can take from us.

Those of you, whoever you may be, who do not know the Lord, should be thankful that the call to come to Christ can still be given to you. Oh, let me plead with you to come to Christ today. Do not delay. We don't know what a day holds for any of us. Today is the day of salvation. Come to Christ. Put your trust in Him to save you from the penalty of your sins, and from the power of the Devil himself. The promise of the Lord is that if you come to Him, He will never cast you out. So come now, and be saved.