

**JESUS – OUR MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST**

Hebrews 2:17-18

Scripture Reading - Hebrews 2

**Note:** This message was to have been delivered on 12/14/08, but due to snow, we did not have services on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the 21<sup>st</sup>, or the 28<sup>th</sup>. On the first Sunday of January '09, as I usually do on the first Sunday of the new year, I spoke on Psalm 1. So this is the first opportunity I have had to get back to the Christmas series focusing on the humanity of Christ.

**Intro:** I think that most of you know that my family and I came to Portland in 1951 because I had been asked to teach at the Multnomah School of the Bible, as it was called then. When Multnomah began, Dr. B. B. Sutcliffe and Dr. John G. Mitchell and the original teachers decided that they wanted to give the students the opportunity to study the Bible primarily in two ways. They were to study some of the books of the Bible verse by verse, and they were also to study the books of the Bible surveying all of the books of the Bible. My assignment was to join Dr. Mitchell in Bible exposition, the study of six of the major books of the Bible. The course of study at Multnomah in those years was three years. They asked me to teach three courses of OT books for the first part of their study. Dr. Mitchell would take the students at the middle of their second year and teach them three NT books, the most important books in the OT for the first half of their course, and the most important books of the NT for the second half of the NT. I was to teach Genesis, Exodus, and Joel, Jonah and Zechariah in their third semester. Later those minor prophets were dropped, and I taught Isaiah in their place. In other classes the students were taught Synthesis which took them through the whole Bible in three years.

I don't know if you have ever thought about what books of the OT are most basic, and the same about the NT, but I felt their choices were good. And I did my part very enthusiastically.

I mention this because I am speaking primarily from the book of Hebrews today. I think that it is really impossible to overemphasize the importance of any book of the Bible, but it would be hard to pass over the book of Hebrews as one of the most important. It was written to Hebrew Christians to take them from immaturity as Christians to maturity. When

you get to Hebrews 5: 10, you will notice that the writer of Hebrews digressed from his main theme. He knew that they would have trouble understanding it because of their spiritual immaturity. And from chapter 5 verse 10 all through chapter 6 he was speaking of their own spiritual needs. Then when he came back to his subject at the beginning of chapter 7, he got back to his subject. What was his subject? It was the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we don't really know who wrote this epistle. Nor do we know where the Jewish Christians lived to whom he was writing. I think that it is very likely that the writer was writing to believers in Jerusalem, and that he must have been either Paul, or possibly Peter who, as you know, was the apostle to the Jews as Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. But whoever it was who wrote, and to whom it was originally sent, we know that it is a part of the total revelation of God. I believe that these points where Bible students have disagreed about who wrote this epistle, and to whom it was written, give it a certain timelessness so that it speaks in a special way to the Lord's people, whether Jews or Gentiles, in every generation.

The need that we all have as Christians, is the need to grow spiritually. And the book of Hebrews is designed for that specific purpose. Now the special theme of the book of Hebrews is the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, consistent with my purpose in speaking today about the coming of our Savior into the world, we note in the book of Hebrews that the writer placed a special emphasis on our Lord's Name, JESUS. And I want to point out to you where he mentioned our Savior just with that Name, JESUS. He does mention our Lord as Jesus Christ in 10:10 and 13:21, and as Lord Jesus in 13:20, but there is a real emphasis in the book of Hebrews to our Lord simply by the Name, JESUS.

Now please remember that when the angel appeared to Joseph, in the passage we had last Sunday, Joseph was told that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit, and then the angel said to Joseph,

And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

The first reference to our Lord as Jesus in the book of Hebrews, is in our Scripture reading for this morning: 2:9. The second is in 3:1 where the preferred reading is simply JESUS. We find it next in 4:14. Then in 6:20;10:19; 12:2, 24; 13:12; and even in 13:20 where the translation

## 2008 Christmas Series - #2 (3)

could be, Jesus our Lord, or our Lord, Jesus. So the Name Jesus is very prominent in the book of Hebrews.

I am usually suspicious of pastors and teachers who only refer to the Lord as Jesus, because it usually means that they do not believe in the Deity of our Lord. But on the other hand, we must realize that even the Bible puts an emphasis on His Name JESUS because that speaks of His humanity and of His mission in this world which was to “save His people from their sins,” which He could not have done if He had not been both God and Man.

Now I hope that you noticed in our Bible reading for this morning that there are three references to the coming of the Son of God into the world. Let me point them out to you:

- 1) Heb. 2:9-10.
- 2) Heb. 2:14-15.
- 3) Heb. 2:17-18.

Now remember that our Lord was named Jesus “for He shall save His people from their sins.” So in these three references to the incarnation of the Son of God, we see special aspects of His work of salvation.

Look with me at verses 9 and 10. In the verses immediately before verses 9 and 10 we see how the purpose of God to put everything under man, was marred by man’s sin. And if we look at men today we could easily think that the purpose of God will never be fulfilled. But then the writer said this: “But we see Jesus.” When we bring Him into this earthly scene what seemed hopeless became absolutely certain. “Jesus” is the Name given to Him as a Man, and yet speaks of His mission to save sinners ruined by Adam’s fall.

What about JESUS? We see Him made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. This is His humanity. The Son of God could not be touched by death because He had no sin. But He became a Man that He might take our judgment upon Himself so we could be saved.

But what else does this verse tell us about our Lord? It tells us that *as a Man* He was “crowned with glory and honor.” This speaks of His Deity. You see, His birth as a human being did not change the fact that He was the Son of God. He was both God and Man. And this is very important for us to understand. If Jesus ceased to be God, He could not be our

Savior. But His humanity was necessary “that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Note those words, “that He by the grace of God . . .” None of this was because we deserved it. The fact that we still sin as His people always brings us back to thank God for His grace. I hope you have done that this morning, and every morning.

But for whom did He taste death? For whom did He suffer the penalty of human sin? Verse 10. Now the writer is talking about God. “It became Him.” This means that God could not just close His eyes to the fact that we are sinners. As a righteous God He had to judge sin. God is the One “for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things.” Let us not forget that He is God the Creator and the Sovereign of all creation. His heart was moved toward our salvation. And He chose before the foundation of the world those who were to be saved and brought into His family as sons. But it required that “the captain of their salvation.” May I say, *the captain of our salvation, the captain of my salvation, the captain of your salvation*, should be made perfect through sufferings. This means that to qualify for our salvation, He had to suffer death for our sins in order to be our Savior.

As our captain, He is our Leader. If we follow Him, we will be saved. If we follow anyone else, we will not be. There is only one Savior, and only one salvation. Think of what God was doing when the baby Jesus was born in that manger in Bethlehem. Nothing in all of human history can even begin to compare in importance with what God was doing. Jesus is the Captain of salvation, and there is no other!!!

But let us move on to Hebrew 2:14-15.

Again we read about the humanity of our Lord, this One Whose Name is JESUS!

Since those whom God chose for salvation, and those for whom JESUS came to save, were “partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” We were human and so He became human. And again it was in order that He might die. But here for a different purpose. It was “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

People joke about the Devil, but the Devil is no joke. Hell was prepared

for the Devil and his angels, those who rebelled with him when he rebelled against God. People sin and do that which displeases God thinking that they are free, free to do whatever they want to do. But the truth is that they are slaves, in total bondage, deceived about the end of the road they are on. No one could qualify to save us who could not deliver us from our Enemy. The Lord accomplished many things when He died on the Cross, and one of them was that He delivered us from sin's bondage, and sealed the doom of the Devil. What a Savior is JESUS!

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:8b and 9:

8 . . . For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the Devil.

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

The Apostle John was not saying that a Christian cannot sin. He was saying that a Christian will not live in sin. He has been set free, and that deliverance from the tyranny of sin is traceable to the suffering and death of JESUS on the Cross.

But now let us move on to verses 17 and 18 of Hebrews 2.

I don't know if any of us can fully understand what these verses tell us about the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. He became a Man in order "that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God."

What is the responsibility of a priest, and especially the High Priest? I have been with you on this point many times in the past. The priest is to bring the needs of the people to God. The prophet ministers from God to man. The priest ministers from the people to God. Our Lord's priestly ministry began with His death for our sins, but it continues on, can I say, forever? The word "be" in verse 17 would be better translated, *become*. It does not mean that Jesus our High Priest became something He had not been before. He has always been "merciful and faithful." But in His humanity, by His death for sinners, and by His continuing intercession for His people after they are saved, *we have in the incarnation of the Son of God the supreme evidence of His mercy and His faithfulness, not only in saving us, but in His priestly intercession for us until we reach our heavenly home*. Jesus, our great High Priest, is always merciful toward us in our needs, and even in our sins as believers. And He is always and also faithful, trustworthy in meeting our needs, in forgiving our sins, even

when He is called upon to seek us and restore us over and over again for the same sins. You and I are going to get safely to heaven, not because we have always done God's will (because we haven't). We are going to get safely to heaven because we have in Jesus, our merciful and faithful High Priest. He even seeks us when we are not seeking Him. As our High Priest, JESUS is "merciful and faithful." He is always "merciful and faithful," as verse 18 goes on to explain,

For that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor [or *help*] them that are being tempted (Heb. 2:18).

He has compassion on us in our weakness, and often in our sinfulness, He is prepared to help us because as a Man He faced the awfulness of sin, and know how much we need His help. He is faithful to God and to us in His ministry to us to help us in all of our needs.

Please turn with me to Hebrews 5 to get further light on this great truth:

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:7-10).

As "the author of eternal salvation," the suggestion is that Jesus called upon God the Father to save eternally those who show that they belong to Jesus by their obedience to His will. The Lord learned obedience to the Father, and the redeemed learn obedience to Christ. John 17 is one place, along with Gethsemane, and then at the Cross, and surely at other times and places, where we see our Lord's "prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death (lit. *out of*), and was heard in that He feared [God]."

**Concl:** What should be our response to these truths of the incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus our Lord? You and I have to read the whole epistle to the Hebrews to answer that question fully. But let me leave with you today two commandments from chapter four as starters for ourselves. Follow in your Bibles as I read Hebrews 4:14-16:

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Here are the two commandments:

1) In the light of Whom and what we have in our great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, “let us hold fast our profession.” What is our profession? It is that Jesus is our great High Priest. We must lay hold of Him like someone is trying to take Him away from us. And the Devil will try to do this. The temptations to sin are fierce, and we cannot overcome them by ourselves. But our High Priest can. Let us stand guard against anything, or anyone, that would turn us away from our precious Jesus.

2) The second commandment is this: “let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” We not only need to hold fast to Jesus, but we need to come to the throne of grace.” The throne suggests we are coming to a King. Our Jesus is not only our High Priest, but He is a King, a Sovereign over all the earth. And it is probably right for us to think of the throne of grace as having three seats! One for Jesus, one for God our heavenly Father, and one for the Holy Spirit. We have a divine invitation which is urged upon us. “Come.” And we must come as our first resort. “The throne of grace means that there is only one. Grace doesn’t mean that I have to wonder if Jesus will accept me. Acceptance is guaranteed. So I come boldly, confidently that help awaits me. But notice the word “boldly.” It not only means to come with the strongest assurance of a welcome, but you and I are to come, as Bishop Westcott says in his commentary on Hebrews, prepared to give “utterance to every thought and feeling and wish” (p. 108).

And let me tell you one more thing: you will not be kept in a waiting line. Your immediate entrance to the throne of grace is guaranteed. We could all come at once, and we could all get in immediately, and our Jesus is so great that He can listen to all of us at the same time, and He never misses a word.

Jesus, the Lord and Christ, is our Great High Priest, your Great High Priest, my great High Priest, the only Great High Priest. He came to earth looking just like one of His creatures, but continuing to be the eternal Son of the living God, to clear the way for us to come as guilty sinners to the Holy God, and He did it by His incarnation, by His suffering and death,

## 2008 Christmas Series - #2 (8)

and by His resurrection. And He did it without any of us asking Him to do it. Isn't it a shame that we do not come to the throne of grace more often than we do? When the Lord says, "Come," we ought to find it impossible to stay away. How could the Lord express His love for us any more than He already has? He wants us to come to Him. He wants us to feel our need of Him. And He wants to help us, to forgive us, to cleanse us, and to draw us closer to Himself. Until He takes us to heaven, let's meet Him daily at the throne of grace. The welcome sign is always out, and it has your name written on it.

After the closing hymn read Hebrews 7:26-28.