

"All We Were Meant to Be"
Hebrews 2:5-18
2/11/96

There is an old saying that goes like this: "There are some people who are so heavenly minded they're no earthly good."

I think it is possible to turn that around and it be just as true: "Some people are so earthly minded they're no heavenly good"

And maybe it can be changed still more and yet be true: "Some people are so earthly minded they're no earthly good either."

Sometimes we get so mired down in "today" that we have no way to judge what is most valuable in life.

We lose perspective.

When we get so bogged down in the present we are very easily discouraged.

We are very easily led to invest in the unimportant and miss the truly important.

We are such creatures of the present that we lose sight of the future - or if we have any vision of the future it appears as little more than personal peace and affluence as Francis Shaeffer put it.

We define a good future for ourselves in terms of the time, money and freedom to do whatever we want to do.

That most often translates into being able to travel more, purchase a nicer house, get a newer car, obtain some new way to entertain ourselves, or get that promotion.

For still others a good future has no definition at all - they have no vision for anything - they just exist from day to day.

Watch some of the newer sit-coms on TV such as those about younger adults - and notice the emptiness, the banality of the characters portrayed.

The highest goals seem to be getting a job or getting into bed.

We shouldn't be surprised that so many younger people

envision no future at all and can't even express what a good future would be like.

The theology of prime-time television is that there is no personal sovereign God, we are the products of blind chance - hence there is only "now", there is no future.

But even for many who consider themselves Christians - the idea of the future doesn't say much.

"Well, when I die I will go to heaven not hell."

What does that mean to you? Just avoidance of pain?

Many young people will admit that going to heaven holds no excitement for them. And I suspect that going to heaven for many older people only appeals because of the desire to avoid what is happening here - they are tired and want relief.

But is that all eternal life is - avoidance of hell and escape from our present trouble?

What does God have in mind for us?

What is his vision of our future?

Please look in your Bible to Hebrews chapter 2.

In chapter 1 the author of this treatise declared the superiority of Jesus Christ over all created beings including angels.

He makes the point over and over again that Jesus is God himself who came to this earth.

In the very last verse of chapter 1 the author introduces how all of that is relevant to us.

He writes about us who "inherit salvation" - the future.

Then in the first four verses of Chapter 2 he writes about how important it is that we understand and respond to that salvation. In the remainder of chapter 2 he gives us a clearer picture of what that salvation is and how it comes about.

Just as in Chapter 1, so here, in chapter 2, Jesus is still at the center

of the author's thoughts but he begins at verse 5 by talking about God's ultimate intention for us human beings - our future.

READ v5

According to the author, in this verse what has he been talking about?
"The world to come" - "salvation" - the future.

That's right, when the author introduced the idea of "salvation back at the end of chapter 1 he included in that word the whole idea of ultimate salvation - the world to come - that which takes place after this world and history as we know it end.

Again, looking at v5, who is it God has not subjected the world to come?
(Angels)

Now it is obviously not the author's intention to talk about angels again because he goes right on to the answer the question that is begged: "If not to angels, who has God subjected the world to come?"

To answer the question he goes back to such a well-known Psalm that he doesn't even tell where it is found.

All of his readers would know it was Psalm 8.

Now before we read the quote from the Psalm it is important to remember that this Psalm was not written originally about Jesus.

It is clearly written about human beings- mankind - us.

The Psalmist had looked into the night sky and once again felt puny in comparison to the vastness and greatness of creation and he asks,

"What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man (another way of speaking of human beings) that you care for him?

"You made him a little lower than the angels;

You crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet."

The Psalmist was awed - Just think about it - human beings don't have the apparent power and majesty of the angels but God has put us in the highest position of having everything that was created under our rule and authority.

The first readers of this book would remember the rest of the Psalm

where the "everything" over which human beings rule is spelled out as "all the works of God's hands" and "all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the sea." etc.

The author of Hebrews makes the same point when at the end of verse 8 he adds, "In putting everything under him (mankind) God left nothing that is not subject to humans."

God says all creation is subject to mankind. Human beings are the rulers over everything.

Please look in your Bible at Genesis 1:26

What the author of Hebrews is talking about and what the Psalmist was referring to is what God said at the very beginning:

READ Gen 1:26-28 & 31

That's God original intention - a world of order and prosperity and right relationships - with humans ruling and caring for it all.

Not a world of chaos, and grinding poverty, and ecological disasters, and selfishness and broken relationships.

Let's go back to Hebrews 2.

God's design for human beings is that they be in a position of glory and honor and rule over all creation.

But that also begs the question: When is that supposed to happen?

Well as we have seen, it was supposed to have already happened but the very end of verse 8 acknowledges reality.

"Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him."

God's intention for us human beings is not being experienced.

We are living in a way and a world that is far different than what God created us to experience.

I want you to look in your Bible to Romans chapter 8.

As you are finding that passage I want you remember with me what God tells us in Genesis chapter 3.

When the first man and woman rebelled against God by disobeying him they lost the exalted position they were created to have.

As a result of their sin not only was their relationship to God broken but their relationship to all creation was changed.

Even the earth itself was changed and the world became a hostile place and living the human life became a painful experience.

Work became labor, childbirth became an ordeal, and relationships tore apart - the first person born (Cain) killed the second one born (Able).

Many thousands of years later, we still live in that broken world - and to the extent that humans rule at all in this world they do so by force not in the way God originally intended.

The author of Hebrews is right "Yet at present we do not see everything subject to mankind."

But the "world to come" that the author refers to - that's different!

Look at Romans 8:19-21 READ

There is coming a day when the whole world will be re-created.

When the created world and everything in it will be liberated from the damage sin has done to everything.

Jesus said in Matt 25 that those who belong to Him will receive an inheritance - the Kingdom of God - prepared for them since the creation of the world.

In II Peter we are told by God that He will create a new heavens and a new earth - which will be the home of those who belong to Christ.

And in Rev 21 we are given a glimpse of what that new earth will look like when God allowed John to see that things were very different on that new earth.

I think many Christians have a very fuzzy idea of what life after death

will be like because we think of a place "out there" somewhere - where at best we can imagine clouds, harps, angels, and many people standing around a great throne singing songs.

We should remember that "heaven" is more technically the place where the souls of believers who die now go into the presence of God.

But those souls don't have bodies - there is nothing physical about either those people or the place where they are. They are human spirits who are with God - UNTIL...

Until Jesus comes again - at which time the spirits of those who belong to God and their new resurrected bodies will be reunited to live physically in the presence of the Lord.

And where will we live?

After a period of time on this present earth God will create a new earth and there we will live physically in the presence of the Lord forever.

God's ultimate intention for us, in keeping with his original intention for human beings, is that we will live radically different lives in a radically different world.

No longer we or this earth conditioned by or dominated by sin.

Imagine a world in which:

Children no longer taunt each other with unkind and cutting remarks.

No tender young hearts coming home from school broken by rejection or failure.

Where no parents neglect or abuse their children.

No children suffocating to death, unattended in a locked closet.

Where the relationships between men and women are not based on sexual power but on genuine love for each other.

No rape, no rapists, no abuse or abusers.

Where every person matters and belongs.

No loneliness, no sense of insignificance, no self-pity.

Where work is a joy and has real significance.

No drudgery, no sense of shame over less meaningful work, no feelings of inferiority.

Where we aren't jockeying for position in relationships, not having to talk our way into significance by being sharper or wittier.

Not having to self-consciously act in certain ways just to be acceptable.

And not having to hide to avoid the possibility of rejection.

Imagine a world where there is no possibility of poverty, or of losing a job, no possibility of not being able to support yourself or your family.

Imagine a world where there is no fear of sickness or even of death.

Imagine a world where there is no possibility that your parents will divorce each other.

No possibility that your children will ruin their lives and shame or desert the family.

No possibility that your husband or wife will reject and desert you.

No possibility that your best friends will fail you, turn away from you, or leave you.

But how can we know this will be true?

How can we be certain this will come to be?

Look again, please, at Hebrews 2 - this time verse 9

At the end of verse 8 the author acknowledged that the world as God ultimately intends it has not yet come.

We don't yet SEE everything subject to humans.

BUT look at v9 "**BUT WE DO SEE JESUS**"

What the author does in the remainder of the chapter is - he traces the

actions of Jesus that insure our relationship to that world to come.
He reminds us of what Jesus did to make certain we can experience that true new age.

What point does the author emphasize over and over again about Jesus in chapter 1? That Jesus is who? GOD!
The author was intent on proving that Jesus is fully God.

Now here in chapter 2 the author is equally intent on proving something else about Jesus.
Do you already see what it is from V9? That Jesus is also fully a human being.

This is not just esoteric language for theologians to argue about.
Whether Jesus is truly a human being is as important to everyone of us as whether he is truly God.
And the author is going to tell us why.

But first of all does the Bible say that Jesus is truly a human being?
Look at V9 again.
What about human beings in V7 is true about Jesus, in v9?
"He was made a little lower than the angels."

Now we were created as human beings but according to chapter 1 Jesus has always existed - therefore the point of v9 is that Jesus at a point in time became a human being.

Look at the end of verse 9 "because Jesus suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

The phrase "taste death" is a Jewish expression for "fully participating in something"
We might say "just a taste" meaning a little BUT this expression means getting the whole experience.

Jesus who is God became fully a human being so that he could fully experience the fallen human situation -
living in a body that was going to die - facing all the temptations that humans face.

Look at V11: "Both the one who makes men holy (Jesus) and those who are made holy (us) are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers."

We are never called "brothers" of the Father but we are called "brothers" of the Son of God.

In verses 12 & 13 the author takes three OT statements and puts them on the lips of Jesus thereby declaring Jesus' solidarity with us as human beings - He has become one of us .

Look at V14 Since we are flesh and blood - human beings - so too Jesus shared in our humanity.

The words "shared in" mean "fully participated in".

Again the author emphasizes - Jesus became a human being.

Look at V17: "For this reason he (Jesus) had to be made like his brothers IN EVERY WAY..."

There was nothing about being truly human that Jesus missed - he was fully human.

Look back to V10 please: "It was fitting that God should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering."

"It was fitting" means that it was consistent with the way God designed it before creation, and consistent with the way, all through the OT and NT, that God said he would bring about our salvation - he would do it by becoming a human being.

And when it says that Jesus was "made perfect through suffering" - it is saying that he was fully qualified to stand in for us only by becoming one of us - fully human.

Now what is mystifying to us, what is a conundrum for us, is that Jesus remained fully God even while he became fully a human being.

He is nonetheless God even while he is human.

And he is nonetheless human even while he is God.

But WHY did Jesus have to become a human being?

Verses 14 and 17 specifically respond to that question.

V14 "Since we are flesh and blood, human beings, Jesus too shared in our humanity - he became a human being - SO THAT (here's the first place where we are told why Jesus had to become human) "SO THAT by his death Jesus might destroy the devil who holds the power of death -- AND THAT Jesus can free us who all our lives are held in slavery by our fear of death."

The devil gained power over the human race when he seduced the first man and woman and every man and woman since into rebellion against God.

That first rebellion allowed the reality of death to enter the human experience. (Lane TCTC p50)

And since that time death shadows everything we do.

The novelist Somerset Maugham wrote:

"There are moments when I have so palpitating an eagerness for death that I could fly to it as to the arms of a lover...I am content to be assured that with my last breath my soul, with its aspirations and its weaknesses, will dissolve into nothingness."

(In K.Hughes p76)

That is what he wrote when he wasn't facing death squarely in the face.

But his nephew, Robin Maugham, wrote of a far different attitude when he visited his uncle shortly before Somerset Maugham died.

In the London Times, April 9, 1978 the nephew wrote:

"...I found (my uncle - we called him Willie) reclining on a sofa, peering through his spectacles at a Bible which had very large print. He looked horribly wizened, and his face was grim.

"I've been reading the Bible you gave me," he said, "and I've come across the quotation: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

"I must tell you, my dear Robin, that the text used to hang opposite my bed when I was a child...Of course it is all a lot of bunk..."

That evening, in the drawing room after dinner, Willie flung

himself down onto the sofa.

He said, "Oh Robin, I'm so tired."

He placed his head in his hands and then he looked up at me and took ahold of my hand tightly.

At that he looked toward the floor. His face was contorted with fear, and he was trembling violently.

Then he looked up, ashen faced as he stared in horror ahead of him.

Then suddenly he began to shriek, "Go away! I'm not ready...I'm not dead yet...I'm not dead yet, I tell you..."

His high-pitched terror-struck voice seemed to echo from wall to wall. I looked around but the room was empty.

Oh, the fear of death. - especially for one with no vision for a future.

BUT when Jesus became a human being and died and rose again from the grave - he conquered the power of death.

Jesus, a human being, broke the stranglehold Satan had on all human beings.

Jesus proved that death is not the final victor over life.

Death was defeated - life wins - Life in Jesus.

And V17 gives us still more understanding of why Jesus had to become a human being. READ 17

Since God is holy and we are sinful - it is impossible for us to come to God.

There has to be a mediator - some human to stand between God and sinful people.

In the OT, God made a temporary way for the people to come to Him.

He ordained a special class of people, called priests, especially

the High Priest, who would represent the people and come before God with sacrifices to assuage the anger of God against them because of their sin.

The High Priest (Lev 16:20-22) would bring the sacrifice before God in the Temple and confess his own sins and the sins of the people.

And then he would transfer the guilt for their sins onto the sacrifice by laying his hands on the lamb that was being sacrificed.

Then the lamb's life (symbolized by the blood) would be given instead of the people's.

God's wrath would be turned away from the people - God would be made friendly toward the people.

When Jesus became a human being, he became that mediator, not a temporary one, but the sinless human, who would stand between God and others.

Not only did he stand as the mediator to bring God and us together but he also became the sacrifice - not an animal whose blood could never actually take away sins - but a human sacrifice, fully human - and he shed his blood for our sins.

He took the wrath of God against our sin.

He makes it possible for God to look on us with grace rather than anger.

That's why Jesus became a human being - to bring us salvation - to bring us into a right relationship to God.

To bring us back to what God originally intended for us.

To allow us to be the human beings God created us to be.

To allow us to live in this world and the world to come, not enslaved to sin but free to be all God created us to be.

And God not only wants us to experience that "world to come" later but he wants us to begin at least in part to experience some of that world now.

In relationship to God and to each other in the church we can begin to experience the love, acceptance, forgiveness, trust, and joy that God

designed us to enjoy in full in the "world to come".

How do we know we have such a future - Because "we see Jesus"! He's been there and he is now exalted.

If you are "in Christ" you have an almost unbelievable future. Believe it, begin living it.

What perspective do you have on life? On the future?

Do you truly see this life and live this life in the light of the world to come?