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Lesson 7
Jesus Christ's Identification with Man in Death
Makes Him Superior to Angels
Hebrews 2:14-15

Why did Christ become a man? The standard answer learned by most Christians in Sunday school is that He became a man so that He might take away our sins and bring us to heaven. To make a statement of this nature is totally correct, but it is not totally complete. There are other reasons why Christ became a man and we must not neglect them. Christ became a man to reveal and demonstrate the matchless love of God. ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”*** (John 3:16). He became a man to save sinners. ***“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all”*** (1 Tim. 1:15). He became a man to bring “many sons” into glory (Heb. 2:14). There are many reasons for Christ’s incarnation.

Right here in Hebrews 2:14-15, there are two other reasons for Christ taking a human nature and dying. These reasons are: (1) to destroy the devil; and (2) to deliver men from the fear of death. It is around these two concepts that we will center our attention today.

ARGUMENT OF CHAPTER TWO

These professing Jewish-Christians to whom the author was writing were seriously considering going back into Judaism. They were doubting the necessity of believing in Christ for salvation. The author is trying to show the superiority of Christ to angels because the Jewish mind had great difficulty accepting that any man could be superior to angels. The author proved that Christ was more than just a man; He was God. One who is God would be superior to angels.

The Jewish mind had even greater difficulty with the idea that one who was both God and man had to die. Why would the Messiah, the God-man, have to die? Why would one who is God come in the flesh have to be crucified? This was all contrary to the Jewish concept of a glorious, reigning Messiah. The author of Hebrews argues that Jesus Christ had to become a man and die in order to identify Himself with man in all of man’s humanness. The author declares that Christ left heaven’s glory to become a man. What humility, that the eternal Word should become flesh. What a lowly act, that the Son of God should become the Son of Man. The author shows clearly that Christ identified Himself with humanity in general and redeemed men in particular, so that He is not ashamed to call us “brethren” and “children” (Heb. 2:11,13).

CHRIST IDENTIFIED WITH MAN IN DEATH TO DESTROY THE DEVIL (Heb. 2:14)

“Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same...” -- All humans have flesh and blood in common, and Christ identified Himself with man when He took upon Himself a real human nature made up of flesh and blood. Christ was truly a man in every sense of the word; yet He was a man without sin. ***“...who is holy, innocent,***

undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens... (Heb. 7:26). Jesus had a likeness to sinful flesh, but He was Himself sinless. ***“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh...”*** (Rom. 8:3).

Christ was truly a man! Christ experienced all the sensations of being a man, but without sin. He hungered; He thirsted; He cried; He rejoiced; He displayed anger; He was even troubled in spirit. ***“...he became troubled in spirit...”*** (John 13:21). There was no human frailty or weakness that Christ was not subject to, and perhaps that is why He is referred to as “the man of sorrows.” Christ understands what it is like to be a man, for “He had to be made like his brethren.”

Christ knew what it was like to be tired and weary. He knows everything we pass through because He passed through it. When you get up in the morning and you think it is going to be another weary day, He knows all about it. When you get halfway through the day and you feel just like giving up, He knows. He knows what you are going through and He will strengthen you if you will go to Him in faith.

“...that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil...” -- Christ had to become a man to die as a man, in order to destroy the power of death over men. This power (strength) of death is held by the devil who is a real person. Christ believed in the devil and so should we!

Christ’s death defeated Satan but did not destroy him. The KJV Bible says that Satan was destroyed. We might get the idea from the KJV that Satan’s powers were eliminated and destroyed by Christ’s death, but the key that unlocks the riddle is that the word “destroy” literally means “to render impotent, to nullify, to render inoperative.” The devil has not been eliminated, but he has been rendered inoperative or impotent. The devil is alive and well on planet earth and is very active in the unsaved world, but the devil’s power and authority over the truly saved is rendered impotent. All non-Christians are in the grip of Satan because he is the god of this world, and unredeemed men walk according to his dictates. But redeemed men have been delivered from the power (strength) of death because Christ has judged Satan at the cross.

“Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out” (John 12:31).

“When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him” (Col. 2:15).

Christians can be tempted by the devil, but they are no longer under his authority. This is why the Christian is to resist the devil. ***Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*** (James 4:7).

The devil does not have the power of death in the sense of determining who dies and when life shall end. God alone gives life and takes life. ***“See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; and***

there is no one who can deliver from My hand” (Deut. 32:39). The “power of death” means “the grip of death” with its mysterious, fearsome and terrible qualities. Satan causes men to run from death and to fear it because he is the great deceiver. He convinces men that the grave ends all existence and all that is worth living for is found in one’s short life span. He blinds men to eternal realities and causes them to fear death and to live only for the immediate moment.

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

The devil has duped men into believing that death is something to be feared, so men accept the philosophy, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!”

Men run from the concept of death and do not want to talk about it. Even when people are in the very process of dying, many do not want to accept it or admit it. Satan has taught them to fear death so they stoically shield themselves against it.

Believing that one must live only for the immediate present causes men to have great conflicts in life. Man tries to fill the spiritual vacuum of eternity with sinful pleasures, material ends and status pursuits. Because man is afraid he will lose out on life, he keeps pursuing the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, and the result of following this process is that a person loses out in eternity. A person lives all his life trying to find the answer to life only to come up to his 70 years or less to find out that all is meaningless. Life, because of death, is filled with despair and frustration.

Is death all there is? No. There is much more and it is found only in Christ. Someone has said, “One cannot find the meaning of life until he has found the meaning of death!” The riddle of death is solved only in Christ.

CHRIST IDENTIFIES WITH MAN IN DEATH TO TAKE AWAY THE FEAR OF DEATH (Heb. 2:15)

“...and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” -- Redeemed men are actually set free from the fear of death because they are no longer enslaved to sin and Satan. Christ destroyed death with death when He defeated Satan at the cross. How are men freed from the power and fear of death? Through the glorious gospel of Christ, men realize that Christ came into the world to defeat sin and death and He rose victorious over the grave. True Christians do not accept the devil’s lie that the grave ends it all. Christians begin to operate on a totally different principle. The new principle is Christ who died and was resurrected. Now the Christian begins to live for Christ and long for death.

“For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

“We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

It was once asked John Wesley if he would give, in capsule form, the implications of the Christian message he preached. He answered, "Our people die happy."

Christians can now look forward to death because the fear of death has been removed. Jesus Christ died to defeat sin, death and hell. He has actually abolished death for true believers in Christ. *"...but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"* (2 Tim. 1:10). In what sense did Christ abolish death? It cannot mean that He eliminated death because it is still with us. The death rate remains as it has always been - a flat 100%. Christ has abolished death in that he defeated it and broke the bondage it had over true believers before they were saved. Christ abolished the fear of death, removing the sting of it.

"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

Death has its sting removed for true believers because Christ took the sting out of death. I remember reading a story about a mother who saw her baby daughter about to put her hand on a yellow jacket, a wasp. The mother reacted quickly and put her hand over the yellow jacket instead. The wasp stung the mother instead of the little girl. Then the mother let the child play with the dead wasp, for the sting was taken out of it. Christians must die, but Christ has taken the sting out of death and it is now a harmless thing.

A true Christian may still fear death, but he need not do so because Christ defeated death for every Christian. If a Christian does fear death, it shows him that he is human, but by faith in Christ a Christian can look forward to death.

When the United States government made the Emancipation Proclamation, all slaves were set free legally, but all slaves did not know they were free because of ignorance of the law. So Christ has broken the power of death for all Christians, but because of lack of understanding of the fact, they may act as if Christ has not freed them from the fear of death.

John Calvin, when addressing the Christians in Geneva, said, "Although we must still meet death, let us nevertheless be calm and serene in living and dying, when we have Christ going before us. If anyone cannot set his mind at rest by disregarding death, that man should know that he has not yet gone far enough in the faith of Christ."

Christ gives redeemed men a new set of values. Once men are convinced that death does not end it all, they begin to live for the future. The self-centered life before conversion begins to disappear and men begin to pursue Christ. The cross reverses our values about life. The Christian begins to reason, "It is not what I want, but it is what God wants," and redeemed men live life now in light of eternity.

CONCLUSION

For you without Christ, I can assure you that death patiently waits for you. Death is inescapable

and all men must fall victim to it sooner or later. Do you fear death? You should, for death for men without Christ as their Lord and Savior means certain judgment and eternal damnation.

If you are a non-Christian, you do not have to fear death because Christ has abolished death for all true believers in Christ. Christ has broken the power of death for all who obey Him.

What is your answer to death? What happens beyond the grave? No human can answer that question because no mere human has ever died and returned to tell us about it. There is only One who has died and come back to tell us about it - the God-man, Christ Jesus. There are no human authorities on the subject of death, for no one but Christ ever came back from the dead to tell us about it.

Are you going to trust Christ who came back from the dead, or are you going to trust the human speculations about death from men who have never returned to tell you about it? Only Christ can take away your fear of death.
