

HEBREWS 2:10-18. JESUS, SAVIOUR AND HIGH PRIEST

Second of our Bible studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews.

2:10

"For whom are all things" is a reference to God the Father. here he is spoken of as making perfect the Pioneer, the Son.

e[prepen yar aujtw~z: It was fitting that God should make Jesus, the Pioneer, perfect through suffering. There are many people who are ready to tell us confidently what would and what would not be worthy of God. The only way to discover what is a worthy thing for God to do is to consider what God has actually done. The man who says, "I could not have a high opinion of a God who would (or would not) do this or that", is not adding anything to our knowledge of God. He is simply telling us something about himself. From the Bible we may be certain that all that God does is worthy of Himself, but here the writer to the Hebrews singles out one of God's actions and tells us what was fitting for Him to do. It was His making Jesus, through His sufferings, perfectly qualified to be the Saviour of His people. For as one writer puts it: "it is in the passion of our Lord that we see the very heart of God laid bare." Nowhere is God more fully or wonderfully revealed than in the Cross.

Jesus is described here as the "pioneer" RSV; "author" ARV; "captain" AV (ajrchgon"). The word has to do with the person who goes before, the trail-blazer. Jesus is then described as the Saviour who blazes the trail of salvation. It is along this path that the Pioneer must go if he is to lead many sons to glory. (Illustration of Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson). Jesus has gone ahead into the presence of God in order to secure our entry there - idea of "access, introduction, Rom. 5:2.

But what does it mean to say that Jesus has been made perfect? (*teleiw~sai*). Did Jesus fall short of perfection? Surely to say this would be a great error. No, the writer to the Hebrews does not mean this. He has already said that as Son, Jesus is the very radiance of God, the express image of His person, the One through whom the worlds have been made. We have already seen that the picture is the highest and greatest that could be given. What is meant is that the perfect Son of God has become the perfect Saviour. He cannot be the perfect Saviour until He actually saves. And that He does wonderfully and perfectly. He has become the perfect Saviour for His people by opening up the way to God - this freedom of access we referred to some little time ago. Now in order to become the access to God he must endure suffering and death. The pathway He treads is a pathway of perfection (which His people must also pass over), and as the trail-blazer He must go over it first. This He does by suffering. The many sons come to glory through suffering (cf. Rom. 8:18). the divine pioneer passes through this experience on their behalf. Perfection in this context has to do with free access into the presence of God, being about to speak with Him openly, freely, with *parrhsiva*, with boldness. It refers to having unbroken communion with the Father (cf. 4:16). In this as in other things the Lord Jesus, the Son, leads the way.

2:11

NEB: "For a consecrating priest and those whom he consecrates are all of one stock".

A general truth is made specific here. He who sanctifies is the Son of god. Those who are sanctified are sons of God. Later on in the Epistle we are told that they are sanctified through Jesus' sacrifice of Himself in obedience to God's will (10:10). By his

death they are set apart, consecrated to God for the purpose of serving and worshipping Him as His holy people. Since those who are sanctified are sons of God, and he is the Son of God, then he is not ashamed to call them His brethren, His brothers.

2:12-13

Three texts from the Old Testament are then taken up by the Writer, brought forward as proofs to show why Christ is not ashamed to call them His brethren.

a. Psalm 22:22

As well-known Psalm to the early Christians of the first century. The opening words of the Psalm Jesus took upon His lips in His cry from the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And practically the whole of the first part of the Psalm was used by the early Christians as a testimony to the crucifixion of Christ. It is expressly quoted on the one hand while its language serves as an echo in the passion narratives.

The second half of this Psalm is a thanksgiving. The speaker of the first part is Christ. The same is true of the second half. The words in v. 22 are thus those of the exalted Christ. He who is crucified but now exalted makes this utterance: "I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee". In the text the words "brothers", "brethren" and "congregation" are parallel. In other words those whom the Son of god is pleased to call His brethren are the members of His congregation, His church.

b. Isaiah 8:17 (second half) "I will put my trust in him"

It is not easy to see the relevance of this quotation here. We need to go back to the Old Testament context if we are to make any sense of it. In the context of this quotation, Isaiah, finds that his message of salvation and judgment meets with no response among the people. So he seals up his prophecies, hands them over to his disciples so that when the words of his prophecies are fulfilled the people will know that he has truly spoken the word of the Lord. Isaiah was going to wait trusting in God for His vindication. He trusted in God during dark days, gladly acknowledging that God was truly faithful. Now this is a mark of many biblical characters. Isaiah, however, gathered around him a remnant, a small band of his disciples, together with his family, who would rest their confidence in the living God. They were the Old Testament counterpart to Christ's brethren. Christ is not ashamed to call such ones His brethren.

c. **Isaiah 8:18** (first half) "Here am I, and the children of God has given me."

The third quotation follows hard on the previous one, and it refers to Isaiah's family. Isaiah, his wife and children (note his son's names - an indication of his obedient trust in God) were part of that small remnant that trusted in God during this hard period, these hard times. They were at one with Christ and His people ultimately, since they like Christ's brethren walked by faith. They are all of a piece. Here instead of being referred to as brethren they are called "children".

We come now to a very important section, vv. 14-18. We have seen that Jesus, the Son of God, is the perfect Saviour of His people. He is the Pioneer, the trail-blazer who carves a path of salvation for them. A path of access into the presence of God. But in order to be the perfect High Priest he must be at one with His

people (v. 17). If His solidarity with them is to be real then He must be a true human being, He must be truly man. He must partake of the same nature, he must come via the gateway of birth, and since all men die, he must leave by the gateway of death.

2:14

V. 14 therefore speaks on this theme. It tells us that Jesus became true man. Men and women by nature share in flesh and blood. That is part and parcel of their being men and women. Our Lord existed before His Incarnation. Flesh and blood was not an essential part of His eternal being. But at a fixed point of time He partook of (metevscen - kekoinwvnhken: aorist. *vis-à-vis* perfect, since no difference in meaning of verbs) the same nature, flesh and blood. Jesus became man through the gateway of birth.

Yet our passage does not stop here. It tells us about the purpose of the incarnation. The purpose of the incarnation was that He should die. If Jesus became one with men and women by birth, then since his fellowmen leave by the gateway of death He must pass along the same road. And this is exactly what our verse states. The purpose of the incarnation was that He should die, and by this very act he drew the sting of death. (Full quote from FF Bruce, p. 49).

2:15

Only by becoming man could the Son of God conquer death. When Jesus died He conquered the Prince of Death, the Devil. He invaded the strong man's fortress, disarmed him, bound him fast and robbed him of his spoil. Cf. Luke 11:21f. The keys of death and hell are now firmly held in Jesus' powerful hand. Prior to this death and hell seemed

to have the last say. Man himself could not conquer death, could not free himself from the tyranny of death, a tyranny which the evil one, the devil held over men and women.

The fear of death is a very powerful thing. Through fear of death many men will consent to do things that nothing else could compel them to do. Some might accept death rather than dishonour. But for the majority this fear is a terrible instrument of pressure. And for the person who is in any way concerned about spiritual things death is terrible (apart from Christ) for it is bound up with the penalty of sin. Many older persons, outside of Christ, are really worried about death - and well they might be. It is the unmentionable word in our society. But Jesus by His death delivers men and women; He releases them from the terrors of death. The Christian, as well as the non-Christian dies. But Jesus has transformed the meaning of death for the Christian. It is no longer the instrument of Satan for him. Since death cannot separate the Christian from the love of God (Rom. 8:38f.) then it cannot be held over the Christian's head (your head or mine) by the evil one as a means of intimidation.

These tremendous words of Scripture bring us face to face with Easter, its message and its power.

2:16-18

The Son of God became man in order to help men. He humbled Himself, bypassing the angelic state, stooping still lower and becoming man. Jesus takes hold of (επιλαμβανεται) - not simply concerning-men, and a particular group of people, "the descendants of Abraham". Those who are His brethren. They are the ones who participate in these tremendous benefits that we refer to.

Having mentioned that Jesus became one with His brethren, the writer to the Hebrews then draws attention to that aspect of Jesus' solidarity with His brethren that is of particular interest to him - Jesus' high priesthood, His priestly activity on their behalf. We have seen that Jesus is the perfect Saviour who delivers His people from death, from the tyranny of death, the perfect Saviour who blazes a trail to glory, to the presence of God Himself. We now turn to Jesus as High Priest.

One of the requirements for any high priest is that he be at one with his people. He must stand with those whom he represents in the presence of God. What is true of high priests in general is true of Jesus in particular. In order to serve in this capacity Jesus was obliged to become completely like His brethren, except, of course, with reference to personal participation in sin (cf. 4:15).

Jesus is the perfect High Priest. He is perfect as a High Priest because He was faithful (*pistov*). His faithfulness refers to His absolute reliability. He has endured to the end without falling. 4:15, tempted in every respect, i.e. He has run the full gamut of temptation without giving in. He knows what temptation is all about since the devil threw everything at Him. We are inclined to give up, to cave in before the full force of the temptation has been felt. Jesus by contrast was a faithful High Priest. He withstood the full force of temptation, its full blast and came out victorious.

He is the *perfect High Priest* because He is *merciful* (*ejlehvmwn*). His priesthood was not simply carried out in a faithful manner. He has rung the full gamut of temptation. But He is also a merciful High Priest, able to sympathize with others. His days of temptation may be past. But that does not mean He is unable to help others. 4:15 informs us He is able to sympathize with them in their weaknesses.

When you are passing through a difficulty, and you decide as a Christian to seek the advice of some other Christian person, what kind of individual do you turn to? One who has not had a day's trouble in his life? I think not. You will turn to someone who has been through similar things, perhaps someone whom you know to be understanding. Now while not wishing to deny the place and importance of Christian advice and help that can be given by those who have gone further along the road in the Christian life than we have, we need to realize from this passage that ultimately Jesus the Son of God is the only perfect High Priest. He is the only one who is able to assist in our weaknesses.

Jesus' High Priesthood is exercised "in matters for which His people are responsible to God". And the most crucial among these things is the matter of sin. How can sinners approach the holiness of God, either personally or through a representative? They can come to Him with confidence only if their sin has first been dealt with. This is what makes Jesus so different from all others. Not only is He sinless Himself, and therefore entitled to enter the presence of God on his own behalf, but He has dealt effectively with His people's sins and can therefore enter the presence of God on their account too. A high priest who has *actually* removed His people's sins and with them the barrier brought about by sins, and actually opened the way to God's presence is a high priest worth having indeed.

Is Jesus your Saviour? Is he your High Priest?