

## INTRODUCTION

The Book of Hebrews is all about Jesus. From chapter one all the way through chapter thirteen there is a radical focus on Jesus. Hebrews is a study of Jesusology. I just made that word up. I think we should all strive to major in Jesusology. The theme of the book is "Eyes on Jesus." It comes from the words we read in Hebrews 12 that speaks of us running a race. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that we should be "Fixing our EYES ON JESUS, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

A young pastor was preaching his first sermon at his new church. He was really nervous. He said, "And Jesus fed five men with five thousand loaves of bread and two thousand fish." At that misquotation an old member, Mr. Smith laughed and said, "That's no miracle. I could do that!" The young preacher didn't say anything, he just kept on preaching. The next Sunday he used the same text but corrected his mistake. He said, "And Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes." He paused, and said, "Mr. Smith, I'll bet you couldn't do that!" Mr. Smith said, "Sure I could. I'd just use the leftovers from last week's sermon!"

I'm going to serve a few leftovers from last week's message because we're going to talk some more about the great salvation that Jesus offers.

Hebrews 2:3-9. "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place [Psalm 8] where someone [David] has testified: 'What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels for a little while; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.' In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

Here in the second chapter, we are introduced to this Great Salvation Jesus brought. What's so great about it? It's great because it's available to everyone, not just a few select people. It's great because it is forever, it never expires. It's not like a driver's license you have to renew, it's good forever. This salvation is great because of the great cost required to purchase it. And to answer the question again, if you ignore that great salvation, there will be no way you can escape the coming judgment of God.

As we dig a little deeper into this great salvation, let's learn three truths that will transform us.

### 1. GOD MADE US TO HAVE AUTHORITY OVER HIS CREATION

The writer quotes Psalm 8 when he wrote, "You made him a little lower than the angels for a

little while; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet." Now when God created Adam and Eve he put them in a beautiful Garden called Eden. But they weren't the only living things there. God had created a wonderful variety of plants and animals. And God put them in charge of all the plants and animals. God wanted Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over His creation. We read His instructions to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1: God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)

The writer of Hebrews quotes a few verses from Psalm 8 to support the idea that God originally made humanity a little lower than the angels and gave us full authority. He put everything under our feet. Psalm 8 is a beautiful Psalm about the majesty and greatness of God. It was a Psalm of David. I can just imagine little David as a shepherd boy staring up at the night sky filled with stars and the moon. And he started singing to God. "Oh, Lord, Our Lord How majestic is your name in all the earth...When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:1,3-4)

Have you ever done that? You really have to get away from the city lights and smog to see a night sky full of stars. A few weeks ago when we were in Fiji, in the middle of the south Pacific, we could see thousands of stars. I could easily see the Milky Way as it spread out like a silky band in the sky. I was reminded again about how big God is and how small we are.

That's what David must have thought when he wrote that Psalm of praise. As David stared at the moon, he would have been surprised to realize that one day the words from Psalm 8 would be read on the moon's surface, and even left there.

In 1968 when Apollo 8 circled the moon without landing, the astronauts took turns reading the creation story from Genesis 1:1-10. I can still remember that. But after the flight, the famous Texas atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hair sued NASA alleging violations of the First Amendment.

So when Apollo 11 landed on the moon, Astronaut Buzz Aldrin (not Buzz Lightyear, kids) celebrated communion and read the Eighth Psalm, but he did it under radio silence. He had smuggled on the lunar lander a small communion set and he read from John 15:5 and Psalm 8.

Some of the first words spoken on the moon after they said, "The Eagle has landed" were words from the Bible. Buzz had them written down on a small card. He read, "Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me." Then he read, "When I consider they heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon the stars, which thou has ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of Man, that thou visitest Him?" Then after they walked on the moon and collected 47 pounds of lunar rocks, they left a capsule on the surface of the moon that contained the text from Psalm 8. So whenever you look at the moon, you can smile when you know that the words from Psalm 8 are actually on the surface of the moon, unless you believe your crazy uncle who says it was all done in a Hollywood movie theatre!

There are at least two powerful truths in Psalm 8. First, we learn that God made us. He made us a little lower than the angels. Let me remind you that you are not simply the result of some biological process. God made you. The Bible says He formed you in your mother's womb. The second amazing thing is that God is mindful of you. David asked, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" In other words, God thinks about you. He cares about you. It's like the little boy who was trying to learn the Lord's Prayer. He said, "Our Father who art in Heaven; How do you know my name?" He's right. God knows your name. You matter to God. He's thinking about you right now. In Psalm 139 David sang, "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you." (Psalm 139:17-18)

God made us, but sin marred us. Adam and Eve had dominion over all the creatures in the Garden. They had dominion over the weather; there was no illness or evil. But then Adam and Eve rebelled against their Creator. When they were expelled from the Garden of Eden we lost the ability to exercise authority over God's Creation. And since that time, we have been at the subjected to the whims and flaws of creation itself. Today, I don't have dominion over a mosquito or a mole that digs in my back yard. We don't have dominion over hurricanes, or deadly diseases.

But still deep within our DNA is a desire to achieve and conquer. Why do men and women risk their lives every year to climb to the top of Mt. Everest? Because it's there? We have excelled mentally, but we have failed morally. We invented airplanes that can fly, and we turned them into fighter jets. We discovered how to split the atom, and we turned it into a bomb. We invented television, movies and the Internet and then we fill the screens with all kinds of disgusting violence and perversion. It's as if our mental engines have sped up beyond the ability of our moral brakes to control.

## **2. JESUS BECAME A MAN TO RECOVER OUR LOST DESTINY**

We read, "But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels." Since the beginning of the beginning, Jesus had been superior to the angels, but for the thirty-three years in which he walked this planet, he became one of us, a little lower than the angels. But even as a man, Jesus exercised the authority that was given to Adam and Eve. Psalm 8 speaks of the son of man having authority over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea. Can you think of times when Jesus demonstrated dominion over creation? In the middle of a storm, He could say, "Peace, be still." One the day He rode into Jerusalem he rode on a donkey that had never been ridden before. You try that sometime and you'll have your own personal rodeo. Jesus could command fish to school together on the other side of Peter's boat. He even directed one fish to swallow a coin and then grab the hook that Peter was fishing with. And what about birds? Jesus said, "Peter, you will deny me three times before the rooster crows." And right after the third denial, that old rooster let out a crow that made him famous.

He became a man so He could recover what was lost in the Garden of Eden. John Milton was a British Puritan writer who penned the greatest epic poem in history, "Paradise Lost." It tells the story of the sin of Adam and Eve. He summarizes it this way: "Of Man's First Disobedience, and

the Fruit Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste Brought Death into the World, and all our woe, With loss of Eden, till one greater Man Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat." Jesus was the greater Man who died to restore our position to be in authority over God's creation. Salvation is the story of Paradise regained.

Let's shift our thinking from the Garden of Eden in the past, all the way to the future in heaven. In Revelation 4-5 John describes an amazing scene in heaven. Billions of saints and angels are described as praising the One who sits on the throne of Heaven. Then a scroll, or a book is produced. This is a very important book. Most Bible scholars believe this scroll represents our inheritance that Adam and Eve forfeited in the Garden. Think of it as the title deed to the Garden of Eden. In Bible times, when a property was lost, the written deed was always kept safe, in hopes that a kinsman redeemer could one day step forward and pay-off the outstanding debt on the property and reclaim it for his family.

That's what John saw in heaven. Here's how he described it: "And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?' But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne." (Revelation 5:2-6) John is so sad that nobody seems qualified to be a kinsman redeemer that he weeps. But there is a man who qualifies. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which speaks of his majesty. He is the root of David, which speaks of his humanity. And he is the Lamb who was slain, that speaks of his sacrifice. When Jesus takes the scroll, once again worship erupts in heaven.

Jesus had already paid the price for our salvation. He has redeemed us. But in this scene, He is reclaiming what we lost at the Garden of Eden.

So part of what heaven will be like for us will be a restoration of authority over God's creation of a new heaven and a new earth. That should be pretty cool. Right now, we are made a little lower than the angels, but in heaven, we will judge the angels.

### **3. JESUS DIED TO DEMONSTRATE GOD'S GRACE**

The Bible says, "Now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." This is the first time in Hebrews we read about the grace of God, but it won't be the last. My definition of grace is simple. Grace is God giving me what I need instead of what I deserve. I DESERVE to spend eternity separated from God in a place called hell, but what I NEED is forgiveness and a new life that includes being with Jesus forever in heaven.

This chapter is all about our Great Salvation. Let me review the three points of our great salvation: **(1) WE WERE CROWNED WITH GLORY** – that was God's original plan for humanity. **(2) WE WERE CHARGED WITH GUILT** – sin entered the human equation and we

paradise was lost. **(3) WE CAN BE CHANGED BY GRACE!** If you will accept by faith that Jesus died on the cross to take your place, then you can have paradise restored. Once you understand the tremendous cost of your great salvation, you will no longer want to live for yourself. You will want to live for Jesus. Paul expressed this in 2 Corinthians 5 when he wrote:

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

On our trip to Uganda last month, Justin Hayes was the big boss, and I was the guest pastor. In a couple of places Justin was asked to introduce the old gentleman who was with him. So Justin and Emmy started calling me the old gentleman. Actually, in Uganda, I am an old man because I looked it up and the average life expectancy of a man in Uganda is 58 and I'm 63. It's good to be an old gentleman!

Have you read the latest statistics on death? You might want to write this down: One out of one people will die. Death is no respecter of persons. Old people die; children die; teenagers die; young adults die. As followers of Jesus Christ we don't have to fear death because Jesus has already tasted death for us.

In ancient days, kings and rulers often had food tasters. Kings had enemies who would poison them if given a chance, so these servants tasted the food and drink, and if they didn't fall over dead, the king could enjoy the meal. That would have been a pretty tough job. The perks were that you'd get to eat the kings' food. The disadvantage of the job was that you had to eat the king's food.

Jesus tasted death for every one of us. That doesn't mean He just nibbled it, or gave it a taste test. He fully consumed the entire bitter cup of death. He was swallowed up by death, but then death was swallowed up in victory when Jesus came out of the tomb alive. And because He tasted death and survived, He lets us know that we don't have to be afraid.

If the Lord carries, death is inevitable. So your main concern isn't ARE you going to die, or even HOW are you going to die. The question you should be concerned about is what is going to happen to you AFTER you die?

There are only two eternal destinies. I heard about a tombstone where the deceased left instructions to warn others to prepare to die. The tombstone said: Consider Young man as you walk by; as you are now, so once was I. as I am now, you soon shall be; so prepare young man to follow me." That sounded pretty wise, but some guy came along and added these words to the tombstone: "To follow you is not my intent, until I know which way you went!"

In last week's message, the writer of Hebrews tells us to pay closer attention to what we have heard or we will be in danger of drifting away. I used the illustration of how first-time fliers on an airliner pay close attention to the pre-flight safety briefing that the flight attendants provide. But the more often we fly, the less attention we pay to their safety briefing.

This past week I got an email from a member of our church who is a former flight attendant. She asked to remain anonymous, but gave me permission to share part of what she wrote.

"Last Sunday when you mentioned how seasoned fliers ignore the safety briefing at the beginning of every flight, the Lord really spoke to my heart. I realized that what you do every week as a pastor is the same thing I did as a flight attendant. My primary job was to insure the safety of the passengers in case of an emergency. I was trained on how to get them out alive. During the recorded safety briefing, I admit that I thought many times, 'I'm trying to give you advice that can save your life, and you're reading a magazine or listening to your iPod? I'm pointing to these exits and the escape pathway lighting because this could save your life. Why don't you pay attention?' But I kept a smile on my face and prayed that we wouldn't have an emergency. I know that the odds of being in an airplane crash are one in ten million, but we still had to tell people how to get out alive. Pastor, every week, you're doing the same thing I did, but you're not just talking about getting out of an airplane alive, you're talking about how to get out of this world alive—how to have eternal life. And the odds of heaven and hell are not one in ten million. They are 50/50. So, keep on sharing the truth, even if seems that people aren't paying attention. Your message of how to safely arrive in heaven is the most important safety briefing a person will ever hear."

So, are you paying close attention? How will you escape the judgment of God if you ignore such a great salvation? You won't. Faith in Jesus who tasted death for you is your only hope. Like a safety briefing, you've heard it before. But have you done anything about it?

## OUTLINE

### THEME

"Fixing our EYES ON JESUS, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." *Hebrews 12:2*



#### 1. GOD MADE US TO HAVE AUTHORITY OVER HIS CREATION

"You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet." vs. 7-8

"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." *Genesis 1:28*

#### 2. JESUS BECAME A MAN TO RECOVER OUR LOST DESTINY

"But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while." vs. 9

"And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?' But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne." *Revelation 5:2-6*

#### 3. JESUS DIED TO DEMONSTRATE GOD'S GRACE

"Now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." vs. 9

In our Great Salvation: We were

- A. Crowned with glory
- B. Charged with guilt
- C. Changed by grace

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." *2 Corinthians 5:14-15*

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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