

Hebrews 2 • The Purpose of Christ

Introduction

It is worth noting that there are many religions outside of Christianity which give recognition to Christ whether it be tacitly as some kind of “good teacher” or implicitly as the Son of God. Even within the many cults and false spiritual movements found within the domain of Christendom some kind of special place is always afforded the Person of Christ, but they differ greatly as to His purpose. How Christ is portrayed by each of these is reflected in what they believe His purpose to be. For those who think He was just a role model, they attribute nothing more to Him. But in Scripture, like the passage to be studied here, the purpose of Christ is never anything less than the cross. The writer of Hebrews establishes this foundation as a prelude to showing how the entire Old Testament approach to sin and salvation is but a shadow of how it was ultimately fulfilled as nothing less than God’s purpose for Christ.

¹For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. ²For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, ³how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, ⁴God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: What is the keyword in v.1 and the keyword in v.3 which are starkly contrasted to each other? To what are they referring?

A: “Attention” (v.1) and “neglect”. (v.2) They are referring to “what we have heard” (v.1) – “the word” (v.2).

Q: To whom is the writer of Hebrews exhorting to pay attention and not neglect God’s Word?

A: Believers. This is extremely important for the overall context of the teaching. This is not a warning to the unsaved, but the saved.

Q: How might we summarize this warning?

A: Since the Old Testament “word spoken through angels proved unalterable” and those who were disobedient suffered consequences, how much more so our responsibility for the New Testament Word “spoken through the Lord”.

Q: What seems to be the common problem for Believers where God’s Word is concerned?

A: The danger that they might “drift away from it”. (v.1)

Application: This is actually an insight into the definition of “apostasy” – “the falling away”. No one can fall away from something they never had, thus this term always applies to Christians. It begins by drifting away from God’s Word and ultimately results in “a just penalty”.

Q: Who were the first and primary witnesses to the authority and authenticity of the Word of God given through Christ?

A: “...it was confirmed to us by those who heard” – the Apostles. (v.3)

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

— Ephesians 2:19–21

Q: What did God further provide to confirm the authority and power of the Word given through Christ?

1. “...signs and wonders...” (v.4)
2. “...various miracles...” (v.4)
3. “...gifts of the Holy Spirit...” (v.4)

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Point: This is how we always test whether a sign, wonder, miracle, or proclaimed manifestation of the Holy Spirit is genuine or counterfeit, by whether or not it confirms and conforms to God's Word. False personalities claim such things have a newer and greater authority, but if they are truly from God they can never contradict the Word of God they are given to confirm.

Application: The central purpose of Christ's ministry is to affirm God's Word. In acting like Him, this was not only reflected in the ministry of the Apostles, but in every generation to whom gifts of the Holy Spirit are given. It is always about the Word.

⁵For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. ⁶But one has testified somewhere, saying,

“WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU
REMEMBER HIM?
OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU
ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?
⁷YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A
LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN
THE ANGELS;
YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH
GLORY AND HONOR,
AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM
OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR
HANDS;
⁸YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN
SUBJECTION UNDER HIS
FEET.”

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

⁹But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

[Read v.5-9]

Q: How is this an extension of the teaching which began in the previous chapter of Hebrews?

A: In the previous chapter it was established that Christ as the Son of God is better than the angels. Now the writer is explaining why, if He had a human body, He could still be better than the angels, and how it is not connected to the kind of body He or the angels have but according to Christ's purpose.

Q: What is God's view of angels versus mankind?

A: In v.7 it states that God made mankind “for a little while lower than the angels”. It would suggest that Adam and Eve were living under a kind of probationary period but were not created to permanently remain there and would ultimately share God's glory in a superior way to that of the angels.

Point: Satan knew mankind would only be lower “for a little while” and hurried to promise mankind, while still in the Garden, the glory ahead of time.

Q: What was God's original intent with Adam?

A: “You have put all things in subjection under his feet”. (v.8)

Q: But why then does it state, “But now we do not see all things subjected to him”?

A: Because of Adam's sin, earthly dominion passed to Satan. Adam ceased being a king and instead became a slave.

Q: So what is the first purpose of Christ revealed here?

A: He became a man – the “second Adam”, so to speak – “so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone”. (v.9) The Second Adam comes to restore what was lost through the first Adam.

Application: Through the work of the cross, Christ comes as the Second Adam to restore what mankind lost because of sin through the first Adam. Christ had to have a body of flesh in order to die for the sins of the world.

¹⁰For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. ¹¹For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²saying,

“I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME
TO MY BRETHREN,
IN THE MIDST OF THE
CONGREGATION I WILL SING
YOUR PRAISE.”

¹³And again,

“I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.”

And again,

“BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN
WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

¹⁴Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ¹⁶For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

[Read v.10-13]

Q: So what is being described here as a result of the work of the cross where mankind is concerned?

A: There is now a new family in the world as Christ is “*bringing many sons to glory*”. (v.10)

Point: Whereas Adam’s descendants were plunging toward sin and death because of his sin, Christ changed Adam’s descendants into children of God as “*the author of their salvation*”. (v.10)

Q: What might be significant about the quote from Psalm 22:22 in v.12?

A: This comes directly from the Messianic Psalm 22 which provides a depth of details about Christ on the cross. It affirms the stated purpose in v.10 that He was perfected “*through sufferings*”.

Q: Who does the author of Hebrews quote in v.13-14?

A: These are Isaiah’s statements from Isaiah 8:17-18.

Q: How might Isaiah’s statement about “the children whom God has given me” provide an illustration for the current discussion of the children of God through Christ?

A: Isaiah was given two sons who were to be signs to God’s people: “*Shear-jashup*” (Is. 7:3) – meaning “a remnant shall return”, and “*Masher-Shalal-Has*” (Is. 8:3) – meaning “swift is the booty, speedy is the prey”. In Isaiah’s day there was a faithful remnant saved when the nation was judged, “Isaiah’s children” so to speak. It was an Old Testament foreshadow of the work of Christ to come.

Application: The purpose of Christ is to restore both God’s original plan and standing to mankind as members of God’s family. It is a very personal restoration of “the sons” to “the Father”.

[Read v.14-16]

Q: What were the consequences of Adam’s sin?

A: “*Death*” (v.14) and “*the fear of death*”. (v.15) (See Gen. 2:17; 3:10)

Q: Does Satan have absolute, independent “power of death”?

A: We know from the account of Job that Satan can do nothing without God’s permission. The word here translated “*power*” might be better understood as “*might*” rather than “*authority*”. It is expressing how Satan has might over sinners and darkness, but Christ had delivered God’s children from the power of darkness.

“*While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.*”
— Luke 22:53

“*For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,*”
— Colossians 1:13

Q: How did Christ “render powerless him who had the power of death”?

A: Through the cross.

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Q: How did this fundamentally change things?

A: Those in bondage to sin (“subject to slavery”) were freed.

Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

— 1 John 3:7–8

Q: How does v.16 sum up the purpose of Christ through the cross?

A: Christ did not become an angel to save angels, He became a man to save men. He did not die for angels, He died for humans.

Application: *The purpose of Christ is to defeat Satan through the work of the cross and deliver “the descendant of Abraham”.*

¹⁷Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
¹⁸For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

[Read v.17-18]

Q: What is the final reason Christ took human form?

A: God knew that His children needed a sympathetic high priest “to make propitiation for the sins of the people”. (v.17)

Point: *The Old Testament high priest foreshadowed the role and character of Christ the final High Priest to come.*

Q: Is v.18 somehow intimating that Christ in human form needed to be perfected?

A: Since Christ was God, He needed no perfecting. But in human form as the “God-Man”, this is expressing the fact that Christ endured suffering to prepare Himself to meet our needs.

Observation

1. Christ was “made flesh” at Bethlehem. (Jn. 1:14)
2. Christ was “made like His brethren” during His earthly life. (v.17)
3. Christ was “made sin” at the cross. (2 Co. 5:21)
4. Now He is the “merciful and faithful high priest” (v.17) we can depend upon!

Application: *The purpose of Christ is to become our sympathetic High Priest.*

Overall Application

In Hebrews 1 the author explains the precise nature of the Person of Christ; here he expands on that foundation to provide the core purpose of Christ. It is important to note that the true purpose of Christ the Son cannot be extracted in even the remotest sense from His work on the cross to restore God’s children, defeat Satan, and be established as a sympathetic High Priest in fulfillment of the whole Word of God. But while as humans we might think that angelic beings are superior in their bodies and powers, that is neither how God views things nor is it His overall plan. God so loves the children He intends to restore to a much greater position than the angels that He gives His Son to make it happen.