

SERMON 1
BY COY ROPER

JESUS, DIVINE & HUMAN

(1; 2; 4:14–16)

The Book of Hebrews, like every book of the New Testament, is about Jesus Christ. In the book He is identified as “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (3:1), as “the author and perfecter of faith” (12:2), as “the great Shepherd of the sheep,” and as “Jesus our Lord” (13:20). He is the sacrifice offered to take away the sins of mankind (9:26), and He is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (13:8).

However, the most important two facts about Jesus are the emphases of the first two chapters of Hebrews—namely, that He was both divine and human.¹ Let us consider what these chapters tell us about Christ’s divinity and humanity, as well as the consequences of His divine/human nature as described in Hebrews.

JESUS IS DIVINE

Notice in chapter 1 the fact of Christ’s divinity. What does this chapter teach us about Jesus Christ?

Jesus is God’s Son and spokesman (1:1, 2a). As such, He is a superior spokesman. “God . . . spoke . . . to the fathers in the prophets,” but “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” To receive the Word of God from God’s own Son is immeasurably better than to receive it from a prophet.

Through Jesus, God made the world and upholds the world (1:2b, 3b). God’s work of creation was accomplished through His Son, Jesus Christ (see also John 1:1–14). However, the

creation of all things did not end God’s involvement with the world. The world holds together because God “upholds” it through His Son.

Jesus is altogether like God; He has the characteristics of Deity; He is “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (1:3a). Jesus has the same nature as God (see also Philippians 2:5–9).

Jesus “made purification of sins” and is seated “at the right hand” of God (1:3c). Only One who is altogether divine could atone for sins; only One who is God could sit at the right hand of God. Jesus is Deity.

Jesus, because He is divine, is greater than the angels (1:4–14). The rest of chapter 1 is about the fact that Jesus is greater than the angels. Why is He greater? Primarily because He is God’s Son and they are not. God called Jesus His Son, but He never said that to the angels (1:5, 6). Next, the writer contrasted the Son, Jesus Christ, with the angels. (a) He is worshiped; in contrast, the angels worship Him (1:6). (b) The angels are servants, but Jesus rules over a kingdom (1:7–9). (c) Jesus is the Creator of all the earth, which will someday perish, and He reigns at God’s right hand (1:10–13); the angels are “ministering spirits” (1:14) who serve on behalf of “those who will inherit salvation” (Christians).

What do these facts mean to us? The truth that Jesus is the Son of God and is Deity must be believed if one desires to be saved by Christ (see John 8:24)! In Hebrews 2:1–4, the writer of Hebrews spoke of the consequences of Jesus’ Sonship, His deity, and the fact that He is God’s spokesman today.

¹This sermon could be divided into two lessons—one on “The Divine Christ” and one on “The Human Christ.” One could be preached on Sunday morning, the other on Sunday night.

WHY IS JESUS' DIVINITY IMPORTANT?

The great importance of Jesus' identity is explained in these verses: We need to pay close attention to what we have heard so that we do not "drift away from it" (2:1). The writer illustrated this point by referring to the Old Testament law and its adherents. He said, "If the word spoken through angels [that word was the law of Moses] proved unalterable [his readers would agree that it did], and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty [his readers would agree that they did], how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (2:2, 3). Those who first read the letter would have found this reasoning irrefutable—in such a case there would be no escape!

The emphasis of the passage is that God has spoken through His Son; therefore, we must listen to Him or face eternal consequences!

We must listen to certain people when they tell us what to do. Children need to listen to their parents, and students are required to listen to their teachers. Likewise, employees ought to listen to their employers, and citizens are to listen to policemen. If we fail to listen to those in authority, we will be in trouble! How much more trouble will one be in if he refuses to listen to Jesus Christ, the One who is Deity, who speaks from God Himself!

JESUS WAS HUMAN

After speaking of Christ's divinity, the writer described His humanity. Consider the great truth of Christ's humanity as expressed in Hebrews 2:5–18. This passage begins with the continuing contrast between Jesus and the angels. Whereas the emphasis in chapter 1 is that Jesus is greater than the angels because He is divine, the emphasis in chapter 2 is that Jesus is greater than the angels because He became human. The writer pointed out that, in the passage cited (from Psalm 8:4–6), God did not promise angels that He would subject the world to them. Rather, He made that promise to mankind. The promise of subjection has not been fulfilled on this earth (2:8b); but it is being fulfilled through Jesus, who was "made for a little while lower than the angels" (2:9). He has been "crowned with glory and honor," so the prediction of the psalm finds fulfillment in Him.

Who is this Jesus who was so honored? He

lived as a man: (a) He experienced the suffering of death (2:9, 14); only physical beings can die. (b) He and the human beings He saves come from the same source (2:10, 11). (c) He has called human beings His brothers (2:11b–13). (d) He shared "flesh and blood" with humanity (2:14). (e) He helps His flesh and blood brethren, rather than giving aid to angels (2:16). (f) He was "made like His brethren in all things" (2:17). Therefore, although Jesus was divine, He was also fully human in every way!² These two great truths about Jesus—His divinity and His humanity—must be accepted by all who would be truly Christian!

What is the practical significance of the fact that Jesus was altogether human? The writer of Hebrews answered that question for us. Reread Hebrews 2:17, 18. The consequence of Jesus' being human is that, through His experience of humanity, He is able to be our perfect High Priest: "Since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (2:18). Later in the book, the writer said,

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (4:15, 16).

WHY IS JESUS' HUMANITY IMPORTANT?

Because He was fully human, Jesus experienced all the kinds of problems and temptations that we experience; that is why He can sympathize with us in our weaknesses. Furthermore, that means we can and should approach "the throne of grace" with confidence, knowing that we have a sympathetic High Priest to intercede for us.

Because Jesus is Deity, the Son of God, we must pay attention to what He says in His Word. If we do not, we will be punished. Because He is human, having been made like us in every respect, we can draw near to God boldly, knowing that He who has experienced our humanity sympathizes with our weaknesses and can effectively intercede with God on our behalf.

Carefulness and confidence: These qualities

²The exception is that, unlike any other accountable human being, Jesus never sinned. See Hebrews 4:14–16.

should reflect Christ's divinity and humanity in our lives. We must always be careful to hear and obey the words of the divine Christ, but we may approach God with confidence because we have a sympathetic High Priest who has shared our experiences!

CONCLUSION

Hebrews 2 teaches perhaps the greatest truth in the Bible: Christ died for each of us! "By the grace of God He [tasted] death for everyone" (2:9). He died to "render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," and to "free those who through fear of death" have been "subject to slavery all their lives" (2:14,

15). He died for everyone: That means He died for you, that you might be delivered from the slavery of sin!

What will you do about it? Will you obey the One who has been given "all authority" (Matthew 28:18)? Will you listen to Him and obey His Word by believing in Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith, and being baptized into Christ? Do you dare to refuse to hear the One who speaks from heaven? How will you escape if you neglect such a great salvation? The answer is that you will not escape! You will be punished for your sins! Do not let that happen to you. Come to the One who died for you.

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