

The Final Word on Salvation

1. Intro

- A teacher, a garbage collector, and a lawyer wound up together at the Pearly Gates of heaven
- St. Peter informed them that in order to get into Heaven, they would each have to answer one question
- St. Peter addressed the teacher and asked, "What was the name of the ship that crashed into the iceberg? They just made a movie about it." The teacher answered quickly, "That would be the Titanic." St. Peter let him through the gate
- St. Peter turned to the garbage man and, figuring Heaven didn't REALLY need all the odours that this guy would bring with him, decided to make the question a little harder: "How many people died on the ship?" Fortunately for him, the trash man had just seen the movie and answered, "1,500." "That's right! You may enter."
- St. Peter then turned to the lawyer. "Name them."

- I tell you that story because in today's passage (Heb 2) we are going to be looking at the reality of Heaven

- One of the great truths the writer wants to remind us of in this passage of the certain confidence they can have about heaven
 - That is, since the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christian believers all around the world have spoken boldly about heaven
 - And the Bible's clear message about heaven is it's a guaranteed, certain, future reality
 - Heaven is a place that has been established by and ruled over by Jesus
 - And that all Christians will one day be there with him

- Today – the final word on salvation
 - Jesus the perfect man who rules the eternal future
 - Jesus the perfect man who secures our eternal future

2. Jesus the perfect human who rules the eternal future (v5-9)

- Just started looking at letter to Hebrews
 - Probably written to Jewish Christians who were starting to waver in their faith > persecution or doubt
 - And the writer of this letter is writing to encourage them and warn them not to give up on Jesus

- Keep their eyes fixed on him
- Not to drift away from the message of Christianity they first heard
- Because Jesus Christ is supreme
- He's far greater than any person or institution in the OT
 - Moses, Aaron, High priests, Angels
 - Greater and final revelation of God
- It's a great letter to read and study to keep Christians going strong in the their faith and the dangers of letting go of the truth they first heard

- Passage looking at last week, our writer was making it clear that Jesus is not merely a spiritual being like the angels ... he's far greater than that
 - He's the Son of God, the creator, the Messiah, heir of all things
- Here in v5 he continues to demonstrate how Jesus is greater by declaring that its Jesus (not the angels) who will rule over the age to come > heaven

- Remember he's writing to Jews who'd become Christians and are drifting away from their Christian faith back to Judaism
 - So our writer is using lots of references from the OT to make his point ... because as Jews they would have known and cherished the OT

- This is what he does in v6-8
 - Only problem is ... he can't remember exactly where about in the OT he wants to quote from
 - "Somewhere in the OT ... someone wrote something ..."
 - You ever done that? ... "somewhere in the Bible it says ..."
 - To be fair to our writer he may not know exactly where ... but he exactly knows what he's saying
 - He quotes word for word from Psalm 8:4-6

- In Psalm 8, the Psalmist is celebrating the special role and place of humanity in God's creation
 - He starts off praising God for his majesty and power which is especially seen in God's amazing creation
 - But when he looks at the starry heavens and contemplates their vastness ... it leads him to ask the question ...
 - Why does God treat mankind in such a special way when they seem so small and insignificant in context of our universe

- **Illustration – Size of creation**

- This here is a comet > We just landed a probe on one like this > Here's what one looks like compared with Los Angeles
- Sun and all the planets ... and earth is down there ... and we are one of 7 billion ppl on the planet!
- You can understand why our psalmist is so overwhelmed with the special place mankind has in all of God's world

- And so the psalmist ponders the question – *"what is man that you are mindful of him"*
- The answer is ...
 - that while God made man 'a little lower' than the angels ...
 - his intention was that they would be crowned with glory and rule God's creation
- The reality is however ... the Psalm remains unfulfilled
 - Since the Fall in Gen 3 ... mankind rules the world well in some things and abysmally in other things
 - +ve = Technology, infrastructure, medical services, education
 - -ve = Corruption, pollution, extinction, gang wars
 - Humans are not ruling the world, bringing God's order and justice to bear on the whole of creation as God intended

- Writer of Hebrews goes on in v8-9 ... to show how the Psalm actually finds its fulfillment in Jesus
 - In his coming to earth as a human ... and in his death on the cross ... he was made a little lower than the angels
 - But in his resurrection and ascension ... God crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet
 - Jesus is now at the Father's right hand and rules over everything in heaven and earth – in this world and the world to come

- **Implication / Application**
- And so while Christians are confident of the reality of heaven, these verses show us who is ruling over heaven and the age to come
 - The answer is clear – its Jesus
 - Yes he lowered himself and became man ... but God has put all things under his feet and made him to king of kings and Lord of Lords
 - All things in heaven and on earth ... in this age and in the age to come ... belong to him and are ruled by him
- So before we look at the reality of heaven we need to know who rules over it

- And its Jesus > He is the perfect man who rules the eternal future

3. Jesus the perfect human who secures our eternal future (v10-18)

• *Illustration – A River Runs Through It*

- Tells the story of two brothers growing up in the Montana countryside
- The older one was quiet, studious and hard working
 - He got a good job and became a respectable man in the community
- The younger brother (Brad Pitt) was a tear-away who loved to have fun but was always getting into trouble and pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable
- He ended up associating with ppl who led him deeper and deeper into trouble and was finally killed in a brawl
- It is a tragic end to a moving story
 - The most tragic thing about the story is that the older brother could see what was happening to his beloved younger brother ... but there was just nothing he could do about it
 - He couldn't reach him
 - He couldn't come to where he was and rescue him
- The point of v10-18 is that Jesus is the older brother of a much larger family
 - He could and did come and rescue his siblings when they were lost in sin and death
 - He identified with them, shared their fate and was therefore able to rescue them from it
- Jesus is not the kind of older brother we resent because he's always getting things right and being successful and we're always getting in wrong and failing
 - We're meant to see Jesus as the kind of older brother who without a trace of patronising or looking down his nose at us ... comes to find us where we are ... out of sheer love and goodness of heart to help us out of our mess
- As we unpack these verses we see three key elements that help us understand this idea of Jesus as the older brother coming to rescue us from ourselves
- The first is sees Jesus as the pioneer

- v10 *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, [...] should make [him] the author of their salvation perfect through suffering*
- Author = founder, originator, pioneer
- It has the sense of Jesus forging his way through impossible terrain until he reaches his goal
- Like an explorer ... he's blazed the trail so others can follow

- **Illustration – Blaxland Wentworth & Lawson**
- Anyone who's ever driven over the Blue Mountains ... Katoomba Convention, holidays etc ... you'll know you're sure as eggs to get in a traffic jam because some stretch of the highway is being widening, resurfaced or improvement

- Did you know that's been going on for 200 years
 - In 1813 the explorers Blaxland Wentworth and Lawson left from Blaxland's farm near the modern suburb of St Marys to find a way across the Blue Mountains
 - The explorers' success was attributed to their methodical approach
 - Each day they would set out from camp leaving two other men at their campsite, and mark out a trail, before turning back later in the day to cut a path for the horses and allow the rest of the party to progress
 - They achieved the crossing in 21 days
 - When they got to the far side of the mountain range and saw a whole new world fan out in the valley before them
 - In his expedition journal Lawson described what he saw as "the best watered country of any I have seen in the Colony"
- No one had ever gone there before ... they paved the way for others to follow

- The path that Jesus laid down was also one no one had ever gone before ... through suffering, pain, sin and death
 - Nobody had gone through and come out the other side
 - When Jesus did it he paved the way to eternal life and heaven for those who follow him

- The second element is that Jesus calls us into God's family
 - Jesus coming to earth as a man ... and pioneering a trail before us as the author of our salvation ... he qualifies us to be part of God's family
 - v10 – we are sons who he is bringing to glory

- v11 – because he is holy and makes us holy ... we are therefore *'of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.'*
- In coming to earth as a man ... in flesh and blood like us ... Jesus is able to be our brother
 - The brother who can come to us and rescue us and
 - He's not ashamed to call us brothers
 - As our brother ... he's on our side ... he's for us, not against us
- The third element is that he does all this specifically through his death
 - v9 – *so that by the grace of God he might taste **death** for everyone.*
 - v10 – *the author of their salvation perfect through **suffering***
 - v14 – *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his **death** he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil--*
- It's in Christ's suffering and dying that
 - He secures our eternal salvation (v10)
 - He makes us holy / set apart for God (v11)
 - Dies as an atonement for our sin to take away the punishment our sin deserves (v17)
- In suffering and dying on behalf of his people ... Jesus becomes our true high priest
 - According to the OT
 - The high priest served God
 - He interceded between God and the people
 - Offered sacrifices to God for the atonement of ppl's sin and reconcile them back to God
- As the true high priest, Jesus perfectly bridges the gap between humankind and God
- Like the OT high priest
 - He serves God
 - He is faithful to him
 - He intercedes between God and the ppl
 - He makes atonement for our sin by dying in our place
- And because Jesus himself was human
 - He's merciful to us
 - He's able to sympathise with those to whom he ministers
 - He can sympathise with us in our weakness and vulnerability of temptations

- Jesus is no older brother unable to cross the gulf to rescue his brother
 - He shared in flesh and blood and even death itself
 - There's nothing we face today or tomorrow or the next day that Jesus cannot sympathise, help, and rescue us from ...
 - For he has gone through and forged a way of salvation for us to follow
- He is the perfect man who by his death secures our eternal future

- **Implication**
- These verses are key to us to understand what God had to do to atone for our sin
 - In order for God to forgive our sin ... Jesus had to be both fully God and fully man
- He had to be fully God ... because all our sin is an expression of our rebellion against him
 - Therefore only God can forgive sin
 - Which means Jesus had to be God if his death and suffering on the cross was to be effective
 - If I punch XXX in the nose ... I can't ask YYY to forgive me > only XXX can do that
 - Same with our sin
 - We can't sin against God and then have Jesus die for our forgiveness ... unless Jesus in himself God in the flesh

- Of course Hebrews 2 shows us how Jesus also became a man, the perfect man
 - He shared our humanity > therefore he can call us brothers
- Jesus coming to earth as man is vital if God was going to effectively deal our sin
- In the OT, God's ppl used to offer animal sacrifices for the atonement of their sin
 - But animals can't die in the place of human for God's wrath to truly be averted
 - The Bible says the wages of sin is death¹ ... and throughout the Bible ... it's clear that man must die for his sin
 - Human death is only way God's wrath for human sin can be truly appeased

¹ Rom 6:23

- Therefore, Jesus had to be truly human ... otherwise his death in our place would not be effective
 - If he remained fully God ... but not fully man ...
 - Or if we was some spiritual being
 - Then is death on the cross would not have been sufficient to atone for sin > not been effective

- And so you see how important Christmas is?
 - Without Jesus coming into the world ...
 - Fully God > incarnate of the Holy Spirit
 - Fully Man > born of a woman > Mary
 - Then
 - Our salvation
 - Our being made holy
 - Our being brought into God's glory in heaven
 - The atonement of our sin would just not have happened

- Christmas is so much more than mangers, wise men, shepherds and angels singing glory to God in the highest
 - It was Jesus coming to earth > fully God > fully man ... so he could atone for your sin and secure your eternal future

- The other great implication of Jesus atoning for sin and securing our eternal future is ...
 - *Jesus has destroyed the devil who holds the power over death and freed those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death*
 - You see the Devil's weapon is being able to accuse us of sin and therefore declare us worthy of death

- But in dying in our place and atoning for our sin ... that weapon has been destroyed
 - The Devil's got nothing to stand on now
 - He has no power
 - Christ and the cross has disarmed it and rendered him powerless

- Which means if your trust is in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin ...
 - You've been freed from the fear of death
 - You're no longer a slave to that fear
 - Jesus has removed that fear once and for all at the cross

- **Illustration**

- I remember as a kid (primary school) crying in my bed one night because it had suddenly dawned on me that one day I was going to die
 - I was terrified!
 - Bawling to my mum saying "I don't want to die"
 - At the time I wasn't a Christian ... all I knew about death was that was the end

- But when your trust is in Christ ... there's no need to fear death

- You know at the cross death was defeated
- Jesus is bringing you to glory
- Heaven is your home
- Your eternal future is secure

- **Illustration – Kelly's Mum**

- Kelly in Canada > mum passed away after ongoing battle with cancer
 - Understandably Kelly and her family were devastated
 - But in the midst of all that she was still able to say
 - *We are all comforted that she knew our great God and that she is now at rest with her Lord (and brother Jesus)*

- Kelly knows and her family knows ...

- She could look forward to her mum being brought into glory
- Because Jesus had secured her eternal future

- They say ... there's two certainties in life – death and taxes

- Jesus doesn't promise to do anything about your tax bill > some of us probably wish he would!
- But he does promise to do something about your death

- He's overcome it ...

- And so you don't need to fear it
- Whether in old age; or
- Facing terminal illness in younger years
- When Christ is your brother ... death has no hold over you

- Final implication is this ...

- Not only does Jesus coming to earth as a man secure our eternal future ... but it also means we have a true high priest who is merciful and faithful and help those who are being tempted

- As pastor it's a privilege to share life with people in this congregation
 - Many of you have shared deep and personal things with me over the years
 - Things that have
 - Hurt you
 - Saddened you
 - Brought you joy
 - Caused you doubt your faith
 - Done wrong and confessed
 - Many things I've been able to
 - sympathise with you
 - cry with you
 - rejoice with you
 - pray about with you

- But I am a flawed man ... I'm a very imperfect pastor
 - There are many things I'm lacking ... you'll be all too aware of many of them
 - Don't nod your head!

- How good it is it then that we have Jesus ... our great high priest ... who is your perfect pastor
 - He can sympathise with you
 - He knows
 - your pain,
 - your doubts,
 - your suffering,
 - your joy,
 - your temptations,
 - your weaknesses,
 - your sins
 - your desires
 - He knows what you go through in life as you await that perfect future ... because
 - He himself came and lived it
 - He experienced it
 - He suffered in it
 - He went through all of what we go through

- And so you can come to him

- Lean on him
- Cast your burdens on him
- Pray to him
- Cry out to him
- Ask him to forgive your sin
- For he is
 - You brother who has blazed a trail and pioneered a way
 - He has won your salvation
 - He has brought you into his family
 - He calls you his sister or brother
 - He's the ultimate pastor
- He's secured your eternal future

PRAY

Almighty God, we thank you for sending Jesus into the world as one of us to secure our eternal salvation. We praise you that all things are under his feet and even though we cannot see that now, help us to take comfort and trust in the truth of Jesus sharing our humanity to be author and pioneer of our salvation. Help us not longer to fear death knowing he has made atonement for our sins. In his name we pray, **AMEN**