

Advent: Gift-Wrapped in Flesh, Hebrews 2:5-9, 12/4/22

Please turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 2 where we will be throughout our Advent series we are calling: God Gift-Wrapped in Flesh. Let's get nostalgic together this morning. Go back to a Christmastime, when you were burning with anticipation for a particular Christmas gift that you were really hoping to get that year.... some of you will have to go back further than others, Do you have yours? What was it?

Do you remember the anticipation the weeks leading up to Christmas morning? Do you remember counting down, every day just a little bit closer, and when you were young didn't it seem like December was just agonizingly slow....Get here! I just can't take it! And of course, Christmas Eve, you are about to jump out of your skin...That Christmas morning you wake up at the crack of dawn and you go wake up mom and dad....come on, it's Christmas! It's finally here! You raced down the steps in your pajamas to gifts under the Christmas tree, but it's still not time yet, you have to eat breakfast, wait for grandma to get there, then you need to read the Christmas story...finally, finally the moment came! Can I show you what it was for me? [Open the gift] I remember 1990, I was 8 years old and the Gameboy just came out...it was the first legitimate handheld, portable gaming device, finally I wouldn't have to share with my brothers and I could take it with me!

That anticipation, that longing, that excitement for a gift at Christmas is just a shadow of the anticipation, long and excitement for the gift of Christmas, the Savior Jesus Christ. This is what the Advent season is all about. This is the season when our goal as followers of Jesus is to stir up our mind and hearts to dwell on the advent of our Savior that first Christmas morning. To be filled with longing for their savior just as God's people did 2000 years ago. Now can we be honest...that is difficult to do, instead of anticipation, for some of us we are filled with anxiety-there's all the busyness of shopping and the calendar fills up with obligations, family tensions, maybe the budget is tight, facing a Christmas without someone you love...and so while we are singing the carols, decorating the tree, saying Merry Christmas...many of us aren't filled with longing and wonder during Advent.

This was the situation for the Hebrew Church at the end of the first century. We might say they had lost the wonder of Christmas. Look at the beginning of chapter 2. **V.1 We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.** V.2 he warns us not to **ignore so great a salvation.** Oh you can be singing the carols and setting up your nativity scene and yet inwardly be drifting and unaffected.

[title slide] And so the writer does what any good preacher would do, from verses 5-18, he paints a word picture of the beauty and wonder of the incarnation of Jesus. His goal is to stir their hearts and minds to soak in the wonder of the gift of advent, the incarnation of God, wrapped in flesh, Jesus Christ. To see Jesus as the greatest gift the world has ever seen, given that first Christmas morning. These verses are so theologically and spiritually rich, deep and beautiful...we want to take 5 messages to unpack 5 aspects of the gift of the incarnation. And our goal, just as the writer of Hebrews is to stir in our hearts a Christmas longing for Christ as

our greatest gift we ever received, and the longing for his 2nd advent, when he returns. ⁵ *For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.*

⁶ *It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?"*

⁷ *You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet."*

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

⁹ *But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor*

because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

It may not be obvious in first reading, but the writer wraps this beautiful reflection on the gift of the incarnation in the grand story of **salvation history: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration**. That's our outline.

Creation:

Notice the writer says "it has been testified somewhere" and then quotes a passage? Well that somewhere is Psalm 8. In Psalm 8, David is contemplating the mighty expanse of the evening sky, and he is so overwhelmed with the majesty of God that he burst into a creation Psalm, reflecting on Genesis 1 and 2, which leads him to then see the smallness of himself and mankind in general...who am I that you would care for me, for us? Not only that but that you would create us in your image, therefore inherently are "crowned" as it were with glory and honor, and that you would give us a destiny to rule your creation? Wow. And that's a good lesson for all of us by the way, if you are struggling to get some self-perspective- first look up! not first looking inside, or out at other people...but up at God and his creation. Only grasping God's design for man can we see our true dignity and destiny. But there's a problem: why don't we see and experience this?

Fall:

Notice verse 8 the writer addresses this... *At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.* That's an understatement. We have lost our position in creation because mankind fell into sin, Genesis 3. Rebellion against God resulted in paradise lost. Adam and Eve are removed from the garden, and the curse of sin is this: instead of the world being subject to us, we are made subject to the world- frustration, toil, suffering of all kinds, a type of slavery to work. As

much as we try, We can't rule the natural world, we can't even rule ourselves! We are broken versions of ourselves- we sin against one another, make war, commit every injustice... everything broke loose to make man not a king, but a slave to sin, to the evil one, fighting all his lifetime just to eke out an existence. Humans have been searching for an answer of how to reach our destiny of glory on our own terms. Perhaps, says the humanist, with more education, perhaps with a little more time, if we can just turn the corner, if we can look deeper into the microscope or further out into the telescope, if we can use technology to finally unite mankind then we will achieve our glorious utopia- do you remember when social media came out- "finally, we will be able to achieve peace when everyone is able to communicate freely with one another, we will understand we aren't different and finally reach unity!" How has that worked out? Humanity, in our rebellion refuses to seek God for the answers and stumbles in the darkness searching for our own redemption. As one author says of this text- "The glorious design for human beings has not become a reality in human history. Instead, human history is littered with the wreckage of destruction and death, a world gone mad."¹ At present, indeed, everything is not in subjection...we are a glorious mess...ah but there is good news...

Redemption:

⁹ *But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor.* The writer of Hebrews sees in Psalm 8 a dual meaning, that points beyond itself to another man. This text is not only talking about the first Adam, but also the 2nd Adam, Jesus. What we see is not a man, but *the man*. Not every son of man, but *the Son of Man*.² What Adam and the human race failed to do, could never do, refused to do- Jesus did. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 8, the ultimate fulfillment of the destiny of man for glory, honor and rule of the world. In his incarnation that first Christmas, God became flesh, he was made a little lower than the angels, he took on our flesh and its weakness and vulnerability. He came to join us under the frustration of a world gone mad with suffering, disease, and sin. His intention? *because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.* Now we will go into more detail about this over these weeks- but the "for" means instead of, in our place as a substitution. The path to the crown was the suffering of death on the cross. See the ultimate destiny of Jesus is not explained by the cradle in Bethlehem, but by the cross at Calvary. Christmas points to Easter. This leads us to...

Restoration:

In tasting death FOR us, *v.10 he brings many brothers and sisters to glory.* Jesus fulfills the destiny of man that we are incapable of fulfilling, so that one day those who trust in him will reign with him in the new heavens and new earth to fulfill our ultimate destiny. A world filled with all things bright and beautiful... as that great Christmas Carol that looks at the first advent in light of the second advent of Jesus' return- Joy to the world, the Lord is come, Let Earth receive her King, Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing. Then and only then will mankind truly be the glorious creatures we were destined to be, with bodies that will never crack, fade, fail and fall apart, with hearts that desire only to love God and love

¹ Thomas Schriener, *Hebrews Commentary*

² Thanks to John Piper message on Hebrews 2 for this idea

others, when heaven and nature sing together in perfect harmony. Ah, what a day that will be. And so in this incredible opening incarnation text we see all of salvation history coming together in the incarnation of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Here's what I want to encourage you with this morning... **We don't see the world the way it ought to be, but we do see Jesus.**

-Politics: Oh, we may see the hostility of political battles, and friends and family members separated by entrenched ideologies...but we also see Jesus, who came to bring peace, and will ultimately bring peace on Earth and good will to men.

-Disease: We may see a diagnosis of cancer...but we also see Jesus, who showed us in the gospels he has the power over disease and when he returns will bring an end to cancer.

-Injustice: We see injustices done, corruption, and the powerful seeming to get away it...but we also see Jesus who willingly allowed injustice done to him at the hands powerful men, and overcame it and will one day come with true justice.

-Emotional Fragility: We see depression and anxiety that we battle every day and seems to overcome us...but we also see Jesus, who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who says in this life you will have troubles, but take heart I have overcome the world. He will come and restore our minds with true peace and joy. Imagine the day when you wake up with no anxiety, no self-hatred, no guilt...

-Sin: We see the pain of sin and what it does to ourselves and others, broken relationships, regrets. But we also see Jesus who was a friend of sinners, gives grace, forgives and went to the cross to pay for our sin. And one day when he returns we will be free from the presence of sin.

-Death: We see the grief of death. People we love taken from us too soon. But we also see Jesus whose death put to death to death. Who says I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live, though he die, yet will live.

We don't see the world the way it ought to be, but we do see Jesus. And what should this do in us? It should fill us with hope and wonder and courage to face a world that isn't yet what it ought to be. The hymn writer, **Vaughn Williams wrote, *For all the Saints*: "And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long, steals on the ear the distant triumph song, and hearts are brave again and arms are strong."** In the hymn he's saying that life feels like a war, constantly fighting against the reality of a broken world...but then those on the battlefield here the distant triumph song- The battle is present, but the triumph song in the distance was a declaration that the war has been won...and so hearts are brave and arms are strong again. We can keep fighting because the victory is on its way!

What is **Christmas? It's a distant triumph song**- because he came once, he will come again! Because he overcame death, we will overcome death. Because he was crowned with glory, we will be crowned with glory.

What is **communion? It is a distant triumph feast**. Because he gave his life, we will feast with Jesus in eternity. During our communion reflection time I want you to write a prayer. In the pain, disappointment, difficulty of your life right now- **where do you need to see Jesus?**