

**Introduction:**

- A. The 19<sup>th</sup> century American poet **John Greenleaf Whittier** wrote a poem titled, “Maud Muller,” about a peasant girl who had a chance meeting one summer day with a judge who rode by the spot where she was working in a field. She gave him a drink of water and they talked a few moments of farming, then the judge went on his way. Unbeknownst to each other they each were drawn to the other, and silently dreamed of life together, but neither dared mention it, and the moment passed. In time, they each married someone of their own station in life and raised families. But late in life in their private moments each thought wistfully of that day so many years before. The poem ends:

*Alas for maiden, alas for Judge,  
For rich repiner and household drudge!  
God pity them both! and pity us all,  
Who vainly the dreams of youth recall.  
For of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"  
Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies  
Deeply buried from human eyes;  
And, in the hereafter, angels may  
Roll the stone from its grave away!*

- B. In Psalm 8, the poet David wrote of God’s creation:

*“What is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
a son of man that you care for him?  
You made them a little lower than the angels;  
you crowned them with glory and honor  
and put everything under their feet.”*

- C. The writer of Hebrews quoted those last lines that so beautifully described mankind’s created glory, and then in **Heb. 2:8** he writes, “*In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them... **Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.***” You can say that again! What God intended for mankind did not happen.

*“Of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’”*

God created Adam and Eve to be the parents of a race crowned like kings and queens with God's own glory and honor, ruling over everything God had made. But the sin of Adam and Eve ruined everything, leaving only faint vestiges in us of what might have been. A race marred and toxic, destined only to die, and in the humiliation of death to lose every last strand of glory and honor, entering into everlasting death utterly helpless and powerless, and ever under the sad epitaph, "It might have been."

- D. But what if that great divine intention could actually be our destiny? What if, as a free gift, you could have that glory and honor—be noble and good, the unmarred image of God—and be worthy and able to rule over all God has made? **If that could be restored to you, would you ever let it go? That is the question before us today.** Turn to **Heb. 2.**
- E. **Heb. 2:8** says, "*Yet at present we do **not** see everything subject to them [mankind]. But we **do** see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for a little while [i.e., human like us] now crowned with glory and honor...*" **In Jesus we see what we are meant to be.** And here is why that has changed everything for all who trust him. **Vv.9-10.**

**I. THERE IS ONE MAN, JESUS, WHO IS CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR *BECAUSE* HE SUFFERED THE DISHONOR OF DEATH (2:9-10)**

- A. Jesus is *now* "crowned with glory and honor" because he did what no other person could have ever done—**he suffered death for everyone.** This came about "*by the grace of God*" and **v.10** adds, "*it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists,*" should ordain this. That's saying, if you know anything about God's grace, it only makes sense that God would bring all his infinite resources to save people from sin and death.
- B. Jesus, the Son of God, who we saw in the very first verses of this book, is fully God in every way, took on this assignment from the Father: Pioneer a way for people to

pass through death unharmed to the glory, honor and dominion that God intended for them at creation.

- C. Death has different dimensions. There is, of course, the death of the physical body which is written into our DNA because of Adam's sin. But there is a far worse death: the penalty for sin, which is the death of the soul. As Christians we speak of of everlasting life. But **to die without Christ is everlasting death**—conscious, unending, absence from anything good, even light itself, because God is the only source of good, and rejecting God's love in this life is met by the absence of God forever in the next. In a word, **hell**.
- D. In an extraordinary paradox, God made Jesus the perfect pioneer of our salvation through what he suffered. Jesus became the perfect man because he did what is hardest for human beings to do: in the most extreme and godforsaken suffering, he still trusted and obeyed God. He thereby became the perfect holy man. Then this perfect, sinless man died as a sacrifice for sinners.

To restore the crown of glory and honor Jesus wore the crown of thorns and died in the most inglorious, dishonored way imaginable. Rather than having everything under his feet, Jesus was nailed, hands and feet, to the cross and died powerless. *“If you're the Son of God,”* they jeered, *“come down from the cross and save yourself.”* But he didn't because Jesus had said, *“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”* Who would have ever imagined such a thing!

*Illus.:* About the time I was graduating from high school, there was a very popular song that got its start in a story nearly 100 years earlier in Scotland. In 1884 a minister named James Wells told of a little girl carrying a big baby boy. Seeing her struggling, someone asked her if she wasn't tired. With surprise she replied, “No, he's not heavy; he's my brother.” It became an anthem of soldiers in battle caring for one another: “He ain't heavy. He's my brother.” Listen to **vv.11-13...**

## II. JESUS WILLINGLY IDENTIFIED WITH US AS HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS (2:11-13)

- A. The Son of God was most definitely *not like us*. Remember what we learned about him in **Heb. 1:2-3**? The Son made the universe. He is the radiance of God’s glory. He sustains all things by his powerful word. But he laid aside his divine prerogatives and, as it says in **Phil. 2**, “*made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*” He served us by becoming one with us. Imagine the Son of God “*not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters*”!
- B. These Old Testament passages quoted here are more significant than you might realize. The first, in v.12, is from **Ps. 22**. Do you know that psalm? It begins, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” and ends, “*They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!*” Jesus’ last words were, “*It is finished.*” Ps. 22 was obviously on Jesus mind as he died on the cross. Jesus took those words of desolation and trust as his own words even as he died for us. So as he died, forsaken by God, he was thinking this: “*I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.*” As if to say, *This terrible suffering, this being forsaken by God, will end with me praising God along with my brothers and sisters whom I am saving.*
- The next two quotations are from **Is 8:17,18**. Again Jesus takes the words of another—Isaiah, here—as his own. Isaiah was bemoaning how Israel had rejected the Lord but despite that he says, “*I will put my trust in him.*” And despite the fact that so many rejected the Lord, Jesus would stand with “*the children God has given me,*”—his brothers and sisters, saved from death through his death for us.
- C. So as God promised in Scripture, Jesus identified with us most clearly—most certainly—when he suffered for us.

That leads us on: **vv.14-16...**

### III. JESUS SHARED OUR HUMANITY AND DIED FOR US IN ORDER TO BREAK THE POWER OF DEATH AND THE DEVIL (2:14-16)

- A. Jesus said in Jn 8:44 that the devil “was a murderer from the beginning.” He murders everyone. He doesn’t have to gun you down in the street. First, he tempted Adam and Eve to sin so that sinfulness was set into the spiritual DNA of every one of their descendants. Then, with our sinful nature always bending away from God, the devil tempts us to sin. All sin is an offense against God, which requires judgment and death. How diabolical is this!? Satan relentlessly incites us to sin, made easy by our sinful nature, and then God himself, the righteous Judge, must pronounce our death sentence. How can you stop a terrorist plot like that!?
- B. Here’s how: Jesus, the sinless Son of God—of infinite value as a sacrifice—died for our sin instead of us dying for our sin. Then, with God’s judgment on sinners satisfied, God raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand in glory and honor. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, now gives his new life to all who trust him to take them through death into life everlasting. Our Pioneer, our Pathfinder, the Way-Maker through death into life.
- C. **V.16** says, *“For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.”* In the New Testament Abraham’s descendants are all who share Abraham’s faith, not his genes. Those are the people Jesus helps by pioneering salvation. That little word, **helps**, is a picture word of Jesus taking his younger brothers and sisters—these descendants of Abraham—by the hand to lead them. *Stick with me. Hold my hand. I’ll take you safely to the other side.* The writer here was thinking of the Exodus, when God lead Israel out of bondage, and through the sea of death to life beyond. Jesus makes the waters of death part for us and he leads us through himself. *Just hold my hand.*
- D. All this breaks the power the devil has over us. He cannot threaten you with death because he cannot accuse you before God the Judge. Since Jesus rose from the dead the

devil no longer holds the keys to death and hell. And the devil himself is now condemned by Christ to everlasting punishment.

So that brings us to this conclusion: **vv.17-18....**

#### **IV. BECAUSE JESUS SUFFERED AS A MAN FOR US, HE OFFERS US A WONDROUS SALVATION (2:17-18)**

The themes of these verses are expanded in the passages to come, so I'll be brief now. Jesus' humanity in saving us means:

- A. Jesus has "become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God." And that's good for us, because the kind of service God wants is someone to intercede for us! Jesus represents us before God the Father, and what characterizes his service? First, **mercy**. *"Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence [thanks to our High Priest] so that we may receive **mercy** and find grace to help us in our time of need."* The second quality: **faithful**. That is, he never stops. He never gives up on us nor does he stop serving God's interests. Jesus not only ushers us through death but he also ushers us safely and gladly into the very presence of Almighty God.
- B. There's a second benefit in v.17, "that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." Because he was fully human like us, he could stand in our place and die for us. *"Every debt that you ever had has been paid up in full by the grace of the Lord. Be ye glad!"*
- C. And one more benefit of Jesus' humanity is in v.18, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Jesus was tempted—from the beginning of his ministry, when he was alone in the wilderness with the devil, to the last night of his life, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he pleaded with God to let the cup of suffering pass.

Suffering of any kind makes us vulnerable to temptations to sin. And then resisting those temptations to sin is itself a kind of suffering. It is more painful in this world to trust and obey God than to ignore him. But here's the good news: we don't have to just grit our teeth and

muscle through temptation. Jesus, who sympathizes with us, “*is able to help those who are being tempted.*” So ask for his help.

## Conclusion

Human beings were created for honor, glory and dominion over all God has made. But we don't see that now. Instead that glory was lost forever, sealed by our certain death—the very antithesis of honor and glory. **But what we do not see now, we will see, thanks to Jesus.**

As we said last week, the whole point of this book is to urge those who profess Christ to stay true to him. As **Heb 2:1** says, “*so that we do not drift away.*” So after this whole study the writer says in **3:1**, “*Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling...*” (meaning the glory, honor and dominion which awaits us in heaven) “*fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as apostle* [who spoke the good news to us] *and high priest* [who makes it possible].” Fix your thoughts on Jesus.

Remember these incentives to faithfulness:

- **Your sins are forgiven and death's prison doors stand open.** Why would you turn your back on that gift?
- **As our High Priest Christ stands ever ready and able to help you in times of temptation,** so you need not face the suffering or temptation on your own. He will help you so that you do not fall, and if you fall, to be restored.
- Our “heavenly calling” awaits us—to “*crowned with glory and honor*” forever, even as Jesus is. What's more, God will put everything in the new heavens and earth under our feet and we will reign with Jesus.

## Do not forfeit such help and hope.

*Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies  
Deeply buried from human eyes;  
And, in the hereafter, angels may  
Roll the stone from its grave away!*

Oh, with this great hope that Christ gives us, the angels **will** roll the stone from its grave away. Indeed they will!

**What might have been... will be!**