

## DAY 7: THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST

Hebrews 2:10–3:6

Christ's humiliation and death suggest the seriousness of sin. To deal with the power of evil, God had to sacrifice His sinless Son. The value of Christ's triumph over death led the author to write about this great salvation.

**PERFECTED THROUGH SUFFERING** The Jews expected their Messiah to be a powerful king. The idea of a humble, suffering Savior offended them. Here, however, the writer tells why it was fitting that God chose a lowly path for His Son; salvation could be accomplished only in this way. The emphasis on the Lord's humility and suffering is a necessary part of the author's continuing argument for Christ's superiority. The process of salvation is that of "*bringing many sons to glory*" (Hebrews 2:10). In fulfilling His work of salvation, Christ's suffering and humility resulted in glory—His own and ours.

As our forerunner and representative, Jesus experienced physical birth and death. In His birth, the Son accepted humanity's weakness (Philippians 2:6-11). But, unlike the human experience, Christ demonstrated strength and superiority through His death. The Son has entered into God's presence, securing the entry of those He has redeemed. Verse 10 also describes Jesus as being made "*perfect through suffering*," meaning to *fulfill a certain goal*. By suffering, Jesus completed perfectly the work the Father had given Him and removed the sins of those "*who are sanctified*" (Hebrews 2:11).

The result of His suffering is that believers not only are saved but also are "*sanctified*" (meaning *set apart for God's use*). Jesus set Himself apart to become our Savior, and by His sacrifice we are set apart from the corruption of sin to honor and serve God. The link between Jesus and those He saves and sanctifies is emphasized in the words "*are of the same family*" (Hebrews 2:11, NIV). Jesus is not ashamed to call us members of His family.

Three Old Testament passages demonstrate Jesus' identification with us. Using Psalm 22:22, the author confirms that Jesus calls His followers "*brothers*." From Isaiah 8:17 he shows that, although He was God, Jesus, while on earth, depended on the Father in complete trust. Isaiah 8:18 shows that Jesus stands faithfully with His brothers, as the prophet Isaiah had been faithful to his children.

Unlike any other death, Jesus' death broke Satan's grip on humanity by making death a passage to glory for any who would join the family of faith. Jesus became the author of salvation by defeating the devil and the sting of death itself. His resurrection means that even death cannot separate Christ's people from the love of God; no longer is the threat of death a means of intimidation.

**THINK ABOUT** how people today are as fearful of death as the ancients were. Only in Christ are we free from this fear. Imagine what the Resurrection meant to Jesus' followers. Not only had their leader triumphed over death, but He had done it for them! He was alive! They probably began to understand what Jesus meant when He said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die*" (John 11:25-26). For those who believe in Jesus, there is good news—He has conquered death forever!

Verse 17 introduces one of Hebrews' major themes: To save mankind, Jesus had to be like fallen man in every way, yet without sin. Jesus was therefore qualified to represent us before God as our great High Priest. Only Hebrews develops this aspect of the Savior's work. A priest represents people before God and represents God to the people. Israel's priesthood served as a *type*, pointing to the ultimate priesthood of Christ. At the close of His earthly life, Jesus offered Himself on the Cross to pay for sin; thus man was reconciled to God.

In verse 18, the writer underscores the reason Jesus is sufficient and able to represent us before God. He is merciful because His suffering and trials enable Him to sympathize with ours. He is faithful because He completed the Father's purpose for His life without faltering.



**THINK ABOUT** how, when we face temptation, Jesus is our source of strength. He is the One who understands the full force of temptation because He is the only one to withstand its full power. Obviously, He suffered agony on the Cross, but He also suffered throughout His life. He was tempted in every way that is common to the human condition. He stood firm and He will enable us to do so—if we ask Him.

**ONE GREATER THAN MOSES** For the Jews, Moses occupied an unparalleled place before God. He led them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, met God face-to-face, and received the tablets of the Law (Exodus 34:29-32). The author now shows that the Son is superior to the human lawgiver (Moses), and that Christ's New Covenant is superior in every way to the Old Covenant that has been replaced.

*"Therefore"* introduces a conclusion to the argument begun in 2:11, where Jesus' identification with us paved the way to His being our High Priest. The holy brothers are called to a life sustained by God. *"Therefore ... consider Jesus,"* the Hebrews are commanded.

Jesus is referred to as *"the apostle and high priest of our confession"* (3:1). An *apostle* is *one who is commissioned and sent*, and has the authority to speak on behalf of his sponsor. Thus the ministry of Moses, an apostle sent to speak on behalf of God, and Aaron, who as the high priest represented the people before God, are combined in one person, Jesus Christ, and He *"was faithful to Him who appointed Him."*

*"House"* (3:2) is used to symbolize the people of God. Moses' relationship to God's household was that of a servant and administrator in the house, whereas Christ's relationship to it is that of the Son and heir. Moses' role in the household was to serve, and he faithfully did so; Christ's role is to rule by the Father's appointment. The author does not minimize Moses' value; he wishes only to prove Christ's superiority.

Faith is God's gift to people and, as the Bible teaches, it is the believer's responsibility to continue living by it. Our author assures the readers that they, and he, are part of God's household if they all hold on to their courage and hope. Faithfulness is not a requirement laid only upon God and special servants such as Moses; it is the requirement of all His people. For this, we must focus our attention on Jesus.

**PERSONALIZE** this lesson. If difficult circumstances foster spiritual growth, and confidence and hope are essential means for growth, then we understand why the author tells us to hold on! When the going is rough, confidence moves us forward and hope trains our eye on the goal God has promised. Confidence enables us to proceed on our course with firmness and without being paralyzed by fear. Confidence is a gift from God: *"For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control"* (2 Timothy 1:7). Hope, too, is a work of the Spirit. Hope holds on to what God has promised. Do you need fresh courage or hope for the difficult circumstances you face? Ask Him for them! Believe that He will supply what you need so that you can hold on!

#### **REVIEW: THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST**

16. What did you learn from this week's lesson? How will you apply what you learned?