Hebrews 2:5-18 More Images of Jesus

So the year 2024 is over and we are just getting started in 2025. Like every time before as we make transitions from 1 year to the next our TV’s, magazines, social media accounts are filled with images of the past year. Displays of events from the past year both good and bad, happy and sad are flashed across our screens in rapid succession. The top 10/50/100 of the greatest and worst plays of the season for sports fans. Top 10 news stories. Facebook will even make a video collage of your postings so that you can share them again with your friends. All these images then help to explain who we are, things that matter to us and events that have shaped our lives in the past.

An example of how images proclaim who we are occurs during the Christmas season. Christians focus on images of angels, shepherds, stables, mangers, wise men and more. Non Christians focus on Santa Claus, Christmas trees, presents and parties.

So, Images help to tell a story, explain or give an example to focus and sharpen our understanding of people, places and events in out lives.

We have been taught that Jesus was both fully divine and fully human. This is a mysterious concept. It is hard to put an image of divinity and humanity in one package. One or the other we can handle, but both at the same time stretches our imagination. The Arts and entertainment people have attempted to depict this scenario in writings and books. For Example Greek mythology. The are gods, and half gods but in the end they all die. There is a show called Outlander. The main characters are somehow immortal, but not divine. But they too don’t live for ever. In one of the Thor movies, Thor is exiled to earth but loses his power and lives as a normal man without any special power. What good is that.

The author of Hebrews in an attempt to explain that Jesus is Supreme and that Jesus is all we need to receive salvation from our sins, paints a more detailed image of Jesus as both divine and human.

The Jews 2000 years ago couldn’t get their heads around the idea that Jesus was both Son of God and Son of man. Even today some Christians and the world can’t quite grasp the concept that if Jesus is the revealer and mediator of God’s grace he **had** to be both divine and human to pay the debt of sin and evil.

Chapter 1 looks at his divinity. For example 1:2 calls Jesus **“God’s son.** **Whom God appointed the heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.”** Chapter 2 looks at his humanity and connects it to his divinity. Succeeding chapters provide insights that Jesus is superior to angels, superior to Moses, superior to the Aaronic Priests, and that as a result of who Jesus is and what he has done, then everybody should follow him and believe in him as their Savior.

The passage of Hebrews we are looking at this morning; offers four images of Jesus, as the author sets out to show that, Jesus is the Answer. The one who reclaims what mankind was created to be and to do. Jesus was like us in every way except that he was perfectly sinless.

 The unknown author of Hebrews describes Jesus as our

1. author of salvation,

2. big brother,

3. liberator

4. high priest.

Jesus is the “**author of our salvation”** as V 10 says. The word author describes someone who tells a story or records an events and writes it down so others may read it. The Greek word is “archegos”. This can be translated to be author as in our text, or the founder of, for example somebody who starts a new business, or a pioneer; as one who blazes a trail where no trail existed before. I think many of us understand a pioneer, or trailblazer. We can see a picture of somebody heading west, leading a train of covered wagons in the face of great hardship and danger. Pioneers faced danger, had courage, were resourceful and were determined. The wagon master had made the trip before and knew the trail, and in some cases he actually made the trail the first time he went west. He used his knowledge and insight to lead others to places that offered an opportunity for a fresh/new start.

We can understand the analogy of Jesus as a pioneer, a trailblazer. Jesus has gone before us where we could not go. We follow the path marked out by Jesus with sign posts along the way showing us the way to salvation. Jesus tunnels the trail through the darkness of sin and evil and brings us into the glorious light of the Father. Jesus used his resources of righteousness and truth and an all conquering life. Jesus opened up the way to heaven. He showed humanity a way back to a full relationship with God the Father. John 14:2-4 says “**In my Father’s house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** Also in V 6 it says “**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

Jesus is the trailblazer of our salvation. It doesn’t happen without Jesus. The world God created has been taken over by sin, evil and death and Satan has made his headquarters here. Jesus grew up to be humanity’s hero who came to defeat death’s powers and heroically rescue those whom it held in its iron grip

Jesus is our brother. V 11 says that “**both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.”** And Verse 12 quotes Jesus as saying to the Father, “**I will declare your name to my brothers [and sisters].”** Jesus insists that he’s not ashamed to call us his adopted siblings, his brothers and sisters. For Jesus’ sake, God has graciously adopted God’s dearly beloved people as God’s sons and daughters. That means that Jesus is our brother. Since Jesus has always existed, He is eternally older than us, so Jesus is our big brother.

So some of you listening to this sermon are either a big brother or sister or have a big brother or sister. You are familiar with the concept. The role of a big brother or sister is one of leadership for the younger ones and submission to the authority of the parents. A big siblings role is to be a positive role model and friend to their younger siblings, and to help them develop important life skills:

* **Be a good role model**
* **Be kind and protective**
* **Help with work or gets things done**
* **Encourage healthy habits**
* **Build self-confidence**
* **Develop life skills**

In my family I am the big brother. I have 2 younger brothers. I can’t say I was all of these points all the time. There were times I would rather just look out myself. It was hard to be a good example when at times I had no idea on how to solve my problems. I really didn’t care about my brothers’ problems. There were other times I didn’t want to be anywhere near my brothers. Who wants to have a younger brother tag along when you are doing things that were not so wholesome.

Of course Jesus does all of these roles perfectly and many more. Jesus was not embarrassed to be our brother. More importantly Jesus is the source of inspiration, a source of help and salvation for his spiritual siblings whom he loves with sacrificial care. By grace we are adopted into the family to which Jesus belongs as the rightful Son of God. We are not his brothers and sisters because we are children of God, but rather we are children of God because we are his brothers and sisters. Jesus is our elder brother who leads us and shows us how to live a life as worthy sons and daughters of God.

The next image shapes Jesus as our liberator. Verse 14 celebrates how Jesus was made like us in every way so that “**he might free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”** Jesus broke through death’s gates. He liberated all those whom the fear of death had enslaved. As a liberator, Jesus came to do 2 main jobs. 1 to destroy the power of the devil who held humanity in slavery to sin and evil. 2 to deliver the offspring of Abraham or everybody who has faith in Jesus Christ.

The devil has had the power of death over humanity since Adam and Eve first sinned. Ever since then Satan and his demons have rained down terror, evil and death on all. This fear of death drives humanity to be busy. Humanity finds ways of distraction through entertainment, drugs, alcohol, greed and more in an attempt to avert our gaze from the shadow of death that will over take us all. Humanity lives with unhappiness, dysfunction and failures. However, Jesus came as our liberator. Jesus breaks the devils power and sets us free by his own death on the cross. Taking our sins upon himself, Jesus endured the wrath of God that we deserved. Jesus abolished death and brought light and immortality

 Jesus came to set his people free. In order for Jesus to do that, he had to be human and divine. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 16 asks “**why must he be truly human and truly righteous**?”Answer is “**God’s justice demands that human nature which has sinned, must pay for it’s sin. But a sinner could never pay for others.”**  Q&A 17 asks “**why must he also be true God?”** Answer “s**o that by the power of his divinity he might bear the weight of God’s anger in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.”** Jesus as God, could not die, but Jesus, as a man could die. Jesus as a man had no power over death, but Jesus as God has power over everything including death. Jesus was like us in every way so that he might “make atonement for the sins of the people.” He graciously gave his life so that his adopted brothers and sisters might have eternal life.

 Humanity and divinity working together simultaneously to liberate slaves from the power of darkness.

The fourth image of Jesus in this section of scripture is displayed in V 17: which says Jesus is our **“merciful and faithful high priest.**” We are familiar with the role of the high priest from the old testament. The High Priest stood as a mediator between God and humanity. The priest represented God before man, which is why they were clothed with glory and honour. Their priestly apparel gleamed to portray the righteousness and holiness of God before the people. The priest also represented man before God. This is why the high priest wore an ephod of gold, upon which were fastened 12 stones bearing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel.

God the Father in his holiness cannot accept people who are stained by sin. So the priest would sacrifice lambs on the alter to subdue or put off the wrath of God against humanity for it’s sin until a complete sacrifice could be made. Jesus came and became the perfect lamb, the perfect sacrifice to wipe away God’s wrath against those who were sorry for their sins. Jesus made atonement for our sins. He covered them up and washed them away.  Christ, in His perfect life and atoning, substitutionary death, meaning he took our place to pay the debt of sin, satisfied the wrath of God against our sin and against us. Jesus as High priest took our names on his shoulders. Jesus clothed in righteousness offered his precious blood his divine and infinitely valuable life to pay the debt of our sin. Jesus as a divine and human high priest satisfied God’s wrath against humanity of it’s sin and disobedience.

There is more to these 4 images of Jesus being our trailblazer, big brother, liberator and high priest. Jesus also suffered to be our trailblazer, big brother, liberator and high priest. V18 says that “**because he himself suffered when being tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”** Jesus in his humanity faced many temptations like we do every day. As a result of these temptations he knows what we are going through when tempted. Jesus has our high priest has real sympathy and compassion for what we are going through.

However, there are people who will say that Jesus didn’t experience the whole nature of humanity because he was sinless. As a result he never had to feel shame or quilt or sickness, which are very much prevalent in all our lives. However, to counter this argument Jesus actually knows more about temptation than us because he never submitted to temptation. He continually resisted. When the strongest of us fall to temptation, Jesus continued to resist. Jesus’ sympathy for the sinner does not depend on Jesus experiencing the sin but on the experience to the amount of strength is takes to resist. Only Jesus as a sinless man knows the full intensity of pressure to conform and give in to temptation. Remember, when Jesus on the night of his betrayal, while in the garden of Gethsemane he was praying and wanting to give up; Jesus sweated drops of blood, now that is an image of withstanding extreme pressure.

Since Jesus has this knowledge of how to resist temptation, he is also able to help us resist temptations. Jesus knows what we are feeling when we are tempted and resisting temptation. So Jesus is able to help. Jesus was like us and experienced pain, suffering and temptations. He experienced the pain of nails being driven through his hands and feet because he remained sinless. He was flogged, punched and spit on, he was homeless and often hungry, he worked tirelessly healing, preaching and teaching so that he could rescue us from the power of death. He’s been there, done that and over came.

Jesus hears us with a sympathetic and merciful heart when we cry out to him. As we cry out to Jesus in our prayers we are encouraged knowing Jesus was there too. Jesus helps us by praying for us at the throne of his/our Father in heaven and by sending his spirit, the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Paul says in Gal2:20 “I**t is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”**

So, when we look into these images of Jesus as our hero, big brother, liberator and high priest; we also see that when Jesus sees a woman crawl into a cardboard box to get out of the cold, he doesn’t see a person who’s homeless. He sees a sister. When Jesus watches dementia shrink someone’s world, he doesn’t see a forgetful and forgettable person. He sees a child of God. When Jesus sees us stuck in our sin, repeating several sins again and again, he doesn’t shake his head at us or wag his finger at us in disappointment, he sends people to us to be accountable to and to help us fight against our addictions.

Do these images of Jesus as a hero, big brother, liberator and high priest solidify a greater picture of Jesus as both divine and human? The picture is only complete when both parts are together mixed to form 1 picture of who Jesus is. All of these images combine to form a picture of Jesus that is both complex and unified.

The world does not see this picture of Jesus. Many call Jesus and the stories of the bible, an imaginary tale. North American culture prefers to shrink Jesus to a much smaller picture. He isn’t, the hero of our salvation; He’s just the perfect example of a nice guy. Jesus isn’t the one who liberated people from death’s iron grip; He’s no more than a model for us to emulate. Jesus isn’t our merciful priest; He was just a prophet who advocated for justice.

But we know the truth of who Jesus is. We know the way to heaven. We know that eternal life is available to all who have faith in Jesus. We have been invited into God’s family. Jesus paid the price for us to join and leads us back to a relationship with God that was created at the beginning of creation. But, the work of Jesus is not done yet. The world is still full of sin and evil. Death has been conquered, but not every knee has bowed before Jesus, not everybody claims to have Jesus has his brother. Jesus has more to do. His reign is not complete. The message of who of Jesus Christ is, is still spreading. Jesus is still at work. Jesus is still looking for more of his brothers and sisters who are lost. Jesus is doing this work from his throne in heaven beside God the Father. God’s Spirit, the Holy Spirit is at work convicting others to join the family. Jesus will return to earth someday in glory and a final triumph over sin and evil proclaiming a new creation in holiness and light. As members of God’s family, as Jesus’ brothers and sisters we help in the work of finding those who have yet to join the family.

So a year from now when 2025 ends, will there be images of you worshiping God? Will you as V12 says “**be in the presence of the congregation, and will you sing his praise?”** Will you have flashbacks of times spent at work for the gospel message? Will you also be not ashamed to call Jesus your big Brother? Will you, as V13 says **“put your trust in him?”**

We are the children of God given by Jesus Christ, who is both Son of God and Son of man. We are called to testify among this present generation to the reality of salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. God has sent his gospel to us to declare a pathway open to God. When we have the top 5/10/50/100 images of who Jesus is, we need to share them with the world.