Jesus’ Divinity and Humanity

Hebrews 2:1-18

Key Verse: 2:10 “In brining many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.”

Last week we studied Hebrews 1:1-14 with the title, “Jesus’ superiority and our priority.” In 1:1-3 the author explains who Jesus the Son is in seven ways. Do you remember all these seven depictions of Jesus? Jesus the Son is the heir of all things. He is the Creator of the universe. He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being. He is the sustainer of all things, providing purification for sins, and finally sits down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. All these explains the superiority of the Son Jesus over anything and anyone, even angels in heaven. These verses also reveal Jesus’ divinity as fully God.

Today in chapter 2 we see another aspect of Jesus, who is superior to angels. We see Jesus’ humanity as the fully human Savior. Let us study why the perfect God Jesus became a human like one of us and what the meaning of his humanity is for us.

First, pay the most careful attention (1-4) Look at verse 1. “***We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away***.” People say that Hebrews is the book of “Therefore (*dia*).” The author often concludes his statement and starts a new chapter by using ‘therefore’ after explaining and instructing something (3:1;4:1,6,11,14; 6:1;10:5,19;12:1,12,28). Jesus the Son is superior to all things, even to angels. Therefore, we must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard. Here, what we have heard indicates the gospel message of Jesus Christ. We must pay the most careful attention to the gospel message so that we may not drift away. Here the word ‘drift away’ means to ‘slip away silently and slowly,’ (*pararreo* ) like an untied boat drifts away slowly and silently from the pier. If we don’t take heed to what Jesus said and what we studied from the gospel, our hearts may drift away from our faith little by little, knowingly and unknowingly. Drifting away is not violently or strongly refusing, which is apostacy, but neglecting or ignoring, consciously and unconsciously, until we lose our faith. When I was young, I was enjoying floating on a donut floatie by the shore. But after a little while, I found myself drifting far away from the shore. I was drifting away from the shore because of the ebbing tide. Fortunately, a passing boat found me and took me up into their boat. Likewise, we often don’t realize that we are drifting away from our faith. Slowly and silently, consciously and unconsciously, our faith drifts away from the presence of God.

What caused the believers’ drift away from their faith? At that time, there were many false teachings making them spiritually blind such as Judaism, Dualism, Docetism, and other Greek philosophy. When they did not pay attention to the gospel truth, they began to drift away slowly and silently from their gospel faith. What causes us drift away from our faith today? Christianity in the 20th century faced so-called Postmodernism. The idea of Postmodernism took away absoluteness from the truth of God. They say that there is no absolute truth in this world. They deny the word of God as absolute truth. Relativism grew giant in this era of Postmodernism. Relativism gives birth to a strange word, ‘tolerance’. They refuse repentance and disguise their sinfulness with their lifestyle. I don’t have enough time to explain all the reasons and phenomena which spiritually and socially cause us to drift away from our faith.

If we don’t pay the most careful attention to what we heard, what we studied, and what we were taught from Jesus, it will only be a matter of time for us to drift away. Therefore, we must pay attention to what we study from Hebrews each week. We must eat daily bread, meditate it, and apply to our daily lives. We need to focus on what we really chose. Last week, we studied Jesus’ superiority and our priority. Jesus is our first choice. He is superior to all things. Last week, I heard a sermon from a famous Korean pastor Kim, who delivered a message titled, “Choose and Focus.” I paid attention to his sermon because it was related to the theme of my last Sunday message, “Jesus first”. He said, “Once we choose, we have to focus.” He told a story about a young Chinese church leader whose church members are 50,000. The Chinese pastor is only 25 years old. The old Korean pastor asked him how he made his ministry such big as a young man. The Chinese pastor said, “I was 17 years old when I accepted Christ Jesus through a missionary. Since then, I preached the gospel. Then I was arrested by the Chinese police and put in a jail. In the jail I continued to preach the gospel. After releasing from the jail, I restored my health at home, and continued to preach the gospel. I was arrested again and put in a prison. After I came out of the jail, I preached the gospel. I was arrested again. I repeated this cycle for 8 years.” For the last 8 years those who heard the gospel from him preached it to others while he was in a jail. In this way for the last 8 years, 5,000 Chinese heard the gospel and became Christians. This is the real story which happened today in Chinese underground church. This is the good example of how we choose and focus.

Once we choose, we need to focus and love. Once we choose a woman or man as a wife or husband, we need to focus. If not, we are an unfaithful wife or husband, and the family may be broken. Once we choose Christ Jesus as our Lord, Savior, and bridegroom, we must focus on him. The Hebrews author repeatedly emphasize on this by saying, “*brothers and sisters, let us fix your thoughts on Jesus” (3:1) “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith*.” (12:2) Amen!

Look at verses 2-4. “***For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will***.” In these verses, the author teaches us the reasons why we have to pay attention to the gospel message. The message in verse 2 is not the gospel message, but the law which was believed to be delivered by angels to Moses. (Ac 7:53, Gal 3:19) If the law is binding, reliable to be paid attention to, how much more is the gospel message, which was announced by Jesus and confirmed by his disciples and apostles, who were with him, heard him, and lived together with him. God the Father himself also testified and approved the gospel message through signs, wonders, and various miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The author indirectly states the superiority of the gospel over Moses’ law.

Second, Jesus, the pioneer of our salvation (5-13) In verses 5-18 the author explains the superiority of Jesus over angels with the redemptive viewpoint. In verses 5-9 by quoting Psalm 8:4-6 the author said that Jesus was made lower than angels for a little while because he took on human flesh. In verse 9 he said, “***But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone***.” The author said that Jesus took on human flesh because God had a special purpose for him, which was to taste death for everyone. The author explains the meaning of God’s purpose for Jesus’ incarnation from verses 10-18. Look at verse 10. “***In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered***.” This is not only the key verse for this chapter, but for the whole book of Hebrews. What does ‘bringing many sons and daughters to glory’ mean? I believe that this means our salvation, our glorious resurrection, and our entry into God’s kingdom. For our salvation, God made Jesus his Son, the pioneer of our salvation through what? Through his suffering! The word ‘pioneer’ means ‘originator’ or ‘founder.’ In order to make our salvation perfect, God let Jesus appear as a man and let him suffer and let him taste death. The author said that it was fitting for God to make our salvation perfect. Wow! This is an incredible and incomprehensive story! Paul expressed this ‘mystery.’ Indeed, this is the mystery of God! How can God the Father let his lovely Son suffer and die for sinners? I can’t allow or even imagine letting my son Sam suffer for others. This is yet another mystery, that God made our salvation perfect through his Son’s suffering.

Before we talk about this mystery, let us first consider why Jesus took on our humanity. Look at verses 14-15. “***Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.***” John’s gospel starts with this incarnate message, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us…” (Jn 1:14). Here the Word is *logos* in Greek, which indicates God who speaks. God promised to send the Savior as an offspring of a woman in Genesis 3:15. God did not promise to send our Savior from angels, but from a descendant of a woman, who has flesh and blood like one of us. This is the reason why Jesus frequently called himself ‘the Son of Man.’

Verses 14-15 tells us another reason why Jesus had to be born as a human. Jesus shared in our humanity so that by his death, he might break the power of death and the devil and free those who are enslaved by the fear of death. But by his death? Why by his death? The Bible says that death is the price of sin (Ro 6:23). Because Adam sinned, death came to this world. We die as the result of sin. But the death of Jesus is not the result of his sin. Jesus died on the cross not because he sinned, but because we sinned. His death on the cross is not the outcome of his sin, but the result of our sins. The death of Jesus is different from ours. The death of Jesus is the obedience to God’s will, whereas the death of Adam is the disobedience to God’s will. The death of Jesus restored the glory of God while the death of Adam defiled it. The death of Jesus opened heaven for us while the death of Adam opened the grave. The death of Jesus freed us from the fear of death while the death of Adam enslaved us with fear of death. This is the reason why the death of Jesus is glorious and victorious. Death is the prerequisite for our resurrection. No death, no resurrection. Jesus had to die for our resurrection. Recently, I watched an interesting video from YouTube, titled, “Why are Christians not afraid of death?” The answer is easy and simple. This is because we have hope of eternal life in the kingdom of God after we die.

Verses 16-17 answers another reason why Jesus had to share in our humanity. Look at verses 16,17. “***For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people***.” Jesus took on our full humanity in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest so that he could make an atonement for the sins of the people. A high priest is a mediator between God and men. As 1:3 says, the high priest is the one who provides purification for sins. Once every year, a high priest killed an animal, took their blood, entered the temple, and sprinkled the blood for the ceremony for purification. But the Son Jesus took his own blood and entered the Most Holy Place once for all for our eternal salvation. As 1 John 2:2 says, he himself became an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Here, atonement means making God and men one through reconciliation.

Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest. This verse reveals Jesus’ dual nature, the nature of God and the nature of men, his divinity and humanity. Jesus showed his mercy and faithfulness as God. When he saw a born blind man, he had compassion on him. He healed this man and opened his eyes. When he saw a crowd coming to him, he had compassion on them because they looked like harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd. Jesus also showed his faithfulness amid his suffering and death. He did not save himself to save others. He did not avoid the cross but accepted the cross to obey the Father’s will. He was the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and his love endures forever.

Verse 18 answers about the nature of Jesus’ humanity and another reason why Jesus had to become fully human. Look at verse 18. “***Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted***.” In verse 9 the author says, “*because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone*.” Jesus became fully human in order to taste our suffering and our death. Did he need to taste our suffering and our death? Yes! This is because he needed to understand our suffering and our death. This is because he had to have perfect sympathy for sinners. There is a saying, do not talk with those who have not tasted tearful bread. This means that those who experienced and tasted suffering can understand others’ suffering and pain. By experiencing our suffering and tasting our death, Jesus understood our weakness and our sufferings. The Prophet Isaiah prophesied this long ago. “*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground…He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain…Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering…*” (Is 53:2-4) These verses well describe Jesus’ humanity.

The word ‘tempted’ in verse 18 is *peirazo* in Greek, which are used for both *tempted* and *tested*. Jesus himself suffered when he was tempted and tested as a human being. Because he experienced, tasted, and overcame, he understood our weakness for temptation and trials more than anyone else. This is the reason why Jesus is called a merciful and faithful high priest for us. In fact, a high priest is a dual position as a mediator between God and men. He is a God’s representative to men and men’s representative to God.

We come to Jesus when we suffer. Jesus is the one who understands our pain and agony more than anyone else. He understands our job problems, housing problems, security problems, health problems and all the problems in us. Jesus said, “*For foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head*.” (Mt 8:20) Jesus was rejected and despised by men. He suffered from thirst and hunger as we did. He went through pain of betrayal by his own disciples. He tasted excruciating pain on the cross. But he kept his position as a merciful and faithful high priest. He did not drift away from his position. He did not come down from the cross. He lived as the pioneer of our salvation. Now, it is time for us to call Jesus our friend. Jesus called his disciples friends. Jesus said we can become his friend when we obey his command (Jn 15:14) Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters when we come to him as we are and obey his command. *What a friend we have in Jesus*, *All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer! Have we trials and temptation? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged: Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the Lord in prayer.*” Amen!

In conclusion, please pay the most careful attention to what we have heard, studied, and believed. Check your heart as to whether or not you are drifting away from your first love and from your first calling. Repent and come back to Jesus, who is the pioneer of our salvation and our merciful and faithful high priest. Praise Jesus who is our shepherd and friend in the time of our need and trouble. Amen!