

So Much Better Than the Best of the Best

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I'm a coffee lover so I like the NT coffee book "He Brews". We don't know exactly who the author of Hebrews is but the book gets its title from all the OT that is quoted in it, the Jewish mindset displayed in it, and the sense that he's trying to persuade those who, now that the Jesus experience has been around awhile, are seeming to look for new-fangled ideas or to resume their old Jewish practices.

We get the pizzazz of the new. There are those who get their psychological energizing charge from the new. Buy a new this and then buy a new that and then buy a new that and you feel fresh. I remember a lady who had six couches in her home and when asked about it and when she pondered it, realized that when she was feeling a low ebb in her marriage, she bought things. The new gave her a charge and then it wore off. Jesus was new but now that he isn't, what do you do – go after the next fad in religion?

We know about going back to what was. When we bend some rubber, or pull some elastic, we get to a new, even better position but what happens after a bit, when we let up? We go back to our original shape. The ones who got the book of Hebrews written to them seem to be sighing a bit about Jesus and going back to their original shape.

Have you ever sighed about your car? Your marriage? Your career? In all of those, you can give them up or you can reinvest in them – detail your car and put a decal on it, take a romantic trip and sign up for a course together, find a specialty area in your professional life and develop it. That’s what the author does here with his audience ... and with us because we can do the same kind of sighing with Jesus. Sigh but don’t stay there. Don’t go back.

Rather, say “Let’s go over the features of Jesus again. Let’s ponder who he is. Let’s investigate afresh that the fires of regard for him might burn bright.”

Right out of the starting gate, this is what the author does. He plunges right into who Jesus is in exalted tones and these will play out for the next thirteen chapters. In three dense verses he tells who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. He views Jesus in terms of the past, the present, and the future. But in all his powerful description there is something that is something, that I suppose you could say is odd. That oddness draws attention and brings us to something critical for us to know, critical and appropriate for us this morning.

Jesus is described as the very speech of the eternal God. Jesus is described as the heir of all things ... every single thing in the cosmos will be his. Jesus is described as the creator of the universe. Jesus is described as the perfect image of God. Jesus is described as the radiance of God. Jesus is described as the sustainer of the universe. It would become unglued

without him. Jesus is described as the one seated next to Majesty. Do you see, hear all of that—it’s cosmic, heavenly, exalted, majestic scope, realm?

And then there is one phrase, and only one, that is different, that has to do with his 33 years in Palestine. Only one. We have Jesus eternal come down to earth and Jesus returned to that eternal glory. In between is only one thing mentioned. It isn’t that he did miracles. Maybe you would have cited that. It isn’t that he taught with authority. Maybe you would have cited that. It isn’t that he was a wonderful example, a model for us to follow, of the true human being. Maybe you would have cited that.

The prologue extends to us, “Regard him as supreme!” Why? Yes, certainly for all these cosmic and eternal things but perhaps especially because of this one odd thing cited for his life in Palestine – he made purification for sin. This one thing keeps company with the grandeur of who Jesus as God is.

The Apostles’ Creed makes the very same point in much the same way. It says Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, was crucified, died and was buried. And of his life span between birth and death only one phrase is used, for his whole life – he suffered under Pontius Pilate. That one verb for his entire life span, suffered, is the exact same singular point – in his life he suffered to make purification of human sin possible.

It’s as if the Bible says, “Let’s sum up the most worthy accomplishment, the main thing to remember, the single matter he focused on. What is it? Making the

removal of sin possible. Why leave the glory? So he could make the removal of sin possible. Why is he heir of all things? Because he made the removal of sin possible. Why did the deity take flesh? Because as immortal he could not die and sacrificial death is what was needed to make the removal of sin possible. So he became flesh so he could die, so he could make removal of sin possible, so that you and I could know healing, freedom from guilt, and fellowship with God.

Note very soberly that this singular purpose, this deed heralded alongside Jesus and God's cosmic acclaim, tells us that sin is THE problem, a huge and hairy problem and that what God did for us in Jesus Christ, to be heralded as his one, necessary, crowning achievement, ... that what God did for us in Jesus Christ with respect to our sin is incredibly complex, incredibly significant, incredibly necessary, and incredibly hard.

This tells us that sin is a huge problem. If it wasn't, Jesus would have made his focus something else. I came to do this. It takes me coming to handle this. And if there had been another way, certainly God would have availed himself of it. He came with singular focus, not to deal with some inconsequential issue, some secondary issue, some "oh, everybody's a sinner and so what's the big deal?" issue.

One of the versions of the Bible says that he himself made purification for sin.¹ That means he didn't leave *instructions* for how we can try to be

¹ The middle voice leans the translation in that direction.

purified. That means he didn't send *someone else* to do it. He didn't use some *cleansing agent* like soda water or Oxyclean. He came and himself with his self, his blood, his body, his soul ... HE PERSONALLY made purification for sins.

You and I can get beyond the sin that causes the first death *and the second death*, and the only way we could get beyond its monstrously tragic dimensions, is if God himself would personally take up the cause. And he did.

Having done so, he sits. Jesus sits at the right hand of Majesty. We say, "Don't sit down on the job." One doesn't sit until the job is 100%, completely, perfectly, absolutely done. Jesus did it. He made purification for sin. It is no way incomplete, no way insufficient, no way needing another installment. It's a once-and-for-all done perfectly-and-sufficiently deal.²

He sits even now, at this table. So don't sigh about Jesus. Come to him who took all of himself from all of eternity and from all the glory of the godhead and came to earth to do this one thing – to address what is fatal to the human soul, sin. And he did it. He sits with it perfectly done. And because he has, we can come. The word of the Lord.

² The high priest never sat. He had to go back again and again. In Jesus the sacrifice is done forever, the temple as a place of sacrifice is no longer necessary. Are you worried about your sins? Jesus dealt with all your sins in his person on the cross. All of them.

Prayer: God, faithful and forever, who in making us desires free and good fellowship with us, and who, in seeing us deceived and running amok, called us from our sickened ways and made a path to wellness possible through your own costly sacrifice,

We are here today to learn more of you, to thank you, and to refresh our surrender to you.

I say every heart, don't just listen to me pray but you, bow in reverence and thank God now.

We pray for the glory of your face and the wonder of your hand to be more and more revealed to us and the world each and every day. May your kingdom come and will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Find today as we pray to you the frightened, the frustrated, the angry, the depressed, the incarcerated, the lonely one, the hungry one, the exhausted one... find and bring them your comfort.

Find the leaders in every business, in every school, in every organization, in every community, in every platoon, in every nation and give them a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others and the sense of need for wisdom from on high.

Now friends, as we pray, you silently convey to God a need, a hope, a wish, a thanks.

Working with you, your way, with your authority, we say, we pray, In Jesus' name. Amen.

If you would like to talk with someone about this message or your spiritual life, or have someone pray with you, the pastor and elders would welcome your call. pastorjeffwood@gmail.com.

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