

Hebrews 2: 5 – end

‘Jesus: the Elder Brother and More’

Introduction ...

There is a massive gulf of assumptions and understandings between us and the writer of the New Testament passage we heard: **Hebrews 2**.

That’s why parts of it can be so difficult to understand!

It’s called the letter to the Hebrews because it seems to be written in order to explain the Christian message – and especially the person of Jesus – to those steeped in the Jewish faith of the day. It therefore relies on being understood by those of that Faith and all the background and teaching they would have.

It also arises from a wider culture that readily believed that God-like beings could come to earth – so more likely to question if Jesus was really human than if Jesus was really divine – God. Thus an emphasis on flesh and blood.

Tom Wright in his commentary wrote this:

*Some while ago there was a movie by the name of **A River Runs through It**. It told the story of two brothers growing up in the beautiful Montana countryside. The older one was quiet, studious, hard-working; he got a good job and became a respected man in the community. His tearaway younger brother was great fun, but was always getting into scrapes, pushing boundaries of what was acceptable. He ended up associating with people who led him deeper and deeper into trouble, and was finally killed in a brawl. His older brother couldn’t help him. They had grown too far apart.*

It was a moving and tragic story, and the most tragic thing about it was this: the older son saw what was happening to his beloved younger brother, and there was nothing he could do about it. He couldn’t reach him. He couldn’t come to where he was and rescue him.

The point of the present passage is that Jesus, the older brother of a much larger family, could and did come to where his siblings were, wallowing in the land of sin and death. He identified with them, shared their fate, and thereby rescued them from it. Above all other passages in early Christian writings, this one speaks most fully about Jesus as the oldest brother, the firstborn, of a large family ... It encourages us to see Jesus not as the kind of older brother whom we resent because he’s always getting things right and being successful while we’re always getting things wrong and failing, but as the kind of older brother who, without a trace of patronizing or looking down his nose at us, comes to find us where we are, out of sheer love and goodness of heart, and to help us out of the mess.

And there are 3 elements to this:

- 1. He is a pioneer ...**
a pioneer in the realm of suffering, pain, sin and death
He cuts his way through – so that we can follow
- 2. His death and resurrection are central** to forging this way to new life
- 3. Jesus is our true High Priest** – this is a theme developed throughout the letter.

So Jesus has great solidarity with us as our brother – he truly shares our flesh and blood – and yet a distinction remains – he is the pioneer, he is the firstborn from the dead ... as in **verse 11** of tonight’s passage – he is the Sanctifier and we are the Sanctified.

Conclusion ...

So when we're in difficulty ... to use the analogy of having fallen in the ditch ... Jesus does come alongside us in the ditch ... but then helps us up and out of it.

He has done for us

and continues to do for us

what we cannot do for ourselves

In everything we face Jesus empathises, helps, rescues us ...

In everything we face Jesus can forge a way through to God's new world.

Amazing grace indeed!