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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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Twelve Jewels in Our Redeemer's Crown

A Christmas Meditation on Hebrews 1-2

I. Looking at Jesus as the Angels Did

A. Christmas a time of vision...LIGHT

1. Christmas lights in the Boston Common
2. Shimmering icicles on the tree
3. Deep starlit nights

B. Light can hide as well as reveal

1. What appears to us is not all there is
2. " 'Tis only the splendor of light hideth thee..."
3. Faith

Hebrews 11:1 "Faith is being sure of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see..."

C. Gazing at Jesus with eyes of faith

Hebrews 2:9 "We see Jesus..."

Hebrews 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."

Charles Spurgeon: "I have nothing to do today but to preach Jesus."

1. Gazing at Jesus in the body did not convert anyone
2. If anything Christ's physical body was a hindrance to faith

John 10:30-33 I and the Father are one." ³¹ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" ³³ "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

John 6:40-44 *At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" ⁴³ "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴ "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

3. BUT if God granted you faith, you could see eternal glory in Christ

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

D. Following angelic example despite Christmas customs

1. Incessant labors of December

- Christmas cards to hundreds of people, many with personal notes to friends from previous walks of life
- Christmas shopping... gifts to family, friends, acquaintances, postal deliverers, office mates and co-workers, bosses, neighbors, church-members, hairdressers, etc. etc. etc.!!!
- Christmas mailings: packages to be boxed up, wrapped with brown paper, addressed, weighed, and posted
- Christmas decorations: a tree to put up, lights, ornaments; lights outside the house, Christmas wreaths, electric candles in every window, creche or manger scene to set up
- Christmas food to be baked, boiled, measured, mixed, stirred, ladled, poured, sliced and served
- Christmas parties to host and to attend... thoroughly cleaning your living room for the third time this week
- Christmas guests: traveling to or hosting relatives
- Christmas services to attend or participate in at church
- Christmas bills to be paid

What is the point of all this? Total exhaustion!!! (My wife will call me a Scrooge)

2. Following angelic example

What did the angels do? They followed orders and their heart's desire...

Hebrews 1:7 *"When God brings His firstborn into the world, He says 'Let all God's angels worship Him.'"*

God commanded them to worship His firstborn... they obeyed all the way, right away, and with a happy spirit:

Luke 2:8-14 *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

3. The shepherds' response: worship!!

4. Not possible except by faith

- We can't go to Bethlehem and see anything like they saw
- We must simply hear what has been told and believe it by faith
- BUT we can follow the angels example and "Come and worship..."

E. Making a crown & laying it down

Illus. Heaven a place of incessant worship... crowning Christ with glory

"Crown Him with many crowns..."

Illus. Making a crown... not an idol (receiving the materials from heaven itself)

II. Christ's Eternal Glory

1. Eternally God the Son

1. Deity

- a. eternally co-equal with the Father
- b. God from God, light from light, very God from very God, begotten not made

Hebrews 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being*

The great mystery of Christmas is that the helpless baby in Mary's womb was the eternal Son of God, co-eternal with the Father

c. "radiance of God's glory"

Just as light and radiation emanate from the sun and represent our experience with the sun, so Christ is our direct and perfect revelation of the Father's glory

Christ's glory was so brilliant that the angels hid their faces before Christ

1 Timothy 6:15-16 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

d. "exact representation of His being..."

Lit. "charakter"... imprint in a seal leaves the exact likeness of the original

Looking at Jesus is looking at an exact representation of the Father's being

John 14:6-10 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?"

For this very reason, Jesus came into the world... to reveal the Father to us

2. Sonship

vs. 5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son" ?

- a. perfect submission to the Father's will
- b. gladly following the Father's leadership
- c. not eternal subordination... for still co-equal with the Father

3. "Firstborn..."

vs. 6 When God brings His firstborn into the world, He says "Let all God's angels worship Him."

- a. position of honor in household... heir of all the Father's possessions and dominions

vs. 2 "Whom he appointed heir of all things..."

- b. ruler over the house under the Father's authority

Hebrews 3:6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house.

- c. ultimate position of honor in all the universe

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

- d. firstborn: implies other sons and daughters... as we shall see

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus

2. Creator and Sustainer of the Universe

vs.2, 3 “By His Son, whom He appointed 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, sustaining all things by His powerful word...”

1. Christ is the eternal Word of God
2. When God spoke and said “Let there be light”, Christ was the effective power of that creation
3. Nothing exists except through Christ

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

- Every feature of the night sky was created through Christ... every luminous star, burning with the power of nuclear fusion; every wandering planet, from massive Jupiter to fiery Mercury to distant cold and mysterious Pluto; every immense nebula and light absorbing black hole... all of it created through the one who became the baby in Mary’s arms
- Every mountain rose and every valley sagged at Christ’s powerful word
- Every drop of water ran to its starting place and began its seemingly endless cycle of flow, evaporation and rainfall at His powerful word
- Every growing plant, from mighty redwoods 100 feet tall to tiny blades of grass, from ugly stinkweed to glorious hyacinths... all of them were fashioned by Christ’s breath
- Every animal, every mighty beast and timid hiding rodent, every soaring eagle and every running ostrich flowed through the mind and out the mouth of Christ
- Every person that ever lived, from Adam and Eve to you who hear me today... all of us were fashioned by His command
- Christ knit Mary together in her mother’s womb, and fashioned her body... the very place he would come to dwell for nine months

Athanasius, On Why the Word Became Flesh: He, the Mighty One, Artificer of all, Himself prepared this body in the virgin as a temple for Himself and took it for His very own, as the instrument through which He was known and in which He dwelt.

4. Sustainer: Nothing continues to exist apart from His powerful word

vs.3 *sustaining all things by His powerful word*

- Apart from Christ's powerful word, every atom in the universe would fly apart
- Every gold atom in an earthly crown, every carbon atom in a diamond scepter, every fiber of silk in an earthly coronation robe... all would instantly cease to exist if Christ did not sustain them moment by moment by His powerful word
- The holy fetus in Mary's womb was mysteriously holding Her body together while he grew within her
- The baby in the manger was mysteriously holding His own body together while He hungered for milk
- The prisoner before Pontius Pilate was mysteriously holding Pilate's body together while Pilate sat on his judgment seat
- The man on the cross was mysteriously holding the cross together until its deadly work was done

3. Center of Angelic Worship

vs. 6 *When God brings His firstborn into the world, He says "Let all God's angels worship Him."*

1. Angels Created

vs. 7 *"He makes His angels winds, His servants flames of fire..."*

2. Angelic Wonder

a. at creation

Job 38:4-7 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. ⁵ Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶ On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- ⁷ while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"

b. at the redemption plan

Hebrews 1:1-2 "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways."

The prophets gradually revealed the glory of the salvation plan... angels look at it unfolding in history and in the prophetic word and they wondered at it:

1 Peter 1:12 Even angels long to look into these things.

3. Angelic Activity

- Active in guarding the tree of life from Adam or any man eating from it... a flaming sword flashed back and forth

- Active in judging the wicked... both of pagans and of rebellious Jews
- Active in bringing prophetic revelations to God's prophets

4. Angelic Humility

vs. 14 *Are not all angels ministering spirits, sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*

Some wicked angels led the rebellion against God and were cast to earth

There is no redeemer for them... no possibility of salvation! Satan has no savior, Beelzebub no redeemer, Apollyon no atoning sacrifice, and Legion no gospel

Hebrews 2:16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

Mighty angels, far more powerful than any human being, worshipped a baby that night so long ago

5. Angelic Worship

vs. 6 *When God brings His firstborn into the world, He says "Let all God's angels worship Him."*

Gk. lit. "to kiss in homage"... to prostrate oneself; used 59 times in NT, 24 times in the Book of Revelation

Revelation 7:11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God

Worship belongs to God alone, as Jesus Himself said to the devil who craves worship:

Matthew 4:10 "Away from me, Satan, for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

YET God commands the angels to worship this newborn babe! [So much for the Jehovah's Witnesses]

Of course, angels had worshipped the Son from all eternity:

John 12:41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

When did Isaiah see Jesus' glory? Well, in Isaiah 6:

Isaiah 6:1-4 "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

Seraphs are angels... literally "Burning ones"; and for all of history they have been worshipping the Son... but that worship was intensified when God brought His firstborn into the world

III. Christ's Earthly Mission

4. Author of Salvation

Hebrews 2:10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

1. Word means either "author" or "captain" (KJV)... second sense is of "Pioneer", "Trailblazer"

Like Daniel Boone, or Lewis and Clark who showed the way into a whole new territory; Daniel Boone through the Cumberland Gap led countless settlers into the Kentucky territory, saying "This is the way, walk in it!"

BUT better translation is "Author of their salvation"

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He is the initiator of our salvation and He is the Completer of it... therefore, it was fitting that the one who drew up the blueprint, the eternal plan of salvation, should put it into motion and bring it to completion by taking on a human body

5. God's Final Word

Illus. When someone speaks a "final word," he has said everything that needs to be said... he has summed up the matter... all discussion is ended, the matter is concluded

Jesus Christ is God's final word to the human race

vs. 1-2 In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by His Son...

1. "Come thou long-expected Jesus..." Foretold by prophets of long ago!!
2. God has nothing else to say to the human race concerning salvation
3. All who came before or after not bearing this name spoke lies
4. We must hear this word and believe it!!

6. Perfect Flesh and Blood

Hebrews 2:10-11 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. " Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

1. Human race created in the image of God

2. The perfect image of the eternal Father took on human flesh to be completely one with us
3. We are thus of the same family... we are kin!!
4. AMAZINGLY... Jesus not ashamed of us, not ashamed to own us as family
5. He took on a human body to share totally in our earthly condition

Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity

6. This extended to temptation, but NOT to sin

Hebrews 2:17-18 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

7. Merciful, Sympathetic High Priest

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.

1. Jesus' incarnation makes it possible for Him to sympathize with us in our weakness
2. He was the most tempted man that ever lived!!

MOST TEMPTED MAN: felt the full weight of direct Satanic temptation day after day... felt the constant opposition of godless men who hated him... felt the weariness of body, hunger of stomach, parched thirst in His throat... tempted to step outside of God's will, He never yielded for an instant; He felt the full weight of every temptation and never bailed out through sin

3. He can sympathize fully with all the physical struggles you face... but yet He perfectly points to holiness at all times, because He made it through 33 years of life without even once sinning
4. THUS He is fit to be also our Great High Priest... standing in the very presence of God representing us to Him and standing in our very presence and representing God to us

8. Suffering Servant

Hebrews 2:10-11 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

Hebrews 2:17-18 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

1. Greeks believed God could not suffer
2. Jesus suffered temptation, physical pain, rejection, scorn, torture, the wrath of God, and ultimately death
3. No human being can ever say to Jesus “You don’t know how it feels!!”
4. Through this suffering, Jesus has been made perfect as our savior... not at all that He was imperfect, but it qualified him to stand in our place and be our sacrifice for sin

9. Propitiation for Sin

1. Every high priest must have something to offer for sin

Hebrews 5:1 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

Hebrews 8:3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer.

2. Christ did not appear empty-handed... God’s Law must be satisfied, God’s wrath must be absorbed
God’s righteous punishment must be exacted... a sacrifice for sins must take place

Hebrews 1:4 “When he had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

Hebrews 2:17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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.

The word is “propitiation”... lit. turning away God’s wrath by the sacrifice of His own body

Hebrews 9:12-14 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

The reason Christ had to take on our human body was that He might sacrifice that body on the Cross

Christmas is this perfectly linked to Good Friday and to Easter Sunday

10. Courageous Death Conqueror

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

1. Christ did not stay in the tomb
2. He destroyed the devil's kingdom by dying
3. He destroyed our fear of death by rising again from the dead
4. Hallelujah! The Body that Jesus took on in Mary's womb somehow mysteriously became the resurrection Body that He will wear for eternity
5. Christmas was an act of war against the devil and against death
6. Christmas was an act of peace between God and humanity

IV. Christ's Endless Kingdom

11. Present Position of Honor

Hebrews 1:4 "When he had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

Hebrews 1:8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

Hebrews 1:13 To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" ?

1. Christ is sitting on God's right hand... He is ruling presently over His kingdom
2. God's power is extending Christ's throne to the ends of the earth
3. People who used to be Christ's enemies are coming under His scepter
4. Other people who fight His kingdom will become a footstool for His feet by the wrath of Almighty God
5. Christ has the name that is above every name... He earned it by conquest and He sits at the place of ultimate honor ruling an advancing spiritual Kingdom

12. Future and Permanent Throne of Glory

vs. 8 "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

Vs. 10-12 "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ¹¹ They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ¹² You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

1. Christ's Kingdom will extend from shore to shore
2. People from every tribe and language and people and nation will worship Him
3. Christ's entrance into the physical universe shows God's love for this world that He made
4. BUT Christ's entrance into the physical universe also spelled the final phase of its history

SOMEDAY THIS WORLD WILL BE DESTROYED FOREVER TO MAKE ROOM FOR A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH, THE HOME OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

And there Christ's throne will remain forever and ever!!

And that is the true meaning of Christmas!

V. Application

"Come, and worship! Come and worship! Worship Christ the newborn King!!"

"Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all!!"

A. Make a crown for Him

Twelve jewels in it

Christ's Eternal Glory

1. Eternally God the Son
2. Creator and Sustainer of the Universe
3. Center of Angelic Worship

Christ's Earthly Mission

4. Author of Salvation
5. God's Final Word
6. Perfect Flesh and Blood
7. Merciful, Sympathetic High Priest
8. Suffering Servant

9. Propitiation for Sin

10. Courageous Death Conqueror

Christ's Endless Kingdom

11. Present Position of Honor

12. Future and Permanent Throne of Glory

B. Lay it down before Him