

Not Yet Under Jesus' Feet: Death the Last Enemy

By Bob Vincent

Bible Text: Hebrews 2:8,9

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“It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: ‘What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.’ In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

“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. He says, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.’ And again, ‘I will put my trust in him.’ And again he says, ‘Here am I, and the children God has given me.’

“Since the children have shared in 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—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. 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. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

May we pray?

Heavenly Father, we ask you to speak to us now in the power of your Holy Spirit for the sake of your holy child Jesus. Lord, I am a frail and weak man who is beset with sin.

And I know not what to say. But, Lord, if you speak through your Spirit through your Word we will be touched by your grace, changed by your Word, transformed and helped.

Help us then, Lord, for the sake of your Son Jesus; in whose name we pray. Amen.

When I got the word Wednesday evening just before our prayer meeting that Linda had gone to be with the Lord I was bewildered and I was angry. Like many of you here, I had prayed much for Linda to be healed. I even believed that God had given me assurance that Linda would be healed.

Every time we got bad news I said, “Well, that’s some bad news. We’re just going to keep on keeping on. We’re going to hold on. We’re going to fight the good fight.”

I preached a sermon from a passage of Scripture that I felt that God had, in many ways, given for Linda and it is a testimony – the 118th Psalm. “I shall not die, but live and tell the Lord’s power to save. The Lord has sorely chastened me, but he has not given me over to death.”

In my own mind I pictured Linda standing up this summer in this very place and testifying how God had brought her through it. So when I got those words that she had died, even though I had gotten reports the night before and then before noon, I was bewildered. I was angry – angry at God, disappointed.

I don’t think that I woke up in the night – being not far from 60 I do wake up at night – I don’t think I woke up in the night in the past five months that I didn’t pray for her. And that was the experience of many, many people.

So, as I walked down the hall getting ready to do prayer meeting I asked God for a passage of Scripture. And I believe God gave me Hebrews chapter two and verse eight. “In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels.”

We don’t yet see everything under Jesus’ feet. That’s what that passage is saying. We don’t yet see everything under Jesus’ feet.

There are three gods that you could believe in. There is the god of Mohammed. Mohammed’s god is in absolute control of the world. He does everything he chooses to do and he’s absolutely free to act as he chooses to act regardless of whether it’s right or wrong. He is an absolutely sovereign god with no limitations. It sounds like the God of the Bible in a way because there are passages of Scripture, like Ephesians chapter one, verse 11, that sound that way if that’s all we had. Ephesians 1:11 says: “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.” So the Bible certainly tells us that God is absolutely sovereign and in control of the world. Nothing surprises God. Nothing is there that he isn’t able to overcome. It sounds like the god of Mohammed.

Then there's another god; that's the god of rabbi Kushner who wrote a book, *Why do Bad Things Happen to Good People?* And that's not a sovereign god. That's a god who loves us, wants to do good for us, but there are things god just cannot do anything about: the Holocaust in World War II, cancer, leukemia, heart disease. He's a god who wrings his hands. He is a god who is not omnipotent.

Do we have only two choices in terms of the kind of god that we believe in? Is there a third choice? Is there a third god besides the god of rabbi Kushner, who is an impotent god, but well meaning; or the god of Mohammed who may not be well meaning, we just can't know him ultimately and so he's capricious and unpredictable but absolutely omnipotent?

Or is there a different God? What is the God of the Bible like? I submit to you that the God of the Bible is neither the god of rabbi Kushner, who is impotent but well meaning; nor of Mohammed, who is omnipotent, but not necessarily kind, just sovereign. I submit to you that the God of the Bible is a God who, though absolutely sovereign, limits himself to act in accordance with his own nature.

So there are things that God cannot do. God cannot sin. God cannot be tempted to sin. God cannot lie. To say that God is all powerful, omnipotent still we must recognize, in saying that, that God limits himself by his own moral character. He does not sin.

In keeping with that God honors certain things. For example, in the gospel of Mark chapter six this sovereign God that Jesus talked about, this God that he said that, "Not even a sparrow falls to the ground apart from him." We read these words in Mark chapter six. And it says in verse five: "He," that is, the Lord who is both God and man. "could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith."

The God of the Bible is an absolutely sovereign God and yet the God of the Bible limits himself according to his own character. He isn't a tyrant. He doesn't violate his own laws. He doesn't violate his own rules; yet he's absolutely sovereign. And in God's sovereignty he chooses to limit himself in accordance with certain things. Make no mistake about it, this sovereign God, the God and Father of Jesus Christ, we're told here in verse five of Mark six: "He *could not* do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith." The God of the Bible is a God who freely chooses to limit himself and act in accordance with his own nature.

Now, when we look at the world, when we come across a tragedy like this – for this is a tragedy. Let's make no mistakes about it. Let's not say things that aren't true. More lies are told at funerals, I think, than anywhere else. This is a tragedy, folks. This is a tragedy. This is a mother in the prime of life leaving a husband and seven children. This is a gifted teacher whose gifts now are taken from us.

The world, according to the Bible, is far more complicated than we might like to think it is.

If you have your Bibles, I'd like to direct you for a moment, to the book of Daniel; Daniel chapter 10. It's a strange passage of Scripture – page 1389. The prophet Daniel is on the threshold of the Jews being released from their Babylonian captivity and he is seeking God. We're told here in Daniel 10:2: "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist."

He sees this great archangel. And we're told this archangel speaks to Daniel and he tells him this – verse 12: "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes [that's an archangel], came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future."

This is a strange passage of Scripture. Let me see if I can give you the essence of it. What we're told in the tenth chapter of Daniel is that Daniel was in great need of a word from God and he sought God with all his heart. He sought him earnestly. And he went through an extended fast. He didn't eat any food for three whole weeks as he sought God, seeking an answer from God, seeking and answer and not getting it, seeking hard for an answer from God, praying to God, pleading with God. And the answer is elusive. Day comes and day goes; week comes and week goes and there's no answer. Finally, at the end of the three weeks of his fast, the archangel Gabriel comes and appears to him and he tells him these words. "From the very first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble your words before God, your words were heard and I've come in response to them."

God answered Daniel's prayer on the very first day that Daniel prayed. God answered that prayer. He dispatched an archangel, the archangel Gabriel, to come with that answer to prayer. But Gabriel says that he didn't make it on day one. He didn't make it on day two. He didn't make it on day three. Why did this archangel – this incredibly powerful angel, whose name means "God is my hero" – why is this archangel unable to bring the answer to the prayer that God himself gave?

He tells us. He says that he was hindered. He was hindered not by an earthly prince, the Prince of Persia in verse 13; he was hindered by a supernatural, malevolent, malignant being. "But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days." Twenty-one days!

I want to tell you that the world is far more complicated than Mohammed understood. Mohammed understood one thing about the nature of God; that God is omnipotent, that God is sovereign. But Mohammed did not understand the reality of spiritual forces in this world that resist answers to prayer; that resist the purpose of God. He didn't understand the world the way the world really is.

See, Daniel 10 brings it home for us. It says that a man can be full of God, full of prayer, full of faith and he can seek God with all his heart and he can pray day in and day out, abstaining from food and seeking God. And God can hear and answer his prayer and dispatch that answer and yet that answer is hindered by forces that are beyond the mind of a human being to understand. We can't see these forces. We can't hear these forces. But these forces are nevertheless real. They are in our world in this time-space continuum. They function here and they hinder the work of God. They hinder goodness.

That's the reality.

Now Daniel got his prayer answered. As he persevered in prayer for 21 days that angel got through as more angelic reinforcements were sent in the person of the archangel Michel. So he's able to come through.

What in the world does our text – Hebrews chapter two, verse eight – mean in telling us that at the present time we do not see everything subject to Jesus? We don't see everything under Jesus' feet. It's an understanding that the world that is, is not the world that God created. God didn't create this world. Oh, he did in a sense. But in another sense, he didn't. The Bible tells us that the world that exists is not the same world that God created. Something happened in this world. You can dismiss it as mythology if you like, but it corresponds to reality like nothing else. The world that we live in is a fallen planet that is a result of original sin. As a result of the sin of our first parents the world that is is not the world that was. As a result of the sin of our first parents death entered into this world and sin and disease and misery and war and evil and greed and all the other things that history is full of. The world that is is not the same as the world that God created. It is, but it's been transformed by sin.

That's why babies die. Innocent babies die not because of their own sin, but according to what Scripture tells us, because of the sin of Adam. There really was man named Adam. And that's the Bible's explanation for the world. The world that is was created by God, but radically affected by sin. The world became cursed. Disease and death and divorce, alienation, loneliness, anxiety, fear, despair, suicide – all of those things came into our world as a result of human sin. So babies die. Innocent babies die.

And mothers in the prime of life are struck down because the world that we live in is not the world that God created.

Yet the Bible has an answer to that, too. The Bible says that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Jesus, who is God almighty, became a real human being just like you and me. Our text tells us about that. It says in verse 17 of Hebrews chapter two: “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.” Made like us. God became a man and he entered into life the way that we have entered into life.

We have a grieving family here: a father, a mother-in-law, a mother, a husband and children and brothers and sisters. And the Scripture tells us that God became a person just like us. He has experienced everything we experience.

The shortest verse in the Bible in John 11 is “Jesus wept.” Why did Jesus weep? Because Jesus had lost a dear friend, Lazarus, who was dead; because he saw the grief and felt the grief, truly felt the grief, of Lazarus’ sisters Mary and Martha. Jesus wept. He groaned in his human spirit. He felt anguish in his human soul. He grappled trying to make sense of things with his human mind. And yet, at the same time, he is God almighty.

The Scripture tells us in the same passage – Hebrews chapter two, in verse 18: “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” Jesus has sat where you are sitting. He’s felt what you’re feeling. He’s gone through what you have gone through, are going through and will go through. That’s Jesus.

And as a result of Jesus’ sinless life, as a result of Jesus’ taking your sins and my sins, the guilt of our sins and the consequences of our sins on himself and suffering in our place on the cross what Jesus has done is to begin a process of undoing what Adam did. You see, God loved the world, not just humans, but animals and plants as well because, as a result of the sin of that first man, the whole world has been plunged into misery – a law of fang and tooth. And as a result of Jesus’ dying not just for humans, but for the world, the world will be transformed.

But we don’t yet see everything under Jesus’ feet.

Turn with me, if you will, to the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. Romans chapter eight and verse 18 – page 1757: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

The redemption of our bodies – verse 23 – we wait for the redemption of our body. We have here a testimony before us that the body has not yet been redeemed. The body has not yet been redeemed, that's why we're going to drive to Cottonport, the family is, after this service. And we're going to take Linda's body and we're going to plant it in the ground. It's a testimony that Romans chapter eight is still true; that its hope and its promise has not yet come to pass – the redemption of the body. We await the redemption of the body.

What does it mean that the body is redeemed? It means that the Lord Jesus Christ, by this death and resurrection, has redeemed us, but the giving of the benefit of that hasn't yet happened. When is it going to happen? When is the body going to experience redemption? I'll tell you when.

Turn with me, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 starting at verse 20 – page 1790: “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”

Our sister in Christ, Linda, on Wednesday evening about 5:20 or 5:25 left her body. She departed her body. Her inner person, sometimes called the soul, sometimes called the spirit, left her body behind.

Saint Paul put it this way: “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” Absent from the body, present with the Lord. Linda is not here today. We have her body. But unlike pagan Greeks we don't treat the body with disrespect thinking of only a noble soul and an ignoble body. A body is very important. That's why the undertaker's art has worked.

And yet, in spite of the craft of the funeral home, her body will see corruption. Indeed corruption began with this disease that ravaged her body because we don't yet see all things under Jesus' feet. So we'll take her body, not her, she's with Jesus. She's praying for us. We'll take her body and we'll lower it in the ground. But her body won't stay there.

There's coming a day when she will rise from the dead. There will come a time when there will be a great shout – so loud that it will wake the dead. There will be the blast of the last trumpet and the dead in Christ will rise. Linda's soul will leave Heaven. Linda's soul will go to Cottonport. Linda's soul will go down into her body and Linda's soul will bring her body up out of the ground. It will break through the lid of this coffin. It will burst through the ground. And that body will fly into the air and it will meet the Lord Jesus in the air.

And if you and I die before Christ returns and we are believers, we will share that same blessed state. But if we're alive when that happens we will never experience death. We

will simply put immortality over these mortal bodies. And we, too, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We await the redemption of the body.

Saint Paul tells us, “Then the end will come,” verse 24, “when Jesus hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.”

You see, Jesus has not yet destroyed all dominion, authority and power. That’s why there’s still disease on our planet. That’s why there’s still sin on our planet. That’s why there’s still war on our planet. That’s why people still hate each other and get into fights and squabbles and steal and lie and all the evil things of this life; because he has not yet destroyed all dominion, authority and power. And that’s why, as we think of that, as we live in this time between the first coming of Christ and the Second Coming of Christ that, in spite of our pleading with God, in spite of our prayers, in spite of all that medical science could do, we’re going to bury Linda. Not because God is not omnipotent, but because God honors his own word, his own law, his own character. And the world is in the process of being transformed. And it hasn’t fully happened yet.

We read further – verse 25: “For he,” that is, the Lord Jesus, “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

Think about death for a moment. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Death is an enemy. It’s an enemy. Death has stolen a mother. Death has stolen a wife. Death has stolen a daughter, a sister, a friend, a teacher. Death is evil and death is an enemy and death is not part of God’s creation. Death is an alien to our planet. It shouldn’t be here. And death is still free in spite of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ in dying and rising again. Death is still free and it roams the earth and it stalks us all. And until Jesus comes death will grab us and pull us down to the grave. Death is strong and death is evil and death seems to be omnipotent.

But 1 Corinthians 15:26 says, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” We do not yet see all things under Jesus’ feet.” In spite of the prayers of all saints, in spite of fathers and mothers and children weeping, in spite of organized prayer in church after church, in spite of all that doctors have done, death is still a force to be reckoned with, a force that has not yet been put under the feet of Christ. The last enemy to be put under Christ’s feet is death. And when will that be? When the archangel shouts, when the trumpet sounds, when the dead in Christ rise; that’s the redemption of the body. That’s when we will see the world as God meant it to be. Then there will be a new world order, not spoken of by lying politicians who can’t bring the dream to pass.

But it will be brought to pass by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. For Christ our king is coming. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth. Linda is not here. She’s with Jesus. But Linda’s going to return when Jesus returns. And she will come back from the dead.

“Death, where is your victory? Grave, where is your sting?”

Jesus Christ has conquered death by his death and resurrection, but the final outworking of it we haven't seen yet. And that's why, "It is appointed to man once to die."

Linda, like you and like me, was appointed to die. You will die. You may die at the age of 12. You may not die until you're 92. You will die because an enemy, an alien, stalks our planet and he has not yet been fully removed. But he will be when Jesus comes again.

May we pray?

Lord, in all of our bewilderment deliver us from believing in the false God of Mohammed or the false God of rabbi Kushner. For you are neither an impotent god nor are you a god who acts without respect to your own law, your own character, your own nature. Lord, we thank you that you who are a God who is all powerful, yet you cannot do everything. And so you sent your own Son into the world because you could not pardon sin without the debt being paid. We thank you that Jesus came into the world to pay the debt so that you are now free to pardon sin. We thank you that Jesus, by his death and resurrection has freed you to raise the dead.

Lord, as we wait this time of final victory when Jesus comes again, as we live in a world where we see prayers answered and sometimes, in spite of all of our earnest efforts, sincerity and confidence in you the answer is not the answer that we prayed for. Give us a rest in a sovereign God who is working his purpose out, who has not yet defeated every foe. But that foe is about to be defeated and as we bury Linda this afternoon to remember that that last enemy, death, will be put under Jesus' feet in the redemption of the body when the dead in Christ rise first.

Lord, we thank you that Linda is not here. We thank you that she is with Jesus, that she is with Jesus not because of perfection of her works, but because of perfection of the works of Jesus; not because of the perfection of her suffering, but because of the perfection of the suffering of Jesus who loved Linda and gave himself up for her.

Amen.

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