

Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 3, Hebrews 2:5-18: Hope and Help in the Son

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All right, so we're diving into some pretty fascinating stuff today. We're going to be looking at the book of Hebrews, but not just reading it. We're going to be looking at some scholarship, some excerpts from a lecture by Dr. David A. deSilva.

Yeah, he's great. He is. And you know what I found so interesting about his work is that it's academic, but it's like so applicable to just life, you know what I mean? And it's not just some dusty old theology textbook; it's actually about how early Christians found hope and strength in the face of real hardcore persecution.

What can we learn from them? You know what I mean? Exactly. Yeah, and Dr. deSilva really brings that out, I think, in his lecture. He really highlights how they found resilience in their faith, especially through this whole idea of Jesus as high priest.

That's what I found so fascinating. I was like, okay, high priest, what does that even mean? And so that's kind of what we're going to be uncovering in this deep dive, right? How did that concept offer comfort and even motivation to those early Christians, especially when things got really, really rough? It's like, where do you turn when everything's falling apart? Right. And that's where I think this image of Jesus as a high priest becomes really powerful.

So where does Dr. deSilva start with all of this? What's his entry point? Well, he kind of dives right into Hebrews chapter two, where the author is using Psalm 8 as a framework to kind of explain Jesus's journey. And what I think is really fascinating is how he uses this phrase, a little lower than the angels. It's this intentionally ambiguous phrase that links Jesus's temporary human state to his eventual triumph and glorification.

Okay. So it's not just saying that he was always divine, but that he became glorious through his experiences as a human. Exactly.

It's emphasizing the process of Jesus's journey, which I think would have been so powerful for those early Christians who are facing their own hardships, right? Think about it like, you know, just as Jesus wasn't born into glory, but became glorious through suffering, your own journey might involve going through trials. Oh, okay. And so this perspective in Hebrews, it's kind of encouraging you to see those challenges, not as like setbacks, but as part of a process leading to something greater.

It's like a roadmap almost, right? Exactly. Like, oh, okay. If Jesus went through it and came out stronger on the other side, then maybe I can too.

Yeah. And I think that leads to a pretty big question, like why a suffering Messiah in the first place? Right. Yeah.

You'd think like, if you're the Messiah, you're just like- you skip that part. You just skip the suffering part, right? Yeah. Come down, fix everything, you know? Yeah, exactly.

Yeah. But there's a purpose to it. And this is where Dr. deSilva explains this by highlighting this concept of perfecting.

Okay. Now, when he says perfecting, he doesn't mean like fixing flaws, right? He means like reaching this destination through a process. So not like polishing a stone to like make it perfect.

Exactly. But more like a seed becoming a flower. Yes.

It has to go through the process of growth to reach its full potential. That's a great way to put it, yeah. And Jesus, as the, you know, he uses this term pioneer of salvation, needed to experience suffering in order to truly understand and empathize with human struggles.

He had to walk the path himself to lead others through it. So it's about more than just theoretical knowledge. It's about like lived experience.

Absolutely. And I think Dr. deSilva really backs this up by pointing to how the author of Hebrews uses Scripture. Okay.

Yeah. Psalm 22 and Isaiah. Okay.

To really highlight like how deeply Jesus identifies with humanity. That makes sense. But I'm curious, how does that connect to like Jesus being a high priest? That's a great question.

And that's where we'll pick up in the next part of our deep dive. Ooh, cliffhanger. Stay tuned.

Yeah. So you asked about how that identification with humanity connects to the whole high priest thing. Yeah.

That's what I'm really interested in. Like how does that role offer hope and help, you know, especially to those early Christians who are facing persecution and stuff? Yeah.

Well, Dr. deSilva really gets into this idea of the high priest as a bridge between humanity and God. Okay. Someone who intercedes on our behalf.

Well, kind of like a go-between. Yes, exactly. Someone who, like, understands both sides.

And here's where it gets really interesting. He points to this passage in Hebrews chapter two, verses 14 and 15. Okay.

It talks about how through his death, Jesus destroyed the power of Satan and freed humanity from the fear of death itself. Okay. That's a pretty bold claim.

Yeah. But I'm curious, like how would that freedom be helpful, especially for early Christians? I mean, beyond just like not being scared of dying, you know? That's a great question. And I think if you think about it this way, if you're no longer consumed by the fear of death, what becomes possible? Okay.

What risks are you willing to take? Okay. Yeah. What pressures are you suddenly free from? I see where you're going with this.

Yeah. Yeah. So for those early Christians facing persecution and even death for their beliefs, this would have been incredibly empowering.

Yeah. To be like, okay, you can't really threaten me with the worst thing because I'm not afraid of it anymore. And Dr. deSilva actually draws a really interesting parallel here to the Stoic philosophers, you know, like Seneca, who really admired these figures, like Socrates, who faced death fearlessly, you know, believing that overcoming that fear was key to living a virtuous life.

So it's like this idea wasn't totally new, even back then. Right. Exactly.

But it kind of takes on a whole new dimension when you connect it to Jesus. Exactly. It's not just about, you know, facing death bravely.

It's about... It's about what that means. Yeah. Yeah.

For our beliefs. Exactly. And if we connect this to the bigger picture, what does this freedom from fear mean for us today? Okay.

You know, let's say you're facing a situation where you have to choose between doing what's right, even if it means personal loss, and taking the easy way out to protect yourself. Okay. Yeah.

How might this idea of freedom from the fear of death influence your choice? It's almost like a whole different level of courage and conviction you could have, you know? Mm-hmm. If you know that, like, even the worst-case scenario, which is death, like, has been conquered. And that brings us back to the high priest.

Okay. This freedom empowers believers to live courageously, resist coercion, focus on what truly matters, you know, God's values, instead of just self-preservation. Right.

Because it's not just about, like, surviving. Right. Exactly.

It's about, like, thriving. And it's about leaning on Jesus's strength when we feel weak, finding comfort in his compassion when we're hurting. So it's like, we've got Jesus identifying with humanity, suffering alongside us, conquering the fear of death, bridging the gap between God and us.

Yeah. That's a lot. It is.

How does Dr. deSilva bring it all together? Well, he goes on to emphasize that this concept of Jesus as high priest wasn't totally new. Okay. And he points to some really interesting historical context.

Okay. I'm all ears. Lay it on me.

Okay. So. Okay.

So historical context, spill the tea. What did Dr. deSilva find? Well, like I was saying, this idea of Jesus as a high priest, it wasn't, like, totally brand new. It wasn't something that nobody had ever thought of before.

Okay. It wasn't, you know, totally out of left field. Gotcha.

There were whispers, you could say, of a priestly messiah figure kind of floating around. Okay. During what's called the Second Temple period.

So the idea was out there, but not like super mainstream. Right. Exactly.

Like the idea of a kingly messiah was more common in the first century. Okay. But this priestly messiah idea, it was, it was there.

I'm guessing Dr. deSilva has some examples of this. Oh, he does. Lay it on me.

He points to texts like the Dead Sea Scrolls. Okay. Yeah.

And the Testament of Levi. Okay. Both of which kind of hint at this concept.

Okay. They describe, like, a future priest who would be a righteous leader, atone for sins, reveal God's will. So kind of setting the stage a little bit.

Right. Exactly. But what makes the version in Hebrews so unique? Like what's the, what's the special sauce? Yeah.

That's where it gets really interesting. Both? Hebrews takes this existing concept and kind of elevates it, emphasizing Jesus's heavenly priesthood. Okay.

His unique sacrifice for sins and his ability to intercede for us directly with God. So not just, like, earthly rituals or a political position or something. It's about, like, a cosmic connection made possible through Jesus.

Exactly. I can see how that would have been, like, mind-blowing for early Christians facing persecution and stuff. Absolutely.

Think about it. Yeah. You're one of those early believers facing rejection, hostility.

Right. Maybe even violence for your faith. To know that you have a high priest in heaven who understands your suffering and intercedes for you.

Okay. Offers hope for a future beyond this life. Yeah.

I mean, that would have been a tremendous source of comfort and strength. It makes you wonder how our lives would be different if we, like, live with that awareness every day. Totally.

You know? If we truly believed we had someone in our corner, someone who not only gets it, but actively advocates for us before God, would that change how we approach our own struggles and challenges? And I think that's really the heart of what Dr. deSilva is challenging

us to consider. He's encouraging us to actively involve Jesus in our struggles. To run to him for help in times of temptation and testing.

To live with the confidence that comes from knowing we are not alone. You know? It's a call to live out our faith in a tangible, practical way. Recognizing that the message of Hebrews is just as relevant today as it was for those early Christians.

We may not be facing the same kind of persecution, but we all experience suffering, temptation, and the need for hope. Absolutely. It's almost like this ancient letter is speaking directly to us, you know? Across time and cultures.

Offering a message of resilience and unwavering support. It's a message worth reflecting on. One that can transform how we navigate the inevitable ups and downs of life.

This idea that we are not alone. That we have a high priest who has walked the path of suffering himself and offers us freedom from fear. That's a truth that can change everything.

Absolutely. Well, that brings us to the end of our deep dive into Dr. deSilva's lecture on Hebrews. We've covered a lot of ground from Jesus' path to glory and his solidarity with humanity to the profound implications of freedom from fear and the enduring power of his role as our high priest.

And as always, there's so much more to explore. We've only just scratched the surface of this rich and complex book. So we encourage you to keep diving deeper into the book of Hebrews to continue wrestling with these ideas and allowing them to shape your understanding of faith and life.

Absolutely. Until next time, keep seeking, keep questioning, and keep the conversation going.