

Hebrews 2: The Humanity of Christ

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We welcome all our visitors. You will want to return to our little congregation again and again; for, you see, this church is founded on the Word of God. That makes it an old-fashioned church, the kind your grandparents used to attend.

Last week we began a study of the book of Hebrews. If you missed last week's church service, we can supply you with copies of that sermon on Hebrews 1, either in an 8½ x 11 reading format or a 5½ x 8½ sermon presentation format.

But, now, let us open the precious Word of God. The book of Hebrews, chapter 2. We will begin with verse 1:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

It is the will of God that we earnestly study His Word. Communion with our kind Father, through prayer and the study of His Word, should be our chiefest delight. Indeed, Deuteronomy 4:9 should be written on the walls of our home. Turn with me to that beautiful passage:

"Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life."

Let us never forget the truths we have found in the Word of God, the sweet experiences we have had by obeying His rules for our life! The warning of Hosea 4:6 should ever be remembered.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me, seeing thou has forgotten the law of thy God."

The last part of Hosea 4:10 summarizes the terrible danger: "because they have left off to take heed to the Lord." May it be our diligent work, individually, that this is never said of any of us, never penned by the recording angel in our record.

Now, back to Hebrews, chapter 2, verses 2-3:

"For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;—how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken . . . to us by them that heard Him."

A world of warning is to be found in those words! We must examine them closely.

What is meant by the phrase, "the word spoken by angels?" It is obviously the key to both verses. It is also clear that continuing disobedience to it will bring eternal death.

Scripture explains Scripture, and Deuteronomy 33:2 provides the explanation:

"The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them. He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints. From His right hand went a fiery law for them."

There you have it! One of the most majestic experiences in the history of our world occurred on the day when God came down from heaven and spoke the Ten Commandments to the people! Clothed in clouds on top of Mount Sinai, prefaced by thunder and lightning, the Voice of God spoke! We know, from the above passage, that the Lord came down in the glory of ten thousand angels. Little wonder the Israelites shook with terror.

So Hebrews 2:2-3 is referring to the Ten Commandments, spoken on Mount Sinai! The fearful warning given in those two verses speaks of the fate of those who willfully disobey those commandments!

How very solemn is this life! How we must daily cling to Christ, our only Saviour, that we may be strengthened, moment by moment, to obey His holy law! Galatians 3:19 also speaks of the law and the angels, and mentions Christ:

"It [the law] was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator."

The law was given in the presence of the angels. They agree to its principles, for they have always obeyed God's laws. Through the enabling grace of Christ, our Mediator, it is written on our hearts. Only in His strength can we obey it.

Hebrews 2:2-3, which we have just read, is the first of several passages in the book of Hebrews which contain fearful threatenings. John Bunyan said they were the most fearful threatenings in all of Scripture. Yet the first of them, this passage here, reveals what they are all about: Obedience to the law of God is required from mankind, and it can only be obeyed through the help of Jesus Christ. So we find that the warnings contain a wonderful promise! Those who are God's trustful, obedient little children will escape His wrath against sin and sinners. They are secure in the everlasting arms. The promise is given in Hebrews 7:25:

"He is able . . . to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

Returning again to Hebrews, chapter 2, notice the wording of the last part of verse 3:

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation,—*which at the first began to be spoken . . . to us by them that heard Him.*"

From the beginning, those who have heard of the wonderful news of salvation, through Christ, have shared it with still others. Then, when Jesus was on the earth, His disciples heard His words and they too began to share the message. As they did so, God clearly showed that they had the right message, as we see in the next verse, verse 4:

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will.”

This verse links with the previous two verses. There is a terrible threatening for those who willfully disobey, but there is a glorious promise of empowerment for those who will submit to the will of God. And that message must be carried to all the world!

Now, in arriving at verse 5, the Apostle Paul—the author of Hebrews—brings us to a new point. He had mentioned how the angels were present when the law was given on Mount Sinai. But he wants us to know that it is not the angels who are the important subjects in this matter of salvation.

Hebrews 2:5— “For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.”

Paul is telling us that the dominion of the earth made new will not be given to the angels, but to someone else.

Just as in chapter 1, we were told that Christ was more important than the angels; so now we are told that the key figures in the plan of salvation, and the future dominion, are men and Christ. Men must choose to accept what God provides, and Christ alone can give it.

That is the message of Hebrews 2:5-9. Let us read this passage and see what it tells us:

“For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

“But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

“Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands.

“Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him.

“But now we see not yet all things put under him.—But we see Jesus! who was a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

Do you see the beautiful progression here? It is not the angels who will inherit the new earth. It will be men, who seem so inconsequential. Yes, it is true they originally came forth from the hand of their Creator, only a little lower than the angels. And it is true that originally Adam and Eve were appointed to hold dominion over all the earth.

But it is clear that they no longer do. What has

happened? How can mankind be restored to their Edenic home?

Oh, “but we see Jesus!” We see Jesus! This is where we receive the answer: as we see Jesus! — Jesus, who earlier had been crowned with glory and honor,—took human flesh, was made in the likeness of men, lower than the angels, and then stepping still lower—to the suffering of death, the tasting of death, that, by the kindness of God, He should recover man from the dark pit of despair.

After 22 verses of introduction, the Apostle has brought us to our Redeemer. And, in bringing us to our Saviour in verse 9, Paul has presented the steps down which Christ took.

“But we see Jesus,—who was a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

This passage parallels that of Philippians 2:6-8, which also speaks about the steps down.

“Who, being in the in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Jesus did all that for us! He went from the highest place to the lowest, to deliver us from sin. And, someday soon, to raise us up—from the lowest to a place by His side, a home in His kingdom.

There are those who deny those steps down. They say Christ did not go all the way to the bottom. They agree with us that Christ never once sinned, but they say He did not fully become like us. But Jesus did not pretend take the nature of man; He fully took the nature of man. This is clearly proven in the last part of the chapter we are studying today.

Jesus Christ, who was fully God, united His divinity with our humanity in a tie that is never to be broken. He gave Himself to the human race, forever to identify Himself with our needs. He who was fully God became fully man. And in our nature, He triumphed over temptation and sin. He did this to provide us with an example and assurance that, by faith in Him, we too can overcome.

Christ fully became a human being. He fully experienced our temptations, but never yielded to them. Christ was without sin.

In the next verse, we are told that it was through suffering that Jesus underwent this experience of taking humanity upon Him.

Hebrews 2:10— “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

As we are told in Luke 24:46, “Thus it behoved Christ to suffer.” It was part of the cup He must drink. Hebrews 2:11-12:

“For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.”

Christ became our Brother by fully taking our human nature. We become fully His brethren by accepting His sacrifice on our behalf, and by yielding our lives in obedience to Him and to the laws of His kingdom. He made this clear in Matthew 12:49 and 50:

“He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.”

Christ says to us, “Ye are My brethren, if you will do what I ask; if you will obey My laws.” —Oh, what a privilege it is to be counted as a brother, a sister to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour!

But there is an even closer relationship which we may enter upon. By faith, we can become His little children!

Hebrews 2:13— “And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given Me.”

There is no relationship closer than a parent with his little child. It is an obedient, loving, trustful relationship on the part of the child. Experiencing it, in deepest happiness we sing our Father’s praise:

Psalms 18:2— “The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.”

Isaiah 50:7— “The Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded.”

Hebrews 2:13 quotes Isaiah 8:18. In that verse we are told:

“Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me are for signs and for wonders in Israel.”

That is telling us it is astounding what Christ can do through His humble, believing earthly children. Oh, that we may submit fully to His molding influence!

But now, Paul takes us more directly to the nature Christ took when He was incarnated.

The question has been asked, To what extent did Christ take man’s nature? The answer is clearly given in this chapter.

Fact number one: Christ fully took our flesh.

Hebrews 2:14-15— “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Verses 14-15 tell us that Christ took our flesh— all of it: our bodies, our brains, our emotions—the whole body. And in that nature, trusting in His heavenly Father for help, He overcame all the power of

the wicked one. It is only by fully taking our nature that Christ could destroy the enemy of mankind and empower us to resist temptation and sin.

Fact number two: Christ did not take the nature of Adam; instead, He took the human nature of Abraham’s descendants.

Verse 16— “For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.”

There are a number of other passages which show that Christ took, not the nature of Adam, but that of his descendants [Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; Matthew 1:1-17; Romans 1:3-4; Revelation 22:16; Psalm 132:11; Matthew 12:23].

That is why the heirs according to the promise are also said to be Abraham’s seed. —And we surely want to be among these heirs!

Galatians 3:29— “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Those are the two points which are most strongly contested. *First*, it is argued that Christ did not really take human nature. But Hebrews 2:14 says He did. *Second*, it is argued that Christ only took the nature of Adam before his fall into sin. But Hebrews 2:16 says He took the nature of Adam’s fallen descendants.

If we say that Christ only took the nature of Adam before his fall, then we are saying that Christ only died for unfallen Adam! But, by saying that, we are cutting ourselves off from the hope of salvation.

Christ is our brother, not just Adam’s! Christ died for us, not just for Adam. In our nature, Christ resisted and overcame sin and died on the cross for us. He did not just die for unfallen Adam.

The truth is that there is no “unfallen Adam!” Adam sinned and Adam fell, and thus totally lost his unfallen state. From that point onward, “unfallen Adam” no longer existed! Christ did not die for unfallen Adam, because Adam before his fall needed no redemption. This whole idea that Christ took unfallen Adam’s nature is ridiculous.

The truth is that Christ took our nature, so He could reach us; minister to our needs; and, by His death in our nature, empower us in our nature to resist and overcome sin.

But there are other important facts in this chapter.

Fact number three: In every possible way Christ took our nature. He had to do this, or He could not have become our great High Priest!

Hebrews 2:17— “Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

Christ is not mediating today in heaven for unfallen Adam; he is interceding for fallen human beings, such as you and me. He can only be our High

Priest because He connects earth with heaven; He is fully man and fully God.

Fact number four: Only one who has experienced our problems, our temptations, and our sufferings—can today help us in the midst of our problems.

Hebrews 2:18— “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Only one who has had our infirmities can minister to us as an effective priest. Here are three other passages which say this same thing:

Hebrews 5:1-2— “Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself is compassed with infirmity.”

Hebrews 4:14-16— “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Hebrews 4:16— “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

We are told in Scripture that Christ was like us in yet another way:

Hebrews 5:7-9— “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.”

While He was on earth, Christ suffered from temptation; yet never once—in thought, word, or action—did He, in the slightest, yield to temptation. Christ was made fully like us and is our perfect example. He wrestled for help from the Father, just as we must do. This is another reason why He is now our perfect High Priest.

Since this is such an important subject, here are several more passages which show that Christ took the nature that we have, not the nature of unfallen beings:

Galatians 4:4— “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

That would be the law of genetics. On His earthly side, Christ inherited chromosomes and genes from

Mary, His mother.

John 1:1-2, 14— “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

Hebrews 2:11— “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Hebrews 2:14— “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.”

Romans 8:3— “God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

2 Corinthians 5:21— “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

We are required, by Scripture, to believe that Christ fully took our nature. God’s Word is clear that those who deny this great truth, that Christ fully took our flesh, are of antichrist:

1 John 4:3— “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist.”

But remember that, throughout the entire experience, He never once yielded to temptation or sin:

1 Peter 2:22— “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.”

1 John 3:5— “Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.”

John 14:30— “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.”

There are over a thousand passages in the Spirit of Prophecy which clearly affirm this great truth, that Christ took our fallen human nature and, in that nature, resisted all the temptations of the enemy and came off more than conqueror. We are told that, if He had not taken our nature, He could not be our High Priest and enable us to overcome sin as He did.

To simplify finding what you want to show others, simply memorize two quotes: *Desire of Ages*, 49 and 117. Then you will always be able to explain this truth about the human nature of Christ to others.

How thankful we can be that we have so much guidance from Heaven as we traverse the path to the Promised Land. —*vf*

For an in-depth Bible and Spirit of Prophecy analysis of this subject, purchase a copy of our book, *The Nature of Christ*. 80 pp., 8½ x 11, \$7.00 + \$2.00. It is quite thorough in its coverage.

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