

The Kingship (or Supremacy) of Christ—*continued* 2:10-18, Benefits (to Us) of Christ's Supremacy over Man

The Law of Moses, though ordained by angels and ratified by blood, was still unable to do what Christ accomplished through His death (2:10-13). It appears at first that God is the initial "He" mentioned in 2:10, but this seems inconsistent with what has been said so far. The Hebrews writer has already spoken of Christ as the One through whom and for whom all things have been made (Hebrews 1:2; see also John 1:1-3, 1 Corinthians 8:6). Thus, the Creator gave Himself up for His Creation; nothing *less* than this kind of sacrifice would have sufficed in dealing with the problem *with* the Creation (i.e., sin). Christ made *Himself* the "author" [lit., leader or captain] of salvation through His own suffering. When the writer states that Christ was "perfected" through His sufferings, this cannot mean that at any time He was less than perfect. As our Creator, Christ was already perfect; if He was ever less than this, He would not be a worthy sacrifice for us. This expression means that His sufferings fulfilled the objective of God's plan of redemption for man (see Isaiah 53:10 and Colossians 1:19-20, for example). Through His sufferings, "many sons"—i.e., many faithful believers—are saved. As He is the Creator of man, so Christ is also the Savior of men. He is the "author of salvation" in that He defines the terms and conditions of the gospel, just as He defines the kind of faith that God requires of those saved by that gospel (Hebrews 12:2).

Since Christ has so identified with man, even having endured unspeakable suffering for his sake, "He is not ashamed to call them [believers] brethren" (2:11). Christ the Sanctifier and those who are sanctified are all from one Father: Christ was sent from the Father; and we derive spiritual life from the Father. The first quote (2:12) is from Psalm 22:22, a verse which exemplifies Christ's own appreciation for those faithful to Him. The second and third quotes (2:13) are from Isaiah 8:17-18: Jesus trusted in God, and therefore gladly represents those who also trust in Him—namely, God's children. In other words, Christ is our Brother as well as our Lord: He identifies with us intimately and compassionately.

Jesus so *completely* identifies with us that He became "flesh and blood" as we are (2:14-16). In doing so, He did not abandon His divine nature, but took on our physical nature as well (John 1:14, Romans 8:3): He became the one (human) without ceasing to be the other (deity). The *purpose* for this was to rescue "the children" (i.e., those who become believers) from the grip of fear and death (see Ephesians 4:8-9, Colossians 1:12-14). "The only way He could deal with death was by dying, and the only way He could die was by becoming human."¹ As Christ and "His brethren" have a common existence (in the flesh), so we have a common enemy: Satan. As Jesus defeated Satan's power over death, so we defeat Satan's power over *our* (spiritual) death: we are able to overcome through the One who has overcome Satan (see Matthew 12:29, John 16:33). Just as David cut off Goliath's head with the giant's own sword, Jesus destroyed the devil's works with his own weapon (1 John 3:8). At the same time, we are limited in our knowledge of this "death," since none of us has experienced it. "Until we understand perfectly what death is, we cannot of course fully understand its power."²

¹ Robert Jamieson, Andrew Fausset, and David Brown, *New Commentary on the Whole Bible*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (*QuickVerse 2009 for Windows*, © 2000-2008 by QuickVerse), in comments on Hebrews 2:14.

² Milligan, 99.

The “slavery” mentioned here (2:15) is the insurmountable burden of trying to achieve righteousness through law-keeping or any human effort (Galatians 5:1-4). It is the *pronouncement* of death, the shadow of condemnation each person incurs when he or she has violated any of God’s commandments. (To violate a single commandment makes a person guilty of violating the entire law; see James 2:10-11.) Satan never actually had authority to sentence anyone to death or cast a single soul into hell: such authority rests with God alone. But Satan has long served as the great accuser (see Zechariah 3:1-2), inducing men to sin, incapacitating them with guilt, and capitalizing on their fear of judgment. He has also been very successful at deceiving sinners into believing they can achieve righteousness apart from God’s grace. Upon Christ having removed our unworthiness, guilt, and condemnation, He has also neutralized all of Satan’s threats. Having enlightened us with *truth*, we no longer need to be seduced by Satan’s deceptions. Instead of bringing His children into yet another form of oppression, Christ has led His children to freedom (John 8:31-32). He has overcome everything by which we have been overcome; having “abolished death” (2 Timothy 1:10; see also Revelation 1:17-18), He has given us life instead.

Christ offers no such salvation to angels, but only to “His brethren” (2:16). With these words, the writer concludes his discussion of angels, since his purpose for having even mentioned them has been fulfilled. Angels are messengers of God and heavenly servants to His people, but in the hereafter the church in her glory (as the bride of Christ) will rise far above even that of angels. The “descendant of Abraham” is yet another expression to define the children of God (Romans 4:22-24, Galatians 3:6-9, 26-29). In sum, Jesus identifies those who belong to Him as “brethren”; never does He refer to angels in this way.

In order to become a “merciful and faithful high priest” for us, Christ had to be made like His brethren—a likeness of the affliction (sinful man) without Himself being afflicted (guilty of sin) (2:17-18). The high priest’s primary responsibility was to minister to the “things pertaining to God,” which involved the intercession of the nation (or congregation) of Israel, as epitomized in the Day of Atonement observance (Leviticus 16).³ This is the first direct mention of Jesus’ high-priestly role, yet this subject will be discussed throughout much of this epistle from here forward.⁴ Thus, we would do well to familiarize ourselves with the different aspects of the Levitical high priest which foreshadow the perfection of Christ’s high-priestly role:

³ I strongly recommend that the student of Hebrews read and become well-acquainted with Leviticus 16. The writer not only draws on it heavily throughout his epistle, but the Day of Atonement exercise also serves as a primitive yet effective illustration of Christ’s mediatory role for His church.

⁴ “High priest” is used 17 times in Hebrews in reference to Christ, but nowhere else in the New Testament is He referred to in this way.

Levitical high priest	Christ as the eternal High Priest
Pure lineage: from the tribe of Levi <i>and</i> the family of Aaron (Exodus 28:41-43)	Pure lineage: Son of God <i>and</i> from the family of man—specifically, a descendant of David, according to promise (2 Samuel 7:8-16, Romans 1:1-4)
Pure body: no one could serve who had some physical defect (Leviticus 21:16-23)	Pure body: no bones broken (John 19:31-37), no physical defect that would disqualify Him from serving as High Priest (Luke 2:52)
Pure relationships (Leviticus 21:13-15)	Pure relationships: sinless in all His dealings with men (1 Peter 2:22); not defiled with any questionable relationship
Dedicated to the Lord (Exodus 28:36-38, Leviticus 21:11-13)	Dedicated to the Lord: “consumed” with His Father’s work, John 2:16-17; see also John 5:17, Mark 10:45, Hebrews 10:7, et al
Wore garments appropriate for his office (Exodus 28:1ff)	Wore garments appropriate for His office, as symbolized in Revelation 1:12-16, implying His holy works (as implied of believers; see Revelation 19:7-8)
Anointed with the holy oil (Leviticus 8:10-12)	Anointed with God’s Spirit (Psalm 89:20, Matthew 4:16-17, Luke 4:18-19, Acts 4:27)
Interceded (or made propitiation) for the sins of Israel with sacrifices and blood (Leviticus 16)	Interceded for all sinners with His own sacrifice (body) and His own blood (1 Peter 2:24, Hebrews 10:10; Ephesians 1:7)
Blessed the nation with benedictions (Numbers 6:22-26)	Blesses the church with spiritual blessings (Galatians 3:9,14, Ephesians 1:3)
Upon his death, men who lived under the sentence of death were given freedom (Numbers 35:9-34, especially verse 25)	Through His death, all who lived under the sentence of death are given eternal freedom (John 8:34-36, Romans 6:22, 8:1-2, et al)

“Propitiation” (2:17; see Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2, and 4:10) alludes to the Old Testament use of the word “covering,” the same as is used to describe the lid [lit., mercy seat] of the ark of the covenant. (Synonyms include “expiation,” “satisfaction,” and “atonement.”) Christ covers sins as a demonstration of mercy toward sinners. He does not merely hide our sins, nor does He forgive them in anticipation of some (yet) future action; He *properly removes them once for all*. This function was impossible under the Law of Moses, yet was foreshadowed in the Levitical sacrificial system. Christ provided what was lacking in that system—i.e., *the uncorrupted blood of a perfect human specimen who was also a divine being*—and thus absolutely fulfilled the requirement of law in His own offering (Romans 8:1-4).⁵ Much more will be said about this later in Hebrews.

⁵ When someone asks, “Did Christ’s blood fulfill the requirement of the Law of Moses, or did it inaugurate the law of Christ (i.e., the gospel)?” the answer must be *yes*. His blood accomplished both things at once: it brought closure to the one while establishing the other. It is incorrect to say that we are under God’s covenant with Israel (or that we are under the Law of Moses), because we are under a new covenant that has superseded that one. However, it *is* accurate to say that Christ’s blood provides a crucial link to the two covenants.

Christ was *tempted*, yet without sin (2:18; see Hebrews 4:15). He faced what we face, but He did not succumb to that to which we have succumbed—the lies, delusion, and seduction of Satan’s enticement to exalt and/or gratify ourselves. In order to be *like* His “brethren,” He had to endure what we endure; in order to *intercede* for His brethren (as our Redeemer), He had to overcome that which has overcome us. Jesus was “tempted in what He has suffered,” which means He bore sufferings as part of His temptation: He had the ability to forego these sufferings, but He accepted them instead (as indicated at least in Matthew 26:53). “This does not mean that he would not have had *power* to assist others if he had not gone through these sufferings, but that he is now qualified to sympathize with them [i.e., those who also suffer trials—MY WORDS] from the fact that he has endured like trials.”⁶

Questions:

- 1.) What exactly is “fitting” (or, appropriate) concerning Christ’s sacrifice and sufferings (2:10)? In providing a superior sacrifice to those offered under the Law of Moses, does this mean that the Law was *defective* or *expendable*? Please explain (and consider Acts 13:38-39 in your answer).

- 2.) If Jesus has successfully defeated Satan, then why does he [Satan] still exert so much influence and power over so many Christians, overwhelming and immobilizing them?
 - a. Is it because Satan is really *not* defeated?
 - b. Or is it because we are still slaves to the “fear of death” after all?
 - c. Or is it a matter of “unbelief” on the part of those Christians?
 - d. What exactly is the source of Satan’s power?

- 3.) Why does Christ not offer salvation to angels when they sin (see 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6)? (Consider: the child of God is a “descendant of Abraham” *by faith* [Galatians 3:26-29], whereas angels “continually see the face of” God *in fact* [Matthew 18:10].)

- 4.) Was Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness His *only* (occasion of) temptation? If so, then is it correct to say that He was only tempted literally *once* in His entire life? If not, then why is *that* “temptation” so significant?

⁶ Barnes, 74.

- 5.) If Jesus was tempted but never sinned, how can He help (or understand, or sympathize with) all of us who *have* sinned?
- a. For example: since He has never experienced guilt, how can He identify with guilty people?
 - b. On the other hand, is it *necessary* that He *be* guilty in order to identify with those who *are* guilty?
 - c. What if He *did* succumb to temptation just as we have done—how would He be a source of salvation to us?