

Christ is Superior to the Angels
Hebrews 2:14-16
Part Fourteen

We once again return back to our study of Hebrews, where an unknown author, in an attempt to strengthen the faith of a group of struggling Hebrew Christians living in Rome, wrote to them about the superiority of Christ.

So how did the author see Christ as superior? First of all, the author of the Book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets in Hebrew 1:1-4.

Secondly, the author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the angels in Hebrews 1:5-2:18. This is the section we are presently studying and we have broken this section of Scripture into four parts, and we have now completed our examination of three of those parts.

So, what was the first part? The author of Hebrews explained Christ's superiority to the angels in Hebrews 1:5-14.

And what was the second part? After the author had explained the superiority of Christ to the angels he then sounded a warning in Hebrews 2:1-4 based on that explanation.

And what was the third part? Christ's superiority to angels is not contradicted by His humanity (Hebrews 2:5-9).

And what is the fourth and final part of this larger section dealing with Christ's superiority to the angels that we are now presently examining? Christ's superiority to angels is not contradicted by His suffering because His suffering was necessary (Hebrews 2:10-18). So, what have we learned so far about why Christ's suffering was necessary?

Christ's suffering was necessary to complete His identification with humanity (Hebrews 2:10-13), and we saw this in **Hebrews 2:10-13.**

But the author is not done. The author is going to provide us another reason why Christ's suffering was necessary. So what is this next reason?

Christ's suffering was necessary to nullify the devil's work and to bring an end to the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-16). So let me now read for you **Hebrews 2:14-16** and see if this is not so. **“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. (16) For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.”**

So do these verses teach us that Christ's suffering was necessary to nullify the devil's work and to bring an end to the fear of death? I believe that these verses do. So now let us look at these verses more carefully and see if this is not so. First of all, we will look at how Christ's suffering was necessary to nullify the devil's work.

So let us look at **verse 14**. And what does it say? **“Therefore, since the children** [a reference to humanity in general] **share in flesh and blood** [or in other words share together the same kind of mortal body], **He Himself** [referring to Christ] **likewise also partook of the same** [And why did He do this? Why did He partake of the same or in other words to partake of the same mortal body? Let us continue to read.], **that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”**

So now we know why Christ put on a mortal body. In order to experience death, so that He might through death render powerless the one who had the power of death, He first had to be able to die, and that of course would have been impossible, if He had not first chosen to partake of the same flesh and blood as the rest of humanity.

So now let us look at some of the parts of this verse more carefully.

So, what does this expression “render powerless” mean? The expression “render powerless” comes from a Greek word (KARTARCEO) that means, “to render inoperative or ineffective.” In some translations this expression has been rendered **“destroyed”** but that particular rendition, I believe would be confusing. The devil has not been destroyed. He is still with us. The only difference is that through Christ's death, the devil, **“who had the power of**

death,” has been **“rendered powerless”** or in other words **“inoperative or ineffective.”**

So in what way has the devil, who had the power of death, been rendered powerless or in other words ineffective through Christ's death? Christ's death rendered the devil “powerless” or in other words “ineffective” because Christ's death took from the devil the power of death.

So, what was this **“power of death”** that the devil at one time prior to the death of Christ possessed? Was it the power to put whoever he wanted to death, whenever he wanted to put them to death? No! Of course not!

The devil is not some kind of independent operator who can inflict death upon men at his whim. Just consider God's faithful servant Job. The devil could not have taken Job's life unless God Himself had permitted it.

So if the power of death that the devil possessed prior to the death of Christ was not the power to kill people whenever he wanted to kill people, what was the power of death that the devil possessed prior to Christ's death?

The power of death that the devil possessed prior to the death of Christ was the power that he used to hold people in his grip (Genesis 3 cf. Romans 3:23). So once the grip of death's power was broken, the devil could no longer hold His prey.

So how did this come about? Did he always possess this power to hold people in the grip of death, far away from God and the Kingdom of God? No! Prior to the fall of man he had no such power but after the fall he did. Why? Because **Romans 3:23** tells us, **“The wages of sin is death.”**

So did Adam and Eve die? Yes, they spiritually died or they were separated from God. And what about their progeny, did they also die? Yes! They also died (Romans 5:12).

And what was the result of that? Every person was swept into the kingdom of darkness that was ruled by Satan.

So could anyone have wrestled themselves away from this ruler and his kingdom of darkness and escaped, apart from help? No! Why? The ruler, the

potentate of this kingdom, or in other words the devil had in his possession the power of death, and as long as he has this power in his possession, no one would have been able to escape from His kingdom.

But God is very good isn't He? Why? He is good because in the midst of this horrific situation, God sent His Son into this world to die so that Christ, through His death on behalf mankind, might pay the debt that mankind owed to God because of sin, thus removing from the devil the power of death, for the power of death was the unpaid wage that mankind owed to God because of sin.

Therefore after the death of Christ, the work of the devil was nullified, for without the power of death at his disposal the devil had no power to hold his kingdom together. The walls of his kingdom were breached and those who believed that the walls had been breached and had exercised faith in Christ have now crawled up over those breached walls in the light of Christ's kingdom.

So up to this point we have looked at how Christ's suffering was necessary to nullify the devil's work. But now we are going to move on to another thought.

Once the power of death was broken and the devil was rendered powerless, it made it possible for those who had been afraid of death to finally be set free from that fear (Hebrews 2:15).

So now let us now read **verse 15. "And might free those who through the fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."**

The thing that terrifies people more than anything else is death. It is a horrible fear. But when we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior by faith, or in other when we by faith pass through the breach in the wall of sin that surrounds that kingdom over which the devil rules, death holds no more fear for us.

We have been released from bondage to the fear of death and instead actually look forward to it. We say with Paul, **"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21)** and **"O death, where is your**

victory? O death, where is your sting” (1 Corinthians 15:55)? Death no longer holds any fear, for it simply releases us into the presence of our Lord.

So now we come to **Hebrews 2:16** and what does it say? **“For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.”**

The phrase “the descendant of Abraham” literally means “seed of Abraham” and therefore in this context should be understood as referring not to a person but rather to the spiritual seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16).

May God give us the grace to understand that not only did Christ’s suffering nullify the devil’s work but made it possible for us to live our lives free from the fear of death.