

**Christ is Superior to the Angels**  
**Hebrews 2:17-18**  
**Part Fifteen**

Living in the presence of God and being the recipient of His blessings is a wonderful thing. What did the Psalmist say in **Psalm 84:1-4**? **“How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! (2) My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. (2) The bird also has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, My King and my God. (4) How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You.”** So is living in the presence of God and being the recipient of His blessings a wonderful thing? Absolutely!

Those who dwell in the house of the Lord will praise Him when their stomachs are full or when their stomachs are empty. Those who dwell in the house of the Lord will praise him when they have sufficient covering or when they have insufficient covering. Those who dwell in the house of the Lord will praise Him when they are experiencing health or when they are experiencing sickness. Those who dwell in the house of the Lord will never cease praising the Lord, no matter what they might be experiencing whether good or bad. For as they focus on Him and all that He is and all that He has done for them, they will be filled with thanksgiving and praise regardless of their circumstances.

So is living in the presence of God and being the recipient of the blessings of His presence a wonderful thing? Absolutely! But getting into His presence and staying bowed before Him while in His presence so that we might enjoy the blessings of His presence is not something that any person will be able to pull off without the help of the Lord. And why is this?

When we consider God and what the Scriptures reveal to us about God; that He is independent from everything, that He is unchanging and unchangeable, that He knows all things, that He has created all things, that He is over all things, that He can do all things and then on top of all this, if we add what the Scriptures teach about His holiness and our sinfulness, should it come as a surprise to us that we; being so weak, so small, so fallen might need some help to get access to God’s presence and to stay bowed

before Him while in His presence? No! It should not come as a surprise to us at all, for since the fall of man we have always needed His help.

So how has God extended His help to us? God has extended help to us, since the fall of man, by supplying priests, who through their sacrifices and prayers have made it possible, for those who they were representing, to approach God and to enjoy the blessings of God, even in spite of their weaknesses, frailties and sins, if they so chose.

So who exactly are these priests that God has supplied to us since the fall of man to bring us help? The identity of these priests has changed with each successive wave of priests and there have been multiple waves.

The first wave of priests consisted of men, who were the first-born son of each household, as is made clear to us in **Numbers 3:12**. These household priests, offered up sacrifices and prayers to God on behalf of their respective households. They were the first wave of priests. But then things changed and God sent a second wave of priests, but they were not like the first wave of priests.

The second wave of priests was a hereditary priesthood that was established by God in the giving of the Mosaic Law when God made it clear to the nation of Israel that the priesthood that had resided in the first-born son of each respective household had now been transferred to Aaron, who was of the tribe of Levi, and to his sons. This is made clear in **Exodus 28:1**.

The chief priest among those sons of Aaron was called the “high priest.” Though this priest, like all the other priests, could offer up daily sacrifices and prayers on behalf of the people, he was also responsible, once a year on “**the day of atonement**” for entering into the “**Holy of Holies**” where he would offer up a blood sacrifice on the “**Ark of the Covenant**” to atone for the sins of the entire nation, which is made clear to us in **Exodus 30:10** and expanded on in great detail in **Leviticus 16**. And apart from this blood sacrifice being offered by him on that particular day, all other blood sacrifices, by all the other priests would have been for naught.

So was the high priest an important person to the priesthood that God established when He gave the Mosaic Law to Israel? Absolutely!

In fact, He is so important that he served as picture of the next downsizing of the priesthood or in other words the third wave of the priesthood, when the God of this universe sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice to offer Himself up to death on the cross of Calvary, not for the sins of a household, not for the sins of the nation but rather for the sins of the entire world, and not for a moment in time or a period of time, but for all time, thus making it possible for any person at any time by grace through faith to enter into His presence and to enjoy the blessings of His presence forever.

Now hopefully all of this will come alive for us this morning as we once again return to our study of the Book 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 (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 based on that explanation (Hebrews 2:1-4).

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). We saw this in **Hebrews 2:10-13**. How else was Christ's suffering necessary?

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). We saw this in **Hebrews 2:14-16** and this is where we left off.

But this there is one more thing that the author believed his readers needed to understand about why Christ's suffering was necessary. And this brings us to our text this morning, which will complete our examination of this very large section on angels that started all the way back in **Hebrews 1:5**.

So, what was this final thought that the author wanted his readers to understand about the necessity of Christ's suffering?

Christ's suffering was necessary so that He might be able to serve as our merciful and faithful high priest (Hebrews 2:17-18).

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 2:17-18** and see if this is not so. **“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”** So based on these verses was Christ's suffering necessary so that He might be able to serve as our merciful and faithful high priest? Yes, absolutely!

So now let us look at these verses more carefully and see what that might mean for us. And we will begin with **verse 17**. And how does **verse 17** begin? It begins with the word **“therefore.”** The word **“therefore”** ties **verses 10-16** to **verses 17-18**.

So how in the author's mind were these verses tied together? Or in other words, what thought had the author shared with his readers in **verses 10-16** that the author will now use to make his point in **verses 17-18**? Now normally we would have to go back to **verses 10-16** to find the answer to this question, but in this case we don't. Why? It is because the author gives us the answer.

So let us continue to read **verse 17** and what does it say? **“Therefore, He [referring to Christ] had to be made like His brethren in all things.”**

This thought that He (or in other words Christ) **“had to be made like his brethren in all things,”** which certainly would include His suffering, had already been emphasized in **verses 10-16**, where the author had earlier made it clear that such a thing was necessary to complete His identification with humanity in **Hebrews 2:10-13** and to nullify the devils work and to bring an end to the fear of death in **Hebrews 2:14-16**.

But this was not the end of it and this is why the author began **verse 17** as he did. He wants to give his readers another reason why Christ had to be made like His brethren in all things. And what is this further reason? Let us continue read.

**“Therefore, He [referring to Christ] had to be made like His brethren in all things [not simply so that he might be completely identified with man, not simply to nullify the work of the devil and to bring an end to the fear of death but also what?], so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”**

As we look at this particular phrase at the end of **verse 17** the author initially focuses on the kind of high priest Christ proved Himself to be when He became like His brethren in all things. And what kind of high priest did He prove Himself to be? First of all, He proved Himself to be merciful.

The word merciful (ELEEMON) speaks of that feeling of sympathy generated by the misery of another that leads one to act in order to relieve that misery.

So let me ask you this question. When Christ the eternal Son of God was in glory and looked down upon this world and the people of this world, and saw our miserable spiritual state, was He filled with sympathy toward us? Absolutely! If He had not been filled with sympathy He never would have chosen to become a man, and to live among us as a man, and to suffer all that He suffered on our behalf, in being made like His brethren in all things, if He were not merciful.

But this was not the only kind of high priest that Christ proved Himself to be when He was willing to be made like His brethren in all things. He also proved Himself to be faithful. So, what does this word mean? The word could be mean several different things but here:

The word “faithful” (PISTOS), as it used in this verse, references Christ’s loyalty to His Father and to His Father’s redemptive plan as manifested throughout His life and death in spite of all that He suffered.

So let me ask you this question. Was Christ faithful in spite of all that He suffered when He was made like His brethren in all things? Absolutely!

Did He remain loyal to His Father and to His Father’s redemptive plan when Satan was attacking Him in the wilderness? Yes! Did He remain loyal to His Father and to His Father’s redemptive plan when Peter forcefully trying to keep Him from the cross? Yes! Did He remain loyal to His Father and to His Father’s redemptive plan even as His disciples deserted Him? Yes! Did He remain faithful to His Father and His Father’s redemptive plan through His unjust court trial? Yes! Did He remain faithful on the cross? Yes! He never wavered.

So did Christ, in His willingness to be made like His brethren in all things, prove Himself to be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God? Yes! Absolutely!

So after the author focused on the kind of high priest Christ proved Himself to be when He was made like His brethren in all things, what did the author focus on next? He focused on what Christ came to do as a merciful and faithful high priest.

And what that? Let us continue to read **verse 17**. **“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”** So, what did Christ come to do as our merciful and faithful high priest? He came so that He might, in things pertaining to God, make propitiation for the sins of the people. So, what does this word “propitiation” mean?

The word “propitiation” (HILASKOMAI) in Hebrews 2:17 conveys the sense of a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God and therefore makes God propitious or favorable toward us.

In the Old Testament period, when a high priest, on the Day of Atonement, offered up a blood sacrifice on the Ark of the Covenant, that blood sacrifice was only able to propitiate or turn away the wrath of God, in respect to the sins of the nation of Israel for one year. But this was not true of Christ and His sacrifice, for His sacrifice turned away God’s wrath in such a way that God is presently standing before this world with His arms wide open inviting the people of this world to come to Him.

So if someone wants to presently enter into the presence of God and to enjoy the blessings the blessings of His presence, what do they have to do? They just simply by grace through faith have to enter into the presence of God through Christ. What does **Ephesians 2:8-9** tell us? **“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**

So how do we get into God’s presence? By grace through faith, by taking advantage of what Christ, our merciful and faithful priest, has done for us. **John 14:6** tells us, **Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth and the life no one comes to the Father but through Me.”**

But getting into His presence and continuing to enjoy the blessings of His presence is another matter, which the author will now address in **verse 18**.

Let us now read **Hebrews 2:18**. **“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”** So, what is the author emphasizing here?

In Hebrews 2:18 the author is not emphasizing how Christ’s suffering made it possible for Him as a merciful and faithful high priest to propitiate, but rather he is emphasizing how it makes it possible for Him to come our aid when we are being tempted.

So let us now look at **verse 18** and see if this is not so. And how does the verse begin? It begins with these words, **“For since He Himself was**

**tempted in that which He suffered.”** So, what is the author communicating to his readers here?

He is telling them that in all that Christ suffered, in becoming a man, in living His life as a man, and in dying as a man in order to propitiate the wrath of God against man, He was tempted, or in other words He was tried in every possible way that any other man might be tried, and tried more severely than any other man might be tempted or tried, yet without sin.

So why would the author want us to know this? Let us continue to read **verse 18** and what does it say? **“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”**

His point is this that no matter what difficulty we may find ourselves in, no matter how severely we are being tried, we can know that He is certainly able to come to our aid, so that we in the midst of those trials and in the midst of those difficulties might continue, as we look to Him in the midst of those difficulties and trials, to enjoy the blessings of the Lord’s presence, as we by faith remain bowed before Him.

If we have exercised faith in Christ, our merciful and faithful high priest, we can know that not only have we, because of what He has done for us on the cross of Calvary, entered into the presence of God, but that we by His ongoing help, will be able to remain bowed before the God of glory in such a way that we will be able to continuously enjoy the blessings of His presence in spite of whatever we might presently be having to suffer.

May God give us the grace to take advantage of the help that He has extended to us through Christ so that we might not only enter His presence but also that we might be able to enjoy the blessings of His presence continuously.