

Sermon Series: *Hebrews: The Supremacy of Christ*



Jesus Helps Abraham's Offspring, Not Angels

Why did Jesus have to become human?

Hebrews 2:14-18 (ESV)

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had

to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Introduction

Last week, as we looked at the first nine verses of chapter two, the central question was, “Why did Jesus have to suffer?” This week, as we finish chapter two, the central question is, “Why did Jesus have to become human?” Why could not God have just saved us himself? Why was it necessary for he would save us to be human rather than divine?

The author offers two answers to that question. First, Jesus had to become human in order to save those who are human. Second, he had to become human in order to be made like those whom he would save, i.e. his brothers, “in every respect.”

1) Jesus Had to Become Human In Order to Save Those Who Are Human (v.14)

The previous paragraph, 2:1-9, concluded the argument of why Jesus had to suffer, with the assertion that Jesus had to suffer because his family members suffer. Verse 11 pointed out the truth that both Jesus and those whom he saves share the same human nature. They both have one father, which probably points back to Adam¹ as the common ancestor. For this reason, Jesus is not ashamed to call those whom he saves, **brothers** (2:11,12).

He then refers to those whom he saves as **children**, whom God has given him (v.13).² The point is that *finding salvation in Jesus is the means by which one is brought into the family of God*. Apart from salvation in Jesus, everyone because of our sin is cut off from the family of God. Only through Christ can we be called the “*children of God*.” The author of Hebrews then argues that this is one of the main reasons why Jesus had to become human.

Jesus had to become human in order to save those who are human.

Hebrews 2:14a (ESV)

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things,

Since the **children** were **made of flesh and blood**, so too must he who would be their Savior **share in flesh and blood**. In other words, since his family is human, Jesus must also be human.

¹ It may point to God or perhaps to common human nature.

² See also John 17:2.

If Jesus is to save humans, then he must *be* human. The full humanity of Jesus is necessary to effect the complete the salvation of those whom he will save. Only *humans are the beneficiaries of the saving work of Jesus*. This may sound like an observation that is so obvious that it's silly to even make, but it's not when you consider that there other kinds of beings who do not benefit from the saving work of Jesus, namely angels.

Jesus Was Sent to Help the Offspring of Abraham, Not Angels (v.16)

Verse 16 reveals that there are those whom Jesus *will* save and there are those whom he will *not* save. Jesus was sent to help the offspring of Abraham, but his work did not help angels. Jesus had to become human in order to save humans, but his saving work does not extend to angelic beings. The soul-saving work of Jesus is not helpful to angels.

Hebrews 2:16 (ESV)

For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.

This verse raises two issues; whom does Jesus save and whom does he not save. First, he does not save angels. Second, he does **help**—i.e. save—**the offspring of Abraham**. Questions arise. Why mention this? Why does the author want us to know that Jesus does not save angels? And who exactly is the offspring of Abraham whom Jesus saves? First, lets consider angels and then we'll consider the offspring of Abraham.

Jesus Does Not Help Angels

Why does the author want you to know that Jesus became human in order to save humans and not angels? He at least mentions this in order to remind us that gift of **salvation is nothing but pure grace**. The salvation of humans is not obligatory. It is a pure act of divine grace. Jesus became human in order to offer humans the gracious gift of salvation, but he does not offer this gracious gift to angels.

You may be thinking, "Do angels even need salvation? Don't they already live in heaven?" Some do and some don't. There are some angels who sinned and fell from heaven. Those angels do not receive salvation or grace. They only receive justice, which is eternal condemnation. That is what each and every sin justly deserves.

2 Peter 2:4 (ESV)

God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

Some angels sinned and were immediately cast into hell and chained up until the day of judgment. Aren't you happy that God has not done this to you when you sinned, for certainly this is what we each deserve for even just on sin?

What did they do?

Jude 1:6 (ESV)

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—

Some angels were not content with the authority God had given them and so they rebelled. They left their proper place and tried to assert themselves into places or positions of authority where they did not belong and in which God had not given them permission. Chief among them was Satan. *The just punishment for each and every sin—even just one—is permanent separation from God's presence and condemnation in the eternal fires of hell.* How do we know this? Because this was the punishment that God gave to the angels who sinned.

Matthew 25:41 (ESV)

"Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

The just punishment for just one sin is to be cursed forever in the eternal fires of hell. This is just judgment God rendered against Satan and all the angels who with him sinned. These fallen angels will never be saved. There is no need to pray for the salvation of the devil or for his fallen angels. Their condemnation is sure and certain. There is no escape for them. These sinful angels are receiving what they deserve. This is a demonstration of God's justice. These angels do not receive grace. Jesus did not die to help angels, but he did die to help Abraham's offspring.

Jesus Does Help Abraham's Offspring

This leads us to the second question, "Who then is Abraham's offspring?" Let's begin with who it is not. We know that not all humans are saved, so "Abraham's offspring" does not refer to all human beings. The verse from Matthew 25, that I just read a moment ago, is taken from a passage³ that describes that final day of judgment when Jesus will separate those who will be saved—represented by the sheep on his right, from those who will not be saved—represented by the goats on his left. So "Abraham's offspring" does not refer to all people. We must reject the universalist notion that all people will be saved. The Bible does not teach this.

Secondly, "Abraham's offspring" does not refer to all Jews or all ethnic descendants of Abraham. We know this because of what Jesus taught and what Paul taught. In John 8, Jesus said to the Jews,

John 8:24 (ESV)

"Unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

These Jews then said to Jesus,

³ Mt. 25:31-46.

"We are Abraham's offspring" (Jn. 8:33).

Jesus then said,

"I know you are Abraham's offspring, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you" (Jn. 8:37).

On that day, there were some "offspring of Abraham" who believed in Jesus and were thus saved, and there were some "offspring of Abraham" i.e. ethnic descendants of Abraham, who did not, and as a result, died in their sins and were lost. Jesus then "helped," i.e. saved, some of the ethnic descendants of Abraham, but not all of them. Paul teaches the same.

Romans 9:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

In other words, those who are considered the "offspring of Abraham" and "children of God" are not all who are biologically descended from Abraham, but rather are those who are spiritually descended from Abraham.⁴ Abraham is the father of all who have faith in God. Jesus is the Son of God whom the Father sent into the world to save those whom he had chosen to save. These are the elect. Therefore the "offspring of Abraham" whom Jesus helps are those who have been elected by God to put their faith in Jesus.

Your ethnicity is irrelevant for getting you into heaven, but that in which you put your faith isn't. What a great and gracious blessing to know that even though salvation is of the Jews, by faith in Jesus, you and I and anyone listening to my voice, can be included among the "**offspring of Abraham**" whom Jesus helps.

We who have sinned deserve exactly the same condemnation that the sinful angels received, but we are offered grace in stead. Jesus graciously came to give us salvation, but he chose not to be gracious to sinful angels. They receive only justice, while we, who put our faith in Jesus, are vessels of his great grace. Jesus had to become human in order to save the offspring of Abraham, but he does not save angels even though they are far more powerful than us.

Jesus Became Human to Destroy the Devil (v.14)

So, Jesus became human in order to save some humans, but there's also another reason he became human. Jesus became human to destroy the devil. Jesus had to partake of flesh and blood in order to destroy the devil.

⁴ See also Rom. 4:11-16.

Hebrews 2:14 (ESV)

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

Jesus became human in order to destroy the devil. This is wonderful news. Jesus took on flesh and blood in order to destroy the one who had the power of death. It sounds really good, but did it work? People still die every day and the devil looks to still be pretty active in the world. So what, if anything, did Jesus do?

Jesus Destroyed the Devil Through Death

The author tells us that Jesus had to become human in order that **through death** he could *destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil*. This makes sense because God cannot die. If the way to destroy the devil was **through death**, then only someone who could die could complete the mission. Jesus had to become human so that he could die and then through his death, destroy the devil. So Jesus' coming to die was part of God's plan to destroy the devil. Jesus' death was not unintended. It was an designed by God as an integral part of his predetermined plan.⁵

But how did he do it? What did his death accomplish? It accomplished at least two things. It *turned away God's wrath and removed all grounds of accusation*.

He Made Propitiation for Sins

Verse 17 tells us that one result Jesus effected through his death is that he **made propitiation for the sins of the people**.

Hebrews 2:17 (ESV)

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

What on earth does '**propitiation**' mean? To make propitiation for sins means to *offer a sacrifice that takes God's just wrath against sin and satisfies that wrath in such a way that God's appropriate anger toward the sin is turned into favor*.⁶

It is a sacrifice that causes there to be a change in God. It satisfies his anger towards our evil and turns his frown into favor. What Jesus did for us through his death, was to take upon himself all of the just punishment that we deserved for our sin, and then he let that just punishment be fully executed upon himself rather than on us. Thus he died, for death is the

⁵ Acts 2:23; 4:28.

⁶ Wayne A. Grudem, [*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*](#) (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 1252.

only just penalty for sin. Then, **through death**, all of God's just anger is turned away from us and toward Jesus, who willingly chose to receive our punishment.

Therefore, Jesus has removed God's just anger towards sinners and now God is only favorable disposed towards those who are united to Jesus through faith. Jesus received in his person God's frown upon sin and turned it into a face of fondness and favor. **That's propitiation, taking away God's frown and transforming it into favor.** The sacrificial, substitutionary death of Jesus effected a transformation in God by moving him from condemning judge into favorable Father. Through death Jesus made propitiation for sins.

Jesus Removed Grounds for Accusation

The second effect that Jesus wrought through his death is that he removed all grounds of accusation. What does it mean that the devil has the power of death? Isn't it true that God alone had the power of life and death? Isn't this what we learned in the book of Job? Satan wanted to destroy Job and God said, "*You can do anything to him except take his life.*"⁷ That passage, along with others, demonstrates that Satan cannot take life at will. He has no authority to take anyone's life. Well, if God has the ultimate say over who lives and who dies, then what does this mean that the devil has the power of death?

The word 'devil' means "accuser" or "adversary."⁸ Satan is called "*the accuser of the brothers who stands in God's presence day and night*" accusing the children of God. Apparently he stands demanding that the just punishment for their sins be executed against them.⁹ This is the "power of death" that the devil holds against us. He stands in God's presence and probably saying something like,

God, if you are just, then how can you allow these sinners, like Todd Cravens, to remain alive since he has sinned and thus deserves to die. You say you are righteous, but that fact that he is a guilty sinner yet still lives says that you are not.

Satan can then list a long list of my and your offenses and say that the death penalty is the only proper punishment for all my sins. He would be right. In so far as he is right, he has the power of death. I think this is alluded to by the apostle Paul.

Colossians 2:13-15 (ESV)

having forgiven us all our trespasses,¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

⁷ Job 2:6.

⁸ Werner Foerster, "[Διαβάλλω, Διάβολος](#)," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 72.

⁹ Rev. 12:10.

The record of all our debts, all our sins, stands against us with its **legal demand** of our death. So how can sinful debtors not receive the just penalty they deserve? Our sins demand our death, thus the devil has a kind of power of death in his hand as he holds the “record of our debts and sins.”

So how did Jesus through his death destroy the one who had the power of death? He did it by taking upon himself the record of all our sins and then being nailed to the cross. He then actually paid the just penalty of the sins of everyone who would put their faith in him and be united with him through faith. All my sins and yours were nailed to the cross when Jesus was nailed to the cross. His death was my death. Thus the devil has been disarmed. He no longer has the right to accuse me. My sins have been atoned for. Satan’s accusations fall flat. They no longer have validity. The legal demand that death be executed against sinners who trust in Jesus has been met through the death of Jesus. The power of the devil to demand my death is now destroyed through the death of Jesus.

I praise you Jesus for taking upon yourself the long record of all my sins. I praise you Jesus for destroying the devil.

Free From the Fear of Death (v.15)

I now no longer need to fear death. Jesus has now delivered me from my slavery to the fear of death. Now I no longer need to tremble that maybe some sin I committed was so bad that God would not forgive me. If Jesus took on himself, back in A.D. 30, the long list of all my sins, and, back then, paid for them all—even the ones I have yet to commit, and then he died with all my sins placed upon him, and then he rose from dead proving that he had properly paid for them all, then if I am in him by faith, then I am assured that I too will be raised from the dead. Death will not hold me. Yes, I will lay aside this fleshly body, but I have perfect confidence that I will be raised up and given a spiritual body. Death will not hold me long, for Jesus has become my victory. In him is life eternal. He lives today and so I too will live after I die. Therefore, I no longer need to live enslaved to a fear of death.

Jesus had to become human so that he could die. Through his death he destroyed the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil. The devil no longer has any claim on me. I have been purchased by the blood of Jesus. Through his death I am innocent and free from the fear of death. And so you can be too if you are trusting in Jesus.

2) Jesus Had to Become Human in Order to Become a Merciful & Faithful High Priest (v.17)

There’s one more reason that Jesus had to become human. This final reason is seen in the verses 17-18.

Hebrews 2:17 (ESV)

17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

He Became Like His Brothers to Become a Merciful High Priest

Jesus had to become human in order to become **a merciful and faithful high priest**. Part of the reason for him becoming a faithful high priest was to make propitiation for our sins, which we've already discussed. We will conclude by focusing on the fact that we needed **a merciful high priest**. We can easily see the need for a **faithful** high priest in performing his priestly duty of offering himself as an atoning sacrifice. However, how does his becoming human enable him to become a **merciful** high priest? The answer is found in verse 18.

Hebrews 2:18 (ESV)

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The suffering of Jesus is still on the mind of the author of Hebrews. Last week we considered the emotional and physical suffering that Jesus endured. We saw that he endured that kind of suffering so that he would become the perfect kind of savior—one who demonstrated God's grace, who fulfilled God's plan for humanity, and identified with his family who also suffered. In this instance, the author focuses our attention on another kind of suffering, spiritual suffering during temptation. Jesus had to become human in order to become a merciful high priest and that mercy is primarily expressed during temptation.

Jesus Suffered When He Was Tempted

Jesus himself suffered when he was tempted. Let's think about this for a moment. Jesus submitted himself to all the frailties of humanity even though it was he who created us. He laid aside all of his divine prerogatives and subjected himself to all the temptations to which we are subjected. Jesus suffered when he was tempted. We know that he was "*tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus endured every temptation that we endure.

And he suffered through the full allurements of every temptation that you will ever face and yet he never gave in to sin. Remember it's not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin to give in to that temptation. Jesus suffered under the full weight of all the enticing allurements of every imaginable sin. We don't know this degree of suffering against temptation because we have all given in to temptation and sinned. Jesus never did, so he has suffered through the full strength of every temptation in a way that we have not. Jesus suffered through every temptation without giving in, therefore he is able to help you with your every temptation.

For example, it's tax season. Have you ever been tempted to cheat on your taxes? If you do your own taxes and your tax preparation software keeps a little running total of your refund or amount you owe, have you ever been tempt to inflate this number here and decrease that number there in order to make the little refund tracker rise as high as possible? Doing so is a sin.

Jesus was a small business owner. He had a carpentry shop. Do you think he was never tempted to fudge a little on an invoice in order to have a little extra money? Of course he was. Have you ever falsified an invoice in order to pad the slush fund? How long did you struggle with that? Ten minutes? Fifteen minutes? A couple of days? Jesus suffered through the full power of that temptation longer than any of us ever did because he never gave in to it. And because he knows the full weight of the temptation to falsify documents, he can help you when you're tempted.

Men, have you ever been tempted to click or tap on that link that you know will lead you pornography? How long did you fight against that temptation? One minute? Two? Ten? Twenty? If you gave in, you probably gave in after about 30 seconds. Do you think Jesus was immune from the temptation to indulge in lust? Do you think because he lived in the first century that he was never tempted to lust after a women? Do you think that his full divinity kept him immune from the raging teen-year hormones of full humanity? Do you think he never accidentally happened upon a woman bathing in a stream or in a pond somewhere or some similar circumstance? Of course he did, but he never gave in to the sin of lust. He knows the full allurements of the temptation to lust and therefore he is merciful enough and powerful enough to help you when you're tempted.

Are you ever been tempted to stretch the truth a little in order to make yourself look better than you are or to diminish the truth of how bad you've been? How long did you wrestle with this temptation? One minute? Two? Ten? Twenty? Jesus suffered through the pull of this kind of temptation for longer than any of us every have and yet he never gave in to that sin. Therefore, he is merciful enough and powerful enough to help you when you are tempted.

Have you ever been tempted to talk a little too long about how wonderful you are? Have you ever been so proud of your best quality that you just can't stop talking about your skill? Have you ever been on a job interview and been asked why you should be hired and then they have to shut you up because you exhausted the interviewer with elaborate descriptions of all of your glorified areas of expertise? We laugh because we've all struggled with this.

Imagine being Jesus, who is perfect at everything he does, and having some old rich guy ask you, "And why should I give you the contract to add the addition onto my house?" "Well because it will be done on the day on which I say it will be done, it will come in under budget, there will be no material waste, you neighbors will go nuts over, you mother-in-law will love it, it will be built with a kind of skill and craftsmanship that is unparalleled in this region,... need I go on?" Jesus suffered through the temptation to be prideful in all of his speech and yet he never

gave it to that sin. Therefore, he is merciful enough and powerful enough to help you when you're tempted in this way.

Have you ever been tempted with same sex attraction? Have you ever been tempted to have one too many drinks? Have you ever been tempted to shout profanities at the car in front of you who just cut you off? Have you ever been tempted to _____? You fill in the blank. Whatever it is he is merciful enough to help you when you are tempted.

Jesus knows how tempting temptation can be. He in fact knows it better than you and me because we give in before the temptation can pull out all its powers of allurements, yet Jesus suffered through the full attraction of each and every temptation and yet he never gave in to sin. Therefore, he has the ability to be a merciful companion to us when we are being tempted. And since he knows the full and complete power of each and every temptation no one can say to him, "You don't know what this is like!" He can actually say to us,

Oh, I know full well what this is like. Actually, it's you who doesn't know what this can be like. Try struggling with this temptation for forty days without eating or drinking. I know exactly what this is like. I've been there. I've walked that path. So when you're tempted, run to me. I will be merciful to you. When you're weak, cry out to me. I will come to help you. I have suffered through all temptation, therefore I can help you when you're tempted.

Conclusion (v.18)

Jesus became human to save humans. He became human to be gracious to humans who sin. He is not gracious towards angels when they sin. Jesus is gracious to the offspring of Abraham. He saves and helps those who, like Abraham, put their faith in him.

Jesus became human to destroy the devil. Jesus had to become human so that he could die so that through death he could destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil. Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, the devil now has no power over those who are united to Jesus by faith. Therefore, we have been freed from all slavery to the fear of death.

Jesus has become like us in every respect. He knows the power and allurements of every temptation and yet he has overcome each one. Therefore, he is a merciful high priest to whom we can run when we are tempted. Because he suffered through every temptation, he is now able to help us who struggle with temptation. There's no one we need more than a merciful savior whom God sent to save the offspring of Abraham.

Are you an offspring of Abraham? Is your faith in him? Then he is ready to show you mercy and help.

Could God have saved us any other way? No. There was no other way to save us. Jesus had to become human to save us humans. If there was any other way, then God would have said to his suffering Son, "You don't have to go through with this." But he didn't. Jesus had to become human and he had to suffer in order to save us. In the Garden three times he plead with the Father, "I don't want to do this. Is there any other way?" The answer was, "No." Jesus' reply was, "Then if this is only way, then I'll do it." He had to become flesh and blood because we are flesh and blood. He had to suffer because we suffer. And now he can help us because he became just like us—except without sin.

Run to him. Worship him. Go to him for help when you are tempted. You need him and he will help you. He will save you! Praise be to God the Father for giving us this great salvation.