

Text: Heb 2.14-15

Today, we move forward two more verses in Hebrews 2. Each step forward adds an increment to our understanding of the Incarnation.

So far, we have come up with these concepts:

- God created man for dominion, but man failed (5-8)
- God made Jesus a little lower than angels to restore that dominion in a perfect man (9)
- God was right to perfect Jesus through suffering, adding many sons to his kingdom through the cross (10)
- God set apart these men to life through Jesus who sanctifies, as both he and they share one spiritual father (11)
- God accepts these men as Christ's brethren, they are the children the Father gave to him (12-13)

Today we will take this union of the Son with his people one step farther. I've named our message this:

He Partook of the Same

It is not just that they are born again to the same spiritual life as the Son, it is that the Son by the Incarnation became of the same physical life as the children of God.

Let's read our text:

Read 2.10-15, text 14-15

Do you see the difference between verse 11 and verse 14?

- In verse 11, both saint and Saviour have One Father; this speaks about being born again, of spiritual life
- In verse 14, the Saviour took on flesh and blood; this speaks about the Incarnation and physical life

What we are adding today is a powerful reason why Jesus took on physical life. If he had not done so, we could not have eternal life.

Proposition: The Incarnation means that through death Jesus could destroy death so men could live free forever.

I. The fact of the Incarnation (14a)

A. The humanity of born-again men and women

1. This may seem obvious; only humans are born-again
2. Our text starts with two summary particles
 - a. **Therefore:** the passage following is a conclusion from the passage preceding
 - b. **Since:** the condition mentioned is a reason for the next assertion
3. The humanity of saved men requires a human Saviour
 - a. Since the saved are human (partook of flesh and blood)
 - b. He Himself likewise is human (partook of the same)

This is a very basic step, but it means much

B. The contrast of tenses

1. The children share (having been having fellowship) [perfect tense] = from a time in the past continuing into the present, *i.e.*, they are always human
2. He himself partook (different word) [aorist tense] = took on deliberately at a fixed point in time

“Our Lord, however, existed before his incarnation; ‘flesh and blood’ form no essential part of his eternal being; but at a fixed point in time, by his own choice, ‘he also himself in like manner partook (μετέσχεν, aorist) of the same’ and so began to share fully the nature of those whom he chose thus to redeem.”¹

3. Jesus really, deliberately, historically, and actually became a man

C. Side-bar: this doctrine destroys to heresies

1. Docetism (from “to seem”) – Jesus only seemed to be human – an early heresy utterly destroyed by this verse

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 78 n. 55.

2. Apollinarianism – a 4th c. heresy, Jesus was a man upon whom the divine spirit of the Son descended then departed
3. No, Jesus, the eternal Son, who existed before partook (took on) real flesh and blood at a real point in time for a real purpose

D. By this he truly became “the captain of our salvation” (see v. 10)

1. Compare Isaiah 42.13

Isa 42.13 The LORD will go forth like a warrior,
He will arouse *His* zeal like a man of war.
He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.
He will prevail against His enemies.

2. Compare Lk 11.21-22

Lk 11.21-22 “When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. ²² “But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.

- a. Satan is the strong man
- b. Jesus is the stronger man, who utterly defeats him...

This is the purpose of taking on flesh and blood

II. For the defeat of the devil (14b)

A. The means of his warfare was his death (the cross)

1. The cross seemed to be a defeat
 - a. In the garden, God said the serpent would bruise his heel
 - b. God said the seed would crush the head of the serpent

No doubt the serpent smiled to see the Son on the cross.
This was no heel blow!

“If ever a cause was lost, it was his; if ever the powers of evil were victorious, it was then. And yet—within a generation his followers were exultingly proclaiming the crucified Jesus to be the conqueror of death and

asserting, like our author here, that by dying he had reduced the erstwhile lord of death to impotence.”²

2. The cross rendered the one with the power of death powerless
 - a. To cause something to be unproductive, *use up, exhaust, waste*
 - b. To cause something to lose its power or effectiveness, *invalidate, make powerless*
 - c. To cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence, *abolish, wipe out, set aside*³
 - 1) This is the meaning BAGD takes for this verse
 - 2) Yet the devil remains active — the point is, he is now *powerless*

B. The identity of the one with the power of death: “that is, the devil”

1. The one with the power of death is the devil
2. Not that the devil has the power to kill whom he will
3. But that the devil controls men by the fear of death: the power of death is its fear

The Son partook of flesh and blood to render death powerless – by delivering men from its fear

III. Providing freedom for the enslaved (15)

A. The fear of death enslaves

“The fear of death enslaves unbelievers in that this fear leads them to behave in ways that please Satan (e.g., selfishly, living for the present, etc.).”⁴

“It is ironic that human beings, destined to rule over the creation (Ps 8:5–7 LXX, cited in vv 6–8), should find

² Bruce, 85.

³ These three definitions from Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Heb 2.15.

themselves in the posture of a slave, paralyzed through the fear of death (Kögel, *Sohn*, 80)."⁵

1. Some will by all means be concerned with their legacy (Ozymandias)
2. Others will pursue the youthful scene as long as they can maintain the energy of youthfulness: party animals
3. Still others pursue every effort to keep looking young, endless cosmetic surgeries, endless dieting, obsession with youth
4. And then there are those who drown their consciousness of death in mind-numbing substances, trying to forget mortality
5. And on and on

"A believer need not have the same fear of death as an unbeliever (cf. Luke 11:21–22). Consequently we need not feel compelled to live for the present (e.g., put self first, do anything to save our lives, etc.) as unbelievers do."⁶

The desperation that so many felt during the Covid crisis should bring no Christians to despair. Why? Christ rendered death powerless, and set us free from its terror

B. Death holds no fear for the Christian

Last Friday, Frank Garlock, one of the compilers of our hymnal passed into glory. His family is understandably in mourning, but with joy. He is not dead, though he died.

1. One commentator compared pagan vs. Christian epitaphs in ancient Rome

"The different aspect which death assumed in the eyes of Christians is forcibly illustrated by the contrast between the passionate despair, resentment, and cynicism of many Pagan epitaphs, compared with the peace, resignation, and even exultation displayed by those in the catacombs"⁷

⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 61.

⁶ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Heb 2.15.

⁷ Farrar, *Hebrews*, 52.

A few samples of inscriptions:

- “May You Live With The Saints In Heaven In God In Christ In The Holy Spirit Forever”
- “I Septimius Fronto Servant Of God Repose Here
I Shall Have No Regret For Having Lived An Honest Life
I will Serve You Lord Also In Heaven
And I Will Praise Your Name Forever
I Gave Back My Soul To God At The Age Of 33 Years
And 6 Months”
- “Sweet Simplicius Live In Eternity”
- “Deacon Deusdedit Who Melted The Hearts Of The
Obstinate With Goodness
He Was Devoted To Justice And Led An Upright Life
He was Rich To The Poor And Poor To Himself”
- “The Gentle And Innocent Severianus Rests Here In
The Sign Of Christ
He Lived More Or Less 50 Years
His Soul Was Received Into The Light Of The Lord”
- “To The Sweet Repose To The Singular Piety To The
Innocence Of Life
And The Marvelous Wisdom Of A Most Dear Youth
Who Chose His Mother’s Religion
Augustine Lived 15 Tender Years And 3 Months
A Most Devoted Mother To Her Sweetest Son In
Eternal Peace”⁸

2. This is the ancient promise of God

Isa 49.24-26 “Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,
Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”

²⁵ Surely, thus says the LORD,
“Even the captives of the mighty man will
be taken away,

⁸ Source: [Catacomb Art \(earlychurchhistory.org\)](http://Catacomb Art (earlychurchhistory.org)) Accessed March 4, 2023.

And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;
For I will contend with the one who contends
with you,
And I will save your sons.
²⁶ “I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh,
And they will become drunk with their own blood
as with sweet wine;
And all flesh will know that I, the LORD,
am your Savior
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

3. This is accomplished by him who partook of flesh and blood and rendered powerless him who had the power of death

Conclusion:

Proposition: The Incarnation means that through death Jesus could destroy death so men could live free forever.

Are you free?