

Introduction: In this lesson we continue with the author's consideration of why the second person of the Trinity came in the flesh to live among us.

Hebrews 2:14-16: *“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.”*

Why the Son Came in the Flesh: Humans consist of a material body in union with an immaterial soul. The material body can suffer and die. The Second Person of the Trinity took to Himself a human nature, including a flesh and blood body so that He too could die. As the God-man, having both a divine and a human nature, His divine nature is immortal and cannot die. But His human nature was mortal and could die. The life and death and resurrection of His human nature was used to defeat Satan. It is not immortal angels but mortal humans that Christ came to save.

If Satan is Immortal, What Does it Mean to Destroy Him? As a fallen angel, Satan is created but immortal. The word translated as “destroy” more accurately means to “render inoperative.” Satan remains alive and busy, but His plans for control have been defeated. Though Satan lost the war, he continues to exercise evil influence over people. That evil influence can only be countered by being “in Christ.”

In What Sense Does Satan Have the Power of Death? Deuteronomy 32:39, Matthew 10:28, Revelation 1:18, God has final authority over death. Satan can do only what he is permitted to do. Satan is the author of sin. Sin brings death (Romans 6:23). It is in this sense Satan exercises power in the realm of death. Jesus called him a murderer (John 8:44). Satan's kingdom is one of darkness and death (Colossians 1:13). Unredeemed sinners should fear death. The redeemed in Jesus have once and for all been delivered from Satan's authority. As we see in 1 Corinthians 15:55-58, it was Christ's life, death, burial, and resurrection that brought the victory.

In taking to Himself a human nature, Christ stooped lower than angels for the purpose of saving fallen humans. He did not save fallen angels. The Son became “man” and not just “man” in general. He became a Jew, one of the “seed of Abraham” (Hebrews 2:16). To many people, the Jews were a despised and hated race.

Hebrews 2:17-18: *“Therefore he (Jesus) 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.”*

Made Like His Brothers: Angels are pure spirits. As such they cannot identify with the bodily weakness, suffering, and needs of humans. ***But Jesus can!*** In His human nature, He was like us in every respect except He was without sin. Jesus experienced human nature’s sinless infirmities. He came as a helpless baby, then as a growing child and a maturing adolescent. As an adult, He experienced weariness, hunger and thirst. He knew what it was to be despised, rejected, and falsely accused. When He was arrested, He endured severe physical punishment which ended with His suffering and death on a cross.

In view of His divine nature, it is difficult for us to grasp that incarnate Jesus had a true human body, mind, and emotions. His body, mind, and emotions developed just as ours do. When He was a child, in His human nature, He thought as a child.

Jesus was always fully man and fully God. Even in infancy, His divine nature, retained all the qualities of divinity – omniscience, omnipotence etc. During His years of life on earth, He voluntarily subjected the exercise of His divine powers to the discretion of God the Father as we see in Philippians 2:5-11. Did Jesus in His human nature always know that He was God? I don’t know. At some point He did definitely and fully understand. In response to Philip in John 14:9 He said, ***“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”***

Jesus Himself said that His great acts of omnipotence and omniscience were under the discretionary control of the Father when in John 5:19 ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”***

Our Merciful and Faithful High Priest: What is a High Priest's function? A High Priest represents humans before God. Judaic High Priests had only limited access to the Father. God closely defined their function and how they carried out their duties. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest made sacrifices for himself and for the people. The sacrifices covered only certain categories of sins that had been committed during the past year.

Sin alienates people from God. God's wrath is directed at sin and sinful people. Once a year on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies where he sprinkled sacrificial blood – first for himself and then for the people – to remove (literally to cover) sin. Now, Christ, our merciful and faithful High Priest, is the only mediator between God and man. He has once for all time, made propitiation for sins with His own blood. Christ is continually in the presence of the Father.

When we are tempted, Christ gives grace enabling us to not sin (1Corinthians 10:13), but if we do sin, and confess that sin, He is our Advocate before the Father (1John 1:5-22). By taking to Himself a human nature, Christ, the God-Man, accomplished great things neither humans nor angels could do. After His return to glory, His experience as a human enabled Him to identify completely with His people as their Heavenly High Priest.

Jesus Tempted Like Us: The author says, *“For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”* Jesus in His human nature suffered when tempted. When we think of His divine nature, we may be inclined to say his temptations were not real. The truth is His sinless human nature experienced temptation more painfully than is possible for us. Temptation's desire came into His mind, but he never gave in and never let the desires become manifest. Resisting temptation is more painful and disturbing than giving in to temptation. No one who gives in to temptation understands the depth of suffering continued resistance to temptation brings.

Jesus always successfully resisted temptation. He suffered many dramatic temptations as He lived His sinless life. At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Satan tempted Jesus. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness to fast and pray. There, as described in Matthew 4:1-14, Satan came to Him and

offered three diabolical temptations for easy “success.” Later Peter, Jesus’ close friend, was enticed to rebuke Jesus for saying He must die on the cross. Satan also used Jesus’ family against Him. Satan’s goal was to defeat Jesus’ mission.

Satan frequently brought temptations to Jesus in continuing efforts to cause Him to fail in His mission. Near the end, in Gethsemane, the temptation to escape from the horror that lay before Him was almost overpowering. Jesus sweated drops of blood and pleaded with the Father to take the cup from Him, yet He remained submissive to the Father’s will. He said in Mark 14:36, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*”

Hanging on the cross, Jesus experienced the ultimate temptation. He could save Himself by invoking His divinity and coming down from the cross. But He remained faithful to the Father’s will. Rather than come down from the cross, He had mercy on the criminal on an adjacent cross who believed in Him. In His human nature, Jesus experienced and suffered real temptations. From experience, He knows what it is like when we are tempted.

Hebrews 3:1-6: “*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ² who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*”

Moses: The author turns his attention to showing Jesus’ superiority to Moses. If Jesus is superior to Moses, He is, by implication, also superior to the Law of Moses. To appreciate the dramatic significance of asserting Jesus to be superior to Moses, one must understand the awesome reverence Jews held for Moses. Strong proof will be necessary for the author to convince them of this truth.

Jews recognize Moses as the great Man of God whom God chose and empowered for the incredible task of freeing Hebrew slaves from Egypt and leading them to a land of their own. Moses was born in Egypt at a time when Hebrew male babies were under a death sentence. He was miraculously preserved. Hidden in bulrushes, he was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter. She chose his real mother to be his nursemaid. Pharaoh's daughter gave Moses a noble upbringing. At the right time God (the great *I Am*) spoke to Moses from a burning bush, calling and commissioning him to deliver his people from slavery.

Through Moses, God displayed His astounding power. He brought 10 plagues on Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to release the Hebrew slaves. The plagues culminated the night of Passover when all firstborn humans and beasts in Egypt not protected by blood perished. This devastated the Egyptians. The Hebrew slaves were finally permitted to leave Egypt.

During the process of leaving Egypt, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to recover his slaves. To escape the pursuing army, Moses was instructed to part the Red Sea by holding up his staff. It worked! The fleeing people passed through. The sea then collapsed into its original state and Pharaoh's army was caught in the deluge and drowned.

Later in the desert, in desperate need of water, Moses struck a rock and all of Israel drank of the water that flowed from the rock. The Hebrews, so recently slaves in Egypt, failed when their faith was tested and spent 40 years wandering in the desert before entering the promised land. The comment often made is it took only a short time to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel.

Moses, the Man of God: Next to Father Abraham, Moses was Israel's greatest prophet and most revered man in Jewish history. God delivered His message through prophets in a variety of indirect ways, but He communicated directly to Moses. In Numbers 12:6-8, God said, "*Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord.*"

Moses, the Lawgiver: The system of Jewish religion came to the Jews from God through Moses. To the Jews, the Law of Moses was their greatest possession. It included the Ten Commandments, the Levitical laws, the sacrificial rites, the Tabernacle, and much wisdom for life. Moses was Israel’s great historian. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote the first five books of the Bible – Genesis through Deuteronomy. Yet, with all his mighty accomplishments, the Bible tells us Moses was *“very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.”* Moses is correctly called the Great Apostle and High Priest of the Old Testament.

Moses as Israel’s Advocate with God: Apostle means “one who is sent.” Moses was called by God and appointed by Him to carry out a huge task. He was sent as God’s representative to God’s people in Egypt and the court of Pharaoh. While Aaron, Moses’ brother, was named High Priest, it was Moses who was Israel’s advocate with God. In the episode of the golden calf in which Aaron shamefully took part, it was Moses intercession that brought about pardon for his people.

Moses Epitaph: The book of Deuteronomy closes with Moses epitaph. Deuteronomy 34:10-12: *“And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.”*

Christ is Superior to Moses: As great as Moses was, Christ is superior to Him. The author carefully frames the beginning of his argument for Christ’s superiority. He points out that he (the author) and his readers share a common confession of Christ with all that means – brotherhood, holiness, and a heavenly calling. Having confirmed their joint relationship in Christ, he tells them to carefully consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom they all confess. “Carefully consider” is a stronger admonition that it at first sounds. The NIV translates it as “fix your thoughts on Jesus.” Fixing or focusing thoughts requires desire, concentration, discipline, and willingness to devote the necessary time. It is a commitment to endure to the end, not a simple few minutes and done kind of thing. The author’s argument continues.

Both Jesus and Moses As Apostles: Both Jesus and Moses are apostles or “ones sent with a commission.” Moses was sent and empowered by God to rescue and deliver the Jews from slavery in Egypt. God highly honored him for his faithful work. Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, was sent by the Father into the world to live and die as a man in order to rescue and deliver His people from slavery to sin and from the wrath of God directed toward sin. That is a greater achievement than that of Moses.

Jesus, the Son: The Father said in Matthew 3:17, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Jesus was sent and commissioned by the Father to save the world from slavery to sin. Jesus was the final and complete revelation of God to the world. As we see in Hebrews 1:3a Jesus was, “*the radiance of the glory of God, and the exact imprint of his nature.*”

As the ultimate apostle, the God-Man, Jesus, was “the apostle who is first in priority, the apostle superior to all others, the source of all apostleship.” Jesus is superior to Moses in both His assignment and His perfect completion of that assignment. Moses rescued the Jews from slavery to men, but Jesus saved people of all races from slavery to sin.

Jesus, the Great Heavenly High Priest: Jesus is the supreme high priest, fully man (yet sinless) and fully God. Only He is capable of providing the eternal blood sacrifice necessary to atone for sins once and for all. God the Son came in the flesh, and by His life and death, He enables men to come to the Father. After His resurrection and return to the Father, Jesus became the Great Heavenly High Priest for believers, mediating between them and the Father, and advocating with Father on their behalf. He lives today and continues to minister to His people in a sense Moses cannot duplicate.

What Jesus Accomplished Does not Detract from What Moses Did: Moses powerful work in carrying out his calling and commission commended him to God. The text points out Jesus and Moses were both faithful in their God-given callings and commissions. While delivering the Jewish slaves from Egypt was an enormous and great work, Jesus’ work of delivering men from slavery to sin and the wrath of

God rightfully due sinners was immeasurably greater. Jesus is superior to Moses because of His greater work. Because Jesus' calling is superior, Moses and Jesus are in different categories. Moses was great. Jesus is greater.

Jesus and Moses' Work were Different in Character: The next step in the author's argument is to point out the different character of the ministries of Moses and Jesus. Hebrews 3:5-6a, "*Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.*" Moses was an honored servant and member of the household of the Lord, but Jesus was the Son who built the house. (The word translated servant is different than the usual word for servant or slave. This word means a voluntary servant who serves out of affection). Another factor in Christ's superiority to Moses is Moses testified to things to come, but Jesus brought fulfillment of the things to which Moses testified. Jesus Christ brought to the world the final light of the Gospel of the grace of God.

Perseverance Affirms Standing as Members of God's Household: Hebrews 3:6b, "*And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*" What does this mean? As shown in 7:17 and following verses, Hebrews' unifying perspective is the finished work of Christ and His heavenly ministry which together guarantee our eternal salvation. The author affirms that those who hold fast to their confidence and hope are proving they are truly born again as members of God's household.

The word translated as "confidence" literally means freedom of speech or openness. When a person is free to speak, there is no fear; they have confidence (or boldness) to approach the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). Confidence, not in ourselves, because we are prone to drift from the God we love. Our confidence is to be in Christ who never fails. Those who have trusted in Christ prove their confession by steadfastness, confidence, and joyful hope. Do not be burdened by the past or threatened by the present. Rather, live knowing the future is in Christ's hands as we await the "blessed hope" of our Lord's return. It is this "heavenly calling" which motivates believers to keep on living for Christ even when the going is tough.

In Numbers 14:26-38, Caleb and Joshua illustrate the proper attitude. All Israel listed in the Census as twenty years old or older were to die in the desert, except Caleb and Joshua. They were to live and enter the Promised Land along with those younger than twenty at the time of the census. For forty years Caleb and Joshua watched friends and relatives die. But they maintained confidence and hope they would enter the Promised Land and they did. As believers, we know that God will take us to heaven. Live in joyful confidence and hope like Caleb and Joshua.

What is Next? Rebellion in the desert.