

Introduction

In 2:5-9, we learned that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death. This does not contradict Hebrews' larger argument that the Son is superior to the angels, even though it may seem that it does. The Son's being made lower allowed him to be the ideal fulfillment of Psalm 8:4-6 which talked about man being set in authority over all the works of God's hands. Since humanity botched the initial dominion mandate from Genesis 1:28, it needed someone to come along and help them get back to the full exercise of that authority. Furthermore, the being "made lower" allowed Jesus to accomplish dying for humanity and then being crowned with glory and honor. The extreme need of man's sin demanded extreme measures to address it. And those extreme measures did not invalidate the claim of the Son's greatness, for He accomplished a great thing that no angel could have done anyway.

The apostle Paul shifts his attention in verses 10-18 from the humanity of Christ to the sufferings of Christ. These sufferings allowed Him to accomplish three things:

1. Suffering Identified Christ with Us, 2:10-13

A. Sufferings Made Christ a Complete Man, v. 10-11

When Hebrews says it was **fitting**, it means that it was becoming or appropriate for God to allow the Son to suffer. It was not inappropriate or "below" the Son to suffer as we might initially think—the Son of God suffering? God is the source and end of all things, and He it was Who ordained the Son to pass through sufferings.

Bringing many sons to glory reflects Psalm 8:4-6 again. God is in the business of doing that with mankind, particularly believing mankind. Those who are not believers will never truly have all things put in subjection under them; instead they will be subject to the wrath of God for their sin.

Captain means originator (Heb. 12:2), leader, or pioneer (Acts 5:31). I take the word to mean *originator* because of Hebrews 12:2, but the other meaning is not really out of line either. The meanings all seem to merge in the sense that the first originator is the pioneer as well.

The Captain of the believers' salvation, Jesus, was **made perfect through sufferings**. This need not suggest to the reader's mind that Jesus was imperfect before in the sense of having sin. Rather, he became perfect or "complete" in that He experienced the kinds of things man experiences. The context of the previous and next verses indicates that this is a correct interpretation because both man and the Son were made lower than the angels (v. 7, 9) and they **are all of one** (v. 11). Jesus and mankind have a solidarity or sharing together in humanity. This is how Jesus was made perfect. Had He not been **made a little lower than the angels** He could not perfectly satisfy the conditions of Psalm 8:4-6.

The word **perfect** is a good translation, but it can also mean "complete." As commentator Kent points out, the common lot of humans is to suffer, so that a "Messiah" who did not suffer would not be as complete in his identification with humanity as he could be.

Verse 11, with **for**, explains the previous verse and its idea of **perfect** or **complete**. Jesus is **He who sanctifies** and **those who are being sanctified** refers to believers. They are **all of one**. What does that mean? It could mean they all come from one, that is, God. That is true. But, as I prefer to understand it, it means that they share one nature, as in they all come from one Adam or one humanity more generally, like in Acts 17:26. There is a common link between Jesus and man that has to do with their shared humanity. Both Jesus and His people are **one**, united together. He was and is “one of us” and so is not ashamed to lower Himself to that level of calling us brothers.

B. OT Quotes Supporting the Shared Human Nature, v. 12-13

Verses 12-13 show that the Messiah does indeed treat believers as members of His own immediate family. They are brothers and children. Because of this sharing of humanity, the OT could testify to this thought.

Psalm 22:22 : Clearly Paul takes this Psalm as Messianic. While it can be interpreted to refer directly to David, several portions of it are clearly used by the gospel writers to refer to Christ in His sufferings and even from Christ’s lips Himself. After His deliverance, He promises to sing praise to God and to declare the name of God to proclaim His name to His brethren. Note that this actually did happen (John 17:6, John 5:23).

Isaiah 8:17-18 : The Bible here portrays Isaiah as a *type* of Christ. Christ also trusted in God, like we do. A perfect human being trusts in God—how about that! See Matthew 27:43. Jesus did trust in God, all the way to the bitter end.

Note an illustration and application: 2 Chronicles 16:1-14 tell of Asa. After 35 years of no war and apparently walking with God, Asa turned from fully trusting the Lord in the matter of Baasha king of Israel and in the matter of his own health. The last six years of his life he was in this backward spiritual state and apparently died that way. Note that a believer faces the same danger of not trusting in God. But we must always remain on guard. Something can distract us, sin can derail us, and we fail in our steadfastness and actually regress instead of progress in our walk with God. You may say, “Well, if that were to happen, I would still be a believer and would be saved.” Perhaps true, assuming you had really been born again before; but the attitude that back-sliding is OK is unacceptable. And, remember that we are learning in Hebrews that we must have a *persevering* faith in Jesus in order to be saved. Real faith continues on. The doubts to yourself and others brought on by a life ended in lack of trust in the Lord is hardly what God wants for our lives!

2. Suffering Allowed Christ to Defeat the Devil and Deliver People, 2:14-15

A. Common Sharing of Humanity Allowed Suffering

Children partaking of flesh and blood speaks of our nature as created with bodies that have two major components: flesh and blood. We need both! **Children** here is generic, but ultimately it will refer to believing humans, so children of God through faith in Christ.

The sharing of Jesus in the same **flesh and blood** speaks more to the solidarity idea that is integral to the preceding verses. Flesh and blood indicate that Jesus shares humanity with us (see the interpretive question at verse 11 regarding “all of one”). **Flesh and blood** can refer to the physical stuff that we and Jesus are made of as here; or to “man” as opposed to God or supernatural things as in Galatians 1:16 and Ephesians 6:12 and Matthew 16:17; or it can refer met-

aphorically to the body before its final redemption and glorification (1 Cor. 15:50); or it can refer, also metaphorically, to the saving benefits provided by the sacrificial death of Christ, those benefits that if we “eat and drink” the flesh and blood of Christ we will be saved (John 6:53-56, six times).

B. The Suffering Resulted in Destroying the Devil

God gave the **power of death** to the devil. The devil likes sin and death. The Scriptures testify that Satan is the king of the realm of darkness (Ephesians 2:2, Col. 1:13, 1 John 3:12, 14; see Job 1-2) and as such, spiritual death and physical death are part of his realm. Obviously Satan is not a co-equal sovereign with God, as if he has power over the day of our death. Rather, we are ultimately subject to the will of God, and He is the one who holds our lives in his hand (Psalm 31:15).

The destruction of Satan has to do with the idea of rendering him powerless over believers. The word means to cancel, make void, abolish, release, bring to nothing, or nullify. The same word is used of the body of sin being destroyed, that is, rendered powerless in the believer so that it no longer reigns over him as king (Rom 6:6). He has no ground on which to accuse a believer in Christ, Who has absolutely satisfied the wrath of God. There is no sin that Satan can use to drive a wedge between us and God or on which to ask for our lives. See also 1 John 3:8. The work of Christ made sure the future consignment of the devil into the lake of fire. The final sentencing date has not yet happened.

The theological idea in the verse revolves around the notion of the substitutionary atonement, and particularly what it means for the Son to be able to make a valid substitution. As God, He could not die for sin, and death was required under the law of God. Human sin required a human sacrifice, and there was no one other than Christ who could offer a satisfactory and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of man. Human sacrifice as practiced by pagans over the centuries is a barbaric practice because it is *murder* and it accomplishes *nothing*. The one human sacrifice that was still barbaric in one sense, but necessary in the sense of which we speak, was that of the perfect human Jesus.

Jesus’ death accomplished this substitution, and in so doing, also accomplished the defeat of Satan, who delights to lord it over man with a stout club: death. Furthermore, it effected the release of Satan’s prisoners.

C. The Suffering also Accomplished the Release of Believers

Christ released believers, who previously feared death and its connection to sin as the penalty of sin. Man will sooner do many things than die—thus he is in a sense enslaved to it. This fear produces a bondage caused by dreading to die. It is even worse for someone who understands that death is the penalty for sin, and that beyond death lies eternal death waiting to swallow its victims. Inasmuch as we understand what the Lord has done for us, we need not feel the dread of death. In some way, I think believers “get” this idea because we do not have expressions like you see in the OT of how foreboding the grave, death, and Sheol are. Death cannot separate us from God (Rom 8:38-39). There is a secular notion that death is OK because it marks a release from suffering. This is short-sighted for two reasons—it ignores that death is wielded by Satan, and it ignores that for the unbeliever, death actually brings *more* suffering, in eternal torment. This is what Jesus delivered us from!

3. Suffering Allowed Christ to be Qualified as a High Priest, 2:16-18

The meaning of the term “give aid” is slightly debated, as the KJV has “take on the nature of” and the rest of the translations say something like “give aid to.” The word is used in Matt. 14:31 when Jesus reached out his hand to grab Peter from sinking after he briefly walked on the water. Mark 8:3 uses the same term to tell about Jesus taking a blind man by the hand to go outside a village to heal him. Similarly with Luke 14:4. Other times the term just means “take hold of” or “take” (like in Luke 20:20, 26), or to seize someone (as in Luke 23:26, Acts 9:27, 16:19, 18:17, 21:30, Heb. 8:9). The word certainly does *not* mean that he “took on the nature of angels.”

The point is that Jesus clearly came in order to help mankind, not fallen angels. They are stuck in their sinful and fallen state. Mankind is not. Isn't that a “fortunate” thing for us? God has provided a way of salvation when He did not at all have to do so. He could have left us in the same boat with the fallen angels and that was it.

The other thing about verse 16 is the whole issue of the seed of Abraham. That speaks of believers in general, not just Jews (though Kent takes it to refer to Jews). Gentiles are helped too.

In order to best “give aid” to mankind, Jesus had to be made like mankind. Here again we see the solidarity concept. But why is it that he “had to be made” like His brethren? The rest of the verse gives the answer, namely, that he could be a merciful and faithful high priest. The priest is taken from among men, and so can understand their infirmities. In other words, in order to accomplish giving aid to the seed of Abraham, he had to become like that seed. Since He experientially knows our frame, that we are dust, He can be merciful and faithful to us. Verse 18 explains further verse 17. He knows what it is like to be a human. He has the perfect knowledge of omniscience augmented by personal firsthand experience of the human condition and so can help us when we are tempted to sin.

Think about the concepts **merciful and faithful**. Jesus is merciful toward us and faithful toward God in terms of his obligations, and faithful to us in terms of his promises.

The high priest idea is introduced here, and will be spoken of a lot in the next sections of the book, particularly chapter 5 and following. The Old Testament job of the high priest was mainly to make atonement for the sins of the people. What he did was lead his people in the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. This is what it means that He was **to make propitiation for the sins of the people**. Jesus is the ultimate Jewish high priest who removes sin from His people.

Conclusion

The Son of God is superior to angels even though He became a man and suffered. His purpose in doing so was to release you from the bondage of sin and Satan and to satisfy God's demands against sin. After you come into the family of God as children/brethren, He can further help you face and defeat temptation, of whatever sort it may be.

How could we be anything but thankful for such a High Priest?