

Verse 14

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

Alternate translation: “Therefore since the children have share in flesh and blood, he also partook of the same, in order that through death he might destroy the one who holds the power of death, that is, the devil.

1. 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.

2. 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”). You will recall that 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 metaphorically 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).

3. 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).

4. 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 final consignment of the devil into the lake of fire, even though this destruction we are talking about now was more the judgment and partial sentencing of Satan; the final sentencing date is yet in the future.

5. 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 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.

Verse 15

15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

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.

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 shortsighted 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!

MAP