

WHY ONE OF US?

Hebrews 2:14-18

With the proliferation of personal computers and tablets, we can find many whose main uses of these devices are email and social media which are convenient ways to pass along and receive information. Many others use their computers for games such as solitaire or even more complicated games. Some of the games will allow the player to “undo” a move or several moves that allow multiple chances to correct wrong decisions and increase their probability of “winning.” There are other games that do not have the possibility of “undoing” a poor choice.

In some ways life itself is like that. Some things we do can be corrected with little or no consequences and other situations can happen that have no “undo” option. In the national media, it is not unusual to see such things and the consequence of people making wrong choices or saying something they wish they could “take back.” The pro football player who knocked out his fiancée in an elevator, or the drunk driver who crashed into another car and killed several people are not subject to a “do over.”

In a similar way, Adam and Eve when they gave in to the temptation of the serpent in the Garden of Eden did not get a “do over.” After they had rebelled against God, it was too late to change what had happened and there were serious consequences. A significant consequence was that when Adam chose to go for the enticement that Satan offered to Eve that they would “be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil,” that they got exactly that. Instead of Adam and Eve enjoying the status of being “creatures made in the image of God,” they lost that and they stepped into the role of being their own “creator” in that they had to do everything for themselves and live by their own wits. It did not take long to discover that their own creative abilities and their wits were very limited.

Also, they were now burdened with trying to discern and make sense of what was right and wrong or good and evil. Instead of relying on what God was telling them they now had to consult what we commonly call their consciences which started to immediately made erroneous choices such a running and hiding from God and Adam blaming Eve and God for his disobedience and Eve blaming the serpent. They should have been looking for God, confessing their sins and relying on God’s mercy.

It gets worse. Before the “fall” they had been given dominion over the creation as coregent with God. When they made the decision of obeying Satan, they then became the servant (read that as slave) of the evil one and all they possessed and that which they controlled came under the dominion of Satan. This could be the ultimate bad consequence of not having a way to reverse or undo their bad decision. Not only did they not get a “do over” they were powerless to escape from their predicament. As slaves they (as well as their descendants) had no resources of their own to buy their way out of slavery and no rights to claim injury and thus bring suit in the “courts” of the spiritual realm to gain their freedom.

They needed help from someone who did not have the limitations they were under. Perhaps an angel could have intervened on their behalf; however, there was a problem in that angels did not have legal standing to intervene on behalf of mankind. “Standing” is the ability of a party to bring a lawsuit in court based upon their stake in the outcome. A party seeking to demonstrate standing must be able to show the court sufficient connection to and harm from the law or action challenged. Otherwise, the court will rule that you “lack standing” to bring the suit and dismiss your case. A party (an angel) may assert his or her own rights but cannot raise the claims of a third party (mankind) who is not before the court.

What was needed is a person who would have standing (in a legal sense) but would not be hindered by being a slave of the one who is the defendant. The answer to this dilemma is a person who is “human” but not of the seed of Adam. The only way that could be accomplished was by a virgin birth. We see Paul’s comment on this in Galatians 4:4-5:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

To Be the Second or Last Adam – 2:5-13

The question before us is “why did the Savior need to be one of us or be human?” In order to represent mankind before God, there had to be “standing” established that the One representing humanity was truly human. For this reason, God the Son had to become human – to come as a man – the second, final and heavenly Adam. Paul alludes to this in 1 Corinthians 15:22 where it states “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” Further support for this is found in verses 45-49 of that same chapter.

So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Starting in Hebrew 2, verse 5 and continuing through verse 13, the writer lays out support for proving that which was lost in the First Adam was restored in the reconciling work of the Second or Last Adam.

We see the superiority of Christ to angels in the hierarchy of rule in the “world to come.” In these verses, we find help in interpreting Psalm 8 with its references to “man” and the “son of man.” In the beginning, God placed the dominion of the earth under Adam. Of course, this rule was lost to the devil in the fall of mankind. We see, in this passage, a time coming in which everything would be restored under the rule of the Son of Man.

It is not man to whom everything is in subjection but it is the “Son of Man”; that is Jesus Who will have dominion over all things. Those who are in Christ will reign with Him and will share in this dominion. It is He Who is crowned with glory and honor because He humbled Himself even unto death so that we might be redeemed and live.

Christ is our pioneer – the Captain of our Salvation. He led the way. Since He went before us and experienced what we do, He knows our situation. Also, because He has gone before us, we can have confidence that we can go on to maturity because He did. He, on a temporary basis, was made a little lower than the angels and yet He is now crowned with glory and honor. It was necessary for Him to take on human form to redeem us from spiritual death. He took our death for us.

His death had spiritual and physical significance. Though we cannot see (except by faith) the ultimate victory that is ours in Christ, we can see that He tasted death for everyone. The spiritual significance is that He experienced separation from God the Father and in this, He died in our place. The physical significance was not that His death was a substitute for our physical death but that He demonstrated that physical death is not the end of true life. Death cannot keep us. Since He has gone before us and was resurrected, we can know that this experience is OK. He showed how totally (completely, perfectly) human He was when He suffered death. The purpose was to secure our salvation – our being able to become what God always intended for us to be – His sons ruling and reigning with Him throughout all eternity. What a GREAT SALVATION!

To Defeat and Render Powerless the Devil – 2:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Hebrews 2:14–16 (NASB95)

The descendants of Adam could not redeem themselves since they were slaves to sin and subject to the evil one. They had no rights by which to free themselves. Since Jesus was born of a woman, but not of the seed of Adam, He was not subject to the authority of the devil. In killing Jesus, the devil was judged to be guilty and his power over mankind broken.

In His death, Jesus died as a man (same family as those He came to save). Since He was sinless and not of the seed of Adam, the devil had no authority to do what was done. Any “son of Adam” could (supposedly) have been killed with impunity since all these were slaves to sin and the wages of sin is death. The (illegal) death of Jesus broke the legal hold of the devil and also paid the penalty of a spotless sacrifice for the sin of man.

What we see here is that Jesus used the “strength or power of the devil” (that is, death) to defeat the devil. One commentator compared this to David using the sword of Goliath to cut off the head of Goliath after he was fallen. Notice that God did not use His Almighty power to gain the victory but did it by His death. This is an example of God functioning within defined boundaries that are predetermined by His own principles, laws, commandments, and character. He is not a capricious God (who acts without principle) but He is a God of covenants and faithfulness.

Now those who have entered into the salvation offered through Christ – that is, have died to self and have new life in them – have been set free from the law of sin and death. We who have been set free from the “law of sin and death” need no longer fear death. According to Paul in Roman 8, the “law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” has set us free from the “law of sin and death.” This condition is possible because the death, burial and resurrection of Christ have given us victory and the assurance that though the body may die, the soul is secure and we are spiritually alive in Christ because we have been born again of the Spirit of God.

This redemption and salvation are in operation now in and for the true descendants of Abraham or what is called “the Israel of God.” Those who have the “faith of Abraham” make up the church of the Lord Jesus and this condition of freedom is the blessing of those who are identified with Christ as His “brethren” and “children” as mentioned in verses 12 and 13.

The mention of this salvation (help) not applying to angels is a reference and confirmation of the assertion made in verse 5 of this chapter that the “world to come” would be in subjection to redeemed mankind and not to angels. As Adam had been coregent with God before the fall, we who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are to reign with Christ Who is the Head of the church.

To Make Propitiation as an Empathetic High Priest – 2:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:17–18 (NASB95)

The statement that Jesus Christ was “made like” the brethren was an affirmation of His humanity in that He was conceived in the womb, born as a baby, grew up, developed, matured, slept, was subject to temptation, became tired, had emotions, endured physical pain, and died a physical death. Also, He shared a common physical ancestry of being a descendant of Abraham through the lineage of Isaac and Jacob. While these “proofs” of His humanity speak to His

physical origin and to His physical and emotional development, they do not address His behavior and spiritual nature.

From (before) His physical birth, Jesus had “spiritual life” that was like that which is in those who have been born again of the Spirit of God. He did not have a spiritual life that was inherited from Adam. The spiritual life of all who are of the “seed of Adam” is dead or non-operative. That statement sounds like an oxymoron but this condition is the result of the declaration of God to Adam that on the day that Adam would eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that he would die. The behavior of Jesus was that, though He was tempted, He did not yield to that temptation and, therefore, was sinless in His behavior. That is totally different from the rest of humanity in that we believe and have experiential evident that “all have sinned and there is none righteous.”

Since the work of redemption has been finished, in which Jesus presented Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice that satisfied divine justice, Jesus now functions as our High Priest in the true tabernacle in the heavens. Because He was tested in the same fashion as we are, He understands what it is like to be human. Therefore, He can help us when we are tested and tempted and show mercy when we fail.