

“The Hypostatic Union”
Hebrews 2:14-18
(Preached at Trinity, October 29, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The Book of Hebrews glorifies the person and work of Christ. It makes us hunger for the day when we will see Him face to face, to behold the radiance of His glory. In **Chapter 1** the author stressed the infinite superiority of Jesus. This continues as the theme of **Chapter 2**. The chapter opens with the phrase, “because of this.” The writer is making some important application to what he wrote in **Chapter 1**. Namely, if Jesus Christ is infinitely superior to the angels and is seated at the right hand of Majesty on high, how should we respond? What expectation is placed upon us? The answer is clear: “Pay close attention to it and rest upon it lest you drift away from it.”
Hebrews 2:3 NAU - "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"
2. Jesus rules with all power and glory. All things are under His reign.
 - A. In **Chapter 1** we saw the great mystery of Jesus Christ as God. He is the exact, identical representation of God. The author used the word ὑπόστασις which the NASB translates “nature.”
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"
The Father and the Son and the Spirit are of the same one nature. God is undivided. He is not 1/3 Father and 1/3 Son and 1/3 Holy Spirit. He is one, single Divine being.
By the word hypostasis here we are to understand that Jesus has the one and same and exact nature of God.
 - B. Jesus is eternally glorious. He was the eternal Son before He became man. He has always been infinitely superior to the angels. But as Redeemer, He briefly, for a little while, became a little lower than the angels. He had to first become like us. **Verse 10** says it was fitting for Him. He had to become mortal, subject to our weaknesses. He had to suffer. This was in order to save His people from their sins.
3. The passage before us this morning gives us one of the clearest descriptions of the incarnation of Christ. It is mysterious, yet of great importance. It is essential to the Gospel message. Your salvation is inseparable from the person and work of Christ. Do you know the nature of the one you profess? Do you understand why Jesus is the only possible way of salvation. He had to become like us.
Hebrews 2:14 NAU - "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,"

- A. This describes the ὑπόστασις or nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the union of two natures in one person. Theologically, we refer to this as the hypostatic union of Christ – the union of two natures in one person. The eternal Son of God became man – He took on a human nature while maintaining His Divine nature. It is mysterious but glorious to consider.
- B. David Mathis, the executive editor of *Desiring God* writes:
 “At the end of the day, the term (hypostatic) itself is not essential, but the concept behind the term is infinitely precious — and worshipfully mind-stretching. It is immeasurably sweet, and awe-inspiring, to know that Jesus’s two natures are perfectly united in his one person. Jesus is not divided. He is not two people. He is one person. As the Chalcedonian Creed states, his two natures are without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. Jesus is one.”¹
- C. **Verse 17** reminds us that the incarnation was essential to the work of Christ.
Hebrews 2:17 NAU - "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things"
 Jesus had to take upon Himself our human nature. By nature we mean all of the characteristics that make up the human being. All of God’s creatures have a nature that defines what they are. We have a cat and she has a cat nature – that which defines her cat-hood. She doesn’t have a dog nature or a horse nature. She is in every way a cat.
 In the incarnation Jesus took upon Himself a human nature.
 He had to become like us sharing all of the characteristics of humanity.
Hebrews 2:11 NAU - "He is not ashamed to call them brethren,"
 He had to become one of us so that He might deliver us.
 We are one with Him. He became like us in every way, except without sin.
Hebrews 4:15 NAU - "One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin."
- D. Jesus became mortal so that through death he gained authority over death.
Hebrews 2:17 NAU - "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things"
 “In all things” = “In every way.”
- E. The incarnation involves the union of the Divine nature and the human nature into the one person, the perfect God-Man. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. The hypostatic union describes the union of two natures of Jesus Christ. The human and the Divine natures shared by the one person of Christ.
Colossians 2:9 NAU - "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,"
1 Timothy 2:5 NAU - "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,"
- F. We also see this in the Gospel of **John**.
John 1:1 NAU - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
John 1:14 NAU - "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-hypostatic-union>

4. Jesus has two natures and yet the two natures are undivided. Jesus is not two persons. He isn't a Divine person and a human person. He is a single, solitary person, the second person of the Godhead, the eternal Son. But in the incarnation there is a union of two natures in the one person.
5. There are two aspects of Christ's work as our Redeemer. There were two parties to which His work was directed. The first is seen in **Verses 14-16**. He came on behalf of His brethren—to become like us and to die for us so that we might be delivered from sin and death.
He was made like us so that He could die for us.
6. The second party to which Christ's work was directed was God the Father. We see this in the second half of **Verse 17**. He came in service to God, to satisfy God's justice. The author uses the term propitiation.
Hebrews 2:17 NAU - "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."
"Propitiation" from the word ἱλάσκομαι – the word us only used twice.
- A. It is used here and again in Luke 18:13 where it is translated mercy.
Luke 18:13 NAU - "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"
- B. It is the verbal form of the nouns ἱλαστήριον and ἱλασμός
Romans 3:25 KJV - "Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood"
- C. We catch a glimpse of the meaning in **Hebrews 5**
Hebrews 9:5 NAU - "and above it *were* the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat (ἱλαστήριον); but of these things we cannot now speak in detail."
The mercy seat was the covering of the Ark of the Covenant. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would sprinkle the blood of the atoning sacrifice, thus turning away the wrath of God. God's justice had to be satisfied. His wrath had to be appeased.
Jesus Christ as our high priest made propitiation for the sins of His people, thus accomplishing the way of forgiveness and reconciliation.
- D. Propitiation refers to the satisfaction of God's divine justice. It satisfies God's demand for the punishment of sin.
7. Jesus overcame the curse of sin by becoming a curse in our place.
Verse 16 reminds us that this was not made possible for the fallen angels. Jesus did not suffer in their place. He didn't become like them. He didn't take upon Himself their nature. Jesus became like us so that He might save us.

Conclusion:

1. The issue in the Book of Hebrews is the sufficiency of Christ.
How does one become a partaker of the redemption purchased by Christ?
It cannot be earned by some action on your part. It can't be purchased by the accumulation of good works. It can only be received by faith.
Acts 16:31 NAU - "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."
Romans 3:23-25 NAU - "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith."
2. Notice in **Verse 16** - "He gives help to the descendant of Abraham."
That is, He gives help to those who are of the faith of Abraham – the true descendants of Abraham.
Galatians 3:9 NAU - "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer."
3. Jesus must be received in His fullness.
We need His divine nature in His infinite perfection. Only an infinite Savior could bear the infinite wrath of God.
We need His human nature because He had to become like us. He had to be born subject to the Law as we were. He had to fulfill the Law's demands which we did not. We need His righteousness. This is the essence of the Gospel message.
3. This is the place Satan hates the most. He hates the Gospel and does everything in his power to prevent the Gospel from its saving work.
Donald Grey Barnhouse once asked the question, "What would a city look like that was completely ruled by the devil?" While many of us might picture a city like Sodom and Gomorrah or Babylon, Barnhouse said a city completely ruled by Satan might look like something we never imagined: Every lawn would be mowed and every bridge would be clean of graffiti. No one would drive over the speed limit, children would be obedient to parents, marriages would remain intact, and every church would have a beautiful building. However, the gospel would not be preached at any place or in any pulpit because the devil's primary ambition is to prevent the gospel from being preached. The devil's aim is to keep people from believing the gospel.²
4. The point of the Book of Hebrews is for the readers to consider so great a Gospel. Considering so great a Savior, why would anyone not embrace it. And for those who profess Christ, why would anyone not devote themselves entirely to Him?

² R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 35–36.