

Sermon Transcript
06.22.2025
Hebrews 2:14-15

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- Good morning. Please open your Bibles to Hebrews 2. We'll be in verses 14-15 this morning.
- As you do, I want to make you aware of the importance of this date. There are lots of significant historical events that have taken place on June 22, but I want to mention two in particular.
- First, today is the 6th anniversary of the birth of my son, Canon. Happy birthday, buddy.
- Second, is that today is the 1594th anniversary of the start of the council of Ephesus in 431AD which was called in response to the teaching of Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople.
- And Nestorius had a really 'creative' view of Christology; namely, he didn't like that the early church referred to Mary as theotokos, the mother of God. In the early church, that functioned a bit like a shibboleth to test one's orthodoxy because the point was that the child within Mary's womb was the son of God, He didn't later become God or something. But Nestorius didn't like that. In effect, He divided Jesus into two persons, a divine Son of God and a human Christ.
- When Christ was tired, that was the human person. When He performed a miracle, that was the divine Son.
- Well, this didn't go over well with Cyril, the archbishop of Alexandria. He recognized that Christology isn't abstract ivory tower stuff, but is relevant to our understanding of the gospel. After all, the implication of Nestorianism is that when Christ died, it was just the human person and not the incarnate Son of God. And, as the church has always confessed, the one who died needed to be both human and divine, human in order to die, and divine in order for that death to be of infinite worth. In other words, Nestorianism implies that we have the death of only a finite person. And the merit of a finite human death could hardly be applied to anyone besides the finite person who offers it.
- So a council was called at Ephesus. As the pope was unable to attend, Cyril was appointed as president which offended Nestorius so he refused to attend despite repeated requests.
- The council was supposed to begin on June 7, 431, but had to be postponed when a big contingency of bishops from the East (most notably John, the bishop of Antioch, a major supporter of Nestorius) had not arrived. After waiting two weeks, on the 22nd of June, Cyril finally decided to convene the council without them.
- The council acted fairly quickly and condemned Nestorius and deposed him from his office.
- A few days later, John of Antioch finally showed up, heard that Nestorius was condemned and said, we'll see about that, so he convened his own council that was

much smaller than Cyril's and guess what? That council under John's leadership just so happened to say that Nestorius wasn't the heretic, Cyril was the true heretic.

- So Cyril's council again convened and not only reaffirmed the condemnation of Nestorius, but also added John of Antioch and his posse to the anathemas.
- And you thought church history was boring...this is like an episode of a soap opera!
- This could have gone on indefinitely with councils and counter-councils, but the emperor intervened, arrested both Cyril & John, declared both councils void, put John & Cyril in a room together & said work it out or you won't get out. So they hashed through the issues & worked it out with a formula of union in 433 where John actually agreed with the condemnation of Nestorius & so the decision of Ephesus was affirmed by both the Western and Eastern churches.
- If you want to know more about that, we actually did a TEC on Christological heresies a couple of months back so I'd encourage you to listen to that.
- But I mention all of this because of the importance of understanding Christology & how that affects our understanding of the gospel. In Hebrews chapter 1, we saw a deep dive into the deity of Christ and now in chapter 2 we're seeing some of the most profound statements as it relates to His humanity. We'll see more of that this week and next. Let's pray and we'll dive in.
- Self, others, me.
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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... (Hebrews 2:14)

- Let's begin by setting the scene.
- We've been arguing that the book of Hebrews is an apologetic for the supremacy of Christ. Christ is better is the overarching theme of the book.
- In the context of Hebrews, Christ's superiority is emphasized in contrast to the Mosaic covenant and all of its various elements. Christ is better than the prophets who proclaimed the word of God because He is the word, Christ is better than the angels who mediated the covenant because He is the true mediator who is both God and man. Christ is better than Moses and the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Law and the Mosaic covenant and on and on. That's what Hebrews is about and so we'll come back to drink at this well over and over the next 2 years.
- He offers a better sacrifice as a better priest under a better covenant built on better promises. No matter how you slice it, Christ is better.
- And this is especially important when we remember the historical context. In particular, these first century Jewish Christians are facing a degree of persecution and so there is a temptation to renounce Christ, to apostatize, and go back to the seeming safety of the synagogue, to put themselves back under the law and all of its rituals and forms. So the supremacy of Christ is used to show how futile and vain that would be.
- And sometimes one thing is better, but the old is just as good. Until just a few months ago, one of our members would always make fun of me for having a really old iPhone, but it worked fine...until it didn't!

- That's kinda what is meant by Christ's supremacy. Not that the old is just a bit outdated and slow, but like a phone that's completely broken and no longer functions! It isn't just that Christ is better. Its also that the old is obsolete. The altar is closed. The temple has been replaced. A new sheriff is in town so there's a new law. Not only would going back to the old be foolish, but futile.
- And in chapter 1, we saw Christ's supremacy to the angels in light of His divinity. He is the Creator, they are created. He sits on the throne, they serve the throne.
- The focus in chapter 1 was the deity of Christ. As we've mentioned, perhaps no single chapter of Scripture makes a more compelling case for the deity of Christ. He shares in the honors of God, the attributes of God, the name of God, the deeds of God, and the seat of God.
- And then in chapter 2, Christ is again contrasted with the angels, but this time in regards His humanity. He is the embodiment of what humanity was intended to be and He is the one in whom the original creation mandate is fulfilled as all things are subjected to Him and He exercises dominion over all things (including the angels and as we'll see today, even death and the devil). If you recall, we saw that Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 8 and the expectation that man would rule and reign over the created order. The one who was for a little while made lower than the angels is now crowned with glory and honor and will one day have all his enemies subjected to Him.
- And given the fact that He shares in our humanity, He is not ashamed to call us brothers as we saw last time. I did misspeak in my last sermon so we posted a little clarification on the website. It sounded like I was saying that Christ sings OUR praises in the congregation, when I meant to say that Christ sings the praises of His Father in the midst of the congregation in light of what He has done to rescue and redeem the congregation.
- But this emphasis on Christ's humanity and why it was necessary will continue in our text this morning so let's turn our attention to vs. 14.
- Last time we saw the author quote from Isaiah 8 which says "I and the children God has given me."
- So now the author picks up the word children again.
- The children in view are elsewhere defined as sons of God or as sons of Abraham.
- Christ's shares in the same human nature as all humanity, but the reason for the incarnation is specified as being for the elect in a particular way. There IS a sense in which you could say that Christ was made man and died for all people, but there is another sense in which His life and death was for particularly for the sheep, the elect, the remnant.
- But, again, here the emphasis is on our shared human nature. That's what flesh and blood signifies. It is an idiomatic way of addressing human nature, but in particular is often used to signify the weakness of mortal humanity. So Christ shared not only in our humanity, but even in our weakness, which fits well in the context of talking about his suffering. We are weak in the sense of susceptible to pain and suffering and even death.
- He has partaken of these same things, that is flesh and blood. So what does that mean? Well, as mentioned in the intro, there have been lots of attempts to try to explain what is meant by the incarnation, what is meant by the word became flesh.

- One early theory was that Jesus possessed a human body, but not a human soul. The early church rightly rejected this view called Apollinarianism for they recognized that if Jesus didn't assume all that it means to be human then He wasn't fully human and thus we aren't fully saved.
- Another view was that Christ was human and divine, but that His humanity and deity merged to form some hybrid that was neither fully human or God, like a mule is neither a donkey nor a horse. This view, called Eutychianism, was also rejected.
- As was Nestorianism as mentioned earlier because it separated Christ into two persons.
- Each of these theories got something wrong about Christology and were thus rejected by the church with the final orthodox definition of Christology and the hypostatic union in particular coming at Chalcedon in 451. There the church affirmed 4 essential Christological truths:
 - 1. Jesus Christ is truly divine.
 - 2. Jesus Christ is truly human.
 - 3. The divine and human natures of Christ are distinct. They don't merge to create a hybrid nature.
 - 4. The divine and human natures of Christ are completely united in one person.
- These are the boundaries. Any view that denies the deity of Christ or denies His humanity or merges the nature or divides the person is beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. Again, we did a TEC on this a few months back so listen to that if you want to know more about why this matters.
- Bottom line, Christ is two natures in one person.
- Now, obviously, as the author of Hebrews is writing chapter 2, he doesn't have all of this subsequent clarification in mind, but it is important for us to understand how the church has universally understood what is meant by how Christ participates in our humanity. He shares in it fully. All that it means to be truly human, was and is possessed by Christ.
- The author of Hebrews is building to a crescendo here. That crescendo concerns the necessity of Christ's solidarity and identification with humanity. In order to rescue humanity from our collective plight, He must become human. Since the children share in flesh and blood, the Son also shared in flesh and blood. Whatever it means to share in humanity, Christ did it.
- Now, when I say whatever it means to share in humanity, I'm excluding sin. Sin is not an essential attribute of humanity, its an accidental attribute. Adam was fully human before sin. In some sense, you could even say that he became a bit less human because of sin. Sin is a bug not a feature of humanity. And one day we will be set free from sin and thus more fully human. In other words, there is a sense in which Christ's humanity was even more human than our own. We have only known a deformed and disordered perversion of human nature.
- So that's the what. Christ shared in our humanity. The resemblance wasn't superficial. As we'll see, He shared in it fully, all the way to death so His participation in humanity is profound and deep. He is fully and truly human, beset by the physical weaknesses and mortality that characterize human existence. As mentioned earlier, we need to avoid merging the two natures of Christ in such a way as to make him some sort of unsympathetic Superman figure.

- Superman looks and talks and acts like a human, but he most certainly was not. But Christ was and is fully human and that, as we'll see later in the book, was essential for Him to carry out the task as our faithful and sympathetic high priest.
- That's the what. Christ's participation in the fullness of humanity.
- Now we get to the why.
- We'll see this answered in two ways, first in the latter half of verse 14 and the second reason in verse 15.
- Let's look at the first reason from verse 14.
- *that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...*
- Notice the word "that." In Greek that's the conjunction hina which means so that or in order that. It signifies purpose or goal.
- Why did the Son of God take on flesh? Why did God become man?
- There are lots of ways you can answer that. In fact, 20 years ago John Piper wrote a book called 50 Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die where he tried to articulate some of those divine purposes.
- The problem is that anytime you ask the question, why does God do what He does, there are innumerable answers to that question. For His own glory, for the good of His people, in order to discipline some of His children, in order to warn His enemies, in order to magnify His grace, and on and on we could go depending on the circumstance.
- Answering that question is like looking through a prism refracting light in dozens of directions. In one act, God may be doing hundreds if not thousands or myriad things and we might only know a few of them as Piper has said.
- So here in Hebrews we have two reasons. They aren't exhaustive, but they are true. As has been said, we can know God truly, but not fully.
- The fact that we can't know Him fully, should humble us. But the fact that we can know Him truly means that our humility isn't soft-minded intellectual agnosticism. In other words, because I can know Him truly, I can boldly and strongly confess that Christ is the eternal Son of God, but, because I can't know Him fully, I can also confess that I don't understand all of the complexities of the metaphysics of the trinity or the hypostatic union.
- To use the illustration we've used before, knowing doctrine includes an awareness of when to punt and when to go for it. You shouldn't punt on 2nd and 5, but neither should you go for it on 4th and 50 in the 2nd quarter.
- Some of you are tempted to theological pride, you're gonna go for it on 4th and 50, because you think you should be able to figure everything out. You need to think more about the fact that God cannot be known fully. As Augustine said, if you could know Him fully, He wouldn't be God because God is by definition transcendent and infinite.
- Others are tempted to a more subtle form of theological pride that is modeled on postmodern skepticism and refuses to form convictions and thus you need to think more about the fact not only can God be truly known, but that He has communicated through His word for just that purpose. The Bible warns against those who are always learning, but never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.
- So, there are lots of reasons that Christ became man, lots of reasons that He died. But here in vss. 14-15 we see two reasons for the incarnation. Two reasons that God became

man. We'll actually see two more reasons next week in verses 16-18, but for now, let's look at what he writes in vs. 14.

- The first reason that the Son became man was so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, i.e. the devil.
- The author doesn't really explain why death was necessary to destroy death, he just kind of assumes it, but it stands to reason that if death is necessary, then the Son must take on a flesh and blood that is capable of dying. As Calvin says:
 - "...he put on our nature that he might thus make himself capable of dying, for as God he could not undergo death." (John Calvin)
- We know from other passages of scripture and even from later in this chapter that Christ's death had a substitutionary intent. Christ died for us and in our place. He died as a vicarious sacrifice so you might sometimes hear of vicarious penal substitution. He died in our place, as a substitute for our sin.
- That is at the heart of the atonement and an answer to the question, why did Christ have to die. But we see another answer here as well. He died in order to destroy the devil.
- This is another answer to the question of why Christ had to die. We call it the Christus victor theory of the atonement. Christ died in order to defeat the devil.
- Both penal substitution and Christus victor are true. Both are legitimate reasons that Christ had to die and thus reasons why He had to partake of flesh and blood. The atonement is another place where we can use the image of a prism. At the heart is penal substitution, but we also see Christus victor and moral example and so forth.
- And notice the irony in here. Christ used the very weapon of the devil against him. It would be like someone taking Thor's hammer, mjolnir, and using it against him. As John Chrysostom says:
 - "by what the devil prevailed, by that was he overcome, and the very thing which was his strong weapon against the world, [namely], Death, by this Christ smote him. In this he exhibits the greatness of the conqueror's power. Dost thou see how great good death hath wrought?" (John Chrysostom)
- And think about what this implies for God's sovereignty. God uses death and uses evil to accomplish good. Some people think that the best way to protect God's honor is to suggest that He has nothing to do with evil. And yet the biblical picture is that both good and evil are within the bounds of God's control. His relationship to good and evil are asymmetrical. He does good and merely uses evil, but nonetheless, evil is not somehow beyond His power or sovereignty.
- The death of Christ is the prime example. The most evil act ever perpetrated wasn't the Holocaust or the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge or the Rwandan genocide or antebellum slavery or the atrocities of the Soviet Union or even abortion. As evil as all of those are, they don't top the list. The most evil act to ever occur was the death of Christ and yet it was also the greatest, the best, the most good.
- This is part of the irony of the gospel. Later we'll read that Christ endured the cross and scorned its shame and Colossians says;
 - *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* (Colossians 2:15)

- See what happens there. Christ plays an Uno reverse cards on the demonic realm. He embraces the shame of death and in that He ends up subjecting those rulers and authorities to shame.
- So He uses evil to accomplish good. He uses shame to defeat shame. And here in Hebrews 2, He uses death to defeat death.
- Or, to be more precise to the particular language of Heb 2, He uses death to destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil. As Augustine of Hippo notes:
 - “The cross of the Lord became a trap for the Devil.” (Augustine)
- BTW, the word destroy here probably doesn’t mean destroy like we tend to think of the term, sometimes it carries the nuance of absolute obliteration, but it often means render powerless which is how the NASB translates it here in Hebrews 2.
- We know from elsewhere in Scripture that the devil has been bound. In Mark 3, Jesus speaks of binding the strong man in order to plunder His house. And in Colossians 2 as we just read, the demonic realm was disarmed.
- We’ll see the full and final destruction of the devil at some point in the future when the devil is thrown into the lake of fire. BTW, just a few short verses later, death itself will be thrown in as well. So we see an already, but not yet aspect to the devil’s destruction. His doom is sure. His defeat is certain. And in some sense, he’s already been defeated, defanged, destroyed, but in another sense, he is still active for a while.
- So how was he destroyed? Well, given Christ’s work as our faithful high priest, that we’ll read about next week, He has made perfect provision for sin. And sin is the enemy’s weapon. Even his name is helpful. Here he is called the Devil from the Greek diabolos, from which we get the word diabolical. But the original meaning of diabolos, similar to the Hebrew Satan is slanderer or accuser. In fact, in the Septuagint, diabolos serves as the Greek translation for the Hebrew word “Satan”. So the primary weapon of the enemy is accusation.
- And when we are dead in our trespasses and sins, those accusation exert an insurmountable power over us. After all, it is kind of hard to argue with him when he’s right. He accuses us of sin and he’s absolutely right.
- And even when we are born again into relationship with Christ, the enemy attempts to wield power over us because his accusations are partially true. He accuses us of sin and we are indeed guilty of great sin! And sin is always tied to death. From the very beginning, in the garden, the connection between sin and death was evident.
- In the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.
- Or as Paul writes, the wages of sin is death.
- So the accuser has some power over us as long as we are under the power of sin and death.
- But he is not only the accuser. He is also the deceiver, the father of lies. As I said before, when we are dead in our sin, His accusations are accurate, but for God’s children, he merely tells a partial truth.
- He leaves out the best part, the most important part. The Jesus saves part.
- Because if those sins have been forgiven and if death has been defeated, then the Devil has been disarmed, rendered powerless.
- As an illustration of this its been a while since I’ve quoted The Office so here goes. There’s a scene where everyone is making fun of Michael for falling into a koi pond so

Jim tells him that his embarrassment is actually what fuels their jokes. The more he resists, the more they'll laugh at his expense. But if he'll be humble and self-deprecating, then they'll eventually move on. Its like a joke jiu jitsu. Now, obviously Michael takes it too far, but I think that's a good principle for understanding spiritual warfare.

- Luther talks about this a lot. He says that one of the best strategies when you're tempted by shame is to lean into the accusation. To say, yeah, I am guilty of that, but I'm also guilty of so much more. You don't know the half of it. You see the lust and pride, but have you considered my greed and sloth and deception and insubordination and so forth?
- I am far worse than even the accuser knows.
- AND YET its all been bought and paid for. Every single penny, every single ounce. Tetelestai, it is finished.
- If that's your stance, what can the accuser do? If you plead guilty, but then plead the blood of Christ, then he has nothing to hold over you.
- You can see how this is the opposite of the therapeutic self-help age we live in that tries to convince you that you're good enough and that your problem is just a lack of self-esteem. You aren't enough. But Christ is and He's forgiven your sin and defeated your accuser. So walk in freedom!
- Speaking of freedom, let's look at verse 15 and the second related reason for the incarnation.

...and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.
(Hebrews 2:15)

- What is the second reason? He must become man in order to die. And his death not only destroys the enemy, but delivers all those enslaved to the enemy. As Jesus says in Mark 3:27:
 - *But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.* (Mark 3:27)
- That's what has happened in the life and death of Christ. He has not only bound the strong man, but has plundered his house and released all the captives!
- And we see that same theme in the Exodus account as well. I think that's significance given how prevalent the OT narrative and especially the person of Moses and the experience of Israel in the desert is to the book of Hebrews.
- So think back to Exodus. God delivers his people through death. First through the events that are symbolized by Passover and the death of the firstborn. That's what initially compels Pharoah to relent and let the people go, but ultimately, Pharoah's destruction is accomplished in the events of the Red Sea and Israel is finally and fully delivered.
- BTW, consider how Israel's experience at the Red Sea was called a baptism by Paul in 1 Corinthians and then Christ's death is also called a baptism in Romans.
- So the baptism of Israel in the dead sea both destroyed Pharoah and delivered Israel and likewise the death of Christ both destroys the devil and delivers His people.
- So death is the means by which God defeats death. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:54
 - *...Death is swallowed up in victory.* (1 Corinthians 15:54)

- And this fulfills the hope of Psalm 110 that the author quoted in chapter 1. Remember how God the Father says to His messianic son, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.
- Lest there be any confusion, death is one of those very enemies that will be subjected to Christ. As Paul writes earlier in 1 Corinthians:
 - *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* (1 Corinthians 15:25–26)
- This is completely antithetical to the reigning philosophical presuppositions of the Roman empire. According to Stoicism, death was inevitable and thus you should just accept it and not fear it. And according to Platonic thought, death was a great escape from the prison of the body. But the biblical picture is different from both of those ideas.
- Death isn't a great escape. God uses it for good, but death is nonetheless an enemy. And we shouldn't fear it, but not because its inevitable, but rather because its been rendered impotent.
- So death has been dealt the decisive blow. It is already dead, but not yet.
- And not only death, but the devil, who through death, has a sort of illegitimate authority.
- But with the death of Christ, the devil has been defeated and death no longer reigns. In fact, Paul can mock it as he says in 1 Corinthians 15:55
 - *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?* (1 Corinthians 15:55)
- As the 17th century English poet, John Donne, wrote in his poem, Death be not Proud:
 - One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die. (John Donne; Death, Be Not Proud)
- That should fire you up. I love a good trash talk. Like when David asks of Goliath, who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the army of the living God! In effect, the Bible is taunting, mocking, trash talking death. That should wake you up and get the blood pumping.
- That's exactly what happened for the early church. They were supercharged by this truth. When threatened with death, what did Paul and various martyrs say? to die is gain. In other words, the worst you can do to me is make me take a brief nap.
- That would be profoundly liberating if we actually believed it.
- You see the fear of death is paralyzing. On a fairly superficial level, this is obvious. Imagine if you were immortal. Imagine that you're Superman or you're Phil Connors in Groundhog Day. Why wouldn't you go bungee jumping or sky diving or deep sea diving or whatever. I'm sure many of us can think of things that we might find interesting, but we are too scared to do it. But what if you couldn't die? How much more free we would feel?
- And think of how much of modern life is spent trying to avoid death. Between the fitness and medical and nutritional and pharmaceutical industries, we spend hundreds of billions of dollars trying to stave off death. And we've kinda sanitized ourselves from it.
- Just a few generations ago, when a relative would die, you would lay them out on the table and everyone would gather there to pay respects. And then you would bury them in the family plot there on your own land so you'd be regularly reminded of them. Death was a natural part of life.

- But not today. Today we avoid the reminders of death like the plague. Now we have morgues and funeral parlors and cemeteries in the hope that death is out of sight and out of mind.
- And we don't have funerals, but celebration of life services & not burials, but cremation.
- & we don't even like to talk directly about death. We use euphemisms like pass away, sleep, kick the bucket, bought the farm, bite the dust, 6feet under, resting in peace or gone someplace better.
- I think to some degree this shows how uncomfortable we are with death and that perhaps shows how unconvinced we are as a culture that the resurrection is real and Jesus is better.
- That's why its important to memento mori, Latin for remember you must die. That doesn't mean that we all need dozens of skulls in our house like Ed's haunted office, but whatever helps you to remember mortality is helpful.
- I have a pic of my son standing by my dad's open casket because I want them to see death. And both of my kids were sitting in the room with us as Kaci's grandmother took her last breath. That's morbid you might think. Your right, death is morbid. That's the whole point. I want them to see how ugly death is so that they'll have a better appreciation for how beautiful Christ is.
- We remember death in order to remember to live well. And we remember the resurrection in order to die well.
- But regardless, death has been robbed of its power. Take that idea of the fear of death and apply it beyond the obvious applications like skydiving. How much differently would you live if you lived in constant awareness of the inevitable defeat of death? If the resurrection was constantly what drove your thinking and feeling and doing?
- That's why Paul ends 1 Corinthians with this exhortation:
 - *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- You see how this imperative flows out of the indicative. That is, the command to be steadfast and immovable, is a logical application of the truth that Christ is risen and not only is He risen, but He is the firstfruits, the pioneer. He has trailblazed the path through death so that we might see that He has passed safely through and made it to the other side. He had to walk through the wilderness in order to lead many sons to glory.
- As Chrysostom says:
 - "For those who are indeed worthy of being grieved for, are these who still fear and shudder at death, who have no faith in the resurrection" (John Chrysostom)
- Death is like a childhood bully. No one had the guts to stand up to him until one day Jesus takes his best punch and then gets up and lays him out cold. After that, the bully loses his power, the mystique, the stigma, the reputation.
- As we saw back in Psalm 8 which was quoted back in verses 6-8, humans were created to rule the world for God. But because of sin, we were subjected to death. Notice that irony. We, who were created to rule, are subjected to slavery.
- So Christ became a servant in order to defeat death and restore us to the imago dei. He has raised us not only from death to life, but from slavery to glory.
- So what do we do with this? I want to suggest just a few different implications:

- First, we should be all the more eager to know Christ. If all of our hope hangs on Christ, then it is impossible to know too much about Him. We should be eager to study the person and work of Christ. To know why it is essential that He be both God and man. To know why He became man and why He died. To know what His death accomplished in all of its complexity and glory.
- Yes, there should be a relational knowing that is MORE than mere intellectual knowledge, but never LESS. So are you growing in your understanding of Christ?
- 2nd as we grow in our knowledge of Christ, our worship should be growing. Everything you could possibly learn about Christ is good, assuming that its true, because He is the very definition of goodness. So, is your worship growing? Are you growing in gratitude & virtues like love, humility & kindness? Are you being more & more transformed by & conformed to the image of Christ?
- Third, we should grieve differently from the world. Maybe you're facing your own death or the death of a loved one. Maybe you've recently lost a friend or family member. This text should fuel your hope. As Paul writes, we do not grieve as though without hope.
 - If you are in Christ, then even death cannot separate you from the love of Christ. I once heard a pastor say that he was counseling someone who was about to be taken in for a very risky operation and the pastor said, you WILL wake up. I don't know where you'll be, in this hospital or in heaven, but you'll awake...and your body WILL be healed...I don't know if it will be today or when Christ returns, but you will be healed.
 - That's how Christians should think and talk. We should remind ourselves of that day after day after day and remind each other of that until we really truly believe it.
- Fourth, we shouldn't anesthetize ourselves from death. We should think of death and in particular think of resurrection. One of the ways to defeat a fear is to confront it. Christ defeated death by destroying it. And one of the ways that we learn to walk in freedom from fear is by staring it in the face and being reminded that death is swallowed up in victory.
- The Scriptures often present the allure of sin as being fixated and focused on the present life. Eat, and drink, for tomorrow we die. But Christ calls us to lay up for ourselves not treasures on earth, but in heaven, and to seek the things that are above.
- And in light of that, ask yourself why you might be paralyzed by fear? Are there places where your willingness to walk in obedience to Christ is being hindered by some fear, rather of death or ostracism or inconvenience or whatever?
- I'll end with this. The devil is portrayed in this & other texts as having a form of power. He is described as the one who has the power of death or the ruler of this world in a sense.
- And yet this isn't a dualistic picture of two somewhat evenly matched opposing forces locked in perpetual battle. Satan's authority is mediated and temporary. He is a pawn in God's providence. And in Christ's death, he's been rendered powerless.
- So as R.C. Sproul notes:
 - "Satan does not hold the keys of death." (R.C. Sproul)
- As we read in Revelation 1

- *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (Revelation 1:17–18)*
- Christ holds the keys. Christ has the power. Christ is in charge.
- And as a result, we read this in Revelation 20
 - *and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)*
 - The devil doesn't rule in hell. The devil himself is tormented.
 - And even death doesn't win in the end. Look at vss. 13-14.
 - *And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:13–14)*
 - In other words, death, thou shalt die.
- So come Lord Jesus.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence the table
- As we prepare for communion, I want us to think about Christ's death in particular. As Paul writes, this meal is a constant reminder of the death of Christ. Look at 1 Corinthians 11:26
- For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)
- This meal is an opportunity for us to think about the benefits of the death of Christ. His broken body, His shed blood, our forgiveness, our reconciliation to God and each other.
- And in light of our passage, there is also an eschatological dimension to this meal. Christ says in the gospels that He was excited to share the Passover with his disciples because He wouldn't eat it again UNTIL the kingdom.
- That until is important. It is eschatological. It means that there is a future expectation.
- We read about that in Revelation as the marriage supper of the lamb.
- So, as we prepare to partake, we do so looking both backward and forward. Backward to Christ's death, but forward to His return. Backward to our old life that was buried with Christ, and forward to who He is remaking us day by day.
- We are fully forgiven...even now...but one day we will be fully free from all of the residue of sin.
- So let's partake with appreciation for the past and anticipation for the future.
- The body of Christ...