

In All Things Made Like unto His Brethren, I

So Great Salvation

1. In **Heb 2:1-4**, Paul admonished his fellow Hebrew believers to take heed lest they should “neglect so great salvation” which was at the first began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus and was confirmed by those that heard Him, God bearing witness with signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. . .;
2. As to what this “so great salvation” is and what it involves, we are not left guessing, for Paul explains it very systematically in the verses that follow; it essentially involves Jesus assuming two roles:
 - a. **Verses 9, 14**—Jesus had to taste death for every man; a reference to His death as an **atoning sacrifice**;
 - b. **Verses 17-18**—Next, Jesus had to become high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement (reconciliation) for the sins of the people—a reference to His work as **High Priest** in the heavenly sanctuary,
3. Hence, this “so great salvation” essentially called for Christ to have dual roles—the role of an a) atoning sacrifice and b) high priest; this dual role was illustrated vividly in the sanctuary service in the time of Moses:
 - a. atonement was made by the **priest** in the sanctuary for the forgiveness of sin on the basis of the blood of an **atoning sacrifice (Lev 4:13-25)**;
 - b. both the death of an atoning sacrifice and priestly ministrations were required in the work of atonement and both roles pointed to Jesus, the true **Sacrifice** and great **High Priest**;

The Necessity of the Incarnation

4. **IMPORTANT**: Before Jesus could assume these two roles for the salvation of man however, He had to take a required step in order to qualify for these roles: this is explained in **verses 5-9**:
 - a. **Verses 5-9**—Jesus had to be made lower than the angels; a reference to His **incarnation**; Jesus had to assume the form and nature of the race he came to save;
 - i. Jesus had to assume the position and place of Adam at the point in time when Adam no longer had dominion over all things; in other words, after Adam had fallen into sin and had corrupted his nature;
 - ii. In taking human nature upon Himself, Jesus assumed the role of second Adam;
5. In **Hebrews 2**, the humanity of Christ is presented as the **basis** and the **ground** upon which Christ’s dual roles as atoning Sacrifice and High Priest are built upon;

- a. **Verse 9-- Atoning Sacrifice**—to be an atoning sacrifice, Jesus had to be made lower than the angels that He might taste death for every man; a reference to Jesus taking the form and nature of man to qualify as atoning sacrifice;
 - b. **Verse 17--High Priest and Mediator**—He had to be made in all things like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest;
6. **IMPORTANT:** Paul’s argument in **Hebrews 2** is, if Jesus did not take the preliminary step of lowering Himself and assuming the appropriate form and nature of the humanity He came to save, He would not be able to take on the roles of **Sacrifice** and **High Priest**;
7. **QUESTION:** Is the study of the incarnation of Christ important for Seventh-day Adventists?
8. **ANSWER:** It is a life and death message in view of at least one particular belief, their pioneers held on to for many years—the Last Generation theology which is based on the understanding that the final generation of believers will perfectly keep the commandments of God and reflect the perfect character of Jesus;
- a. This belief is based on the understanding that Jesus came in the same sinful flesh every fallen son and daughter of Adam received at birth, yet never sinned in that flesh;
 - b. Hence, Jesus becomes not only Savior but Example to His followers of how to live above sin, even in sinful flesh
 - c. The belief in a perfected final generation stands or falls, depending on how the nature of Christ is understood with the intellect and believed by the heart;
9. **IMPORTANT:** The topic of the incarnation serves as the basis for correctly understanding “so great salvation” (the gospel) and failing to give earnest heed to it is “letting it slip” (**Heb 2:1**);
- a. Hence, a correct understanding of the incarnation is a life and death issue
10. **IMPORTANT:** The topic of the incarnation is also important because it helps us understand what reflecting the image of Jesus is like:
- “Those who are sealed and protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.” (EW 71)*
11. If Satan wanted to undercut the gospel, he would most definitely attempt to confuse our understanding of the nature of Christ;

The Biblical Basis for the Nature of Christ

12. **QUESTION:** So, what does the Bible teach about the nature that Jesus took upon His sinless divinity at His incarnation
- a. **Heb 10:5**--What body was prepared for Him when He became man?
13. **ANSWER:** ON this extremely important point, Paul does not leave his audience guessing, as he spells it out clearly in **Hebrews 2** and elsewhere:

- a. **Verse 8**—took the nature of Adam when he was no longer had dominion over all creation because of sin; on other words, when Adam’s nature had become fallen and sinful;
 - b. **Verse 9**—made a lower than the angels; the kind of human nature that could suffer death so He could taste death for every man; this cannot be done in sinless human nature as sinless nature is not subject to death;
 - c. **Verse 10**—a character that had yet to be perfected through suffering and death
 - i. **Luke 13:32**—until Jesus had obeyed the last of His Father’s commands to die for the lost race, it could not be said that He had perfectly kept His Father’s commandments and therefore perfect in character; the death of Christ was the final test of character, making it perfect;
 - ii. **Heb 2:9**—the suffering of death therefore sealed and confirmed the perfection of Christ’s character in human flesh;
14. Hence, the nature that Christ took upon Himself could not have been the same sinless nature Adam had before the fall;
- a. **Verse 16**—of the seed of Abraham (sinful, fallen nature)
 - b. **Verse 10, 11**--he took the nature that suffers when tempted (not true of sinless nature; Adam did not have to struggle and suffer to obey God’s commands because his nature was in harmony with God’s will at the beginning)
 - c. **Verse 14**—partaker of the same flesh and blood of humanity which are corrupted by sin;
 - d. **Verse 17**—in all things made like unto his brethren
 - e. **Verse 18**—Jesus took the nature that suffered when tempted
 - f. **Heb 4:15**—He could be tempted in all points like a we are
 - g. **Matt 8:17**—He took the nature that bore the sicknesses and infirmities of the race
 - h. **Heb 5:1-2**—like any other priest, Jesus compassed with infirmity
 - i. **Rom 1:3**—Jesus was made of the seed of David according to the flesh (His humanity)
 - j. **Rom 8:3**—Paul says that Jesus took the likeness of sinful flesh
15. These bible verses unmistakably and most definitely teach that Jesus had to take man’s sinful, fallen nature as part of the contract of the plan of redemption; He took humanity upon His sinless divinity after it had been weakened by 4,000 years of sin!

Historic Adventism’s Position on the Nature of Christ

16. Historic Adventism’s position on the nature of Christ lines up fully with New Testament teaching that Jesus took fallen, sinful human nature for the salvation of man; this position can be gleaned from many books and articles published by Adventist pioneers, including Ellen White:

- “It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man.” —**2SP 39**

- “Having taken our fallen nature. . .” —**Special Instruction to the Review and Herald Office, and the Work in Battle Creek, May 26, 1896, p. 13.**
- “He condescended to connect our fallen nature with His divinity.”-- **Special Instruction to the Review and Herald Office, and the Work in Battle Creek, May 26, 1896, p. 13.**
- “He took upon Him our sinful nature.”—**RH Dec. 15, 1896**
- “. . .took our nature in its deteriorated condition.” —**ST June 8, 1898.**
- “He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature.” —**MM 181.**
- “He assumed the liabilities of human nature.”—**ST Aug 2, 1905.**
- “The great work of redemption could be carried out only by the Redeemer taking the place of fallen Adam. . . .He would take man’s fallen nature.” **RH Feb 24, 1874.**
- “He condescended to step down, step by step, to the level of fallen humanity.” --**GCB, Apr 23, 1901**
- “. . .in taking upon Himself man’s nature in its fallen condition. . .” **ST June 8, 1898.**
- “Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.”—**Special Testimony 28:771, Dec 3, 1902.**
- “Just what you may be, He was in human nature.” —**Letter 106, 1896**

17. What the incarnation teaches us is that Jesus was willing to humble Himself and empty Himself of every divine prerogative, so that He can be made like unto His brethren in all things, and effect their salvation;
18. Jesus risked all by allowing Himself to be confined in man’s dilapidated human form and nature after it had been weakened and degraded by sin for four thousand years!
19. By being made in all things like unto His brethren, Jesus could have very easily have sinned; all heaven was placed at risk when Jesus took fallen human nature and undertook the plan of redemption.
20. If the incarnation of Christ is such wonderful truth, demonstrating the breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ for the fallen race, then why are the main Christian churches opposed to it? Why are those who teach that Jesus took fallen, sinful flesh upon His divinity run the risk of being labeled a cult by the mainstream Christian denominations at large?
 - a. The teaching that Christ took sinful fallen flesh at the incarnation supposedly makes Christ a sinner and denigrates His holy person;
 - b. The argument is, Christ is too pure and too holy to dwell in sinful, human flesh
 - c. This mindset is no different from that shown by the astrologers and wise men of Babylon in Daniel’s time: “. . .the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.” **Dan 2:11;**
21. The main objection to the teaching that Jesus took sinful, fallen flesh seems to be found in the notion that such act would have made Jesus a sinner and thus render Him unfit for the role of Savior and atoning sacrifice.

Sinful Nature Is Not Sin

22. **QUESTION:** So the question is, does one become a sinner because he is born with a sinful, fallen, corrupt nature? Would Jesus have become a sinner by inheriting sinful, fallen flesh?
- If we believe in the doctrine of the original sin, it goes without saying that inheriting a sinful nature is of itself sinful;
23. **ANSWER:** The bible however, does not teach that merely being born with sinful nature automatically makes one a sinner;
- Jas 1:14-15**--sin is not an inherited, involuntary condition, but involves volition; sin is **an act of the will**, the result of personal **choice**: "*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. . .*"
 - In Ellen White's words,

It is not in the power of Satan to force anyone to sin. **Sin is the sinner's individual act.** Before sin exists in the heart, the **consent of the will must be given**, and as soon as it is given, sin is triumphant, and hell rejoices. --*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 18, 1893.

24. **Ps 51:5**--Some have cited this verse as proof supporting the notion that inheriting a sinful nature at birth, is sin: "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;*" Notice that David does not say, "I became a sinner when my mother conceived me," but rather, "**in sin** did my mother conceive me. I was shapen in iniquity." Since Adam, all have been born into a sinful, corrupt, demoralizing environment. But that should not be equated with being born a sinner and being born in a state of sin;
25. **Ps 58:2**--Some will also utilize the verse which says: "*The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*" Notice that verse speaks only of the wicked, not of all humanity. This verse uses figurative language to describe the experience of the wicked—they start in the path of wickedness very early in life;
26. Hence, there is no sin and guilt involved in merely receiving a sinful, fallen nature by inheritance.

Sinful Nature Defiles

27. If inheriting a sinful nature is not sinful and involves no guilt, then following that argument, infants and babies who die before making any conscious choice to sin, are innocent and therefore can go to heaven without a need of a Savior.
28. While mere possession of an inherited, involuntary sinful nature constitutes no sin and guilt, babies who die still need a Savior; if they die, they can enter heaven through the merits of Christ alone for two reasons:
- REASON # 1: Ps 51:5**—corruption of the human nature at birth ("in sin did my mother conceive me; I was shapen in iniquity"), places the newly-born in a state of

impurity that defiles every thought and action and which can only be remediated by the cleansing blood of Christ and His work of intercession:

- b. **Rev 8:3**—this explains why much incense is mixed with the prayers of the saints to purify them;
- c. **Isa 64:6**—all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags
- d. In the words of Ellen White:

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but **passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled** that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. **1SM 344.**

- i. The "**corrupt channels of humanity**"—a reference to corrupt, sinful nature which every person is born with; "in sin did my mother conceive me"
- e. **REASON #2: 1 Cor 15:50**—corruption of the human nature at birth disqualifies for heaven: "*corruption cannot inherit incorruption;*"

29. This is why babies, who are born with "corrupt channels of humanity," need the atoning blood of Christ to cover for sinfulness and corruption of human nature; babies need redeeming too!

Conclusion

30. If Jesus took a nature different from what you and I have, then. . .

- a. It can never be said that He was made of the seed of Abraham (**Heb 2:16**)
- b. Paul would technically be incorrect to say He was in all things made like unto His brethren (**Heb 2:17**)
- c. It cannot be said that Jesus was tempted in all points just like we are (**Heb 4:15**)
- d. The verse that says we were predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son would be unattainable (**Rom 8:29**)
- e. It cannot be said that Jesus accepted the workings of the great law of heredity (**DA 49**)
- f. We have no way of reflecting the image of Jesus fully, receive the seal of God and be protected in the time of trouble (**EW 71**)
- g. The "so great salvation" Paul talks about in **Hebrews 2** is not so great after all (**Heb 2:3**).