

Why did Jesus Come?

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[0 : 0 0] Hebrews chapter 2, this letter in, I guess, in sermon form written to Jewish Christians who are suffering in different ways for their faith. Page 1202, some tempted to go back to the Judaism that they'd grown up in. And our author wants to show them the supremacy of Jesus so that they would continue in their Christian faith.

And so we'll read Hebrews chapter 2 from verse 5 to the end of the chapter, and we'll pay special attention to verses 14 and 15. Let's hear God's Word.

It is not to angels that He has subjected the world to come about which we are speaking, but there is a place where someone has testified. What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, I will declare your name to my brothers. In the presence of the congregation, I will sing your praises. And again,

I will put my trust in him. And again, he says, here am I and the children God has given me. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death, he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Amen. This is God's Word. Hebrews chapter 2, and we'll look especially at verses 14 and 15, thinking together about why did Jesus come? On Monday afternoon after school, we went to Handel's Messiah for Children. There was like an interactive introduction to that great work. And so you had a guy dressed up as Mr. Handel, and he would ask the audience some questions. And he was kind of teaching them a little bit of basic music theory and appreciation. But also, it was interesting. He was asking them at the start who this was about. Who was the Messiah? And it was interesting to me, the kids instantly recognized Jesus was the Messiah. This piece was all about the birth of Jesus. And it was one of those times where you wanted them to ask another question. You know, why? Why did Jesus come? Why is this Messiah? Why was Handel celebrating? Why does the church make so much of the coming of Jesus? Because Handel's Messiah showed us on Monday that there's lots of people, even if they don't go to church, who know who Christmas is about. And they know, you know, sort of the big idea of the what, that Jesus came to be born as a baby in a stable. They know where it happened. Most people in Bethlehem, they know sort of roughly when it happened. But it's this last question, this why, why this story that seems so crucial that can often get skipped over.

I think it's important for us to recognize the Christmas story does not need to be there. There is no law saying that God must come and must save sinners. Rather, the impulse for the Christmas story stands entirely in God's mercy and God's grace. It's God's love, not necessity, that brings the Christmas story to us. And so, theologians through the centuries, I guess, have been asking the question, why? Anselm, in the 11th century, wrote a famous work called *Cur Deus Homo*, roughly translated, why the God-man. That's what I want us to think about this evening. Why did Jesus become man? And that's where the author of the Hebrews is really helpful for us, because his scope, as he considers that question, is really wide. I think one of the dangers for us is we can get stuck with a Jesus who's frozen in time. You know, lots of people, their only exposure to the Christian message is the Christmas story. And so, there's Jesus, the baby born in the manger. And often, people leave him there, because that's a nice story, and people are happy with that. But the author of Hebrews wants us to take a wide-angle view of the coming of Jesus. And so, at times, we'll think about Jesus as our pre-existence, eternal Son of God with all glory. He'll move from

[5 : 57] Bethlehem and his coming to Calvary. He'll take us all the way to the glory of heaven and eternal future. The author of Hebrews is very careful to place the birth of Jesus, the God-man, within that wider story of redemption, to remind us that Jesus came into his creation for a reason, to undo the fall, to secure redemption and future glory for his people in his person and in his work. So, we're very briefly going to look at how he addresses that in these two verses and some of the verses that we read around it.

So, first thing to notice, Jesus became the God-man to save us. Let's look again at verse 14, where we read, since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in his humanity, so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil. Jesus comes on a rescue mission.

So, we've been singing a lot of carols recently. The church around the world sings a lot of carols that take us into the mystery of the incarnation. One of my favorite Carol lines is from Charles Wesley. He talks about God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man.

Our God of God, light of light, lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb. Very God, begotten, not created. There's lots of high theology, rich theology, reminding us that the creator of the universe, your maker and mine, is the one who is robed in rags and lying in a manger. And that's a glorious truth. But the author of the Hebrews is always wanting us to ask why. Why this gift from God? Why this journey of Jesus? And it's interesting to see how family language plays its part in this little section of Hebrews. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.

First couple of chapters of Hebrews has been all about the supremacy of Christ. He is the supreme revelation of God. He's greater than the angels. He'll go on to say he's greater than Moses. But somewhere around verse 10, the author switches from thinking about how Jesus is supreme to thinking about the solidarity of Christ. The Christ who stands alongside us. The Christ who comes to be with us. And so you see the language, verse 10, Jesus has come bringing many sons to glory. Jesus has come in verse 11 to make sinners his family. So we discover Jesus is made like the children so that we by faith in him will become like Jesus the son in terms of our being accepted by God. When we ask the question, why did Jesus become man? We must understand that he became one of us to save his people. He shared our humanity that he experienced death so as to save us. As God, Jesus could not die for sinners, but as man, he could. Only as one of us could he rescue us. And that's the whole impulse behind Jesus becoming one of us. He's coming so that he might save us. We saw that same idea in verse 9. We see Jesus who is made a little lower than the angels now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone. He takes death so that we might enjoy eternal life. So when we ask the question, why did Jesus become man? Why is there such a thing as Christmas? Well, one answer ultimately is Good Friday. Jesus came so that he might die on the cross. Jesus became human with the aim of dying for sinners. Or to use the language of Psalm 8 and going back to Genesis, why is there Christmas Day?

[10:22] Jesus came to undo the fall that happened in the Garden of Eden. So in those verses in Hebrews 2 verses 5 to 9, you've got this reflection on Psalm 8, which is reflecting on our glory and dignity as people that we are made with glory and honor in the image of God, intended to rule for God and to represent God in his world. But as we see from Genesis 3 onwards, Adam and Eve fail in that. We as people fail in that.

We rob God of his glory rather than reflect his glory. But where we fail, Jesus succeeds. And that's one of the reasons Jesus came. Jesus has come low. Jesus has become one of us to be that true and better Adam. And now he is in glory as the great king. And where he is, his children will follow. Jesus takes this journey from glory to the manger, ultimately to die on the cross, to return to glory.

So that we might enjoy that as our future salvation. So the author of Hebrews is reminding us just how big Jesus' salvation is. Sometimes we think about forgiveness from sin, and that's a huge reality.

But he's also restoring us to the family of God. We're also being remade in the image of God as we are being remade in the image of Christ.

And salvation also takes in future hope of eternal glory, where we'll get to rule and reign with Jesus. And so the author of Hebrews wants us to recognize, yes, the cradle is a vital part of the gospel.

[12:10] We can't have salvation unless God becomes man. But that good news is incomplete without his cross, recognizing he comes to die for us. And it's incomplete without his crown, recognizing his victory and his rule and his return in the fullness of time as our king. So Jesus became the God-man to save us.

And in so doing, he became the God-man so as to destroy the devil, the one who holds the power of death. That's what he says in the second part of verse 14.

So we are reminded that the Christmas story finds its place in the heart of the spiritual battle that we find depicted in the Bible, that great battle of good versus evil. And we see it even in the narratives of the Christmas story.

We see it in evil King Herod, who wants to wipe out Jesus as God's king. He doesn't like a rival to the throne. But what we see in the Bible and what we see throughout history is that the battle that rages, the spiritual battle in the heavenly realms breaks out on the earth, that as God's people, as a church, we find ourselves in spiritual battle. We find ourselves in the war zone. And so it's good for us to remember that Jesus came to destroy the devil, the one who holds the power of death.

The devil is our great enemy. The devil who was one of the created angels, but who wanted to become God, who wanted to overthrow God, and he was cast down from heaven. And since then, he still fights against God, still fights against the will and the purpose of God, still seeks to lead people into rebellion, either to keep people in spiritual darkness or even to steal Christians' joy.

[14 : 10] He wants us to aim, like Adam and Eve, for God-like status in our own lives, to imagine that freedom comes in pushing God's word to one side and setting our own agenda.

It's the story of Eden. It's the story in every human heart. The devil, that accuser, that father of lies, the serpent, he deceives us. In his bite is the poison of sin which spreads.

This sin, this poison, it is a sickness leading to death. And so we need a rescuer from this great enemy, the devil.

What's Satan's great weapon against us? Well, the Bible makes clear that our sin is his great weapon. The devil who tempts us towards sin and to continue in our sin.

The one who holds us in slavery to our sins so that we cannot break free. Where we find that we cannot meet our own personal standards, never mind meeting God's perfect standards.

[15 : 19] And so because of that slavery, we find ourselves deserving death and judgment. And Satan then comes to us as our accuser to throw our sin in our faces.

He holds the power of death over people, giving us fear of having a guilty conscience, the fear of the judgment of God.

Why does Jesus become man? He becomes man to destroy the devil and to destroy that work and to remove that power of death from him.

And how does he do it? Verse 17 helpfully tells us. For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Jesus becomes one of us to atone for our sin. Jesus presents himself as the sacrifice to cover our sin. Jesus is that sacrifice that satisfies the justice of God.

[16 : 35] He stands as our substitute, as our representative, bearing our sin, bearing the punishment sin deserves, absorbing the wrath of God for us so that that power of death is taken from us.

That stranglehold of sin is broken. The power of death is gone because Jesus has come to wipe sin away. And because of that, Satan then has nothing left to accuse the people of God of.

So that when we find the devil coming to us and saying things like, well, how can you be a Christian when you did that, when you responded in that way, when you had that thought, we can, with our hymn writer and our opening hymn, we can say, when Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, because we do sin, upwards I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin.

And we remind ourselves of the gospel, of union with Christ, of the fact that Jesus has come to wage war on the devil and to win a decisive victory.

So there's no basis for accusation. Our condemnation is removed. So when we feel like we've let God down, when we feel like we've let ourselves down, our others down, and we feel horrible, and we feel like we've blown it, and Satan would come and say, well, that's it.

[18 : 07] Well, God's going to be done with you. He won't want someone like you. Again, we can sing, no condemnation now I dread. Jesus and all in him is mine.

It's in Jesus becoming one of us and dying in our place and for our sins that we have this hope. We have this defense against the devil. Jesus, the God-man, is the breastplate of righteousness that's provided for us in the spiritual battle.

Jesus provides that helmet of salvation to guard our heart, to guard our mind from the power of the devil.

So Jesus became the God-man to destroy the devil, to win that decisive victory over our great enemy. And connected to that, we see in verse 15, Jesus became the God-man to free us from our fear of death.

Jesus shared in their humanity so that by his death, he might destroy him who holds the power of death and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

[19 : 28] So here the author of Hebrews, he's speaking right to the heart of so much of our fear as people, our fear of separation and losing those that we love.

Perhaps connected to our fear of an incomplete ending, of not managing to accomplish those things that we wanted to. For some, the fear of facing the judgment of God.

The author here wants us to see that in Jesus' coming, there is hope not just for now, there is hope beyond death. Death, our great enemy, that thing that we hate, it does not, it should not be there.

It's only there because of sin. But in Jesus, there is hope beyond death. And so Jesus became one of us to set us free from the fear of death.

And how can this be? Well, again, we're reminded in verse 9 that Jesus has tasted death for everyone.

[20 : 42] Jesus came to take the sting of death for his people. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, says the same kind of thing.

And in its place to give us the hope of perfect life and the prospect of perfect love and complete joy beyond death.

Jesus has come to be the answer to that promise made back in the garden to Adam and Eve, the promise of a serpent crusher. And Jesus, in his death, has defanged the devil.

He has robbed death of its sting. So that for those who are in Christ, yes, there is fear of dying, but there is not fear of death.

Remember Simeon this morning from Luke 2, he was ready to be dismissed in peace, having discovered in Jesus God's salvation. When we know Jesus, we have a security for this life and beyond.

[21 : 51] So we are ready to face death. When we are united to Christ, when we are united to his life, then resurrection life is our future reality.

It's our certainty. The joy of unbroken relationships, the prospect of unending joy is ours. That hope that everything sad will come untrue, that will be real when Jesus returns.

C.S. Lewis, I think, captured this so well in the last of the Narnia stories, the last battle. As his story concludes, he said, the author said, for them, this is speaking of the children, the subject of the stories who died in a train accident, for them, it was only the beginning of the real story.

All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page. Now at last, they were beginning chapter one of the great story which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.

And Jesus has entered into our world. He has become one of us to give us hope of that great story for ourselves, that unending story where every chapter is better than the one before so that we don't need to live gripped by a fear of death or gripped by guilt and condemnation.

[23 : 32] Instead, we can live with security and we can live with joy when our life is united to Jesus. So the author of Hebrews would say to us, keep asking, why Christmas?

Why is Jesus the God-man? Well, he's here to save us, to destroy our enemies, to set us free so that we might have comfort and joy this season and every season.

God bless you. So the person's life is created for us to be there will even know for us and for the opportunity and the purpose of grace that we need to live how we dwelt over in the every season.

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