

Flesh and Blood

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[0 : 0 0] At this time, we're going to turn our attention to the Word. And if you have your Bible, we're going to be in the book of Hebrews a little bit today.

For you kids, you're welcome to grab a clipboard if you haven't already got one. Today's the first Sunday of December.

Which means that we're on the home stretch to finishing 2022. And it's hard to believe and Christmas is just three weeks away from today. So I wanted to do something this morning to help us prepare a little for Christmas.

But also to lead our hearts as we partake of the Lord's table this morning. So as I was thinking about these two themes, Christ's birth and Christ's death, my heart was drawn to the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews is a letter in the New Testament. And it's the only letter in the New Testament with an unknown author. At least it's unknown to us today, all these 2,000 years later.

[1 : 1 1] All the other letters, the person writing them, they kind of just stated their name at the start. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. To the church at, fill in the blank.

But this letter begins quite differently. It's possible that the author chose to remain anonymous on purpose. Like maybe with the Gospel of John. Maybe in an effort to shine the spotlight of Jesus, but not have people looking at him.

Or stumbling over him as the messenger. But from the earliest days of the church, this letter has been recognized and accepted. As being inspired by God, just like the other letters.

Now Hebrews was written to the Hebrews. And one of the big questions is whether it was written to the unbelieving Jews outside of the established church.

Or to believing Jews within the established church. Or to both. And I'm not going to wade into that today. But it will help you understand why the letter is so full of Jewish things.

[2 : 1 4] Things pertaining to Israel. And the Old Testament. Some of the things discussed here include the priesthood. The sacrificial system. The covenants. Sabbath.

And more. But the undeniable burden of the author of Hebrews. Is to show how Jesus so wonderfully fulfills all of these Old Testament things.

And how in comparison to them, he is superior in every way. Now, it's difficult to sort of dip into this letter.

Because this author tends to think and write a little bit differently than we do. We like to consider one thing at a time. Like at our annual meeting last Sunday. This topic.

Now we're done with that. Then this topic. And so on and so forth. But the author of Hebrews. He doesn't write like that. Even as he makes a new point. He's also adding details about this other thing.

[3 : 1 0] And this thing. And this thing. That he's going to talk more about later. And so we kind of get this interesting effect through the whole letter. Where all of these different things are being woven together right through to the end.

And so this letter is kind of like a tapestry. And inevitably there's going to be some things we hear this morning that we just won't be able to talk about.

That you might have questions about. But we do want to try our best to focus in on a few key threads this morning. Let's begin by reading these first few verses. Hebrews chapter 1.

In the past.

Of God's glory. And the exact representation of his being. Sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins.

[4 : 29] He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels. As the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

The author begins by pointing us to Jesus. And the sense that we get here. Is that. Before. Through the prophets.

God was speaking. But it was all leading up to this great climax. This great moment. In the world story. When God would speak. Through the greatest person of all.

His son. Jesus. The living word. And we learn some marvelous truths about the son of God here. About his glory. And power.

And superiority. The son of God is truly above and beyond. Our world. Even now. The author of Hebrews says.

[5 : 27] He is seated at the right hand of God. The right hand of the majesty in heaven. But notice that there was something he had to do. Before he took this special place of honor.

We see it. Here in verse. Three. After he had provided purification. For sins. He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

After he had provided purification. For sins. Just a little phrase. But one with big meaning.

Our sins. The things that we have done that are wrong. Have had a soiling effect on us. They dirty us. They make us filthy.

They corrupt us. They taint us. And that dirtiness. This is sometimes obvious to us. Other times. We're blind to it.

[6 : 26] Whether we recognize it. Or not. God sees it. And for us to be in. A relationship with this pure and holy God.

There is need. For purification. For us to be washed. Cleansed. Made clean of the filth of our sins. The author of Hebrews tells us. That Jesus provided. That purification. That washing. That cleansing that we need. And he's going to go on to tell us.

Much more about this. Throughout the letter. That Jesus has purified. And cleansed us of our sins. Far beyond. What the. Old sacrifices of animals.

Could ever do. This is one thing that we celebrate. When we partake of this table. That Jesus. Provided purification for us.

[7 : 26] A way to be made clean. After this. The author goes on to. Describe how Jesus. Is far superior. To the angels.

Angels. We're going to kind of skip over that section. But you know. The angels. They're the greatest. And most powerful. Creatures. That we know of. But then.

The author of Hebrews. Kind of takes a step back. And he acknowledges. That for a time. This glorious son of God. The one who sustains. Everything. That he made. By the.

By his powerful word. For a time. He had to come down. Into our world. And become lower. Than the angels. We pick it up.

In chapter 2. Verse 5. It is not to angels. That God has subjected. The world to come. About which we are speaking. But there is a place. Where someone has testified.

[8 : 20] And he quotes from Psalm 8. 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 do see. Jesus. Who was made. Lower than the angels. For a little while. Now. Now. Crowned with glory. And honor. Because.

He suffered death. So that by the grace of God. He might taste. Death. For everyone. The author of Hebrews.

[9 : 13] Loves to tell us about the greatness. And the glory of Jesus. He says that Jesus has now. Right now. Been crowned with glory. And honor.

That he is the one. Who will have everything. In our world. Put under his feet. He is going to rule. He is going to reign. The king. Of the glorious kingdom of God. But here again.

We hear him acknowledge. That before all this. Leading up to this. For a little while. He was made. Lower. Than the angels. The one who created.

Angels. And commands angels. The one whom the angels serve. Had to come. And stoop down. Beneath them. Below them. For a little while. He is right now. Crowned. With glory. And honor. Seated at the right hand. Of God. But why?

[10:13] Notice what the author says. Because. Because. When he was here. In that lowly state. He suffered. Death.

So that by the grace of God. He might taste death. For everyone. Reflect on these words. This son of God.

Jesus. Crowned with glory and honor. Because. Because. He suffered. Death. That's what this table.

That we're about to celebrate. Is all about. It's about. Jesus suffering. And death. And it may seem odd to us. I mean. What could be so glorious. And honorable.

About suffering. Death. Death. But this death. That Jesus died. Was unique. It was. By dying.

[11:11] It was through. Dying. That Jesus provided. That purification. For sins. For the sins. Of his people. It wasn't just.

A tragic. Death. It wasn't just. An accident. That happened. Because he. Decided to speak. Truth. To power. No. His death. Was part. Of the plan.

Of God. As the author says. It was the grace. Of God. At work. So that he might. Taste death. For everyone. So that. His death. Might do something.

For others. And that Jesus. Has done this. Is what makes him. Worthy. Of this great. Glory. And honor. This crown.

That he wears. Let's remember. For a moment. Who Jesus is. He is the son of God. Who with his father. And the holy spirit.

[12:05] Who with his father. And the holy spirit. Created our universe. And everything in it. And yet. There he was. Two thousand years ago. Stepping down.

From heaven's glory. To the dusty streets. Of our earth. On a mission. To suffer. The punishment. That we deserve.

For our sins. To provide purification. For us. What a noble thing. This speaks.

Of the matchless grace. Of our God. We have a God. Who would willingly suffer. For us. Who would taste.

Death. For us. The punishment. That we deserve. Let's look down. A little further. To verse 14.

[13:06] Since the children. That's the children. Of Christ. In the context here. Since the children. Have flesh. And blood. He too. Shared in their humanity. So that by his death.

He might break. The power of 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. Verse 17. For this reason. He had to be made like them. Fully human.

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. Since the children. Have flesh. And blood. He says. As we look at this table.

[14:03] We see. The bread. Under the napkins there. And the cup. Two symbols. We remember the words.

That Jesus spoke. On the night of his betrayal. He took bread. And he broke it. And he passed it around the table. And he said. This is my body. Given for you. And then he took a cup.

With wine in it. And passed it around. And said. Take it. Divided among you. This is my blood of the covenant. Which is poured out for you. Flesh.

And blood. That's what these symbols represent. The flesh and blood of Jesus. And we might wonder. At times. Wasn't there another way.

For God to save us. To provide the purification. For our sins. Did Jesus have to die? Did he have to suffer. As he did.

[15:03] But the answer that we get here. From the author of Hebrews. Is. It had to be this way. We are children.

Of flesh and blood. And the only way. To set us free from death. And the power of him. Who holds the power of death. Is if he came.

And shared. In our humanity. Our flesh and blood. Taking it on. And dying for us. Imagine for just a moment.

This will never be true. But imagine for just a moment. That you were the eternal God. The one who created all things. Glorious. Powerful. And your creatures.

Did the unthinkable. They defied you. They rebelled against you. They chose evil. They became corrupt.

[16:01] Would you. Would you. Stoop down to their level. To fix it. Would you become. One of your own. Creatures.

A weak. Frail. Creature of the dust. To help them. Would you allow yourself. To be mocked.

Spit on. Despised. Beaten. And killed. For them. None of us would. None of us would.

And we know it's true. Because it's a struggle. For all of us. Even to give up our time. And our comforts. And our pleasures. In this world. Just to serve someone in need. But Jesus is so much greater.

Than we are. His love. His grace. His compassion. Knows no bounds. Yes. Yes. He would. He did.

[16:59] Become one of us. One of us frail children. Of the dust. And yes. He would. He did. Suffer.

And die. To save us. This is a big part. Of what's so special. About Christmas. Flesh. And blood. The divine. Son of God. Would he really. Come down. And become flesh. And blood. For us. We know the Christmas story.

We see the baby. In Mary's arms. He did. He would. Verse 17.

For this reason. He had to be made. Like them. Fully. Human. In every way. In order that he might become. A merciful. And faithful. High priest. In service to God.

[18:00] I was thinking about. These words this week. I happened to drive by. The Catholic church. Here in town. And I noticed that they had. Put up their nativity. Scene on the lawn. And it was nice.

I was glad to see that. Here at Christmas time. But as I looked a little closer. I noticed that. There was the baby Jesus. In Mary's arms. And. There was this.

Yellow. Glowing circle. Painted around. Baby Jesus's head. Almost as if the glory. Was shining right out. Of Jesus's face. But then I read.

What it says here. In verse 17. He had to be made like them. Fully human. In every way. And I think maybe. They didn't get it quite right.

He wasn't born. With a glowing face. He was the son of God. He was also. Truly. The son of man. A human being.

[19:00] Having all the same. Human features. That we have. And again. Says the author. This was part of the plan. He had to do this.

He had to become. Fully human. In every way. In order to save us. This flesh. And blood. Humanity. Was required. He had to be made.

Like them. Fully human. 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. There is. An unbreakable line. From Christmas. To this. Table. Flesh and blood.

Now there's many things. That we can celebrate. About Jesus. At Christmas time. And I hope. We celebrate them all. We can celebrate. That he's the Messiah. God's chosen king. Who will.

[19:59] Rule. The kingdom of God. We can celebrate. That he is the light. Of the world. That shines in the darkness. As we go through. These short.

And dark. Days. Around the Christmas season. We can celebrate. That Jesus is the humble. And lowly. Servant of the Lord. Who will do exactly. What the father. Wills.

These are all true. And wonderful. But without. This truth. That he came. And took on. Flesh and blood. And was made like us. In every way.

Fully human. Without that. This table. Wouldn't have anything on it. And the cross. Would be empty. And we would be lost. Forever.

Doomed to suffer. The punishment. That we deserve. For our sins. Why did he need. To have flesh.

[20:54] And blood. As we do. The author tells us. Two reasons here. First. He had to have. Flesh and blood. In order that he might. Become a merciful. And faithful.

High priest. In service to God. Now there's a lot. In that reason. This is probably. Not a concept. That we think about. Too much. And to fully appreciate it.

We have to linger long. In the Old Testament. Writings. And we have to remember. How it is. How it was. Back in those days. Between. God and his people. Back in the days.

Of Moses. God revealed himself. In those days. As a holy God. A pure God. A God who is so righteous. And just.

And good. That even for sinful. Human beings. To be near him. Is dangerous. To them. Lest his goodness. His justice. Strike out at them. To give them.

[21 : 45] What they are due. And so. Wherever God. Showed himself. To be present. In those days. You couldn't just walk up. To where he was. And strike up a conversation. There had to be this.

Separation. Between God. And the people. We saw this at Mount Sinai. God was present. In the cloud. Up on the mountain. And the people. Were to stay. Separate. Apart. Away from the mountain.

We saw this. With the tabernacle. And the temple. God would make his presence. Known. Most powerfully. In the inner room. Of the. The tabernacle. The holy of holies.

Above the ark. Of the covenant. But then there were curtains. That separated. From where the priests served. And there were more curtains. That separated from. Where the people were camped.

God was showing. That our sin. Our impurity. Really does separate us. From him. And so.

[22 : 41] How could we come to God? How could we have relationship with him? In those days. God said. You need to come through the priest. Someone who's specially devoted.

To his service. Someone who would kind of live. And serve. In that gap. Between. The people. And God. The priest. Had to be one of the people.

Because you can't represent people. Unless. You're one of them. Someone who was outwardly clean. And living rightly. Before God. And so.

If you wanted to have a relationship. With God. You would come to the tabernacle. And you would go to. The priest. And he would stand in the gap. Between you and God. If you had sinned.

And done something wrong. And wanted to seek God's forgiveness. You would bring your sacrifice. But the priest. Had to offer it for you. You couldn't just do that on your own.

[23 : 34] Because you were guilty. You were unable to even come near. To God's presence. The sacrifice. Had to be offered by clean hands. And then once a year.

On the day of atonement. The high priest. Would make atonement. For the sins of all the people. And only he could do it. God permitted him to come right. Into that inner room.

In the sanctuary. And sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice. On the ark of the covenant. Where God was present. The author of Hebrews. Is saying that.

It works in a similar manner. With Jesus. Just like the people. In the Old Testament days. We can't have relationship with God. Apart from a priest.

We too. Need. A high priest. To represent us. We need someone to stand in the gap. Between us and God. One who is on our side. One who is for us.

[24 : 32] One who is one of us. That can represent us. Because. He will go on to say that. We need someone who is able. Even to. Enter into heaven.

And approach God's. Very presence in heaven. On our behalf. And for Jesus. To be that for us. He had to have.

Flesh and blood. He had to be one of us. It was the only way. And so we look back. To Jesus. Birth. To Christmas.

Because that's when it happened. It was then. In Bethlehem. All those years ago. That our merciful. And faithful. High priest. Was born.

The one who could. The one who would. Make atonement. For our sins. And give that purification. That we needed. That we needed. We had need of someone.

[25 : 40] That could enter heaven. Somebody who could come. Right into God's presence. None of us could. God saw that. And Jesus.

Saw that. And Jesus said. I will go down. I will serve. I will become the one. To do it for them. Hebrews chapter 10.

Verse 5. Therefore when Christ. Came into the world. He said. Sacrifice. And offering. You did not desire. But a body.

You prepared for me. With burnt offerings. And sin offerings. You were not pleased. Then I said. Here I am. It is written about me. In the scroll. I have come. To do. Your will. My God. This is sort of a. Almost a prayer. Between the son. And the father. A body.

[26 : 36] You prepared for me. Flesh and blood. Only a flesh and blood. Human being. Could do. The priestly work. That needed to be done.

For flesh and blood. Human beings. Like us. And. As the author. Of Hebrews. Goes on. We find out. That. Not only did we need. A flesh and blood. High priest. But we needed. A flesh and blood. Sacrifice. To atone. For us. Hebrews chapter 10. Verse 10. And by.

The will of God. We have been made holy. Through the sacrifice. Of the body. Of Jesus Christ. Once for all. Day after day.

Every. Priest stands. And performs. His religious duties. Again and again. He offers. The same sacrifices. Which can never. Take away sins. But when. This priest.

[27 : 32] Referring to Jesus. Had offered. For all time. One sacrifice. For sins. He sat down. At the right hand. Of God. And since that time. He waits.

For his enemies. To be made. His footstool. For by one sacrifice. He has made. Perfect. Forever. Those. Who are being made. Holy. Amazingly.

We discover. That Jesus is both. The high priest. That we needed. And. The sacrifice. That was offered. To make atonement. For our sins. And bring us to God.

And here is the wonderful news. Of Jesus. What Jesus did. At the cross. Where he made atonement. For us. It isn't something. That ever fades.

The author says. There will never be need. For another sacrifice. To be offered. The one that Jesus offered. Was so effective.

[28 : 26] That the people he atoned for. Are forgiven. Forever. Once for all. Forever made perfect. In God's sight.

Every sin we have done. Every sin that we will do. Has been paid for. Justice has been done. By the suffering and death. That he took. On our behalf.

And so Jesus was able to say. On the cross. It is. Finished. This is what we celebrate. When we partake of.

The bread. And the cup. Guilty. Vile. Helpless. We. Spotless. Lamb of God. Was he. Full atonement.

Can it be. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. What a savior. At the center of our salvation.

[29 : 24] At the center of this purification. Of this atonement. Was flesh and blood. Jesus flesh and blood. In just a moment.

We are going to partake. Of the two elements. That represent. Jesus flesh and blood. And what he suffered. But before we do. I want to encourage you.

This Christmas season. To meditate on this. The son of God. Coming into our world. Taking on flesh and blood.

For you. Because he loves you. This is where the joy of Christmas. Is found. No matter what you're going through. This is where the love of Jesus.

Is seen. And felt. In its fullest of strengths. So let's go now. To the table. If you believe in Jesus.

[30 : 23] If you believe that he is your. Great. High priest. That he has made atonement for you. Then I invite you to eat. And drink with us.

And celebrate his love. If you aren't sure about that. Or if you disagree. I would just ask that you would abstain. And you can kind of indicate that. As the things come around. Just discreetly.

With your hand. I'll invite. Rod. And. Dave.

To come forward. And to serve the bread in the cup. We'll wait until everyone who wants. Has received. And then. I'll pray. And we'll eat and drink together.

As we reflect. On the Savior's love. So come on up. Rod and Dave. So come on up.

[31 : 20] differently tierraíms. Let's pray. And startence. Thank you. So come on up. And get to live. Yeah. So come on up. And get to the next. So come on up.

And cry. How will it be say? The grave of justice. And cry. It's your feet. And cry. And I can't survive. And cry. I can't believe. Let's pray. So come on up. And it's your feet.

■perat. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[34 : 12] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord Jesus, thank you that you were willing to come.

We can't imagine the agony that you suffered. We can't imagine what it was like to take on skin and bone and flesh, stepping out of eternal glory.

But we give you praise and we thank you that you loved us. We're amazed that you desire relationship with us. So we celebrate.

We do this in remembrance of you. And for your glory. Amen.