

Why Jesus Became a Human Being

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Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0:00] But if you turn with me now to our Bibles, we're going to be reading together in the letter! to the Hebrews in chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible with you visiting with us, then there's Vistas Bibles at the side, at the back, at the front. Don't be shy. I'd love to give you one so you can see what we're reading and follow along with us. Edward Lobb has begun a little series in this first few chapters of Hebrews under the title of Persevering, the Perseverance of Christ's people. If we look to chapter 1 last week, and we're going to read chapter 2 together this evening. So Hebrews chapter 2 then and verse 1.

Therefore, says the writer, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will. For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we're speaking. It's been testified somewhere, what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now, in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.

At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him, but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus. We see him crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, that he should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

[2:34] For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation.

I will sing your praise. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, behold, I and the children God has given me. Therefore, since 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, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

For surely it's not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

But because he himself has suffered when tempted, he's able to help those who are being tempted. Amen. May God bless to us his word. Good evening, friends. Very good to see you. Let's turn to Hebrews chapter 2.

[4:18] Now, if you were here last week, you'll remember that we were studying the first chapter of this letter to the Hebrews, plus the first few verses of chapter 2, and we found that the author of the letter, rather surprisingly, was contrasting the role of Jesus with the role of God's angels.

And the big point of this contrast emerged in the first few verses of chapter 2. The role of the angels was to convey the Old Testament law from God to Moses.

And the Old Testament law was attended with fearsome sanctions for those who disobeyed it, such as exclusion from fellowship with God's people, and in severe cases, the death penalty.

So the author of the letter says, look with me at chapter 2, verse 2. He says there, And yet, the sad and sorry reality is that we human beings, now just look with me at chapter 2, verse 1, we human

beings are in real danger of drifting away from the gospel, like a little boat that is drifting out to sea, pushed by a gentle wind, until it disappears over the horizon and is lost forever.

Friends, if we are Christians, we need to be very watchful. In fact, in the words of chapter 2, verse 1, we must pay not only attention, but much closer attention to the message of the gospel that we have heard.

[6 : 29] Because, as verse 3 puts it, we could neglect this great salvation. And if we were to do that, how could we escape the judgment of God?

I would hate for my obituary to say, Edward Lobb served the Lord Jesus for much of his life, but in his later years, he neglected the salvation that he had embraced, and he drifted away.

In the end, he seemed to be interested in nothing but his family and his garden. That's the story of some lives. But it needn't be your story or mine.

Well, let's turn now to the rest of chapter 2. My title for tonight is Why Jesus Became a Human Being. The process whereby Jesus became a human being is usually referred to as the incarnation. And the word incarnation means becoming flesh and blood, if you like, becoming man. The Bible's teaching is that Jesus, just like God the Father, has no beginning.

[7 : 38] He was always there in eternity with his Father. We saw last week from chapter 1, verse 2, that he was the Father's agent in creating the world. He was an all-powerful spiritual being.

The word spiritual simply means non-material. But just over 2,000 years ago, the all-powerful Son of God became man with a flesh and blood body like ours, with a beating heart, respiratory system, digestive system, any system that you and I have, he had it too.

He became hungry. He became tired. He needed to sleep. He experienced the highs and lows of joy and sorrow just like us. He laughed.

He cried. He sang songs. He loved human company. And in the end, he died the death of a human being because he was nailed to a Roman cross.

He was a real man, and he is still a real man. He didn't shed his humanity when he returned to heaven. He took his humanity with him to his Father's house.

[8 : 48] Now, the \$64,000 question is, why did he become a human being? Some people will say, well, he became a human being to demonstrate to the world how to live a really good human life.

He's the ideal man. He's the perfect human being. So, friends, let's rise up and we'll follow his example. Look at his courage, his compassion, his mercy and kindness towards people who are struggling.

Look at his matchless teaching in which he showed us how to behave, how to live. Look at the way he refuted false ideas about God. Look at the way he spoke truth to power when power had become corrupt.

So, men and women, boys and girls, grandpas and grandmas, let's rise up, follow the example of Jesus, and you will then experience life at its very best. Now, that's the way many people will talk about him.

And there is much truth in that view of him because he is the perfect man. He is the example of how to live. But according to the New Testament, that is not the main reason for Jesus becoming man.

[10 : 01] According to the New Testament, our greatest need was not for an example, but for a savior. There are a few passages in the New Testament which teach us quite as clearly as Hebrews chapter 2, why Jesus became a human being and what his incarnation achieved.

Now, we must constantly bear in mind our author's purpose throughout this whole letter. His continuous aim throughout Hebrews is to persuade us of the truth about Jesus, to persuade us so thoroughly that we shall never drift away from him and be in danger of losing our salvation.

Because if we are deeply persuaded about Jesus, we shall stick to him like a limpet to the rock. So friends, let's put on our best reading glasses and allow the author of Hebrews to teach us why Jesus became a human being.

And we'll do this under three headings. First, he became a man in order to fulfill the role and destiny of mankind.

To fulfill the role and destiny of mankind. Let's look first at verses 6, 7, and 8. You'll see the author is quoting there, quoting from Psalm 8. And Willie pointed this out a moment ago, but just look at the interesting way in which he introduces the quotation in verse 6.

[11 : 26] It has been testified somewhere. Well, we can't help smiling a bit at that word somewhere. We think to ourselves, did the author of Hebrews not know where this quotation comes

from?

Was he just being lazy, not bothering to look it up? Well, I don't think so. Our author is not writing a modern academic article where everything has to be meticulously annotated with footnotes.

He clearly knew his Old Testament backwards. He quotes from it in many places as this letter unfolds. The important thing for him is not academic precision, but the fact that every sentence in the Old Testament is the true word of God.

He is saying, this is God speaking. This is God testifying to the truth. So why does our author bring in this quotation? Well, Psalm 8 was written by King David.

It's a short psalm, and it's topped and tailed by David saying, O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. So the psalm is an outpouring of praise to the majesty of God.

[12 : 34] Now, in the verses immediately before the passage quoted here, David expresses his amazement that the God who created the vast universe should be interested in looking after tiny human beings like us.

He writes, speaking to God, He writes, When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him?

So what is David saying? He is contrasting man's apparent insignificance with his real significance. Men and women, we look so tiny and puny against the backdrop of the moon and the endless array of stars and the vastness of the universe.

But in verses 7 and 8, mankind's real significance is presented to us. What is man that you are mindful of him? Well, the fact is you have crowned man with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.

So the role and responsibility of the human race is to rule the world and finally to rule the whole of the universe. Now that responsibility was originally entrusted to Adam.

[13 : 57] The Garden of Eden was a kind of microcosm of the whole earth. And in Genesis chapter 2, the Lord placed Adam in the garden to cultivate it and guard it.

So under God's authority, Adam was in charge. And back in Genesis chapter 1, God had blessed the human race, male and female, and said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over all its creatures.

So God gave the human race dominion over the world. That ruling authority was not given to polar bears or whales or horses or tigers.

It was given to the human race. So when modern anthropologists and biologists speak of human beings as if we were just naked apes, belonging to the same category as gorillas and chimpanzees, they got it badly wrong.

We have responsibility to rule over the animal kingdom. Now we must rule over it wisely and carefully to protect it and preserve it. But Genesis 1 teaches a great divide.

[15 : 07] On one side of the divide are the animals. On the other side are God and human beings. God and the human race are the rulers.

The animals are the ones that are ruled. So coming back to Hebrews chapter 2, let's pick it up halfway through verse 8. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, that is to human beings, he left nothing outside man's control.

Full responsibility and control has been entrusted to us. But, reading on, at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to man.

And that is painfully and obviously true. Now we do, of course, control a great deal. We farm the land, we provide ourselves with food, we trim our hedges, we tame our gardens, mostly, we build roads and canals and railways.

In most parts of the world, we do manage to put food on our tables. But there's so much that is beyond our control. Nations are traumatized by horrible and usually unnecessary wars.

[16 : 23] We experience terrible droughts, earthquakes, floods. We can't control the climate and the weather. We can't even forecast the weather with much accuracy. And the reason why so much of the life of the world is in trouble and quite beyond our power to put right is given to us in Genesis chapter 3 where God says to Adam, because of your rebellion against me, cursed is the ground because of you.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will only be able to eat your food at the expense of a great deal of sweat and hard labor. So it's the great rebellion of the Garden of Eden which has

caused God to place the whole environment under his curse.

Before Adam sinned, Adam really was in control of the Garden of Eden. Adam was a lordly figure. Under God's authority, he was the lord of creation.

But that ruling authority over the world has been sadly weakened and reduced by the rebellion of Adam and Eve. Now we are still responsible for the care of the earth, for its animals and vegetation and everything in it.

The creation mandate has not been withdrawn. But our ingrained rebellion against God, which we've inherited from Adam and Eve, has frustrated our ability to govern the earth well.

[17 : 52] So as our verse 8 says, at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to mankind. The frog in my throat is not in subjection to me at the moment.

Oh frog, I disappear kindly. Good. Now friends, despite the fact that we're not in full control of the earth, we mustn't despair because the news ultimately is good news.

Look back to verse 5. Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come of which we are speaking. To whom then has God subjected the world to come if not to the angels?

The answer is to Jesus who is infinitely superior to the angels as we saw in chapter 1. This paragraph is making the point that the present world order, the old creation, which is under God's curse, is not properly in subjection to mankind.

The blueprint situation, as verse 7 explains, is that mankind has been crowned by God with glory and honor and everything put in subjection under man's feet.

[19 : 07] That was the situation in the Garden of Eden. That was the original arrangement made by God. But to put it crudely, the crown of glory and honor has slipped off Adam's head and it has slipped off the heads of all of Adam's successors, which is why the world is groaning in pain.

We are incapable of governing it correctly. But, verse 9, Jesus has come and the crown of glory and honor is upon his head and to him, as verse 5 explains, has been subjected the world to come.

So he came as a flesh and blood man, as a real and true man, to fulfill the role and destiny of mankind. Adam failed and his disobedience polluted and corrupted the whole of the old creation, handing the world, in effect, to the power of the devil.

This is why Jesus once called the devil the ruler of this world. Adam's disobedience brought not only sin and death into this world, but proved to be a capitulation to the devil.

When Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil's temptation in the garden, the door was immediately opened, not only to death, but to all the misery, wretchedness, violence, and brutality which has characterized the human race ever since.

[20 : 36] But God's unchangeable plan was always for man to rule the creation. The first man failed and by his failure he took the whole world into the devil's captivity.

But the second man, Jesus, the true captain of the human race, did not fail. He obeyed his father, which Adam did not. Jesus came to the world to die for us because it was only through his death that the catastrophe of Adam's rebellion could be reversed.

And that was the point at his crucifixion that the utmost obedience to his father was demanded of Jesus. And he did not fail. He went through with it.

Look at verse 9. Why was Jesus crowned with glory and honor? It was because of the suffering of death. And what was the wonderful effect of his death?

It was that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. Verse 9. Might taste death for everyone. Now what does that mean?

[21 : 44] It means that he did something for us so as to spare us from having to do it. The death that he experienced was a death caused by sin.

Not his sin, but our sin. On the cross he bore He bore God's judgment and curse so that we could be spared it. He died in our place, abandoned by God for a moment, suffering the intolerable pains of hell in our place so that we could be spared those pains.

And by means of that death, terrible for him, but wonderful for us, he has reversed the catastrophe of Adam's disobedience and has reinstated the rule of mankind not over this old world where the devil takes command, but over the new world order.

Verse 5. It was not to angels that God subjected the world to come. It was to Jesus. He has fulfilled the destiny and role of mankind.

He as man is the ruler and the king of the new creation. And if we belong to him, we shall be with him in that glorious world and we shall share his reign with him.

[23:00] Do you want to be there with him, sharing his kingdom? If you do, don't drift away from him in this present world. He became man to fulfill the destiny of man, which is to rule the new creation.

Now secondly, he became man in order to cut a pathway to glory for his people, to cut a pathway to glory. Imagine that we're all with Jesus, lots of us, us and many others, and there we are with Jesus and we are facing an impenetrable forest.

And somehow we have to get through this forest and to the far side of it. But we haven't the tools or the strength or the know-how to do it. But Jesus can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

He's described in verse 10 as the founder of our salvation. This means that he is the leader or pioneer. He is the trailblazer.

He is the one who is able to cut a pathway through the impenetrable forest. Verse 10 tells us the nature of his mission. He is bringing many sons to glory, opening up the pathway to bring many people into the glory of the new creation.

[24:18] salvation. This is what it means to be saved. We are set upon the pathway to heaven and glory. Now look at the interesting beginning of verse 10.

It was fitting. Fitting. It was appropriate. It was the right and proper way to behave. Well, who said so? Who laid down the rules for appropriate behavior?

It can only be God himself. If he decides that his method is fitting and suitable, then we gladly accept his method of bringing many sons to glory. By the way, sons means children of both sexes.

In ancient society, sons had the full rights of inheritance which daughters very often did not have.

So in terms of being heirs of God's kingdom, female Christians and male Christians are all regarded by God as his sons having full inheritance.

Right, back to the line of thought then in verse 10. It was right and fitting that he, that is God the Father, for whom and by whom all things exist in bringing many sons to glory should make the trailblazer of their salvation perfect through suffering.

[25:33] Now, if you or I had been in the shoes of God the Father, would we have done that? If we'd been responsible for devising a pathway to glory for the heirs of salvation, would we have forced the pioneer of salvation to suffer?

Almost certainly not. But the verb in the middle of verse 10 there is a strong verb. The Father decided it was fitting for Jesus to suffer and he made him suffer.

He made him suffer. Why is that? Was the Father being cruel? Was he a kind of sadist who enjoyed seeing Jesus suffer? Certainly not.

He made Jesus suffer because there was no other way for us to be saved or to have our sins forgiven. Our author is going to go on to say in chapter 9 verse 22, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Jesus was the Lamb of God, the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away sin through being sacrificed and the shedding of his blood in death could not be avoided.

[26:41] Now here's another question about verse 10. The verse says that the pioneer of our salvation was made perfect through suffering.

Does that mean that before his suffering he was somehow imperfect, even perhaps sinful? No, it doesn't. We saw back in chapter 1 verse 3 that Jesus carries the exact imprint of God's nature.

He was always God's perfect son, exactly like the perfect father in character. But before he became a man, he had not suffered.

And in becoming fully a man, he had to enter into the fullness of our human experience. The common currency of mankind is our suffering.

Every human being experience is suffering. But Jesus had to suffer a much greater degree of suffering than any other human being because he had to absorb the wrath of God against our sins.

[27:44] He went to that dreadful cross as our representative. We had to be represented by a man. We couldn't be represented by a horse or a cow or a poodle.

Only man could bear the punishment for the sin of man. And as Jesus endured that dreadful suffering and died because he was bearing God's judgment, his service for his people was brought to completion and perfection.

Now, he was always perfect in himself, but it was only through suffering death on our behalf that his ministry was brought to completion and fulfillment. To go back to verse 9, he tasted death for everyone by the grace of God.

That is the perfection of what he has done for us. Now, having made that point in verse 10, our author now proceeds to assure us in the next three or four verses that Jesus and all his people are real siblings.

That he's not only a real human being, but that his people are truly his brothers and sisters. Just look at the way this is worked out. Verse 11, he who sanctifies, that is Jesus, and those who are sanctified, that is every Christian.

[29:06] Now, we'll just pause there. For Jesus to sanctify us means that he sets us apart for himself. He consecrates us for his service, makes a demarcation between us and those who are not his.

So, if we are Christians, what is verse 11 saying? It's saying that Jesus and we all have one origin. That is God the Father. You see, God is Jesus' Father, and he's also our Father.

Jesus taught us to pray, our Father. So, we are all of the same family. And the verse goes on, that is why Jesus is not ashamed to call all Christian people brothers.

brothers. Now, the New Testament expresses our relationship to Jesus in a number of different ways. So, for example, we are his servants, we're his friends, we're his workers or laborers, we're his subjects, we're even his sheep, and he's the shepherd.

But we are also his brothers and sisters. brothers. I'm sure you know the lines in John Newton's hymn, Jesus, my shepherd, brother, friend, my prophet, priest, and king.

[30:22] And verse 11 tells us that he's not ashamed to call us his brothers. Now, you might possibly have a brother that you're ashamed to call your brother.

He's the black sheep of the family, he's misbehaved, he's let you down in some way. But as soon as you or I become Christians and are sanctified by Jesus, in other words, consecrated for his service, all our sins have been dealt with.

We may have been moral gangsters, but our black sheep status is immediately wiped out. And he looks at us and he says, you are my brother, you are my sister.

We might say to him, but Lord, aren't you feeling at least a little bit uneasy about having me with my nasty moral back catalogue? in your family. But he will reply, I'm totally unashamed to call you my brother or my sister.

That back catalogue no longer exists as far as I'm concerned. Once we're Christians, he has sanctified us, we are now his. His suffering and death has cleansed us.

[31:32] We are members of the family and he is totally unashamed to call us brother or sister. Now isn't that glorious to belong to his family? Compare it with your own human family.

Just think of your own human family back a generation or two. Your parents, your grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters. Almost every family is a very dodgy collection of human beings.

Think of the pain and suffering and bad behavior in the history of most families. Broken relationships, broken marriages, violent fathers, alcoholism, siblings fighting over money, elderly sisters not speaking to each other, pride, jealousy, sometimes real hatred.

Now not all families contain all of those elements, of course not, but most families have some of them. But to become a Christian means that you can say to Jesus, you are my brother as well as my savior and all your people are my brothers and sisters.

And in the words of verse 10, you are bringing many sons to glory. You became one of us so as to cut a pathway to glory, to cut through the impenetrable forest of sin and misery and to make us your own forever.

[32:57] Now there's a further aspect to this pathway to glory and we discover it in verses 14 and 15. Verses 14 and 15 teach us that Jesus' incarnation enabled him to destroy the devil.

I want to read these two verses out loud and I do hope that you'll be thrilled by them. 14 and 15. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that is flesh and blood, that through death, his death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Now look at the logic of those two verses. Our author is saying since this is true, it follows that something else is true. This means that, and we use this construction of thought all the time.

For example, since the sky is so full of black clouds, it follows that it will be raining very soon. Or, since the bride's father has not worn his kilt for 20 years and has been eating too many steak pies,

it follows that he will have great difficulty in dancing the gay gordons at the Cayley.

Since this thing is true, that thing follows. Now look at verse 14. Since the children, that's us, share in flesh and blood, Jesus likewise partook of the same things, became fully a flesh and blood man, with the intended consequence that through death, his death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

[34 : 49] Now friends, this is very thrilling. It's a warm summer's evening, isn't it? So if Morpheus is threatening to wrap his arms around you just at the moment, shake him off and sit bolt upright.

We need to think hard about this. The reason Jesus became a real human being was that he had to be able to die the real death of a real human being.

He wasn't an angel, he wasn't a bodiless spirit, he was a man with a beating heart and blood circulating around his body, and he really died. The four gospels are very emphatic about this. His death brought about the forgiveness of our sins, but that is not what verse 14 is telling us. Verse 14 is telling us something else, that the death of Jesus brought about the destruction of the devil. Now we're bound to ask, but isn't the devil still active and malignant in the world? Yes, he is. But the book of Revelation tells us that the devil is active and angry now because he knows that his time is short.

[35 : 57] Time has been called upon him, and he knows it. And it's the death of Jesus that has brought about his downfall and has secured his eventual complete destruction in the lake of fire, as the book of Revelation chapter 20 tells us.

So look again at verse 14. What has the death of Jesus achieved? It has rendered the devil impotent, incapable of wielding the power of death over those who belong to Jesus.

Now Jesus himself taught this same truth very colorfully in Luke chapter 11. He said, when a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe.

But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor and divides his spoil. It's a wonderful picture.

The devil is the strong man fully armed who is guarding his property. But Jesus is the stronger man, and he attacks the strong man and overcomes him and takes away his armor, rips off his breastplate, and runs him through.

[37 : 06] Take that, you blackguard! Jesus has complete mastery over the devil. Now just think back to the first Easter Sunday. Remember the conversation that Jesus had with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

He drew alongside them, unrecognized, and he engaged them in conversation. What are you talking about, he said. He knew, of course, but he asked them. Whereupon they stood still, looking sad.

They were a picture of misery. They explained to Jesus, not recognizing him, they explained to him that Jesus of Nazareth, a mighty prophet, had been condemned to death and crucified.

And they said, we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. We had hoped it, but that hope has died. It must have seemed to all of Jesus' followers that all hope had died with him.

They were miserable. Let me quote from a commentary here, one of my commentaries. Within a very short time, his followers were exultingly proclaiming the crucified Jesus to be the conqueror of death and asserting, like the author of Hebrews, that by dying, he had reduced the erstwhile lord of death to impotence.

[38 : 27] That's what our verse 14 is saying, that the death of Jesus has reduced the erstwhile lord of death to impotence. Jesus broke his power by rising from the grave.

That was the death of death. Paul the apostle gloats over this in 1 Corinthians 15. He writes, death is swallowed up in victory. Then he taunts death. He says, oh death, where is your victory?

Oh death, where is your sting? So back to our verse 14. It's the resurrection of Jesus, which demonstrates that Jesus has destroyed the one who has the power of death.

It is game, set and match to Jesus. But look at the consequence of this in verse 15. The death of Jesus delivers all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Now friends, it is the fear of death, isn't it, that enslaves the human race. Until we come to understand what Jesus has achieved, we are gripped by the fear of death.

[39 : 33] I can remember when I was a very small child, only six or seven years old, crying one night into my pillow after I'd gone to bed at the thought that my mother and father were going to die.

I just couldn't bear it. It seemed unbelievably horrible. My family and I lived at Burton-on-Trent, and when we were there, a member of our church, a very warm hearted man called Tom, was a senior nurse on an oncology ward.

And he told me one day about a patient, a middle aged man called John, who was dying. Tom was standing at his bedside in the middle of the night, and John was lying there in bed with his eyes wide open.

And he said to Tom, I'm forcing myself not to go to sleep, because if I can keep awake and keep breathing, I won't die. But he did die.

The fear of death runs through the human race like a scar. I once heard a preacher say there is a strain of sadness that runs through every level of human culture.

[40 : 36] It runs through our music, our visual arts, our plays, our novels. Paul in Romans chapter 8 writes of the whole creation being in bondage to decay, in bondage to decay.

And if that is true, what a savior we have, and what a savior we rejoice in, because he has broken that bondage. Look at the second word of verse 15, deliver.

Deliver means rescue. And that is what Jesus has done. He became a human being so as to die.

And his death has not only broken the power of the devil, it has rescued us from the fear of death, so that we are no longer enslaved by being frightened to die.

In Romans chapter 8, Paul tells all Christians that death cannot separate Christ's people from the love of God. So the devil has been robbed of his most potent weapon.

He can no longer hold death over our heads as a means of intimidation. The devil is despicable. Therefore, let us despise him.

[41 : 53] He is utterly ungentlemanly. Now, we must beware of his deceitful strategies. He wants to lure us into sin, and we can and must resist him. But if we belong to King Jesus, we belong to the one over whom the devil has not an ounce of power.

So Jesus became a human being so as to cut a pathway to glory for his people and to set us free from the fear of death by rendering the devil powerless.

Now, thirdly, are you still with me? Shorter. Shorter third section. The third reason for his incarnation comes in verse 17. Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers.

You see, it's the same theme. He had to become a human being in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

So here's the third point. Jesus became a man in order to be a merciful and faithful high priest for us. Now, you might want to ask, what is the role of a priest?

[43 : 08] And why do we need a priest? There are confusions about the need of a priest, but they can quickly be ironed out. Some of the older denominations of the Christian church call their ministers priests, as you know.

For example, the Roman Catholics or the Eastern Orthodox churches. But in calling their ministers priests, they're not understanding that we already have a perfect high priest, Jesus.

We don't need another. And his priestly work doesn't need to be supplemented by the actions of fallible, sinful human beings. Jesus' priesthood is perfect.

We've seen already in our verse 9 that through his suffering, Jesus' work for us has been brought to completion and perfection. What then is the role of the priest?

Well, the priest is one who stands between God and man. He is a mediator. He represents God to man, and he represents man to God.

[44 : 10] And his chief work and duty is to offer sacrifices to God which will bring to sinful people the assurance that their sin is atoned for. In the law of Moses, and especially the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, the duties of the Jewish priests are explained in great detail.

And the basic principle is easy to grasp. The worshipper, conscious of his sin, brings an animal to the priest. The priest sacrifices the animal and presents the blood of the slaughtered animal to God. The Lord accepts the offering, and the priest declares to the worshipper that his sin is atoned for and forgiven. Now, the point is this, that forgiveness is costly.

As Hebrews 9.22 puts it, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. But the Old Testament system of sacrifice was never finally adequate.

It was a bit like a rehearsal for the real thing. But it wasn't the real thing. Hebrews 10.4 puts it bluntly by saying, it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

[45:28] These Old Testament sacrifices were always no more than a preparation for the final, effective, unrepeatable sacrifice for sins, which happened in about 32 A.D.

when Jesus shed his blood on the cross and died. Jesus, then, is both the priest and the sacrificial victim. As priest, he offers the atoning blood to God, but the blood that he offers is his own.

That's why he's called the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Now, back to chapter 2, verse 17. Jesus had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.

In other words, he had to become a man. His incarnation was necessary. He became one of us in every respect, apart from one respect.

Just look on to chapter 4, verse 15. 4:15. We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

[46:43] He knows all our temptations, but he never gave in to any of them. It's such a comfort to know that he was tempted in every way that we are tempted. But he had to become truly human, because only a real man could truly represent real men and women to God.

It was man who had sinned, and it was man who reversed the effects of sin, thus nullifying the power of death and the devil.

And what did this priestly offering of himself achieve? Verse 17 tells us, it achieved propitiation for our sins. God's anger was completely propitiated, in other words, turned away.

If it had not been, we would have been condemned and destroyed utterly by the wrath of God. But Jesus, our perfect priest, stood between us and the wrath of God, and stands between us and the wrath of God, and by his willing sacrifice of himself, has brought about the forgiveness of our sins. And the consequence for us is relief and total joy. We are forgiven. If I had a hat on my head, I'd take it off and chuck it up in the air now. It's so wonderful, isn't it?

[48:03] We have forgiven our sins. Our debt is paid. We've been set free. The wrath of God has been turned away. The devil has been defeated. And for every Christian, the power of death has been utterly broken.

Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. Amen. Amen. Our dear Lord Jesus, you have done all this for us.

We can never thank you enough. You became man and you have fulfilled the role of man. You have cut a pathway to glory for all your people and you are our faithful, merciful High Priest, understanding our temptations and helping us to resist them.

May your name, therefore, be honored in the life of our church and of many churches so that the world may see in your people the joyous glory of the gospel and may be drawn irresistibly to you. We ask it for your name's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.