

Why God Became Man

Christmas Sermons

Hebrews 2:5-18

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Dr. Andy Woods

Let us take our Bibles and open them to Hebrews 2. I am looking this morning at Hebrews 2:5-18. The title of our message this morning is "Why God Became Man."

"Why God Became Man," which is really what Christmas is. This week on Thursday we celebrate the birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, His entrance into our world through the virgin birth and the Virgin conception as He made His way into our world. The question becomes, why did that have to happen? What you will discover there in Hebrews 2:5-18, which we are going to try to navigate this morning, are eight reasons why God became man.

Why God Became Man

(Heb. 2:5-18)



1. To restore God's original purpose for man (5-8)
2. To taste death for every man (9)
3. To bring many to glory (10-13)
4. To break Satan's rule over humanity (14)
5. To remove the fear of death (15)
6. To become our merciful high priest (16-17a)
7. To make a complete purification for sin (17b)
8. To sympathize with those tested (18)

Adapted from J. Dwight Pentecost, *Faith that Endures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2000), 60-71.

Christmas, the way we celebrate it, to me, is really bizarre. It is like having a birthday party for somebody and not inviting the person that you are celebrating. We have Santa Claus and Christmas lights and presents and Christmas trees, and we forget, in the midst of all of that, that it is all about Jesus. It is His birthday. It is happy birthday to Jesus.

What we are dealing with is Jesus Christ, who has always been—there never was a time in which He was not, since He is the eternally existent second member of the Godhead. Roughly 2,000 years ago, He stepped out of eternity into time, and He became, at the point of the virgin conception, the God-Man. Then born from a virgin, Mary His mother, into our world.

If you are looking for fancy names for this doctrine, it is the incarnation. You recognize the word "carne," as in chili con carne—chili with meat. "Carne" means flesh or meat. The incarnation is the enfleshment of God.

I learned a bunch of fancy names for this in seminary, and I have to share these with somebody. One name for this is the 'Hypostatic Union'. What does that even mean, 'Hypostatic Union'? Who even talks like that? What it means is that Jesus is unique in the sense that at the point of the virgin conception, 100% God also became 100% man. He is completely and totally unique among the people that have ever walked the face of the earth, because He is the unique God-Man.

John says this concerning Jesus:

"And the Word [Jesus, the "logos"] became flesh [incarnation], and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The words "only begotten" is a translation from the Greek word "monogenes." You recognize the word "genes" as in species or kind. If you are a biology major, you know that you have species and kinds that you study called "genus". Then you recognize the word "mono" as in the word monopoly. "Mono" means by itself, alone. It means one.

When this is translated "only begotten" from the Greek word "monogenes [μονογενής]" it is saying that Jesus was one of a kind. There has never been anything like Him prior; there has never been anything like Him after. There was never anyone like Him as He walked the face of the earth. He was one of a kind, the only begotten. He was completely and totally unique because He was 100% God and 100% man.

Dr. John Walvoord describes this phenomenon. Philippians 2 talks about the emptying of Christ, and he is explaining here what He emptied Himself of and what He did not empty Himself of.

"The act of "kenosis" [emptying] as stated in Philippians 2 may therefore be properly understood to mean that Christ surrendered no attribute of deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations."¹

His powers as God, which is amazing when you think about it. He could have stopped the ordeal of the cross if He had wanted to, but He took that authority and He surrendered it to God the Father. He said over and over again, "Not My will be done, but Thy will be done."

What did Jesus give up in the incarnation? He did not give up the fact that he was God. What He gave up was the privileges of deity for a season. What He surrendered was not His powers and His abilities. What He surrendered was, "I am not going to exercise those independently outside the will of God the Father, even if that means I have got to die on the cross."

¹ Dr. John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 143-44.

The incarnation is not an exchange. It is not like Jesus, at the point of the virgin conception, took off the God coat and put on the human coat. There was no exchange. There was no subtraction. But there was an addition. To eternally existent deity was added humanity, at the point of the virgin conception. He became the God-Man. He went from God to being the God-Man. Yet without sin. That is what we celebrate this week as we look at the virgin conception leading to the virgin birth of Christ.

The question becomes why? Why was this even necessary? What you discover in the Book of Hebrews, in this chapter we are going to look at this morning, are eight reasons why it was necessary. There are eight reasons why God, the eternally existent second member of the Trinity, became man.

Number one, Jesus became man to restore God's original purpose for man. You see that in Hebrews 2:5-8, which says:

*"For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere saying,
'What is man, that You remember him?
Or the Son of Man, that You are concerned about him?
You have made him for a little while lower than the angels;
You have crowned him with glory and honor,
And You have appointed him over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things in subjection under his feet.'
For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him.
But now we do not see all things subjected to him" (Hebrews 2:5-8).*

You will notice, as this was being read, that depending on how your English translation deals with this, this was a quotation. I am reading from the New American Standard Bible, and it is everything in capital letters. What that means is that it is an Old Testament quote. It comes from Psalm 8:4-6, which gives God's original purpose for man.

Why did man and woman come into existence? God had a purpose. Psalm 8:4-6 says:

*"What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!
You have made him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:4-6).*

When God formed humanity at the very beginning, He had a purpose. The purpose of humanity, man alongside his wife, was to rule creation on God's behalf. That is why humanity was brought into existence. Psalm 8:4-6, which is quoted here by the author

of Hebrews, explains that. That is an explanation that goes all the way back to Genesis 1, where God said of humanity:

"And let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

In Genesis 1:28, He tells our forebears:

"And subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

The fancy name for this, if you want one, is called the office of theocratic administrator. It means someone that governs for God. That is why Adam and Eve and the human race came into existence. This was God's purpose. They—man, along with his wife—were to be co-rulers over the created order and works of God that came into existence during the creation week. That is why we exist.

We know how the story ended. It did not end there. Unfortunately, the purpose of God got sidetracked. Our forebears quit ruling creation, and they started listening to creation. In particular, they started listening to a talking snake, and they started listening to creation. Instead of governing creation for God, they listened to creation and rebelled against the principles of God in the process.

The instant this happened (Genesis 3, the Fall of man), Satan became the illegitimate ruler over planet Earth. This is why Satan is called the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), the God of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), the one that the believer wrestles with (Ephesians 6:12). He roams about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). The whole world lies within his power (1 John 5:19).

That was never the design of God. That is an illegitimate usurpation that Adam, along with his wife, turned over to the devil. They gave the keys to Satan. That is why Satan, in one of the temptations to Jesus, said, "I can give you all the kingdoms of this world if you will just worship me, for they have been given to me" (Matthew 4:8-9). Satan says to Jesus, "I can give them to whomever I want." Jesus never says that is not true, because it was true. God of course, retains his sovereignty, but Satan by and large is running planet Earth.

Why is it that the Son of God had to become the God-Man to restore what was lost? You cannot restore what was lost unless God becomes man Himself. You cannot restore the purpose for man unless the Son of God becomes man. That is why Hebrews 12 is quoting Psalm 8.

This is why Jesus is referred to as the last Adam.

"So also it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul.' The last Adam became a live-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45).

I used to think it said that Jesus was the second Adam, but the Bible never says that, because if there is a second one, there could be a third or a fourth. Jesus is the final act. The Scripture never calls Him the second Adam. It calls him the last Adam. He came into the world to reverse the damage ushered in by the first Adam. That cannot happen unless God becomes man Himself.

Who are the two most influential people in world history? Not Donald Trump and Bill Gates. They are Adam and Jesus. These are the two people that have had the most effect on all of humanity. Adam, through his single act of disobedience involving a tree, the tree of knowledge, brought in a universal curse. What is that curse? The world is in a state of groaning because of what he did.

"For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan—"

I was groaning this morning. That alarm clock comes around earlier and earlier. It seems like it is harder and harder to get out of bed. We are groaning all of the time. Our bodies are deteriorating.

"—even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:22-23).

The whole cosmos is in a state of travail. The whole cosmos is in a state of groaning. It is personified as groaning. Adam put it into this condition. Adam, through his one act of disobedience involving a tree, the tree of knowledge, brought in a universal curse. We are physically born into that curse. This is why Adam is called the first Adam. He had a worldwide effect.

Jesus is called the last Adam. He came into the world to fix what was broken. His single act of obedience involving a tree, the cross—Galatians calls the cross a tree, saying, *"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"* (Galatians 3:13), which refers to the cross—brought in a universal blessing. Adam brought in a physical curse; Jesus brought in a spiritual blessing.

You cannot be part of that blessing unless you are born again. If you have only been born physically but never born again spiritually, you are stuck under the consequences of the first Adam. The moment you believe the gospel is the moment your position changes. You are no longer under the consequences of the first Adam, but now you are under the blessings of the last Adam who came into the world to fix what was broken, to fix what was busted.

How can God fix what was destroyed or damaged by the first man unless He becomes man? Christ's ultimate purpose in coming was to restore God's original purpose for man.

By the time it is all said and done in the afterlife in the Millennial Kingdom and in the New Jerusalem, the world is going to look pretty close to the way it looked in Genesis 1-2. It is a plan and a program which cannot happen unless God becomes a man. You cannot fix what the first man destroyed unless you become the God-Man. This doctrine of the incarnation is absolutely critical to the mission of Christ.

The second reason God became a man was to taste death for every man. That is in Hebrews 2:9, which says:

"But we do not see Him who was made for a little lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned him with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

A lot of people look at "taste" as a little lick, but that is not how the author of Hebrews uses the word "taste." It is a full experience. Jesus went through the full experience of death. Why? Because of the penalty for sin. The penalty for Adam's transgression is death. That is what Adam and Eve—really Adam because he was supposed to communicate this to his wife, who did not exist yet when this was given. That was the original command, that goes back to Genesis 2:16-17.

"The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat from it you will surely die'" (Genesis 2:16-17).

It was the easiest job description on planet Earth. Do whatever you want, but just do not eat from the tree of knowledge, which they did. God said, "The instant you do that, you will start to die." This is something that is taught all the way through Scripture.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20, KJV).

"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

In Genesis 3:21, God clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skin. Where did those garments come from? Did they just drop out of the sky? No. An innocent sacrifice was killed right then and there on the spot. God took the animal skins from this deceased animal, and He clothed Adam and Eve.

There is a penalty for death; there is a penalty for sin; and that is death. The thing to understand about this is that it was an eternal crime. It was an eternal offense against God resulting in death. How do you fix something that is an eternal offense against God,

resulting in death? There is really only one way to fix it in the mind of God: eternity must die. If the sin was an eternal consequence resulting in death, then the only way to reverse this problem is that eternity must die. God has to die.

Now ask yourself just a very simple question. How can God die? How do you kill God? There is only one way to kill God. That is if God takes on human limitations. That is the only way to kill God. That way you are not killing God, you are killing the God-Man. That is what Jesus was born into the world to do. The moment He was conceived, where humanity was added to deity, the moment He breathed His very first breath in our world. He was born for the purpose of dying. He was born with a price tag hanging over His head.

When He tasted death, He did it for everyone: "*so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone*" (Hebrews 2:9). That means every man.

I look at the commentary by Jay Adams—a counselor who I happen to agree with on a lot of different things—but he basically says in his book, "Competent to Counsel," that when he is counseling somebody and he does not know if they are a Christian or not, he does not tell them that Christ died for them because he is a believer in limited atonement—Christ only died for some. He says:

"As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ Himself who are His elect for whom He died."²

I say to that, absolute nonsense. The Bible says he tasted death for every man, meaning that the whole world, even as I speak, is savable. Every single man, woman and child on planet Earth is savable. They are not saved until they place their trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ for their own salvation, but they are savable. Every lost person I encounter, I say without any apology whatsoever, no equivocation, "Christ died for you." Hebrews 2:9, among other passages, says that He died for everyone.

"And He Himself is our propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

First Timothy 4:10 describes Jesus as "*the Savior of all men.*" He is the Savior of everyone because He died for everyone. That is the purpose for which He came into the world.

Did you know that the moment you place your trust in Christ for salvation, you are fast-tracked into glory? It is a done deal. This takes us to the third reason that God became man, which is what we are celebrating this week, the virgin conception and the virgin birth.

² Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 70.

The third reason why the incarnation had to happen is to bring many to glory. That is in Hebrews 2:10-13:

"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from the one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, 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 whom God has given Me'" (Hebrews 2:10-13).

You will notice here a lot of Old Testament verses are used. The words "sons," "brethren," and "children" are highlighted. That is why He came into the world, to take people that would trust in His provision, which He could only accomplish as the God-Man, and put them on a fast track into glory.

This path into glory for the Christian is so much of a done deal that God speaks to the Christian as if they are already glorified. I am looking at you guys. You do not look very glorified, and I doubt I look very glorified, but as far as God is concerned, it is a positional reality. I am on the way to glory. It is not "I hope it is going to happen." It is "I know it is going to happen."

Romans 8:29-30 lays out for us the phases of our salvation. It says:

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).

Do you see how all of those are in the past tense? My salvation was foreknown; my salvation was predestined. I have already been called by God; I have already been justified before God. Do you know what? My glorification, even though it does not look like it right now and it does not feel like it right now, is in the past tense as well, because that is how certain our arrival in glory is. God, who is outside of time, can speak of it as if it already happened. Had Jesus not become a man and added humanity to deity, this transaction could not happen.

There is a fourth reason why God became man, and that is to break Satan's stranglehold over humanity. We get that from Hebrews 2:14.

"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless Him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

This is talking about the power of Satan being broken. One of the things that controls people is the devil's power. The devil, as we said before, has authority over all of planet Earth—prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4), prince and power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), the one who the believer wrestles with (Ephesians 6:12). He roams about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). The whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one (1 John 5:19).

Lewis Sperry Chafer uses the example of a mother rocking her newborn to sleep. That is the devil, rocking to sleep the entire world system. It has been that way ever since the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

This is what Jesus was offered by the devil. Yet because of what Christ did, because He first became a man, He reversed this problem. That is why when we get to the Book of Revelation, we read about a seven-sealed scroll. The seven-sealed scroll is described in Revelation 5:1. John writes:

"I saw the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals" (Revelation 5:1).

John sees a scroll. As these seals are progressively broken, the paper gets unrolled a little bit more until you get to seal number seven. The whole thing is opened, and the seventh seal is going to launch the next set of judgments, just like the seventh trumpet is going to launch the bowl judgments. By the time this scroll is opened, we know what is going to happen. God is obviously going to win, because by the time we get to the end of the Book of Revelation, Satan is in the lake of fire and Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning.

What is this seven-sealed scroll? What is it exactly that He is opening? He is opening the title deed to planet Earth. It is a legal deed, and it is sealed up. The reason it is sealed up is because Adam gave the keys to this to the devil. What happens in heaven is that we are shown this seven-sealed scroll. We start to get a picture of what it is.

John, when he sees this—because he is the one seeing the revelation and recording it—starts to sob uncontrollably. That is in Revelation 5:2-4, which says:

"And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?' And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep—"

This is John, the apostle that leaned against Christ's chest in the Upper Room 60 years earlier.

"Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it" (Revelation 5:2-4).

John looks at this seven-sealed scroll. He knows what it is. It is the title deed to the earth, and he just starts crying because he thinks it is going to stay sealed. The reason he thinks it is going to stay sealed is because who in the world is qualified to open that?

If it stays sealed, you know what happens to planet Earth? It continues on under Satan's domain forever. It continues on under the bondage that it is in forever and ever and ever. That is why people are losing hope in our world. They think that the condition of this world, with all of its problems—cancer, drive-by shootings, spousal abuse, you name it—is going to go on forever and ever.

If they believe that, no wonder they are on drugs. No wonder they are packing the bars out, particularly this time of the year. Christmas time is a time where a lot of people decide to end their lives. Did you know that? It is an epidemic of suicides during this time of the year, because they think that what they see will not stop.

That is why John starts to go into this uncontrolled sobbing, but the story continues, thank God. We learn there is someone qualified. Revelation 5:5 says:

"And one of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals'" (Revelation 5:5).

"Put the Kleenex box away. Quit crying. Quit acting like you are so defeated. There is someone that is qualified to open this, John. You ought to know better. You ministered alongside Him 60 years ago. He called you over and over again, as you revealed in your own Gospel, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.'" Someone is worthy to open the scroll. That way the devil's grasp over humanity is limited. That is Christian hope. Satan's grip over everything has a season, but it is a limited season. There is someone that is qualified.

Why is Jesus qualified? He is from the tribe of Judah. He is from the right tribe. You have to be born in the right tribe. No birth of Christ, no right tribe. He is from the lineage of David. It is hard to do that if you have not been physically born into the world. Not only that, He has overcome. Sixty years earlier, He died on a cross; He rose from the dead; He ascended back to the right hand of the Father.

He did everything that a person could do to qualify to open this scroll, none of which could happen without the advent of Jesus. So stop crying. There is a liberation movement coming for planet Earth.

Revelation 5:7 to me is one of the most awesome scenes in the Bible. It says:

"And He [Jesus] came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" (Revelation 5:7).

It was not even handed to He; He just went over and grabbed it. Then what follows in Revelation 5:8-14 is one of the greatest praise sessions that you will ever see found anywhere in the Bible, where heaven itself starts to celebrate. The twenty-four elders are celebrating; the four living creatures are celebrating; the myriads upon myriads of angels are celebrating. What are they celebrating? They are celebrating that planet Earth is about to be liberated from the devil's grasp because there is someone that can open the scroll.

What qualifies Him is His birth into our world 2,000 years ago, which tells us that we are on the winning side of history. Did you know that Jesus is qualified to take the world out of the bondage that it has been in since Genesis 3? That is why so many of the judgments in the Book of Revelation sound like the Book of Exodus.

We are reading about the ten plagues as God is liberating His nation from 400 years of Egyptian bondage. That is small stuff. What God is doing in the Book of Revelation is taking all of planet Earth, all of the cosmos that have been negatively affected out of the devil's grasp, and turning it right back to God where it belongs. Exodus is a mini Exodus; the Book of Revelation is the ultimate Exodus.

"The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

That is why sores, plague six in the Book of Exodus, sound like the first seal judgment in the Book of Revelation. Rivers to blood, the first plague in Exodus, is like the third bowl judgment in the Book of Revelation. I am seeing some parallels here: darkness, the ninth plague in Exodus like the fifth bowl judgment in the Book of Revelation; frogs, the second plague in Exodus like the sixth bowl judgment in Revelation; hail, the seventh plague in the book of Exodus is like the seventh bowl judgment in the Book of revelation.

Why the deliberate parallels? Because John, by writing these things down, is communicating that just as God took a whole nation out of bondage after it had been in that bondage for 400 years, here He is taking the whole planet out of bondage. The whole planet cannot come out of bondage unless someone is qualified to open this scroll. You are not qualified to open the scroll unless you are born into the world.

Jesus said this:

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In fact, the word "overcome" is where we get the word Nike, as in the shoe company. You are connected to Him by way of faith. Did you know what your identity is? You are an overcomer too. You may not look like an overcomer. You may not feel like an overcomer half the time. You may not even act like an overcomer, but if your trust is in Christ, you are an overcomer, not because of something inherent in yourself, but because you are connected to the One who wins.

"You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

You mean I could walk through this life with all of its satanic bondage and problems of people everywhere and walk in victory? Yes, you can. If you are connected to the One who wins, you can.

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one that overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5).

Paul writes in Romans 8:37, concerning trials and things we face:

"But in all of these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

The word there is "nikao" and you will see connected to it a prefix "hyper," which means super. You are not just an overcomer. You are like a super overcomer because His victory is a done deal. It is as good as if it already happened. It is a lot like God telling the Israelites to go out and fight a particular battle, and you have won before you engage in any combat whatsoever. That is who we are. This is what the first advent of Christ put in motion.

There is a fifth reason God became man. This is big because many people are controlled by this. It is to remove the fear of death. Look at Hebrews 2:15:

"And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15, NKJV).

This is something that controls people cradle to grave—fear of death. What happens on the other side? Look at the whole Covid thing, which we are dealing with about 0.0001% of the population dying, supposedly. Look at the fear in people. Look at the acceptance of, "Go ahead and infringe upon my freedoms as an American, because I am afraid. I am fearful, so I am not going to go to church. I am not going to sing, because I am afraid." It is perpetual fear of death.

Since nobody sees what happens on the other side from this life, this is something that the devil has used to keep people in a state of fear. Look at the shooting that just happened at Brown University. That could happen here, could it not? Yes, it could. I hope and pray it does not, but it could. The truth of the matter is, if they come in here and kill you or kill me—we just saw Charlie Kirk get shot in the neck, and he died instantly in front of the whole world. This is serious stuff.

The truth of the matter is, if they went and did that, they would be doing you a big favor because Jesus came into the world to remove the fear of death. You can be afraid to die as a Christian, but you are living way beneath your privileges because the Book of Hebrews tells us that He came into the world to get rid of this fear, which puts people in a state of bondage every time, I am afraid.

It is like I am in chains. Jesus came into the world to remove the chains, to remove the fear. If you are fast-tracked into glory, then what are you afraid of? Paul says this: *"We are of good courage"* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

He was a courageous man. Why was he not afraid to die? You read the Book of Acts, which we are studying on Wednesday evenings. There are multiple attempts to kill Paul prematurely. "Paul, if you go to Jerusalem, they are going to put you in chains." Paul says, "I do not care. I am going anyway." In fact, there is a prophecy that Agabus gives: "If you go to Jerusalem, this is what is going to happen to you." Agabus pantomimes it or acts it out (Acts 21:10-11).

Paul says, "I do not care. I am going anyway." His boat goes into a storm there in Acts 27, and he tells everybody, "We are going to testify in Rome." The guy was fearless. Why was he of good courage?

"We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

If I die, I go home. That will give you courage. You can look a lot of crises right in the eyes and stare them down, if you believe that.

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake" (Philippians 1:21-24).

"Yes, God is using me to write the New Testament and things like that as I am here, but I would rather check out and be with the Lord. Because of you people, I have to stick around." That is what he is saying here. What a perspective that is, because to me, it does not look like the Muslims are getting more calm around here.

These are teachings that we need to understand. We are living in a culture that is becoming more and more belligerent and openly so against people like ourselves, the Saturday people, the Jews, and the Sunday people, the Christians. Jesus came into the world to remove the fear of death.

There is a sixth reason: He came into our world to become our merciful and sympathetic High Priest. You will find that in Hebrews 2:17:

"For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:16-17).

Jesus had to become man, the God-Man, to be our High Priest.

What is a priest? A priest is somebody who represents man before God and God before man. Who is the best candidate to do that? Someone that is both 100% God and 100% man. He would be a great priest because he can represent man's interest before God and God's interest before man. He is, as I will show you in a minute, a mediator.

This is what bothered Job. What is the oldest Book of the Bible? Book of Job. This is what Job's conundrum was, because Job had a lot of problems. Job said, "If I could just get into heaven, I could explain myself to God; but I am just a person, and we are dealing with God. I need a priest. I need a mediator." He calls it here "an umpire." He cries out in the oldest Book of the Bible, Job 9:32-33:

*"For He is not a man that I may answer Him,
That we may go to court together.
There is no umpire between us,
Who may lay his hand upon us" (Job 9:32-33).*

I need a priest, and I need a mediator. Job asked for that in the oldest Book of the Bible, and the rest of the Bible is an answer to Job's request. There is a mediator, not just man, but the God-Man. Not just God, but the God-Man. This is why 1 Timothy 2:5 says,

"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

What is a mediator? A mediator is someone who goes in and settles a controversy between disputing parties. There is a big controversy between us and God. It is called sin, original sin. We are in a world of hurt. We need someone to resolve this conflict. We need a mediator. We need someone that can represent man's interest to God and God's interest to man. Who in the world could do such a thing? Job says, "I cannot do it. I am just a person." But the God-Man can do it. A person that is 100% God and 100% man can pull this off.

I do not mean to sound mean, but I almost start laughing when people tell me there are many ways to God outside of Jesus. I am thinking, "Are you kidding me?" There can only be one way, because whoever bridges the gap has to be the God-Man. There is only one of those. We are celebrating the addition of humanity to eternally existent deity this week. This is what Christmas is about. The birth of Christ, the virgin conception and virgin birth made this whole thing possible.

There is a seventh reason why God became man, and that is to make a complete purification for sin. This is also in Hebrews 2:17 at the end of the verse: *"to make propitiation for the sins of the people."*

What does propitiation even mean? It means the satisfaction of divine wrath. God's wrath against sin is pacified. It is satiated. Here is one definition of propitiation: the cross has pacified, appeased, and placated God's anger so that His wrath has been diverted from us. That is propitiation.

It is a word that is used a lot of times in the New Testament:

"Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (Romans 3:25).

"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Didn't they have that in the Old Testament? They had some neat things in the Old Testament, but not that. In the Old Testament there was a tabernacle. There was a Holy of Holies that only the high priest on the Day of Atonement could enter and sprinkle blood of a Passover lamb on the mercy seat of the Tabernacle in the Holy of Holies.

He could only do it one time a year. When he did it, the note of indebtedness was postponed for a year. "You do not have to pay this year." What about next year? "We will talk about it next year." The priest would go back in. It is called Yom Kippur—Yom Kippur, day of covering. Not removal, but covering. The priest would go back in, do the same thing. "You do not have to pay this year either." What about next year? "We will talk about it next year." The priest would go in on Yom Kippur and do the same thing again. This went on and on and on and on.

Why did it keep going on and on and on and on? Because you are dealing with the blood of animals. Animals cannot fix a man problem. Animals cannot permanently fix a human being problem. There has to be something bigger and better that is coming. That is why Hebrews 10, quoting Psalm 40, says:

"In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure" (Hebrews 10:6).

This is fascinating because God created this system. It was functioning for 1,500 years. That is a long time. Through the psalmist, God says in Psalm 40:6, "Do you know what? I am not pleased with this." You created it, are you not pleased with it?" God was never fully pleased with it because it could not fix a problem. It could only kick the can down the road. That is all it could do, because we have a man problem, a human being problem, and this is an animal sacrificial system.

There has to be something coming that this prefigures that can solve this issue once and for all. The answer is the God-Man. The God-Man can fix this. The God-Man, the God side of Him can fix the eternal offense against God, and the man side can fix this, because now God can die and shed His blood. You cannot kill God unless He becomes a man. Humanity was not added to deity until the virgin conception.

What were Christ's final words on the cross? This is the last thing He said before He died:

"Therefore, when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit" (John 19:30).

"It is finished" is a translation from the Greek word "tetelestai [τετέλεσται]," which means paid in full. Propitiation, the permanent satisfaction of divine wrath. What was that definition earlier? The cross has pacified, appeased, and placated God's anger against sin, so that His wrath has been diverted from us. An animal could not do this because this is a man problem. The animal sacrificial system pointed to this, but it could not fix it.

People say, "Andy, you know you are religious." I am thinking to myself that I am the least religious person you will ever run into. I am not religious at all. You know what religion is? Jesus did 90%, and you kick in 10%. God bought lunch, but you leave the tip. How do I leave the tip? I have to pay, pray, and obey. If I do not pay, pray, and obey, then the tip is not left and I am in trouble. I have to wash dishes, I guess.

What we are teaching is that Jesus did everything. Everything. What about pay, pray, and obey? Why would you think you have to do that to be made right with God, when Jesus says that it is finished? Should you pay, pray, and obey? Yes. Do it as an act of sacrifice and worship to Him, but do not do it because you think you are buying something from Him. Only the God-Man could pull this off.

The last one I have here, number eight, is that God became man to sympathize with those being tested. Hebrews 2:18:

"For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

He is our priest. He represents us and our weaknesses before God. How could He represent those correctly unless He was subject to our limitations and weaknesses? Do not get me wrong, He was without sin, but having said that, He, as the God-Man, lived

as a man and knew what human limitations were like, not in His deity but in His humanity. This is what makes him such a great high priest.

"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

As an ex-basketball player—I played basketball from seventh grade through my senior year in college—I always had two kinds of coaches. I had coaches that had actually played, and I had other coaches that had never played. When a guy that has never played is yelling at you, screaming at you, telling you to endure, telling you to work harder, you listen to him and they do not have your respect because they do not know what you are feeling. As an athlete, you have to put your body through a certain amount of pain. What would they know about it? They have never done it.

The guy that has played is completely different when he is pushing you. He has been there. He knows what you are feeling. That is Jesus. It could not have happened unless He became man. He knew what labor was like (Mark 6:3). He was a carpenter. He knew what it was like to work with his hands and carve out a living. He knew what distress was like (Luke 22:44). He knew what being troubled was like (John 12:27).

He knew what being thirsty was like:

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty'" (John 19:28).

He knew what being hungry was like:

"And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry" (Matthew 4:2).

He knew what being tired was like:

"So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well" (John 4:6).

He knew what sadness was like, because when Lazarus died, he wept (John 11:35). He knew what it was like not to understand everything, not in His deity, but in his humanity. There were questions that I do not think He could answer unless He tapped into His divine side (Matthew 24:36). He did not even know when He was coming back. Nobody knows that.

He knew what it is like to be tempted (Luke 4:1-13). He knew what it was like to be stabbed in the back. Have you had that happen to you? Someone that you trusted just

sticks the knife in. Jesus knows all about that. That is what happened with Judas, whom He called to the end, friend. Judas betrayed him. He knew what it was like to be let down. He knew what it was like to have a struggling ministry that did not attract a very large group of people in many instances.

Virtually any need that you have, you can go to Jesus with it because He knows all about it. He has gone through, as we would concur, far worse than most of us ever experience. To my knowledge, this is unique to Christianity. I do not see this in Buddhism or Islam, where you are praying to some detached deity that has absolutely no idea what it is like to suffer. How different Christianity is because of the incarnation and the God-Man.

Why did God become man? Why are we even celebrating that this week? He became man to restore God's purpose for man. He became man to taste death for everyone. He became a man to bring many to glory. He became a man to break Satan's rule over the human race. He became a man to remove the fear of death. He became a man to become our merciful High Priest. He became a man to make complete purification for sin. He became a man to sympathize with those tested. What a list!

Father, we are grateful for Your Son and what He did, how it is a seamless garment; how, if we appreciate the virgin conception, virgin birth, incarnation, it opens our understanding to all these other things that are intricately related to it. Help us, Lord, in the midst of stress and busyness this season to make You and keep You the reason for the season.

I pray, Lord, if anyone is here within the sound of my voice or listening or watching, and they do not know You personally, that they would understand the gospel. It is finished and they might place their personal trust in the work of Your Son, and they might be born again during a time of the year where we celebrate the birth of Christ.

I pray if anyone is here and they have questions about that, they might seek me out because it really is the most important decision a human being can make. Thank You for Jesus. Thank You for His birthday. Help us to give Him the proper homage that He so beautifully deserves. We will be careful to give you all the praise and the glory. We ask these things in Jesus' name, and God's people said, Amen.