

**WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME A MAN?
JESUS, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST**

Hebrews 2:17-18

Intro: For the past three Sundays as we have been approaching the Christmas Season, we have been considering the Bible's answer to the question, *Why did the Son of God become a Man?* Or to state that question in another way, I was asking what purposes were behind the Virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. After all, nothing like this had ever occurred in history before, and since then such a thing has never been repeated. It obviously was an act of God. God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, conceived in the womb of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. So, since God is a God of infinite wisdom, He must have had a very important purpose, or purposes, in sending His Son to earth as a true human being. We have seen from Scripture that God had two major reasons for sending Christ to earth as a Man.

The first was that the Son of God became a Man as the final and complete revelation of God. God revealed Himself in many way in OT times, but there never was anyone who could say, like Jesus did, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But it is recorded in John 14:8 that that is exactly what Jesus said. His character, His teaching, and His mighty works all proved that He truly was God in human flesh.

The second major reason for the coming of the Son of God into the earth as a human being, was that He could die as a Substitute for human sinners, to obtain for them the forgiveness of sins, perfect and eternal acceptance with God (which is what justification is), and the gift of eternal life. We considered that last Sunday. Jesus is the only Savior of sinners that there is.

Then in between those two purposes related to our Lord's work as a Savior, we consider a third purpose that the Father had in sending His Son into the world as a Man which was that He might be an Example to all who believe in Him, of what it means to live a life of holiness in order to please and to glorify God. We are not saved by following His Example, but when we are saved, He is our primary Example as to how we are to live. We are saved to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ, and that change begins the moment we are saved. And it continues to take place throughout our lives, but will not be completed until we are finally with the Lord.

Now today I want us to consider a fourth purpose that God had in sending His Son into the world as a Man, a purpose also which the Lord Jesus had in coming as a Man. It was, as the Bible reveals in our reading for this morning, “that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God” (Heb. 2:17). But I have actually taken the title of my message for today from Hebrews chapter 4, and verse 14, where the Lord is called “a great high priest.”

This is actually the subject of the book of Hebrews in the NT. The high priestly ministry of our Lord includes His death for us, but it continues on as an encouragement for all of us in our lives as Christians after we are saved. Actually this is far too big a subject to deal with in one message, and so I recommend the reading of the book of Hebrews so that you can get a more complete picture of the ministry of our Lord as our great high Priest.

Let me begin by dealing with the question,

I. WHAT IS A PRIEST?

Now I am asking this from the standpoint of how the word “priest” is used in the Bible. You will remember that there were three main offices, or positions, in the Old Testament concerning Israel. There were prophets. There were priests. And there were kings. The prophets were men who received their messages from God, and delivered them to the people. I don’t think that you can find a better definition of a priest than that which is given in verse 17 in the words, “in things pertaining to God.” Prophets ministered from God to man; priests ministered from man to God. Priests were mainly mediators or intercessors. Whereas the prophet received their messages from God, and delivered them to the people. The priests received their offerings and sacrifices from the people, and delivered them to God. The kings ruled the people according to the revealed Word of God. That is why kings were required to write out their own copy of the Law in OT times, and they were to be faithful in reading the Law.

It is the priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ that the writer of Hebrews referred to when he wrote in Hebrews 7:25,

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

So the eternal character of our salvation not only rests on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, but on the two additional truths that “He ever liveth,” and that “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

So that is why it is important for us to know the truth expressed by Paul in Romans 6:9-10 where he wrote speaking of Christ,

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

One reason that salvation could not be guaranteed under the Law was that the priests lived so many years, and then they died, they were succeeded by other priests who did the same. Again referring to Hebrews 7, this is what we are told in verses 23 and 24:

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

That is one of several reasons why people could not be saved under the old Mosaic covenant. Priests lived and died, and they were replaced by others. But our Lord as a Man lived and died and was raised from the dead never to die again. His death was so sufficient that it never needs to be repeated.

But let us notice secondly,

II. THE UNIQUENESS OF OUR LORD’S PRIESTHOOD.

Again in the sacrifice of our Lord we find a distinct difference between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices of the OT priest was that the OT priests offered the blood of bulls and goats, but the Lord was both the sacrifice and the priest, as we read in Heb 9:11-12

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

The sacrifices of the OT priests had to be offered year after year, first by one priest, and then by another when Hebrews 10:4 tells us “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4).

Their value was that they were offered in anticipation that eventually a perfect sacrifice would be made by the Messiah which would put an end all sacrifices.

Most expositors of the book of Hebrews believe that the doctrinal section of the book ends at chapter 10, verse 18. Let me read to you from verse 1 of chapter 10 how the writer of Hebrews draws everything to a conclusion. You can follow me in your Bible if you are pleased to do so.

(Read Hebrews 10:1-18.)

So our Lord Jesus Christ secured the salvation of His people by offering Himself as the all-sufficient sacrifice, and being raised from the dead, He now continues His priestly ministry, His high priestly ministry, our great High Priest, “who ever lives to make intercession for us.” So let us go back now to our text in Hebrews 2:17-18. Obviously here the writer of Hebrews was thinking of our Lord’s present ministry for us in connection with what He experienced while He lived here on earth as a true human being.

This obviously one of the most precious truths in the Bible.

Did you ever ask yourself why it was that our Lord lived for three years, more or less, in public, under the eye of His enemies as well as His friends? Did you ever ask your self why it was that the Devil tempted the Lord only three times, and then left Him with the intention of coming back to attack Him again? You will have your answer when you take the nature of the three temptations the Devil placed before the Lord, and then identify each temptation with one of the three things that the Apostle John said are in the world, and “all that is in the world” – “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-17).

He lived for three years under the eyes of all to show that being tested in all points like we are, yet He was “without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Peter, who knew the Lord as well as any man, with possibly the exception of the Apostle John, wrote that our Lord “did no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22). The Apostle Paul gave His testimony to the sinless character of our Lord when he wrote that our Lord “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). And the Apostle John after having had some sixty years or more to think it over, wrote in his First Epistle, “in Him is not sin” (1 John 3:5).

The Lord Jesus came in “the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3), *but not in sinful flesh*. Paul in writing to Titus reminded him that God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). God and Christ have the ability to do lots of things, great and glorious things that are greater than anything that we can do, but They “cannot lie.” Nor is there any sin that they can commit.

Now let us think in closing about the humanity of Jesus, the Son of God.

III. THE HUMANITY OF JESUS, THE SON OF GOD.

I have mentioned to you in this series how some professing Christians have caused problems because they have wrongly interpreted truths that God has ordained for our blessing, such as, the Fatherhood of God, and knowing that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Example. Both of those are Biblical truths, and we must let anybody cause us to set them aside. If we do, we are the losers. Here in the humanity we have the same problem with the Name Jesus. People, religious people, often pastors, speak of our Lord as only Jesus. They don’t speak of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of Lord, or of Christ, just Jesus. The Lord was given the name “Jesus” at His birth, and we ought to delight in speaking of “Jesus,” not to the exclusion of His full title, or of Jesus Christ, or of the Lord Jesus, or the Lord Christ.

Look at Hebrews 4:14-16 again:

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

And then remember from our text today:

18 For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

In the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ we have “a merciful and faithful High Priest Who knows what we are going through living in this world of sin, and He alone is able to help us, to deliver us, and when we fall, to forgive us because all of our sins were atoned for at the Cross.

I confess that I can’t fully understand verses like Luke 2:52 where we read that “Jesus increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and

man.” But I will tell you what I can do with it; *I can believe it! And I do!*
And I can't fully explain this passage from Hebrews 5:8-10:

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things
which he suffered;

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal
salvation unto all them that obey him;

10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

I can't fully explain these words, but I will tell you what I can do with it; *I can believe it, and I do!*

I don't know how He can be touched with the feeling of my infirmities (and I have many), *but I believe it.* How the Lord Jesus Christ can be “a merciful and faithful high priest to me when I treat Him the way I do sometimes, but I know that He is. And much of it is traceable to the fact that He became a Man, true, sinless humanity. He knows my frame; He remembers that I am just dust.

The name Jesus appears 9 times in the book of Hebrews by itself, and 5 other times with either Lord or Christ. Remember Hebrews 12:1-3:

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Concl: I close with the words of a hymn that is familiar to most of us. It is #711 in our hymnal. The words express what I have been trying to say this morning. Listen to them as I read them:

The Name of Jesus is so sweet, I love its music to repeat;
It makes my joy full and complete, the precious Name of Jesus.

I love the Name of Him whose heart, knows all my griefs and
bears a part;

Who bids all anxious fears depart, I love the Name of Jesus.

No word of man can ever tell how sweet the Name I love so well;
Oh, let its praises ever swell, oh, praise the Name of Jesus.

Jesus, oh how sweet the Name! Jesus, every day the same;
Jesus, let all saints proclaim Its worthy praise for ever.