



Why the Son Became One of Us The Costs & Benefits of the Incarnation Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, people have bemoaned the fact that a lot less people go to church today than, say, when our parents were our age. It's still amazing to me as I think about how many hundreds of thousands of people went to church this morning in the United States. They go to church with an understanding that Christ was sent into this world to help them. They go to church thinking that they can celebrate or sing about or learn about a Jesus that was born in a manger for some reason to help their lives, augment their lives.

And indeed, they get the idea from Scripture. The real question, though, is, and the real line of demarcation and the distinction is, what kind of help are you talking about? Because so often I find that as I talk to people that say they love God and they want to learn about Christ or they want to be on God's team, they understand Christianity and the coming of Christ as something to help their lives, but not on the level that the Scripture speaks of helping us.

Jesus came to save us, the Bible says, and unfortunately, in truncating the fullness of that thought into a phrase that we're saved, or he came to save us, is that the backdrop of that begins to change in a lot of people's minds. And we really lose sight of the fact that he came to save us from something very specific. Or to turn it around, some people say Christ is here to help us, but the help that they're thinking of is somewhere on the level of a set of Ginsu steak knives, if you know what I mean. In other words, I can use Christ to kind of help me cut through some of the gristle of life, and that'll be good, and I want Christ on my team, and Christ will help me.

And yet, of course, in Scripture, Christ is presented not as an augmentation to our lives, but the sole and last hope of our lives, and that he is to be help to us, not in terms of augmentation or a sharp set of steak knives, but as a lifeboat that is parked next to a sinking Titanic. Both can be called help. I mean, one helps us, helps us with the struggles of a dull knife, and the other helps us in a profound and significant way, as a cold and wet, concerned passenger of a sinking ship.

The extent to which you think you need the help of Christ will be commensurate with how you respond to that help. In other words, I find a lot of people saying, "I'm grateful for Christ in my life." And they're grateful like they would be for some simple augmentation. Their life is better now. When in reality, the Scripture says that, much like you might picture someone huddled in a lifeboat with a blanket around them, hugging the captain of some little lifeboat dinghy, saying, "I'm so grateful that you made a spot for me, and that you saw me bobbing in the water as the ship was going down, and you came over to me and you said, 'There's room for one more. Get in the boat.'" I mean, there's a different kind of gratitude. There's a different level of profundity and gratefulness.

It's the difference between Christians who sing songs before a sermon and people that really worship before a sermon. I mean, there's two levels of understanding. And the more I experience the Christian community, the more I think there are clearly two camps. And the camps are just so distinguishable. Some believe that Christ is there to save them from loneliness or heartache or despair or purposelessness. And there's another group that understands that Christ is here to save us from the wrath that is to come, to put it in biblical terms. And that's a whole different set of perspectives.

As a matter of fact, take your Bibles before we get to the book of Hebrews and turn with me quickly, if you would, to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, I'm sorry. Chapter 2 bleeds right into the concept, but chapter 1, he states this clearly. And you need to understand that if you're devoid of the profound sense in which we need Christ, if you focus on the cost of Christ's coming, which is our topic this morning in Hebrews 2, to the extent that we focus on it will be the extent to which you become either offended by it or you think it's superfluous foolishness.

Paul put it in these words, if you'd look at it real quick. Verse 23, the bottom of chapter 1. 1 Corinthians 1:23 says, "We preach Christ crucified." It's a concept there. Christ came to help us, and the help he gave us was he died on a Roman execution rack by a bunch of Roman thugs. And he says, "We preach that Christ crucified," and look what it is. It's a stumbling block to some. They trip over it. And it's foolishness to others. The Gentiles think it's crazy. But to those whom God has called, there's a sense of need there. The Scripture says that the Spirit is convicting us of sin and righteousness and judgment. To both Jews and Greeks, then Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Understanding the real cost of Christ's coming will divide the two groups up. Really focusing on the fact that Christ came at great cost and great expense to himself, and that the culmination of Christ's ministry was not sitting on a rock teaching people how to live better lives. The culmination of his ministry was being pummeled by Roman soldiers or whipped and having his back torn open, and that's the pinnacle of his ministry. Eventually it seems to divide the two groups. People that say, "I don't want to hear any more about that. I'm not interested in talking about that. I don't want our services focused on that." And then others that say, "Well, that's the whole reason Christ is meaningful to me."

So this morning, as we turn to Hebrews chapter 2 and we look for a little while this morning—this morning, have I said that a few times already? This afternoon, I'm sorry. It's 20 years of practice. This afternoon. Hebrews chapter 2. As we look at the cost of the incarnation and the benefits of the incarnation, we need to recognize that this will do a lot in really defining what we understand about all this. By the time we're done, I trust we're either clearly in one camp or the other.

Now, this is a passage that is filled with information about the coming of Christ. In verse number 10 it says, "In bringing many sons to glory," this is Hebrews 2:10, "it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, it was fitting that God should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering," *teleios*, through suffering. "Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus isn't ashamed to call them brothers. He says, 'I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.'" That's Psalm 22. Then he quotes Isaiah 8. He says, "And I will put my trust in him." And the next verse in Isaiah 8, verse 18, says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." There's connections there about the solidarity that Christ has with human beings.

Verse 14, commentary now by the writer of Hebrews: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants," people, human beings. "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful"—this is the key now, underline this—"a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Verse 17 again: “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” That’s the crux of Christianity right there. And it is so important that we get that. As a matter of fact, we need to understand that a lot of Christianity is really moving Christ’s ministry in a direction we’re not often thinking of. In other words, we think Christ came to minister or serve us. Look at that passage, though. It says that he was here becoming a merciful and faithful high priest in service, not to us, but to who? To God. The direction has shifted.

Jot this down, number one, on your worksheet if you found that. Fill this in, if you would, and then let’s talk about it.

Understand Christ’s ministry to God

Because when we understand that we needed a ministry to God, all of a sudden now everything changes, and we have this sense that it wasn’t just that Christ came to augment our lives, and isn’t it great that we have Christ in our lives and our lives are a little bit better now? Apparently, we were in trouble with God, and Christ had to come not just to minister to us, but to minister to the Father. And that’s a different perspective. Matter of fact, that’s a mind-blowing perspective.

Take your Bibles and turn with me to the Old Testament, the book of Exodus, if you would. And as you’re turning there, let me describe to you something that most of you, I’m sure, know, but let’s just clarify it in some simple terms. Before there was ever a king set up on a throne, King Saul, and after that all the kings, King David, King Solomon, and Rehoboam, Jeroboam, and we split the kingdom in half, we had a time when God didn’t need a king. As a matter of fact, he didn’t want a king. He wanted a theocracy where God was the king, but he had two offices in the nation that were super important.

And those two offices were characterized by two directions. He had an office that he set up that was called prophet, and there were prophets in Israel. And the direction of the prophet was from God to people. And God wanted to be represented among people by the prophet. And if God had something to say, he would pull the prophet out, and the prophet would stand up and speak for God. And he would say, “Here, people, you need to know this about God.” And in a real sense, the prophet ministered to the people on behalf of God.

There was another office in Scripture, one that here Christ is said to be fulfilling, and that is the priest. And the priest isn’t necessarily or primarily trying to minister to the people for God. He’s trying to minister to God for the people. The direction is inverted. Are you following that? It’s a lot of logic for Sunday afternoon after lunch, I realize. But you’re tracking with it. The prophet speaks to the people for God. The prophet really—here’s a good word—he represents God to the people. The priest, though, represents the people to God.

And there were two things you always see about the priests who were trying to stand before God, representing the people to God, that were always a part of it. Take a look at it in Exodus chapter 28. And maybe you never thought about this, but it is so important for us to realize.

Exodus chapter 28, look at verse number 40. Is that what I said, 28? Okay, I'm a little out-of-body experience right now. Verse 40. Did I say that? Okay, that's why the pages are turning. It's a long chapter, the end of chapter 28.

Now we're talking about here the priests. "Make tunics, sashes and headbands for Aaron's sons to give them dignity and honor." What's giving them dignity and honor? Headbands. Is that bizarre? My kids are into headbands right now, and wristbands too. They think it's really cool. They wear them all the time. They're adorning themselves with special clothing, and it was going to give them dignity and honor.

"After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint them, set them apart now, pour that oil on their head and ordain them." Set them up to be priests. "Consecrate them, set them apart so that they may serve me." Do you see the direction there? As priests. "And make sure they're wearing their really cool headband." See? Isn't that weird? And oh, by the way, speaking of clothes, I want them to have really cool underwear too.

Verse 42: "Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the holy place." Is this really bizarre? I mean, think about it. I know you're used to it because a lot of you are Sunday school grads, but God is concerned with the underwear that the priests are wearing when they're doing their ministry. We never had any classes on that in seminary, right? What underwear to wear when you're leading worship or whatever.

It's a bizarre thing. You would admit that, right? Maybe you're just tired, but it doesn't seem like that's a weird thing to you. It's a weird thing to me that God is concerned with underwear here. How concerned is he? We didn't read the rest of that verse. "So that they will not incur guilt and die." You know, boxers or briefs. This is such a bizarre thing. You wear the wrong underwear, you die. When I'm in my study reading that, that was blowing my mind, right? That's just bizarre.

"This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants." Twelve tribes of Israel, one of them was Levi. Levi's within that, Aaron. Aaron had some sons. The sons would create this priesthood, and all the priests were to minister before God in the tent of meeting, representing the people to God. And God was concerned about their sashes, their tunics, their headbands, and their underwear.

Two things I said that were very characteristic of the priesthood. One of them was clothing, and the clothing had to be special. It was special clothing that gave them dignity and honor, and not just the outerwear—even the underwear was supposed to be special, and it brought them some kind of dignity and honor when they stood before God and ministered on behalf of the people to God. They had to be carefully adorned. They had to be dressed special.

Chapter 29. There's another thing that characterizes the priesthood. "This is what you are to do when you consecrate them"—are you with me? Exodus 29, verse 1—"so that they may serve"—who?—"me as priests. Take a young bull and two rams without defect and some fine wheat flour without yeast. Make bread, and cakes mixed with oil, and wafers spread with oil. Put them in a basket and present them in it, along with the bull and the two rams."

Now it's all about food, right? It's all about barbecuing now. "Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water." They gotta be clean. "Take the

garments”—oh, we’re back to the clothes now—“and dress Aaron with the tunic and the robe and the ephod, and the ephod itself with the breastpiece, and fasten the ephod on him with its skillfully woven waistband,” the really cool belt, “and put the turban on his head and attach the sacred diadem to the turban. And then take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head, and bring his sons and dress them in tunics and put headbands on them and tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. And the priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. And in this way you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.”

And then, hey, here we go. It’s time for the barbecue. “Bring the bull to the front of the tent of meeting. And Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head and then slaughter it in Yahweh’s presence at the tent of meeting.” And you can go on and on and read the rest of it, read the book of Leviticus. It’s all about two things if you’re a priest: your clothes and the barbecue stuff, right? Sacrifices, to use a biblical word.

What’s that all about? Run the clock forward 1,450 years. You got Jesus on the scene, who’s being designated and described in Scripture as the greatest priest, the ultimate priest. Chapter 1 of Hebrews, we learned he was the ultimate prophet. You want God representing—you know, you want a representative of God? You got the Son. He’s the exact representation of God’s nature, the radiance of his glory. And then, by the way, the role that he serves that required the incarnation is that he would be a priest and represent the people to God. That’s why the Son had to become one of us.

And in so doing, there are two things of concern. Now, back to Hebrews chapter 2. There’s two things of concern, which, by the way, perfectly symbolically connect with the two things that were always of concern for the priest. Take a look at it.

Look at verse number 11: “The one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.” There’s a concept here of holiness. The representation of the people to God involves holiness. And all throughout Scripture, you see the connection of the metaphor between the clothing and the holiness.

Christ comes on the scene, and he’s got no special headbands. He’s got no specially embroidered sash on. He’s got no diadem on his head. He doesn’t have all the fancy clothes, and his underwear isn’t fancy either. He just comes on the scene, and he fulfills what is needed for a priest. Because the priest could never do it. Clothes were just a symbol of it. If you’re going to represent the people as a priest to God, and God is going to accept those people and you’re representing them, we need holiness. You’ve got to have holiness.

And the priest is coming with his special clothes to say, “Please accept us, God. And look, I’ve done everything you’ve wanted me to do. Look at my holy outfit and my holy underwear. Look at it all. I’m doing it. Now please accept these poor sinful people here, because I know they’re not always perfect, but accept them on behalf of all that I’ve gone through symbolically to represent perfectly what you want me to look like.” See, God wants us to look a certain way. He doesn’t want you grumbling and complaining. He doesn’t want you gossiping. He doesn’t want you committing adultery. He doesn’t want you stealing. He doesn’t want you cheating. He doesn’t want you lying. He doesn’t want you to take pleasure in evil. We could go on and on and on.

And guess what? You don’t look that way to God, and neither do I. And God says, “I need someone to represent the people, not with fancy clothes, but with real holiness.” Christ comes on the scene

and he lives here among us to offer to God on our behalf holiness, dressed up in human form, real holiness. Because the problem you have before God that couldn't be solved by God just sending a few messengers down or showering you with blessings and gifts is you needed holiness before God. And you didn't have it, and I didn't have it. And we have someone who is holy, who is coming on the scene to make men holy. And the way he does that is by living a life that's going to be exchanged. He lives it as a perfect priest.

Isn't it amazing that Jesus and his disciples, and John the Baptist especially, were just known as wacky-dressed people? They were just fishermen. They smelled like the nets and the bait or whatever it was. They just stunk of the Sea of Galilee. Nothing special about that. But in reality, they were providing all the symbolic realities that were behind all these metaphors of the Old Testament priesthood.

And Christ comes on the scene and says, "I want you to accept these people on my behalf because look, every time I was tempted, I said no to temptation. Every time I was tempted to say something that was out of line, I stopped myself. Every time I was tempted to do my own thing my own way, I didn't, and I submitted to the will of the Father." Christ had to come, as John put it—or as Jesus said to John—to fulfill all righteousness. He was dressed right. He looked right to the Father. And if you're going to be right with God, you gotta get behind the guy who's dressed right.

And in Israel, if you want to be right before God, you had to get behind the priest who was dressed right. But the dressing really wasn't the concern. God doesn't care about headbands. I tell my kids that every day. He doesn't care about headbands. Sorry, slipped that one in. He cares about your heart. And Jesus had the right heart with the right behavior, with the right words. Everything was right. He was the perfect high priest. He is a holy person making people holy.

Also, something else in this passage. Drop down to verse number 14. "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity." Why? "So that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil." So that by his death. Okay, now wait a minute. There's two things about the priesthood. What they wear—that's really important—and also the sacrifices that they bring. There's always a lot of bloodshed in worship in the Old Testament. A lot of animals getting slaughtered. A lot of barbecues happening. Why?

Well, because it pictures in a ceremonial sense something that's very true for us. And it started in the garden. Because of the sin, remember that? The first thing God does is he clothes Adam by killing an animal. And he says, "I want to show you that your sin is costly, and death to someone else is going to give you a temporary stay." And so in the ceremonies of the Old Testament, we had these sacrifices being brought.

And here's the point. It's not just that I lack holiness. I did stuff wrong this week. And so here's the thing. On behalf of a God who's mad at sin, instead of killing me, would you let me kill this animal in my stead? And God says ceremonially, yeah, that'll work. So you do that. And then, by the way, it's usually a feast, except for the burnt offering. People would eat it. The worshipers would eat it. The priest, the Levites, would eat it or whatever. But the bottom line was, let's do this killing ceremony to show you I'm really angry with sin, and the wages of sin is death. But here's the thing, I'll let you live another week, another month, another year, but I'm going to kill this animal ceremonially on behalf of you because you deserve to die.

The wages of sin is death, but I'm going to let you off the hook. But we're going to show you how serious your sin is. We're going to kill an animal. Now here's the thing. It was all symbolic, just like the clothing. Do you think that God cares whether or not we're killing animals? He didn't care about that. He didn't care about the fact that, well, you do that and you'll make me happy, any more than wearing headbands is going to make God happy. That's not the point. Those were ceremonial things to show the reality. And the reality is God is mad at sin, and it must be punished because he's just. And because of his justice, what's the issue? He's got to say there's got to be death for sin, because the wages of sin is death.

And in this text, it says we needed someone who perfectly lived and did what was right to stand in our stead and say, "Not only am I providing all the righteousness those people need—listen, get behind me—I'm going to take the hit of sin for you, and all the anger that God has toward your sin, I'm going to have him focus it on me."

Here's a good text to write down. I know we quote it all the time, but it's one of the best summaries in one verse of what happened on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:21: "God made him who knew no sin"—he was perfect—"to be sin for us." God was going to focus his wrath on him, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

There were two things that the Israelites stood back, couldn't enter God's presence, but they sent the priest in dressed right with a sacrifice in hand. And it represented two things that they desperately needed. They needed holiness that they didn't achieve, right? The sins of omission. And they had committed sins that really made God mad, and they needed forgiveness. They needed God's wrath to be spent somewhere else so his justice could be satisfied.

The priest walked up with the right clothes and the sacrifice. And Jesus comes on the scene and says, "Those are all ceremonial. I'm going to walk on the scene with the right clothes, the right behavior, the right life, see? And I'm going to let God punish me instead of you guys. So that a human death, a real death, sharing the flesh and blood that God is angry with, I'm going to take the hit for you."

Okay, time out. Stop, stop. Remember I started this saying the more you focus on the real guts, the real *synkeimenon* of Christianity, the more it will either say, "Oh, I am so grateful for that," or you'll get this: "Over the top, man." Why? Because the cross is a stumbling block, and it's foolishness to people that don't see their need. If you think Christ is a set of Ginsu knives to help you through life, I'm telling you, you're not liking this part. Because it requires that we understand that we deserve God's wrath. That's the bottom line. And that's hard for us to swallow unless, of course, God has done the work in our heart, and we know today we really do deserve that.

But aren't we grateful that here was this lifeboat sitting outside of my sinking life, and Jesus said, "I'll do it all"? Who did he do that for? Well, the benefit is for us, but the service is to the Father. Do you see that? That's the priest's job. The priest is serving the Father, and Jesus is the great and ultimate high priest.

Understand Christ's ministry to God. I know that's rich, it's deep, it's theological, but if we don't understand that, then we don't really know what this whole coming of Christ was all about, the incarnation. So please understand that. Because if it's all about God just helping us, why not dump the help over the rails of heaven? Just send them more blessings. Send them a couple more Elijahs or Isaiahs. Can't do that. We need a great and perfect high priest. Understand Christ's ministry to

God. It's critical. Verses 17, 11, and 14. I know we popped in there. It's because, as you'll see in the third point, he's just so focused on something other than this. But you've got to have this as the undergirding of this text. All right?

Number two on your outline. Take a look again at verse number 10. Something that we need to do, and we're having our periodic celebration of the Lord's Supper here this afternoon. And I think this is a time that we naturally do that when we do this, so we won't spend long here. But you need to appreciate the cost, if you will.

Appreciate the cost

This wasn't cheap. Verse number 10 starts that way: "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation *teleios*, perfect, through suffering." In other words, this was painful. And it cost.

Now, I keep using the word *teleios* in that Greek word because I'm trying to show you, if you've heard me preach enough, you've heard that word come up. Perfect doesn't mean he was imperfect before he suffered. The word *teleios*, I often say, is the word that just has the sense of, "Oh, that's just right." I often use the word *teleios* to describe, or describe the word *teleios* with the example that my dad was a real stickler at using the right tool for the job. Was your dad like that? I'd always pull the crescent wrench out, and that was good for everything. It was a good hammer. It was a good—you know, box-end wrench, didn't need any of that. But Dad would say, "No. If you're going to do this job, you need the right tool." And when he said the right tool, he didn't mean the acceptable tool. He meant the *teleios* tool. It's just right. It's just perfect. It's befitting. It's appropriate.

And that's how this started. In bringing many sons to glory, it is fitting. It is just right. And he would be the perfect solver of the problem if he was willing to suffer. But you see what a great cost, to have a God step down out of heaven to say, "I'm willing to bring holiness that they couldn't provide. Let me live it." And not only that, "I'm willing to take the hit for sin." Costly. Costly. Painful. Suffering.

And just to take that word suffering, which is a general word for suffering, I think we need to recognize this, and I've often said this, but you need to catch it. We cannot think that it was just about the death of Christ. It was about the suffering of Christ. Because if it was about the death of Christ, I'm voting for drowning or decapitation, right? Not crucifixion. Are you tracking with me? If it's all about him dying for our sin, let's get it over with quickly. What can we do to kill you really fast? If that's what God requires, quick, kill him. Chop his head off, shoot him with arrows and everything. I don't know. Do something to end it quickly.

But that's not what crucifixion was. It was the most agonizing, prolonged, whole-day-long ceremony of injury and pain and torture. That's what it was all about. I've often said crucifixion was not intended to kill you. It was intended to torture you until you die. That's what crucifixion was all about. Why? Why? Because here's a great text, and you ought to write it down. Isaiah chapter 53. Matter of fact, let's look at it. We're here at church with Bibles in hand. Isaiah 53. I always say that because most of the time I don't plan to have you turn there. But then I think, why not? You need to see it for yourself.

Christ was willing to fulfill the high priestly role for us, and it all involved a lot of pain. Not just the fulfillment of holiness, but especially becoming the guilt offering for our sin. And in that you even see that God was gracious in the ceremony because the ceremony killed the animals quickly. It wasn't about torturing the animals. That's an interesting point. But it was about torturing his Son. Why? Because the whole point was punishment for sin, which is not, "Let's make this as painless as possible." Matter of fact, it had to be painful.

Isaiah 53, verse 4: "Surely he took up our infirmities." We had a problem, "and carried our sorrows. Yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." Do you see that the value that I needed, which was the sin to be erased from my account, didn't just happen by a decapitation or a drowning. It happened by a day-long venting of God's anger on human life. That's what it needed. And God was able to erase my sin because of that. Not because of just a cessation of biological life, but by God venting his wrath on a human representative of mankind.

Appreciate the cost. Verse 14, Hebrews chapter 2. I just want to point that out because I want to let you know it's not just by his death that we are judicially and theologically healed. It is by his wounds. It is by his suffering. His death, of course, was the culmination of it all, and we needed that.

Verse 14 says, "Death," of course, biologically is just a foreshadowing of the real death, a separation from God eternally and all of his blessings. He packs up all of his blessings. You get none of those, and that's a bad place to live. It's a bad neighborhood. You don't want to be there. And that punishment of God, that alienation from God, he says, ultimately, because of Satan getting in there and convoluting this whole thing and leading us down this path of all of this, though we're still culpable for it, he said we had to end that. And if the wages of sin is death, not just suffering but ultimate separation, we need to solve that problem.

Therefore, it wasn't about Jesus suffering and then God taking him out of the situation. It was about him physically and actually dying biologically, which, by the way, was one of the first heresies of the early church. There's always an attack on the gospel. One of the early ones, if you read the book of 1 John, this is just a little parenthetical excursus here real quick. The book of 1 John said you know that you've got a false teacher on your hands if they don't believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, that he came in the flesh and suffered in the flesh. If he wasn't flesh and bone—because that was one of the first things they did to mitigate this—well, that's too ugly, man. Let's just say it didn't happen, or it just wasn't physical. It was physical. Because in that, even in his physical death, he was reversing the effects of our biological death.

And if I had time, I'd turn you to Romans chapter 6, verses 1 through 10, and you need to read that because of his actual biological death and his willingness to go to that extreme for us, he's willing God now to see us—not just what our punishment deserves—but the actual death itself can be reversed. The only reason I'm going to be resurrected as a person trusting in Christ is because Christ died. It's the only reason. It's rich theology, Romans chapter 6, verses 1 through 10. And we'll get to that on our Thursday night Bible study about 2014, probably. No, it won't be right away, but we'll get there.

One last thing in this second point as we just appreciate the cost for a minute. Look at verse 17. This is a statement we gloss over really quickly, and I know we're popping through here. We'll go

through the whole text in just a second. But in verse number 17 it said, “For this reason, because he’s here to help us,” verse 16, but not Ginsu knife help, but lifeboat help, ultimate help, our only hope help, “for this reason, because he’s here to help us, he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.”

He had to be dressed in all of the frailties of humanity, which is exactly what Philippians chapter 2 says. He didn’t regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. He was willing to empty himself and to come and live among us and be humiliated. I put it this way. It’s the humility of humanity. He was willing to say, “I’ll do that.” And we gloss it up, and you shouldn’t gloss it up. Jesus had to go through all the junk you have to go through.

“Away in a manger” at Christmas time, I always laugh at that hymn. “Away in a manger, no crib for a bed”—thanks, that was the line—“the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where he lay. The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus...” Ain’t no way that song is true. There’s no way. Because he had to be made like us in every way, as Hebrews goes on to say, yet without sin.

And the problem is he went through all the pains, the frustrations, and the agonies of humanity. When he was hungry, guess what? He got a headache and his stomach hurt when he didn’t eat. When he walked a long distance, his feet hurt. When he worked a long day in the carpenter’s shop, guess what? He went to bed and he was sore. And in the little manger that looks so glossy on your Christmas cards, he’s pooping in his leather diapers, okay? And guess what that makes little babies do? They don’t like it. They cry.

Why? Because he suffered through all the humiliation, all the humiliation of humanity, so that he could represent me before the Father in a perfect life. All of that frailty without sin, see? And he was willing to cast all that prerogative of divinity aside to say, “I’m gonna live a perfect...” Do you think when his molars came in that he didn’t cry about that? Have you been a mom or a dad and seen that whole process? Unbelievable how those kids act when they’re popping molars. You think Christ just was like, “You know, I’m the Son of God. They came through in a day.” Or the angels gave him a little Ambesol or something. Nothing.

You think your kid cried. Can you imagine first-century people in Palestine crying big time? I’m just telling you, and I know we don’t like to think about it, but he went through all the stuff. When all his body was in, he had greasy skin. I’m sure all of that was a reality. Think about that. Junior high Jesus. Nobody gets through that without all of that. And why? Because he was going to go through all the humiliation of humanity. We don’t even like to think about it. I talked about dis soiled diapers, and a lot of you were like, you know, can’t say that about Jesus. That’s what he lived.

Why? Because he needed to perfectly represent us as perfect humanity with all the frailties of it. That’s why he was hurting when he got whipped. That’s why he yelled out to God in pain on the cross, echoing Psalm 22, when he was being crucified. Why? Because he was subject to all the frailties of humanity. See, when the cost goes up that high on the coming of Christ, all of a sudden I start to realize the need must have been great. And you know what that does? It doesn’t exalt my ego. It drives my ego into the dirt. And it says, wow, amazing. How sinful was I that God had to do that to solve my problem?

Appreciate the cost. It was humiliating for the creator of the universe to be subject to the pain of molars coming in. But it was the reality for Christ so that he could fulfill all righteousness and live life in a template that could be transferred to my account.

Lastly, the whole passage. Verses 10 through 18. We need to celebrate, number three, the incredible benefits. The reason this was a tough passage to exposit and to preach to you, if you noticed—I mean, you’re looking at the outline—verse 17 first and then verse 11, then we go to verse 14, we go to verse 10, then back to 14. Then we read 17. What are you doing? This church believes in expository preaching. Here’s the thing. He’s so overwhelmed with the benefits that they keep popping in everywhere in between all the theology about the incarnation. So we kind of need to wade through the fact that he’s so incredibly enamored with what we get out of the deal. He’s amazed by what we get. We had to go in and pull these parts out. What a great cost for the incarnation. What an important reason for the incarnation. But if I could real quickly just itemize for you, I’ll just go through this.

This is your homework assignment, so take these and thoughtfully and prayerfully go through every one. But let’s just start at the beginning of the list. Verse number 10. Look what it says in verse number 10. “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, that he should make the author,” the one in charge, the one driving this thing, “of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Here’s the thing. He starts this discussion with the fact that we get to go to heaven. We get to go to glory.

10, just jot—I put it down this way—he guarantees us heaven. Why? Because he’s driving this thing. He is the author of it. He guarantees us heaven. That’s a big benefit, a real big benefit.

Now look at verse 11. He says, “Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.” What’s the thing? He comes to make me holy. In this sense, before God, judicially, legally holy. I like to put it this way. Verse 11a, he makes our resume holy or perfect. He makes it perfect, to where my resume, upon repenting of my sins and putting my trust in Christ, I have my resume completely redone in the order of Christ’s, which is perfection. And I get to be holy before a holy God. He makes our resume holy.

Look at verses 11, second half through verse 13. He says, “So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers,” because he’s sharing the same family as us. He’s doing this in the template of humanity. And then he quotes these verses, verse 12 and 13, quotes Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8, and he uses these passages about brothers and children, and we’re all together in this. He has this solidarity with us. I put it this way. One of the benefits we get, verses 11b through 13, he makes us family. He now says, “You’re part of my family. You’re my brothers. I’m part of your family here.”

That’s huge. That’s gigantic. The blessings and benefits of Christ come to me, not as a next-door neighbor or a kid from church that I like. It’s as family. That’s amazing. We get to be called family. We’re adopted.

Look at verse number 14. “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.” That’s the incarnation. “So that by his death, he might”—key words, circle it—“destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil.” The devil here, disarmed and destroyed. I put it this way. Verse 14, he destroys our enemy. He destroys our enemy. Christ is our—Satan, rather, is our *diabolos*. That’s how they translate devil in this text. And that means the one who is pitted against us. He’s opposing us. That’s the point. He is the opposer of everything in our lives that’s

good, like living eternally with God and him, and he destroys him. He destroys our enemy. He steps in to destroy our enemy.

How about verse 15? “And free those”—here’s an extra benefit—“who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Verse 15, jot this down. He takes away the fear of death for us. He takes away that fear. Now, I’m still not big on the suffering part leading up to it, but the bottom line is, you know, I’m cool with the fact that when I’m done with this life, I get to go into the presence of God because one who was dressed right and sacrificed what I needed to pay for my sin has done the job, and I got guaranteed heaven. So I’m ready for heaven because it’s a lot better than Aliso Viejo, you know what I’m saying? A lot better. And I’m ready for that place.

Look at verses 16 and 17, first half of 17. “Surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God.” Here he is in the whole big picture now. That’s where we started this study. He comes in and says, “I’m gonna represent these guys.” And I just love to summarize it that way. Verse 16 and 17, he represents us before God.

I mean, if you’ve ever been in trouble and you ever needed someone to come in and represent you, maybe in a court of law, you’re being sued, and you got Mr. Competent Lawyer steps in, man, that feels good to have somebody representing you, doesn’t it? And Christ said, “I’ll represent you because you’re in big trouble with my dad, right? And the judge is going to cast you into hell because of your sin, but I’m going to stand there on your behalf having done everything that I need to do. And the bottom line is I’ll stand there for you. I’ll represent you.” I don’t want to die without that. And he promises he’s going to be my representative.

Verse 17, bottom of the verse: “And make atonement”—what a key word—“for the sins of the people.” Yom Kippur, which is going to be celebrated here in this auditorium, the Day of Atonement, was a ceremonial atonement. The real atonement had to be made in that human life had to be sacrificed so that God’s wrath against humanity could be poured out on a human template, and it was. And atonement has been made. We don’t look forward to it. We as Christians look back on it. We don’t have the Day of Atonement looking forward symbolically through the killing of an animal. We look back on it ceremonially with a cup and a piece of bread saying it’s already been done.

He’s permanently removed our sins. Did I say that yet? Verse 17b. He’s permanently removed our sins. And I love the fact that you and I can talk about it in the past tense. That’s why communion is such a good thing for us to do, because we’re looking back on something that’s been accomplished and finished. It’s been permanently removed.

One more, and then this is amazing, that the writer of Hebrews now gets really practical and really present, and it’s not like Christ doesn’t help us now in the present. He does. That hadn’t been the focus here for the first seven, eight verses, but in this last verse he says, you know what? Yeah, because he suffered and he has walked on this life and he’s been through all the pains and trials of this life, and when he was tempted he suffered through that, here’s the thing: “He is able to help those who are being tempted.” And we are being tempted every single day. Verse 18, he helps us conquer our temptations, our problems, things that cost our lives. And in reality, man, that’s a good thing.

Now that's your homework assignment, to go through every one of those and say, wow, those are such good things for us to celebrate. And maybe every day of the week you take a new one and say, hey, today, it's Monday. Christ has guaranteed me heaven. It is guaranteed. It's not me plus, you know, Christ. It's he, what he has done. He is the author of it. He's the driver of it. And he is bringing many sons to glory. I'm going to celebrate that.

And then Tuesday, you know what? Before God, my resume is perfectly holy. Hey, on Wednesday, I'm a part of his family. I'm not just an outsider anymore. I'm family. Oh, and by the way, the one that hates me so much he wants to undo me for eternity? Been destroyed. Christ's already won this thing. Let me just go through the list and celebrate it.

If you just get the list and write them down, man, you've missed really the follow-through of this sermon. Celebrate each one of those. But if you want to remember them and summarize them, here you go. Here's three quick ways to take all of these and say, here's a good summary, a memorable summary.

Number one, let's just summarize it like this. He's given us past help. He's paid it all with his life and death. What he did 2,000 years ago, done, paid in full. *Tetelestai*. Done. Finished.

Secondly, he gives us future help. He's going to represent us on the day of judgment. He will stand there with me. When I die, I'm not dying alone. I'm going with Christ who walked there in Galilee and lived a perfect life and died in my place. I have an advocate. I'm dying with a lawyer. See, that's a good thing. A good lawyer. Sorry. I know, lawyer. It's such a good biblical concept, but our modern culture has kind of destroyed that for us. Not taking it away from our good Christian lawyers that are here today, because you don't want the lawyers mad at you. Sorry.

Past help, future help. What's the third one? Present help. Jot it down. Present help. He mercifully and faithfully helps us, not just in our soteriological needs, but our daily needs. He says to the disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." And everything between the crucifixion of Christ and coming into glory, I'm going to be there the whole way. And Christ wants to help us. But if you live right here and that's it for you, then Christ becomes a set of Ginsu knives, see? That's not what we want.

Christ has done so much for us. Past help, future help, present help. I mean, look at how it's put in verse number 18. It's almost an afterthought. I know it's not, but I mean that's not the thrust of this text. But praise God, he is with us every day helping us through our stuff.