

## He Became One of Us - Hebrews 2:10-18 - 2 August 2015

We are right now, today, in the book of Hebrews and if you have your Bibles with you, please turn with me to Hebrews and chapter 2, as we continue our journey through this New Testament book. We've called this series "Greater". Why greater? Because Hebrews is really focusing about the supremacy of Jesus Christ; how He truly is great.

We've already learned in chapter 1 that Jesus is the creator of all ages, that He is the sustainer of all things, the Saviour of all men and indeed, Lord over all. But one amazing mystery of the Bible is that this same great God, Jesus, condescended himself, humbled himself to be born as man to dwell amongst us. This is what Christians call the incarnation – God becoming man.

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And Martin Luther has this to say: "The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding." He says this is really beyond what we could figure. You see, we are familiar with how kings become commoners and we find that amazing, but the gap between a king and a man is so, so small when you compare the gap between God and man.

CS Lewis actually has this illustration. He says suppose you have a dog and you love your dog very much. And one day, your dog has a problem that can only be solved if you become a dog yourself. Would you then give up your humanity? Would you then give up your job, your arts, your literature, your hobbies? Would you give up the ability to speak, to smile, to relate to other human beings? Would you give up your loved ones to be a dog? I think none of us would want to do that. But then again, the gap between a human and a dog is so small when you compare it to the gap between God and man.

So I agree with Luther that this incarnation is truly beyond all human understanding. Why would the great God do this? In Hebrews 2, we're going to look at how Jesus became one of us, or rather why Jesus became one of us. What did He achieve? What is God's will to His incarnation, becoming one of us?

There's this girl who took the train for the very first time in her life. She looked out of the windows and she saw that the train was going towards the river. So she shouted, "Mum, mum, we're going to crash into the river!" But of course, they didn't get drowned in the river because the bridge carried them across the river. She looked out of the window again and she saw that the train was heading towards the mountain and she shouted, "Mum, mum, we're going to crash into the mountains!" Of course,

they didn't crash into the mountains because they were on the tracks that were through a tunnel at the base of the mountain.

Then she said to herself, "I understand why now, because someone must have gone ahead of us and prepared the way." She is right and it is also absolutely true to why Jesus became man, because Jesus came to be our pioneer. Jesus came before us to open the way for us. This is what the author of Hebrews has to say:

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10 ESV)

For it was fitting (it was suitable, it was appropriate) that he (that is God, the Father)... It was suitable that God, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation (should make Jesus, His Son) perfect through suffering. The word here is the word "founder" – in the Greek "archégos", which can be translated as pioneer or leader or author.

The idea is someone who starts something, who opens the way so that others may follow along. It can be used to refer to someone who starts a family, to someone who starts a city, to someone who starts a school of philosophy. But that's the meaning.

He is a pioneer, He opens a way when there is no way so that others may follow. This is the path of glory, the path of salvation that Jesus the trailblazer has blasted for us. You see, prior to that, there is no hope for man. Prior to that, there is no way we could find a way through the mountain of death, the mountain of sin, the mountain of hell. We couldn't. We're stuck, we're helpless and hopeless.

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George Bernard Shaw has a very interesting statement. He says the statistics on death are quite impressive: one out of one person dies. And he is absolutely right. No one escapes death. No one could break through this mountain of death. But Jesus is our trailblazer, He's our archégos – He opens the path of salvation that the sons of glory may follow along. How did He do this? How did He open a path? the Bible says in verse 14:

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he (added by pastor: "Jesus") himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the

one who has the power of death, that is, the devil  
(Hebrews 2:14 ESV)

Jesus didn't skirt around death. The path is not around the mountain, the path is through the mountain of death. Jesus is going to conquer death through death. He's going to die, and in His dying and rising again, conquer death.

Max Lucado has this story about a missionary who got to a jungle and saw some tribal people. And they were all stricken with this contagious disease and they would die if they do not have medical help. The only hope for them is that they would get out of the jungle into the hospital nearby but they wouldn't, because in order to get out of the jungle, they have to cross this river and the tribal people deeply believed that there were evil spirits in the river and if they were to get into the river, they would die.

So this missionary tried his very best. He taught them, he lectured them, he convinced them as best as he could, but they wouldn't listen. So he brought them to the river and he took a scoop of the water, drank it and said, "Here you see, there's nothing here. You won't die." They still wouldn't believe. He got into the river, he rained on himself water from the river but they wouldn't believe, they wouldn't follow. So he went under water and swam as hard as he could, got across the river to the other side and then punched his fist in the air and says, "Here am I, I'm not dead. Follow me!" But in a way, that's what Jesus did.

Now, this missionary swam through an imagined problem. There was no problem; it was imagined, it was superstitious. He swam through and showed that there was a way. Jesus, however, conquered a real problem – a real problem the whole human history has never been able to solve, has never been able to pass. And through His death and resurrection, He opened the way for us. That is why Jesus could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." That's why he said, "I have the power to lay down my life and the power to take it up again." He's showing that He has defeated death and He can defeat death.

So John Owens actually says this rather cryptic statement: "The death of death in the death of Christ." The death of death in the death of Christ. Through death, He conquered death. He was not conquered by death, He conquered death. Therefore, Christians today are delivered from the fear of death.

and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.  
(Hebrews 2:15 ESV)

What a tremendous statement. He became man and through death defeated death, so that He may deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. People today fear death. You're scared of dying. Why? Because you do not know what's going to happen and worse still, you believe you're going to a worse place when you die. So you have a lifelong slavery to this fear. But the Christian knows that the path across this mountain is already blasted through. Jesus has gone and we need not fear death.

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Let me say this: you may not fear death but you may fear dying. There's a difference. Dying is a process, death is a state. We are not fearful of the state of death because we know it merely ushers us to a glorious eternity with God. Why? Because the sting of death is taken by the sacrifice of Jesus. So we don't fear death.

I always marvel at how when I speak with Sister Hau Chun who's now in Canada, she always says, "I want to die," not in a morbid way, but she says it with no fear. And indeed, if you belong to Jesus today, you're no more under this bondage to the fear of death because you see your pioneer, your archégos who has gone ahead of you, blasted the way and He will bring all the sons of glory to salvation. So why did Jesus become man? He became man so that He can be our pioneer, the archégos.

But there is more, because the author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus didn't just give us a path of salvation, bring us there, say bye-bye to us and leave us, as if God is so far away from those who are being saved. You know that's our idea? Salvation is God plucking us from one place, putting us somewhere else and then leaving us to our own. The salvation plan of God is far more intimate than that.

It's so amazing, because the Bible tells us Jesus became man, not just to be our pioneer, but also to be our Brother. It's an intimate relationship that He is trying to get at, that we are one family. I mean imagine this: God would call sinful man like us family. I mean I wouldn't call myself family with the dogs and the cats. I mean I may say it, but I don't really believe it and neither would I want it. I'm man, I'm not dogs. God would want to be family with us. Jesus became man to be our Brother. Look at what the author says:

That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."

(Hebrews 2:11,12 ESV)

Jesus became man so that He may point us to the Father. He may make the Father known to us and that together we may sing praises unto Him. Side note: Gospeliters, sing better, sing louder, sing with more joy because this is what he is talking about here. Jesus came to die for us so that in the congregation, we lift His name on high, God's name on high.

And again, "I will put my trust in Him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."

(Hebrews 2:13 ESV)

He goes on, actually, to quote from Psalm 18 verse 2, "I will put my trust in Him". And then he also quotes from Isaiah 8:18, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." He says, "I have become man and like you, I will have to trust the Father." As God, He doesn't. As man, He has to. And it's not just about leaving us some place because the family motive is being seen here: Behold, I and the children God has given me. To Jesus, God became flesh so that He may be our Brother.

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And let me focus on this quote from Psalm 22:22. Easy to remember, right? 2-2-2-2. And in Psalm 22:22, he says, "I will tell of your name to my brothers." This is fascinating because if you go to Psalm 22, you'll realize this is not an ordinary Psalm. I mean, it is a very well-known Psalm because Psalm 22 opens with these words: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Immediately, if you have been in church for some time, you'll recognize these are the words Jesus shouted on the cross.

So Psalm 22 is not just written about a David or some ordinary man. Psalm 22 is a messianic Psalm; it's a Psalm that points to Jesus. And for the first 21 verses, it has bizarre sufferings or description of sufferings such as: my jaw or my tongue cleaves to my jaw, my heart is like wax, I'm poured out like water, my bones are all out of joint, they stare at me, they parted my garments, they surround me like animals. I mean these are descriptions that can only be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So for the first 21 verses, it describes how Jesus had to suffer and then in verse 22, it says that's why I suffer, that's why I went to the cross, that's why the passion and the sacrifice so that we might be brothers. It's astonishing.

You know in the Bible, there are... Well, I'm not sure about you, I'm a bad brother to my sister. My sister always complains when I'm younger, I always bully her. I would cheat and it's true. I would cheat her of her money so that... You know, I play card games, I already know how to do some tricks. And I play card games, cheat her of her

money and she complains I'm a bad brother. Indeed, it is. And you know I'm not alone.

The Bible has a lot of bad brothers. The first set of brothers was bad, or not all were bad, but one of them was bad. Remember Abel and Cain? God asked Cain, "Where is your brother?" And then this Cain, with this "tee kee" attitude ("tee kee", a Hokkien expression, means stubborn, rebellious spirit like a young teenager), "Eh what, am I my brother's keeper?" You know that kind of attitude, talk? "Eh, am I my brother's keeper?" He literally said that to God. That shows that Cain never cared for his brother. In fact, he hated his brother, he murdered his brother. He killed his own brother – bad brother.

Then there was another bad brother I read of in the Bible. It's a story Jesus gave – that story about this elder brother who got very angry when the father took part of his inheritance to start a party for the son who is lost. He got so upset about it. He didn't care that the brother has returned home after being lost – bad brother.

But Jesus is our good Brother. Whilst we were lost, He offered up Himself, gave up the glories of heaven to be born as man, to die for our sins so that He may give back to us what we as man have lost. With His humanity, with His sacrifice, He lifts us back to the glorious destiny God has for humanity. He's our good Brother.

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My friends, if He is not ashamed to call us brothers (which is what the Bible says, He came to be our Brother), I ask you today: Are you ashamed of your Brother? Strange question to ask really, but in my own life and I think in your life, there may be times where you're ashamed of telling others you are a Christian. Somehow, we are scared of praying too obviously in the food court in case people think we are Christians. Somehow, we are fearful of carrying a Bible that is too thick so that people may recognize we are Christians. Somehow, we avoid baptism because pai seh lah, don't want to tell people I'm a Christian lah. Somehow, we fear witnessing for Jesus because in some measure, we may be ashamed of our good Brother – bizarre when you think of how our Brother loves us and came for us.

But another applicatory question I like you to consider is this: Are you ashamed of your brothers? Big "b", small "b". Are you ashamed of your brothers, your other brothers – brethren in Christ, this family of Christ? You know, sometimes you're ashamed of people who may be poorer, not so educated, don't behave so classy like

you do. You say better avoid lah, I stick with my gang, I want to be a middle upper-class church, I think this church should be more tasteful, more high class.

Now, Jesus loved and loves everyone who believes in Him. Brothers, you can say to that person who is intellectually challenged, "You are loved by God. We love you and we one day will all be in the heavens above." You can say to the auntie who works in the cleaning toilet role. And you can be rejoicing, doesn't matter what your job is, we are loved by our elder Brother, our good Brother and we are one. I pray when we go to Punggol or even from now till then, this will not be a church that despises one another because of social status or understanding of things like that, but we recognize that the Gospel unites us with a bond that is so deep and profound.

You know Jesus is deeply devoted to this kinship. He is. He's so devoted He came to be man to dwell amongst us. The early church in Acts chapter 2, we are told that they devoted themselves to fellowship. I ask you today: Where is your devotion to fellowship? If you believe Jesus is your Brother and because of Him, many of us are brothers and sisters, are you committed to it? Would you share your life? Would you share your lives? Would you pray together? Would you encourage together? Would you suffer together? Would you have all things in common? I mean this is a high goal but Jesus gave up everything for this.

And here we are as Christians, we keep things to ourselves, we want to keep a safe distance. You don't come to church. I just want to be in a service, I just want to attend service, I want to keep a distance. Now I know I sit beside someone but I'm keeping a distance in reality, because I don't want to talk to him. I don't want to talk too much with them. I don't want to open up my life. I just want to be by myself and I'm worshiping God, but do you realise Jesus came for that fellowship?

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Hey, if we really understand what Jesus values and if He lives in you, you'll not be ashamed of your brothers. You will not just say, "Oh, let's just do care group like once in a week and we just meet. And if I can, I come; if I don't, I don't come. And I don't care about the people from Monday to Thursday. We just have some program." No, Jesus didn't come for a program. He came for family, He came for life. He's our Brother.

Well, Jesus came to be our pioneer, to be our Brother and then thirdly, He came to be our mediator. A mediator here refers to a priest because he says:

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

(Hebrews 2:17 ESV)

High priest. You say, "What is a priest?" A priest is a mediator. A priest is someone who comes between God and man to mediate, to be like a bridge. You see, man by himself cannot come to God. So there must be a priest to help that man come to God. That's why he says here "in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people".

Propitiation is a big word that means to appease the wrath. God is angry with sin – holy, righteous anger against sin. If you love truth, you will hate sin. So, God is angry with sin. So, how can sinful man come to God? Only when the wrath is appeased, and the wrath can only be appeased when there is a sacrifice. So in the Old Testament, the Jews, the priests will offer sacrifices. However, the real sacrifice is Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus is both the high priest and the sacrifice. So Jesus becomes our sacrifice as He represents us before God. But the priest also represents God to man. That's why later on, he says:

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

(Hebrews 2:18 ESV)

The idea here is that Jesus comes to meet us in our struggles, in our needs, in our helplessness. Why did He become man? So that He can understand us and meet our needs. I suppose that's why I read there are men today who stick needles and electrodes in their body to simulate labour pain. Have you read that before? I mean, no man can really understand labour pain. No man can really understand what a woman has to go through in delivery. So they try to simulate so that he may feel together with the wife. Wah, very romantic ah, but I never do that lah. I will not do that, okay? Pain for the sake of pain.

But in a very small way, that's what Jesus did. He came in human frailty, went through the extent, full extent of temptation. By the way, it's very interesting if you think about it. No one was tempted like Jesus was because all of us, we fail at some point in temptation. We give up, we sin. Jesus never sinned so he was tempted to the max. We are never tempted to the max because we give up halfway. Jesus was



tempted to the max. He knows the sorrows, the frailties, the weaknesses, the pains of humanity, so that now He can be our merciful and faithful high priest (Heb 2:17).

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You know, Christians, you struggle through life – you have pains, you have sorrows, you have weaknesses. You say, I'm so ashamed to talk about this with my friends. I tell you something: don't be ashamed to talk about your innermost, deepest problems with God, with Jesus. He knows. You don't have to hide, you can be honest with Him because He's your merciful high priest. Merciful means even when you're wrong, He shows His compassion on you.

There's this song we used to sing, we don't quite sing it anymore. But it's a song that says does Jesus care. It says:

"Does Jesus care when my heart is pained (added by pastor: "so pained")  
Too deeply for mirth (added by pastor: "or joy or happiness") or song,  
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,  
And the way grows weary and long?

Does Jesus care when my way is dark  
With a nameless dread and fear?  
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,  
Does He care enough to be near?

Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed  
To resist some temptation strong;  
When for my deep grief there is no relief,  
Though my tears flow all the night long?

Oh, yes, He cares, I know He cares,  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,  
I know my Savior cares."

How do you know His heart is touched with your grief? Because He became one of us – tempted just as we are. He's our merciful and faithful high priest. Luther is right when he says this incarnation is beyond all human understanding. But there is absolute purpose and sense in why Jesus had to do it. He came to be our pioneer to open the way of salvation to lead the sons of glory to glory. He came so that He may

unite us in one family and have this intimacy. He came to be one of us so that He may be your merciful and faithful high priest every day in your life. This is our Saviour – what a God, what a Saviour. How shall we not bow down to worship Him?

We're going to sing a song later on, a song about this mystery. This song is called "Meekness and Majesty. The tune is a little bit difficult to catch but I just want to share with you the words here. It says:

"Meekness and majesty  
manhood and deity  
in perfect harmony  
the Man who is God

Lord of eternity  
dwells in humanity  
kneels in humility and  
washes our feet

Father's pure radiance (added by pastor: "echoes of Hebrews 1")  
perfect in innocence  
yet learns obedience to  
death on a cross

Suff'ring to give us life (added by pastor: "the good Brother")  
conqu'ring through sacrifice  
and as they crucify prays  
"Father forgive"

Wisdom (added by pastor: "mysterious, beyond all understanding") unsearchable  
God the invisible  
love indestructible  
in frailty appears

Lord of infinity  
stooping so tenderly  
lifts our humanity to  
heights of His throne

O what a mystery  
Meekness and majesty

Bow down and worship  
for this is your God  
this is your God"

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Charles Colson was the former counsel to the President of the United States, Richard Nixon. He's a Christian man and he is the archégos, if I may say, of Prison Fellowship. It's a ministry to prisoners and he has visited many prisons in his life. But one prison visit stood out for him and that is the prison in Brazil, Humaita. That building, that prison building is a rotten building for 20 years. This is a prison where people are being tortured. But one day, there were a group of three Christian men who decided to ask permission to run it like a Christian prison. They got the permission from the government and things started to change and something extraordinary happens in Humaita prison.

There are no keys or there are no doors who are locked in Humaita prison and even if they are locked, the keys are with the prisoners themselves, so not much security to talk about. And when someone who is an inmate there would have to go to court for hearing, they will be accompanied by fellow prisoners. The staff there is entirely made of volunteers. The place is absolutely spick and span, it's clean because there's a clear cleaning schedule. In Brazil, the re-offending rate in that time (that means if you are released from prison and you get back to prison because you've committed a crime again, that's the re-offending rate), the re-offending rate in Brazil is 74%. Every four prisoners let out, in a few years' time, three would... within a few years' times, three would come back. But in Humaita prison, the re-offending rate is 4% – absolutely amazing.

So Charles Colson asked this guy what's the secret. The guy said, "Well, when I first came, they took away the handcuffs of steel and replaced it with handcuffs of love. Every one of us is attached to a buddy and every one of us is assigned to a spiritual elder who would care for our soul. We would pray daily."

And he says, "Sir, would you like to visit our maximum-security cell? This is where people are being punished." He was led to this corridor and at the end of this corridor was this door and he says, "This is where we punish the prisoners and there is one inmate there right now." He opened the door, they got in, it was a dimly-lit room with two chairs. Charles Colson turned around and saw that there was an image of Christ on the cross on the wall. And the inmate then said to Charles, "This is

the one who is punished for us." And on top of the crucifix was a sign in Portuguese that says: "We are together." In Humaita, they know Jesus came to die, to be one with them. In Humaita, Jesus is greater. Let's bow for a word of prayer.

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Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity in perfect harmony – the man who is God. What a mystery, what humility. This morning, as we consider how Jesus became one of us, I pray it will speak to your heart, because some of you may be here today and you wonder how can you escape sin, death and hell. It's like an impenetrable mountain. Millions of people before you have tried to pass by the mountain. They have tried to cheat death but none could do it.

But this morning, you hear of an archégos, a pioneer, a leader, a hero, a champion who would go before you to open the path, who says to you, "Come, repent of your sins, believe in me and I will give you life." You hear of this Jesus who said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me shall not die." Would you this morning turn your eyes away from yourself to Jesus Christ, the captain of our salvation?

I speak to you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ. We have a kinship that runs thicker than blood. Does not appear so superficially, but your brothers and sisters in Christ are the people you would see and rejoice together with forever and ever in the heavens above.

Is there someone you despise today? Is there someone you want to keep a distance from today? You know something? Jesus came for him and Jesus came for you. Because of Jesus, we are brothers. Would you live out that Gospel reality in your life? Stop trying to keep a distance because Jesus traverse divinity to humanity to close that distance. Devote yourself to fellowship. Devote yourself to the Christian community, to the one another so that through this community, you will learn more of Jesus and you'll see more of Jesus and you'll be more like Jesus.

Are you going through trials and pains and guilts and hardships today? And you feel trapped because you think nobody would understand, nobody would care. Your archégos, your Brother is also your mediator who is touched with your grief, who is the merciful and faithful high priest. You don't have to hide, you can be honest even in your brokenness, your failures, your weaknesses, your doubts, your temptations. He cares for you.

In Humaita, they recognize we are together. In Humaita, Jesus is greater. I pray what happens in Humaita will happen in Gospel Light and in every Bible-believing community across the world, because that's what your elder Brother came to do. Let's pray His kingdom come. Let's pray His will be done.

So Father, this morning, we commit Your Word and its impact to your loving hands. I pray the seed sown today will bring forth fruit so that dear friends today would come to faith in Jesus – Your Son, so that followers of Jesus today would live out the Gospel in devotion to Christian community, so that those who are suffering might find solace and comfort as we cry to our merciful and faithful high priest. Lord, we pray from our hearts, we will sing forth praise of worship unto Your name. We thank you. We pray all this now in Jesus' Name. Amen.