

1. Let me start with my title: "Why we should care that Jesus is fully human as well as fully God". Now there's a mouthful. ☺ The point of that title is to understand why it is necessary for Jesus to remain fully human even after He was resurrected for our sins. Why is that important?
  - a) To understand this concept, first remember that Jesus became human so we could know for sure that God Himself could understand what we have to face in our lives.
  - b) Let me state this issue another way: Do we as believers still deal with sin issues? Are there things about our lives that we are embarrassed to share with others? If that is true, we are normal. Next, remember that the same God who rules over this universe is also the same God who became human so He could relate to whatever issues we deal with. My point being is that God understands what it is we face in life and He wants to use us for His glory despite whatever guilt we may feel over any particular sin issue.
  - c) The point for you and me as Christians is not to just understand that Jesus went from being God to just a human to being just God again. Almost all of us already grasp that concept. What is to be grasped here is the idea that because Jesus suffered for the sake of our sins, we don't have to suffer any eternal penalty for our sins. To put it another way, we cannot have victory over our sins by trying harder or praying harder. We only have victory by letting go of "trying harder" and let God be in charge of our lives.
    - i) Let me explain further: God is well aware of areas of our life that are not pleasing to Him. He is well aware of areas where we struggle. He does not want us to overcome our problems by willpower. He wants us to deal with our issues by prayer and trust in Him. The point is if we care about pleasing Him, God does and will make it possible to lead us down a path that He desires for our lives.
2. OK John, now that you have made me feel guilty about my sins, ☺ what does this have to do with Chapter 2 of the book of Hebrews? That's the good news.
  - a) The more I read this chapter, the more I understood it is about God's relationship with us as people. It is about understanding our responsibility before God the Father. It is about the necessity of Jesus' permanent humanity for our sakes.
    - i) Whether we accept it or not, it is God's desire to spend eternity with people who are willing to trust Him with their lives. My point being is that God did not create our world for the sake of angels or for any creature other than humans. So will there be other creatures in the eternal realm? Probably, but we can't worry about things that are beyond our control. I just know that my job in this world is in effect is to live to make a difference for Him.
  - b) The second point of this chapter is to understand our responsibility before God the Father. This chapter makes the point that people of Jewish faith were guilty before God the Father if they violated any aspect of the Old Testament law. The question for us Christians is then, what makes us any less guilty if we turn against His desire and plans for our lives?
    - i) This is far more than believing Jesus is God and that He died for our sins. It is about us believers taking our sins and saying to God, "This is your problem. You deal with it, because I can't have victory over these specific issues without You."
    - ii) Let me state it this way: God knows we are imperfect people. He does not expect us to act perfectly. However, He does want to change our lives to accomplish what He wants to accomplish in our lives. We don't live that way by willpower, but by trust in God to change us to live how He wants us to live. When we realize we sin, it is a matter of confessing it and trusting God to change us His way.
    - iii) The hardest part is not letting go of the sin but letting go of the guilt that comes with that sin. This leads me well to the next point I need to make on this issue.

3. One of the hardest concepts to grasp even as a devout Christian is Jesus as our "high priest". This is the idea of turning to Jesus to intercede between God the Father and ourselves.
  - a) To state this issue another way, if we sin, why can't we just tell God the Father where we messed up today? Why the necessity of Jesus in-between God the Father and ourselves? That question in effect, is the main point of Chapter 2 of the book of Hebrews.
    - i) The answer to the question is that if God became man, it shows us that He can fully relate to whatever problems or issues we are facing. God never promises to make our problems go away in the next thirty seconds. He promises to guide us through our issues, if we are willing to trust Him to deal with them.
  - b) To explain this concept another way, I would like to explain what is a priest is, both as defined in the Old Testament and how the Christian church usually defines priests.
    - i) In the Old Testament, God took a percentage of the Jewish people (roughly 10%) and said in effect, "You 10% are the priests for the rest of the Jewish people." You (the 10%) are to intercede between Me (God the Father) and My people. This 10% group (ok, the tribe of Levi) was in charge of making sacrifices to God and helping other Jewish believers in their relationship with God the Father and everyone else.
      - a) Does that mean this 10% group never had their own problems? Of course not. Does that mean this 10% was closer to God than the other 90%? No.
      - b) It just means that God wanted a group of people to focus on the issue of the relationship between His people and God Himself.
    - ii) Know that religious Jews lost their ancestral records when the Romans in 70AD destroyed their temple. Since ancestral heritage could no longer determine who of that "10% group" could become priests, it eventually got to a point where anyone who wanted to be a Jewish priest could be trained and ordained as one.
    - iii) As to "Christian priests" the idea again, is to have people intercede between God and us. It is about specific people who wanted help others with their emotional needs and help people with their relationship with God the Father.
  - c) This leads me back to Jesus. After all, He is the main focus of this book and this chapter.
    - i) Even with the system of priests that are common in the Christian church, the idea for all Christians is that Jesus is the one who can relate to all of our sins. Does that mean all of these priests are not necessary? Of course not. The function of priests in the church is to help those who don't know what to do to be pleasing to God.
      - a) Understanding what it is Christians are supposed to do is a reason most churches have some sort of ordained group in charge of that church.
    - ii) So with all of these priests "everywhere", where does Jesus play into all of this?
      - a) The idea is when we pray, we know that Jesus understands all of the things we deal with in life, because Jesus became, and still is, "one of us".
      - b) Let me put it this way: If God never became a human, how would we ever know that He can understand what it is we are dealing with at any one moment in time? How would we know He even cares about our lives?
      - c) However, if God did become a man, we could be assured that He can understand what it is we face in our lives.
    - iii) But John, Jesus came 2,000 years ago. How could He ever understand what I have to deal with today? They didn't have all of this technology and information when Jesus came that long ago. What has not changed is human nature. What has not changed is our desire to want to wander away from God and turn to sinful actions. What has not changed is our need for Him in order to guide our lives to live in a way that He desires for us to live.
      - a) My point is at times we may not think that Jesus as a priest can relate to our lives, but He can, because human nature has not changed in all the time since Jesus came 2,000 years ago.

4. OK, I've been talking for two full pages now about our sinful nature and Jesus as our priest. In order to explain how this ties to Chapter 2, it might be best at this point, to actually start going over the eighteen verses in this chapter, as that explains how this concept affects our lives.
5. Hebrews Chapter 2, Verse 1: We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.
  - a) The first four verses of this chapter are in effect are a bridge between the thoughts of the first chapter and the concept of Jesus as being human as taught in this second chapter.
  - b) Hebrews Chapter 1 focused on how Jesus was superior to the angelic creatures that exist in heaven because He (Jesus Himself) created all of those angels.
    - i) That first chapter went on to explain in effect Jesus' purpose and role in our world in comparison to angel's purpose and role in the world.
    - ii) The main purpose of Jesus entering our world was so that He as God could pay the price for all sins. The main function of the resurrected Jesus is to be our high priest, who is our representative between God the Father and ourselves.
  - c) OK, why do we need Jesus as our high priest? That leads me back to my two-page introduction about having a human who understands all that we go through in life as well as being fully God. Think of it this way: Jesus needs to remain fully human as well as remain fully God in order to comprehend all that we struggle with in our lives and relate to our sins. Then we can look to Him to help us deal with the issues we deal with.
  - d) As to angels, remember that the last verse of Chapter 1 focused on angels themselves and what was their purpose in comparison to Jesus' purpose for coming into the world.
    - i) Therefore, the writer of Hebrews is telling us in the last verse of Chapter One that all angels are ministering spirits to those of us who trust in God. That relationship of Jesus and angels is what we should "pay more careful attention to" as stated here in Verse 1 of the second chapter.
  - e) What all of this means, is that the danger of joining a cult, comes from not understanding the necessity of Jesus' role as being both fully God and fully human now and forever.
    - i) The great mistake both Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses' made is they think of Jesus as an angel who rose above other angels in order to become the Son of God. We spent much of the last lesson reminding ourselves that Jesus created all of the angels in the first place. Therefore He could not have risen above them (since He created them) to become the Son of God like these groups teach.
    - ii) Remember that the book of Hebrews was originally written for people of Jewish decent as a warning not to slip back into Judaism. That is why the writer of this book tells us to pay careful attention to what is written or else we start to slip into a false way of thinking about Jesus or some "old way" prior to us being saved.
    - iii) If there is one thing I have learned about cults, is that they prey on those who have some interest in God, but never take the trouble to study outside of how those specific groups tell them to interpret the bible. That is what this opening verse is warning about. OK, with that warning out of my system, it is time for Verse 2.
6. Verse 2: For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,<sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.
  - a) My translation of this verse: If the Jewish law is binding for all of those Jewish people who trusted in it for salvation, how can we ignore what Jesus calls us to do if we believe in Him? I am talking about believing Jesus died for our sins. This is also about our daily trust in Him order to guide our lives and us living to make a difference for Him. This is in effect a warning about turning away from our faith in Jesus to guide our lives.
  - b) The point of these verses are in effect, "If a Jewish person is in trouble every time they violate any law of the Old Testament, what makes us Christians think we are any less in trouble (displeasing to God) any time we sin or turn away from His desire of our lives?

- c) Let me state my other paraphrase of these verses: "We can't get away with anything." ☺
  - i) One of the great misconceptions about Christianity is that because we are fully forgiven of all of our sins, then we are now free to sin all we want. The truth is God cares about us too much to leave us alone and we can't get away with sin.
  - ii) If you have any doubt that is true, try committing some sort of sin, and notice the guilt one feels. I would even add that a Christian is more likely to get caught than a nonbeliever because God cares about those who are "His".
  - iii) If I had to summarize a key difference between the Old Testament view of God and the New Testament view of God, it would be with this statement: In the Old Testament, Jews were required to be obedient to God because they thought they had to in order to please Him. In the New Testament, the Christian wants to be obedient to God not because we have to, but because we want to please Him.
    - a) In other words, Christians should not try to please God because otherwise we are going to hell. We try to please God because we know we are "one of His" and we know He will discipline us if we turn from Him.
  - iv) OK, I'm slipping back in a guilt trip again, so its time to get back to these verses.
- d) Verse 2 also says something interesting: It says that angels delivered the Old Testament.
  - i) It's time for one of my what does that mean and why should I care speeches. ☺
  - ii) There is a hint in Deuteronomy 33:2 and stated in Acts 7:53 that when God first gave the Old Testament law to Moses, angels delivered it. This is commonly taught in Judaism. As to why that was true, I suspect it is for the same reason, God uses angels today: Angels are God's messengers to guide us to do His will.
    - a) I suspect it would be less scary for a human-like (angelic) creature to hand us a book or tell us what to write than for God Himself to appear.
  - iii) So why does God use angels and not do things Himself? First of all, if that is the way God chooses to do things, we have to simply accept that fact. This is about the principal that "He is in charge and we are not". Besides the fact it gives the angels something to do, I suppose it is less frightening to us to deal with God through angels than to try to comprehend how to deal with Him directly.
  - iv) So how did God deliver the Old Testament? Did He just hand documents to the writers and said, "Here, publish this?" I personally think it was more likely that God through angels inspired them to write what they wrote. However it was done, it was done and we accept the bible in its "original autographs" as such.
  - v) Remember the point is not "how" it was done, but the fact it was done. The fact is the Old Testament law was given and was binding to trust in it for salvation.
    - a) So how was the law binding then but not now? The point is to understand that God set up those laws for thousands of years in order to show us that we can't live up to His standards without His help. The history of the Jewish people proves that they could not collectively keep His laws. For support of this, see Peter's comments in Acts 15:10 on this principal.
    - b) Jesus is the only one who ever kept the law perfectly. Therefore we trust in His Perfection, as we cannot live up to God's standards on our own ability.
- e) This leads me back to these two verses. In summary, the Old Testament law was given and was binding on those who trusted in God. Salvation through Jesus is binding on all who have heard or have been exposed to this message in their lifetime.
  - i) Verse 3 declares that Jesus Himself first stated this in the Gospel accounts (See John 14:6 as an example) and then the apostles shared this with other people.
  - ii) OK John, those of us who read this study already believe Jesus is God. Why should I care about this? It is to remind ourselves not to slip into cult ways of thinking about Jesus or thinking that sin is what we can get away with because we are trusting in Jesus. Since I've beaten that to death, we're ready to move on.

7. Verse 4: God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.
- a) A logical question to ponder at this point is "how do I know all of this is true?" Yes we believe by faith Jesus died for our sins, but what other evidence is there that Jesus is who He claims He is? In other words, why should I trust the Gospel accounts?
    - i) This gets me into a discussion of why Jesus did miracles in the first place. After every miracle that Jesus did to help someone's life, those people still died one day. The question is, how did all of those miracles help their salvation? They may have been grateful for the miracle, but I doubt most of them believed Jesus was God.
      - a) To explain this concept another way, Jesus did miracles not just to help people feel better, but to show people that God the Father was working through Jesus to make a difference in this world. It was to give evidence that Jesus had the power of God even when Jesus was human.
    - ii) This leads to you and me. Sometimes God does great miracles in our midst and other times people have to suffer through horrible tragedies. I can't explain why God allows things to happen. I just know He does do incredible things through prayer, which is why we should never stop praying for people we care about.
    - iii) I have found that God does His best work when we totally give up on a situation and say in effect, "God there is nothing else I can do here. I am totally dependant upon You. Whatever is Your will here, I will accept it, no matter what happens."
  - b) This leads back to Verse 4 and the topic of the Holy Spirit and gifts for believers. Know that all believers in Jesus are given special gifts. If you are not sure what gift you have, ask others what it is you are naturally good at. That is a good sign of what is one's gift. Then we should use what one enjoys doing anyway, and what one is "good at" to make a difference for Him. That is where the true joy of living this life comes into play. If one does not have the time or the resources to do what one enjoys doing like that, pray about it. Ask God to lead you down a path where one can use what gifts you have to make a difference for Him.
  - c) OK John, that is neat and I sort of already knew of all this. How is the fact that God gives each of special talents to make a difference for Him relevant to this chapter? In other words, why is the text telling us these facts here at this point in the study?
    - i) That leads me back to the subject of Jesus' miracles. There are times even the most devout believer in Jesus will have their doubts. During such times it helps to read about the miracles that Jesus did and ask oneself, "Why would someone write things like this unless they were true?" History records that the disciples were tortured and killed, but refused to deny any of the stories about Jesus were true.
    - ii) One can also ask oneself, how is it I, or someone I know could have such a special talent, unless there is a God who provided us with such talents in the first place?"
    - iii) When we go through moments of doubts about God, there is all sorts of evidence of His existence not just in the bible, but in the world around us. When we are having a pity party over how bad our life is at any moment, one of the best things one can do is go be of service to someone else. Even if you don't know what to do or who to help, you can always pray for people. I am convinced that prayer is the secret power that gets good things done and too often we forget that principal.
  - d) If I had to summarize the main point of the first four verses in a single thought, it would be "Do not ignore how God is willing to work on our lives if we just make an effort".
    - i) What God the Father asks of us in exchange for Jesus paying the price for sins is to trust in Him and have Him use our lives to make a difference in this world.
    - ii) How He uses us, is up to Him to guide us and us to figure out over time. The key is just to start by "doing something", and let Him guide us through our lives using our gifts to make a difference for Him. With that said, it's time for Verse 5.

8. Verse 5: It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.  
<sup>6</sup> But there is a place where someone has testified:
- a) From Verse 5 until the end of the chapter, we are going to have a "mini-sermon" to explain why it is that Jesus had to become and remain a human. It is more than understanding why Jesus had to die for our sins. It is to explain why Jesus had to become human in the first place and why it is Jesus has to remain human for eternity.
  - b) Let me explain this concept another way: Most people can accept the idea that God exists. Many people can accept the idea of God taking our punishment for us as that way He is perfectly loving and perfectly forgiving at the same time. (As I like to point out a lot. ☺)
    - i) What some people struggle with is how and why God could become a human and why that was necessary? Yes it is so we can understand that Jesus died for our sins. It is also for us to understand God's "big picture" of why the world was created in the first place and what is His eternal plan for people.
    - ii) The reason I am stating all of this is because the rest of this chapter is going to explain why it is Jesus is not only became human, but why He remains that way.
  - c) To expand upon this concept, the idea is that Jesus and not angels are the "center" of God's plan for the world. Jesus is the key figure in that the world was made by Him, and also made for Him. God the Father created this world for Jesus to rule over.
    - i) If that is true, why hasn't it happened yet? The answer is that God wants to show humanity how impossible it is for us to exist without Him. Through thousands of years of recorded history, God is showing how impossible it is for people to keep His laws and how it is not possible for people to live a God-fearing life without Him guiding us. But what about people who are rich or famous now? They may have good things now, but such things do not necessarily bring glory to God. Money itself is not evil. It is how we use it that makes the difference in this world.
9. Verse 6 (cont.) "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? <sup>7</sup> You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor <sup>8</sup> and put everything under his feet."
- a) From the second half of Verse 6 through the first half of Verse 8, we have another quote from the book of Psalms. This time, the quote is from Psalm 8, Verses 4-6.
  - b) If you recall from Chapter 1, that chapter read like a psalm "quote fest" as it was full of different quotes from the psalms with the intent of proving that Jesus is greater than angels in rank, importance and the fact that only Jesus is "God's son", which is a title for Jesus and not an actual birth. Since Jesus created the angels, He is greater than them all.
    - i) The good news is that we are not going down that same path again of discussing Jesus relationship with angels here in Chapter 2.
    - ii) Remember why the writer of Hebrews is quoting the psalms so much: Because the psalms were written to people of Jewish backgrounds who believed it was God's word. Therefore, the book of Hebrews is saying in effect, "If you believe this passage is the word of God, think about that passage in comparison to Jesus."
  - c) OK now that we know why this quote is given, how about I actually break down and explain what exactly this quote means and why it is here in Chapter 2 of Hebrews:
    - i) To paraphrase what these verses are saying, "Dear God, why do you care so much about people? Why do you care so much about all people that You sent Jesus to go die on their behalf? Why did you make Jesus lower in statue than an angel in this world? Yes He will rule over the world, but why this specific plan?
    - ii) Jesus once prayed to God the Father, that if there is any other way for people to be saved other than "this plan", let it be so. (That is my paraphrase of Matthew 26:39).
      - a) The point is God the Father designed this plan for mankind, because there is no other way that people can be saved. That plan is the answer to the question brought up in these verses as well as Psalm 8.

- d) If all of this confuses you, simply remember the fact that Hebrews is making an argument why God's plan of salvation was necessary for mankind. What Chapter 2 is leading up to is an argument of why Jesus permanent humanity was necessary. We'll get into this some more as we go through more verses in this chapter. Speaking of which:
10. Verse 8 (cont.): In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.
- a) To paraphrase this verse, "Everything that is part of world will be subject to Jesus. Yet at the present time, obviously most people in our world refuse to submit their lives to Him.
  - b) In other words, this verse is saying, if everything is subject to Jesus, why does so much evil exist in our world? Why did that dog bit me if the world is subject to Jesus? ☺
    - i) To put this verse a different way: Dear God, why are you allowing me to go through so much difficulty? If You promised Jesus will come back and right the wrongs of this world, why hasn't it happened yet? Why do You allow me to go through all the things I have to go through at this time? Great questions.
      - a) The quickest answer is that if God is in charge, then He is also in charge of time. We have to accept the fact we live on His timing not ours.
    - ii) If Jesus came back a generation or two ago, we would not be alive and we would not get to live forever with Him in heaven. In that sense, God the Father is waiting for as many people possible to be saved before He "pulls the trigger" for Jesus to return. Further, by God waiting as long as He does and even allowing us to go through all of our difficulties, it shows our dependency upon Him.
  - c) So if Jesus has not come back in 2,000 years, how do we know it will happen? Yes the bible teaches the "world will be subject to Him", but how do we know it will happen? Again, 2,000 years is a long time to wait for God's promises to come true for our world.
    - i) For whatever reason God picked, it is a long time frame. I accept the fact that Jesus will return just as I accept the fact the bible is the word of God.
      - a) Let me expand upon that thought. The bible is full of predictions, many of which came true long after they were written. If I believe God knows all things and I believe He is guiding my life, then I trust in His promise to return one day.
  - d) With that said, let me get back to the verse. The point is there is coming a future day when the world will be subject to Jesus. If that doesn't happen in my lifetime, why should I care? If it's been 2,000 years, it could still be many more years before it happens. Again, tell me why I should care about this future event when I have enough to think about?
    - i) The point is not to worry about when Jesus will return. The point is that we might as well start living for Jesus now, knowing He will rule over the world one day.
    - ii) The point is we should live our lives making a difference for Him, because that is the way eternity will be, whenever that eternal reign of Jesus will begin.
    - iii) When it begins here is God's business and not ours. We should want to use what time we have in this world to make a difference for God. OK how do we make that difference? Start by asking Him. Start by looking around and seeing what one can do. Use what talents, abilities and time one has to make that difference.
      - a) While you are thinking about that question, I'll sneak over to Verse 9.
11. Verse 9: But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
- a) Notice the word "now". Jesus was made lower than the angels in that when He was made human. When Jesus was here, He couldn't have direct access to God's "throne" the same way angels do when Jesus walked the earth. After Jesus was resurrected He has returned to heaven to be higher in rank than the angels because, among other reasons He has paid the price for sin for everyone. I'll discuss "everyone" in a bit.

- b) OK John, that is pretty basic stuff for those of us who believe in Jesus. Why is it stated here and again, why should we care?
    - i) The point again is to understand Jesus "humanity": To understand why Jesus had to become and remain fully human. Let me state the question again: Why was Jesus humanity necessary? It is so that we can know that God the Father understands all we go through in life. It is so we can know that He not only understands our lives but He can relate to whatever we are going through.
    - ii) That leads to why Jesus is our high priest. We'll get that subject in latter verses.
  - c) Before I move on, I also need to discuss the word "everyone". A classical debate in Christianity is whether or not Jesus just died for believers or did He die for all people?
    - i) I think if the writer of Hebrews wanted to just say "believers", He would have written the text that way. The text does say "everyone". Let me explain:
      - a) The best way to think about is to consider the fact that Jesus paid the price for all sins of all people. However, only some choose to believe that fact. Therefore, those of us who accept it are saved, but He did die for all.
  - d) One last quick topic: Let me discuss why the term "grace of God" is used here in Verse 9. Most of us get the idea by now that Jesus payment was necessary in order for God to be perfect in justice and perfect in forgiveness. Why is it called grace here?
    - i) Grace is about getting a gift we don't deserve. In other words God the Father did not arrange Jesus' payment for our sins because we deserve it, but because He wants to spend eternity with us. Therefore, it was out of His grace (a gift we didn't earn) that He arranged "Himself" to pay for our sins.
12. Verse 10: 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 perfect through suffering.
- a) There are a handful of things that need to be said about this verse. Let me start with the word "sons". Yes it refers to all people being saved. However, that term requires some explanation especially for my female readers who are worried about being "sons" forever.
    - i) Jesus taught that in heaven, there are no marriages. Existing marriages don't continue and new one's don't happen. See Matthew 22:30 or Mark 12:25 on that topic. Therefore, one's sex is not an issue in heaven. So do we still remain men and women in heaven? I suspect we will still be able to recognize one another and at the same time we are resurrected creatures. Let's put it this way: When Jesus came back from the dead, people eventually recognized Him, even though He looked differently and could enter locked rooms. (See John 21:7 and John 20:26.)
    - ii) In Revelation 22:17, all believers are described as the "bride of Christ". Therefore, I wouldn't make too big a deal about men and women being called "sons".
    - iii) The important point about that reference is that as saved Christians, we actually get to be the "equivalent" of a Son of God. It is the idea of adoption into God's own family. It is like the concept that an adopted child gets the same rights as a natural born child. We as believers get to have that privilege for all of eternity.
  - b) Now that you get an idea of what is in it for us, let us get back to Jesus Himself. Much of the rest of the verse we already dealt with: That is the concept that Jesus has created everything, all things were made for Him and He is the "author of our salvation" in that He and the Father designed this plan from the beginning for our sakes.
  - c) So without going over old ground let me discuss the term "perfect through suffering".
    - i) In other words, why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer for our sins? Why wasn't He just beheaded or jump off a high cliff if it was necessary for God Himself to pay the price for our sins. Why was the suffering necessary?
      - a) Yes it is proof that Jesus really did die. That is a good start. I also think it is so that when we feel pain, we know that God can relate to that pain. If we know that God Himself felt pain, then He can relate to our pain as well.



13. Verse 11: Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.
- a) In the last verse, I explained how both men and women are called "sons" to show that we as believers become part of God's family. That "son" concept is expanded in Verse 11.
    - i) The idea is the one who makes men holy (that means set apart for God the Father) is Jesus. The ones who accept that concept (believers) are holy by that acceptance.
    - ii) In that sense all believers, believers become "brothers" of Jesus.
    - iii) OK, how does that work? Can we call Jesus "brother Jesus" when we see Him? I suppose we can if we understand that He is both God and our "brother" in the sense that God the Father raises us up to equal stature with Him.
    - iv) So if we are "brothers" with Jesus, how does that work? Revelation 19:14 and 21:2 do teach that when Jesus returns to rule, believers return with Him. As I like to say, the bible does not say a lot about heaven, but how we should live now. All we do know now is that the believer will be treated as a brother of Jesus for all of eternity. What privileges comes with that "brotherhood" will find out one day.
  - b) Let me also quickly talk about the word "ashamed": There have been times where I have been too embarrassed to share my faith with someone else. That doesn't mean I lost my salvation. It simply means I failed to be a good witness for Jesus at that moment in time.
    - i) My point is just because we are ashamed at times to share our faith in God, Jesus is never, ever ashamed to consider all of us believers in Him.
    - ii) So does that mean Jesus will embarrass me when I least expect it? Don't think so. The point is He will always be faithful to us even when we are not faithful to Him.
14. Verse 12: He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."
- a) Well we haven't quoted the psalms for a few verses now, so we are overdue. ☺
    - i) This verse quotes Psalm 22, Verse 22. Many consider Psalm 22 to be the "high ground of the Psalms. It is one of the best places in the entire bible to understand why Jesus died for our sins. Even though it is in the Old Testament it reads as if it is Jesus Himself describing His situation from the cross itself.
      - a) By Verse 22 of Psalm 22, we are past the point where Jesus is in effect no longer focusing on His suffering and He is looking forward to the future.
      - b) In other words, the way Jesus is dealing with the physical pain associated with the cross is to think about His glorious future. The same way we may deal with pain by focusing on some positive thought.
    - ii) Jesus understood that the cross was necessary. He dealt with that physical pain by focusing on the future day when He could declare God's name to believers (us) and even sing praises to God the Father. Ok, that requires some explanation:
      - a) It doesn't mean Jesus will say to God the Father, "Here is everyone on my list, let me read the names off one at a time." No, it means He is faithful in that He understood by paying the price for sin, many will believe in that payment and therefore Jesus can share belief in God with all of us through His word and by sharing His story with other people.
      - b) This verse also makes me wonder about Jesus singing ability. It says that Jesus Himself will sing praises to God the Father. One never reads in the bible of angels ever singing. I don't believe they have that privilege. Jesus as a human has the ability to sing to God the Father just as the rest of us do.
      - c) So does Jesus have a good singing voice? I have no idea. This verse does hint that He we can sing to God the Father in heaven I suspect that means we will also be able to communicate with God and each other there. I also suspect we will have great singing voices when we praise God in heaven.

15. Verse 13: And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."
  - a) Apparently we can't get through this chapter without a few more Old Testament quotes. Here we get a quote from Isaiah Chapter 8, 17-18. At the least, it shows that the writer of Hebrews can quote not only from the Psalms, but also from other Old Testament books.
    - i) Remember again, the original intended audience of this letter did believe the Old Testament was God's word. The point of these two verses is to show that there is a separate "entity" other than God the Father who was given children by God the Father. Even Jewish rabbi's understood this passage spoke of the Messiah (eternal king) and how all people will be under the authority of this future king.
  - b) OK John I sort of get all of that. Now tell me how this is relevant to the study?
    - i) The point is if we put our trust in God the Father, we also need to put our trust in God the Son, since God the Father has put all believers under Jesus' authority.
      - a) In effect this means we can't do an "end run" around Jesus to get to God the Father. It is proof to someone who doubts Jesus as both fully God and fully human that we belong to Jesus and we are under His authority.
      - b) But if Christians are all Jesus' brothers (as I argued earlier), how are we under His authority? It is that we are "equal" to Jesus in the sense that we as believers inherit all things with Him. Still, we are under His authority. In short, we are equal in what we share with Jesus, but He rules over us.
  - c) Also know that Verse 13 is a transition to the next section. That next section explains how we as believers will live forever and how Jesus had to be made "like us" in every way. Before the writer can get into all of that, first it is necessary to explain that God the Father gave Jesus the authority to carry out His plan. That is why Verse 13 is here.
16. Verse 14: 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--<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.
  - a) Let me discuss death for a moment. As I grow as a Christian, I don't have much fear of death, as I believe I will forever. I do fear whatever pain I might suffer before I die. Pain is a normal and even a healthy thing to fear. The bible gives us enough assurance that if we do trust in Jesus payment for our sins, we never have to fear death itself.
  - b) Now that I've stated the obvious, let's talk about Verse 14 where it says the devil holds the power of death. What does that mean? It does not mean Satan personally kills everyone. It also does not mean that Satan rules over hell. That is a false concept. Satan will become the chief prisoner in hell along with everyone who refuses to trust in Jesus for salvation. For support on that concept about Satan suffering in hell, see Revelation 20:10.
  - c) If all of that is true, why does the text here say that devil holds the power of death? This gets to the concept that all people are born with the desire to sin. Sin is like an incurable disease that is passed on from one generation to another. Most of us believe the concept that no one is perfect. That is because it is our natural tendency to not want to live the way God wants us to live. Even if we know nothing about God, we instinctively know murder and theft is wrong. My point is we do what we don't want to do because it is our nature.
    - i) This actually leads me back to my introduction where I was making us all feel guilty about sin in our life. We know that sin displeases God and we all have to fight the urge to want to do wrong thing in the first place.
    - ii) The point of all of this is without God's complete payment for sin, we are all sentenced to die. In that sense, the devil has the power of death over anyone and everyone who refuses to acknowledge Jesus complete payment for our sins.
    - iii) But what about those who never heard the gospel message or babies who die? The answer is God judges all people fairly based on what they do know. As to babies, I'll let Him deal with things that are too complicated for me to figure out.

- d) All of this leads me back to Verses 14 and 15. We generally fear death because we don't know what lies beyond the grave. Jesus frees us from that fear as He already paid the price for all sins we have already committed or ever will commit in our lifetime.
  - i) As I also stated in my introduction, that does not mean we are now free to sin all we want. We still "struggle with God" in that we desire to please Him, but we still have to fight our human nature that wants to sin.
  - ii) So if Jesus has freed us from sin, why do we still want to sin? It is so we learn to trust Him with every aspect of our lives. This gets back to the concept of Jesus as our "High Priest". The idea is that instead of giving into our desire to sin, we can take that desire and give it to our "High Priest". Jesus as a human can understand what it is we are struggling with in our lives and help us to deal with our issues.
  - iii) So why doesn't God just make us sinless and save a lot of trouble? The answer is we would not want to focus on Him if we could just sit around and be sinless.
    - a) The truth is if we never sin any more, why would we want to even talk to God any more about our lives? That question leads me to Verse 16.
- 17. Verse 16: For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.
  - a) John's loose translation: Jesus did not become human for the sake of angels, but for the sake of believers. One point to consider based on this verse is that demonic angels can't repent and trust in Jesus payment for their sins. Jesus became human for human's sake.
    - i) In other words Jesus didn't become an angel for their sins, but He did become a human for our sins. Why? Well, for starters to help us in our weakness. As far as why God didn't want to reach out to rebellious angels, we'll have to ask Him that. Maybe that is one reason why Satan and his followers chose to rebel against God.
  - b) Next let me talk a little about "Abraham's descendants". That term traditionally referred to people of Jewish heritage as well as other specific Middle Eastern tribes that were direct descendants of Abraham. Religious Muslims honor Abraham as being an ancestor of theirs. However, that term "Abraham's descendants" as used in the New Testament as an expression that refers to all believers in God. Let me explain how that works:
    - i) In the story of Abraham (in Genesis), he lived out his life based on the fact that he trusted God to guide his life. All of us who trust in that same God to guide our own lives become Abraham's "descendants". Not in the literal sense, but in the sense that we are adopted and become part of God's family.
    - ii) Let me give another translation of that phrase about Abraham's descendants: We as Christians worship a Jewish God. Therefore we are adopted into God's family and in that sense we have become part of "Abraham's descendants".
    - iii) Now that I've beaten that point to death, ☺ we're ready for Verse 17.
- 18. Verse 17: 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. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.
  - a) In these final two verses, we actually get into the topic of Jesus as our High Priest.
    - i) To warn you, the topic of "High Priest" is also the main focus of future chapters of this book. I'll only get into it briefly here. The Book of Hebrews is going to show the superiority of Jesus as a priest to the whole system of priests as taught in the Old Testament. I'll talk a lot more about that topic in future lessons.
    - ii) Meanwhile, I still have to discuss these final two verses in this chapter.
  - b) The first thing to notice about these verses is the concept that Jesus had to be made like his brothers (i.e., fellow Jewish people) in every way. That means Jesus had to be born as a human, grow up in a Jewish home and live a human life long enough to know what it is like to be human. Does that mean Jesus suffered every type of bad situation imaginable? Of course not. It means He can relate to what it is like to be a human.

- c) Let me explain this another way: How do I know Jesus can relate to what I go through in my life? After all Jesus lived in a Jewish culture 2,000 years ago. That is a very different culture than exists today. The idea is not that Jesus experienced every type of situation imaginable. The idea is that Jesus understood what it was like to be tempted by sin. Jesus showed us by His life, how it is possible to live a sinless life. It is not by trying harder, but by sticking close to God (through prayer, His word and fellowship with other believers) that He makes our lives pleasing to God the Father.
  - i) Let me explain this concept another way: We don't live a better life by trying harder. We live a better life by asking God to guide us the way He wants us to live our lives. We ask God to guide us through our situations of the moment.
  - ii) Does that mean God will immediately rescue us from our problems? Of course not. The bible never promises that. However, I do find that He guides us through whatever we are dealing with, ultimately to teach us to trust Him through the difficult times of our lives.
  - iii) That concept of trust was necessary to be a "High Priest". A priest is not someone who wears a bunch of fancy clothes doing things in a church in order to please God. A priest is someone who desires to help fellow believers draw closer to God and help us to live, as He desires. Don't think of the High Priest as a top guy of some religious hierarchy, but as someone who we can turn to, to guide our lives.
  - iv) But John, doesn't God want us to minister to other believers as well? Of course, in that sense I think of all believers as priests. God wants us to work as a team in order to make a difference for Him. So if we are team, who is the leader of that team? That is our High Priest, and that is Jesus in His role as High priest.
  - v) To state it another way, Jesus is someone we can and should turn to, in order to help us through our lives. He in effect, calls the shots. We then, based on what His word teaches, live out our lives in order to make that difference for Him.
- d) Before I finish, let me quickly discuss the word "atonement". The idea of that word is that God's anger over sin was satisfied by Jesus payment for sin. Visualize somebody who is really mad about something. Then an event happens that calms down the angry person who was mad in the first place. The price for sin had (key word is "had") to be paid and the idea of God Himself paying the price for sin, to satisfy God the Father's anger.
  - i) OK, John, I sort of know all of that, but how is that relevant to this study? The idea is not that we are perfect people, just perfectly forgiven. The reason God does not make us sinless now is again so we do stick close to Him. Let's face it, if we asked Jesus for forgiveness and then never sinned again, I guarantee we would stop thinking about Him in a very short time span. However, if we need to trust in Him in order to live the life He desires us to live, it does keep us close to Him and gives Him the type of relationship that He desires with us.
  - ii) In other words, the need of a High Priest for us, is for us to grasp the idea that God Himself can relate to whatever issues we have to deal with in our lives.
- e) Let me try it one more way: Can one live out a life by ignoring God? Sure, it happens all the time. However, if we are going to live forever, why not use one's life to help out His "game plan" for mankind? That in effect is the purpose of life, as God desires us to live. It is about living an eternal relationship based on trust of what He did do (die for our sins) continues to do (guide our lives) and will do (be with us forever) in heaven. Therefore, Jesus needs to be both fully God and fully human in order to relate to our lives that way.

19. Let me wrap this up in my closing prayer: Heavenly Father, may we never stop appreciating the fact that You sent Jesus for us to know we are perfectly forgiven of our sins. Help us to trust in You daily for guidance as we use our lives in order to make a difference for Your kingdom. Help us to be good servants and show us what You want us to do in order to make that difference in the world around us. We ask this in Jesus name, our High Priest, Amen.