



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 2:5-18

"Why Did He Come?"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading this morning will you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 2? And let me read beginning with the 5th verse of the 2nd chapter of this book. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 5.

"For not unto angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, And didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection unto him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare Thy name

unto my brethren. In the midst of the church will I sing Thy praise. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me.' Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

And if I may I would like to interrupt the reading at this point and make slight correction in that 16th verse. A slight correction, but a correction which has a great deal of significance so far as its meaning is concerned. As the text reads, it is a text that has to do with the incarnation and the fact that Jesus took upon him the nature of men rather than the nature of angels. But the word "to take" really means to take hold of with a view to helping. And so consequently it has to do primarily not so much with the fact that he took a certain nature, but that he took hold of a certain group to help them, that is, to redeem them. And so let me render it this way,

"For verily he took no on him (or he did not take hold of angels to help them), but he took hold of the seed of Abraham to help them. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

May God bless the reading of this, his holy word.

We're so happy to have each of our visitors with us this morning. Some of you have come from Fort Worth, and some of you have come from Canada. Some of you

have come from other places and we're happy to have each one of you. And we hope that you feel at home in Believers Chapel and that you'll come back and visit us again. We're also especially happy to have those who have come to visit relatives who are regular at tenders at Believers Chapel. As most of you in the congregation know, Tom and Mary Constable are -- a Pharmacy Student, and Mary is helping him along -- a student at Dallas theological seminary. He is a graduate student. And many of you may not know that his father is vice president of Moody Bible Institute. And he and his wife, Mrs. Constable, are here with us for a few days. And Mr. Constable has gladly consented to come and lead us in our morning prayer. So Mr. Robert Constable we're happy to have you here, and would you lead us in prayer.

[Prayer] We see, our heavenly Father, that it is particularly suitable this morning to bow in Thy presence and acknowledgement that Thou art [inaudible]. We remember the statement of Thy word that he that spared not his own son but freely gave him up for us all. How shall he not with him also freely give us all things? And we are reminded on this Christmas morning of Thy will to do us good, of Thy will to [inaudible], of Thy determination to bring us to Thyself and to everlasting glory

We pray, our heavenly Father, that today we may have a new sense of the joy and the glory of being involved in the meeting of Thy purpose amongst men. Those of whom Thy hast taken hold of in order to do them good, in order to save, we thank Thee for the dark hour. We thank Thee for the Lord Jesus whom Thy hast given to be our Savior. We thank Thee for the gift of Thy spirit sent to direct us and do all Thy gracious will for us, and to manifest Thy light through us amongst men. What a God Thou art. We bow in Thy presence. We acknowledge Thee as God. We pray Thee that there may from these hearts of ours the kind of response that is appropriate to having such a good God.

We thank Thee for the privilege among many privileges that is ours to come and sit under the sound of Thy word, to have it broken to us so that we may understand it

and take it in. And we pray that in this hour we may hear the sound of Thy voice. We thank Thee that we are able to be here in strength and in good health. And we praise Thee for those that are not able to be here, who would love to be in this place. And we pray Thy blessing upon them [inaudible] and sense of Thy presence with each one.

We pray Thee for our country. We pray for our president, and for those who advise him that it may be directed as [inaudible], that Thou wilt manifest Thyself in the [inaudible] and directing the affairs of government so that it please Thee and give peace in the earth, and so that Thy will may be accomplished amongst the nations.

Now, our God, we wait in Thy presence. We wait for Thee. We pray that Thy servant may be taken up by Thy spirit and may he continue the very part of what God [inaudible]. We pray in Jesus' name.

[Message] Last Sunday morning as those of you who were here will remember, we concluded our series of studies on one of the Old Testament judges Sampson. And I am very happy that that series is concluded because now I do not have to watch my pronunciation of the word Philistine anymore. And I can lapse back into my old ways and pronounce it Philistine. This morning, since this is Sunday morning and it's Christmas morning, I want to speak to you on the subject, "Why did he come?" And I'm asking you if you will to turn to the 2nd chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And we want to take a look at the passage, which have read in our Scripture reading, and particularly verses 10 through 18.

Why did Jesus Christ come? There are as many views of the coming of Jesus Christ as there are views of the political scene in the United States today. There are as many views about the coming of Jesus Christ as there are religious denominations. And there are two hundred of them in the United States. Many of these views are false. For example we now have to contend with the view of Professor Schoenfeld who has

suggested in his book "The Passover Plot" that Jesus came as a messianic plotter and planned his life in such a way that he fulfilled miraculously the Old Testament promises.

Others have suggested other reasons why Jesus Christ came. He came to be a social rebel. He came to be a revolutionist. He came to be a sit in striker, and so on. It's rather remarkable the things that people can find in the Bible. I read not so long ago, in fact just this past week, that Jesus came not to tell people to come to church but in order to urge people to exhibit response to the social situation and be engaged in social welfare for the benefit of men. And it's remarkable that people can believe this in the light of the plain teaching of the word of God and the availability of it for anyone to read.

There are some other reasons why Jesus Christ came, which are true but incomplete. For example, we often hear the statement made that Jesus Christ came to bring a message of love. This past week we received a Christmas card from a young man in Germany, a friend of my daughter's. In the midst of the card he wrote a note and in the note he said that God gave us his son and with his son God gave us all his love. Now, if his note had stopped at that point we would have to say, "Well, that's true. It's incomplete, of course." He went on to say that it is in this sense and with this meaning that we in our home this winter shall celebrate Vinox Feasts, or the Christmas holiday season.

Now it's wonderful, of course, to realize that Jesus did come in evidence of the fact that God loved us. But that's not the entire reason why Jesus Christ came. And as a matter of fact, if that is all we know about the coming of Jesus Christ we do not know really the true significance of the coming of Christ.

Others have said Jesus came to be our example. And when we read the Bible we have to agree with that for it is Peter himself who says that Jesus Christ has come and has given us an example that we should follow in his steps. And there is no question but that Jesus Christ is an example for us who are Christians. If we understand by that that Jesus Christ came to be an example for us so that we might know how we might become

Christians, then of course that is not only false but that is diabolically false. It's true that Jesus came to be an example, but it is incomplete to say that that is why Jesus Christ came.

Now, many of you who know Dallas Theological Seminary know that there is a building on the campus called Stearns Hall. That building is named for an Episcopalian minister from Philadelphia, a strong evangelical who conducted Bible classes in the Philadelphia area for many years. D.M. Stearns was a very wonderful man and he was true in his expositions of Scripture to the truth of the word of God. Now, one time he was expounding the word and when he finished a friend came up and said, "Pastor Stearns, you know, I'm not sure I really like the messages that you give. I don't like the cross of Jesus Christ, and I don't like the stress on the cross of Jesus Christ." He said, "It seems to me that you are looking the principle message of the New Testament and that is that Jesus Christ came to be our example." Pastor Stearns looked at him and said, "Would you like to follow Jesus Christ as your example?" The man said, "I certainly would." He said, "Well, let's take a look at the first step." And he opened his Bible to 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 21 in which we have the expression, "Leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." He said, "Now, step number one according to Peter in the next clause is 'who did no sin'." He said, "Would you like to follow Jesus Christ in that step?" The man said, "No, Pastor Stearns. I certainly would not. I sin and I acknowledge the fact that I sin." And Mr. Stearns looked at him and said, "Well, then you need Jesus Christ as a redeemer before you need him as an example." And he was absolutely right. To say that Jesus Christ came to be our example is true, but it is incomplete. It doesn't give us the whole story. He did come to be an example for Christians, but not for non-Christians.

Others say Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father, and he did. John the apostle said that. He said, "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. He had led him forth into full revelation." We could not know God were it not for the fact that Jesus Christ has come to reveal the

Father. But to say the Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father and leave it at that is to give us an incomplete view of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Now we know, that is those of us who are Christians, we know of course that any view of our Lord's coming that does not include his death on the cross at Calvary can hardly be true to the word of God. It can hardly be complete. We know that Jesus Christ came to die. He said he was the good shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. And in our text we read, "But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor that, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man."

Fifteen years ago, to be exact, I was reading *Life* magazine. And there was an editorial in the Christmas number in which the editorial writer said that Jesus, and now the exact words were, "Jesus thought less of the cross, came to reveal the Father's love to men." It's remarkable how much error can be included in a simple expression like, "thought less of the cross". If there is one thing that is true of our Lord's ministry it is that from beginning to end he was thoughtful of the cross, full of thoughts about that cross. So Jesus Christ came to be an example. He came to reveal the Father. He came to bring a message of love. Preeminently he came to die. And if we do not understand that Jesus Christ came to die we have not a complete picture of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But I don't think that we can limit our Lord's coming to any of these things. As a matter of fact Jesus came for many reasons. The most important ones have to do with the various phases of redemption. And this morning I want to deal with three of them that are among the lesser-known reasons why Jesus Christ came.

Now, this is a remarkable section of the Epistle of the Hebrews. Some time, if the elders approve, I'd like to give a series of messages on the Epistle of the Hebrews because I think it's one of the most misunderstood books in the New Testament largely because we approach it without understanding its Hebrew background. And consequently, the meaning of the expressions have for us meanings that the author did

not have when he used the terms. We tend to read the Epistle of the Hebrews as if we are to understand all of the terms as in line with Pauline theology, when as a matter of fact the theology of this epistle is quite different. But this is one of the great sections of the book and in it the author has said for us and to us that Jesus Christ has come in order that he might be the man that God intended man to be. As a matter of fact he said that God has intended for man to be the master of creation. Now, isn't that an amazing that that we as human beings should be the masters of creation?

He says in the 5th verse,

"For not unto angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, And didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection unto him, he left nothing that is not put under him."

Think of that. Man is to be supreme and sovereign in the creation that God has made. But man, of course, is not sovereign now. The author states in the last clause and sentence of that 8th verse, "But now we see not yet all things put unto him."

When I was young I learned the Westminster Confession of Faith, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." We could add to that, "Man's chief end is to enjoy God and to glorify him forever, and to reign over God's creation," for that is God's intention for men. But as we look at the human situation today the author says it's not like that. Now we see not yet all things put unto man. And if you look about in the creation you surely see that to be true. If there is one thing that is true today it is that man is not over the creation. He is not ruling as he was intended to be. G.K. Chesterton was right when he said, "Whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain: man is

not what he was meant to be. Instead of having the mastery over creation is his mastered often by his creation. Instead of ruling he is enslaved. Instead of having strength he is in weakness. Instead of being an ally of God he is a rebel against God. Instead of being the glory of God, man is the shame of the universe." And a striking thing about this is that in our rebellion, in our hostility, in our separation from God and under the condemnation of God we still manifest certain characteristics, which have been given us by God. For example, what I mean is that: that even though we do not have control over the creation it is a startling thing that men are constantly trying to gain control over this creation.

Now, if you look at human history you can see this. You can look at the Pharaohs, and if you know their history you know what they intended to be: rulers over God's creation. Or if you look at Alexander, or the Caesars, or Attila the Hun, or any of the others down to the present day with our Hitlers, and our Stalins, and our Maos, it's rather striking that man has within himself the desire and the ambition to be the ruler over God's creation. It was planted there by God, but it has been spoiled by sin. And as a result, man has a lust for power, which is faint resemblance of God's original grant of dominion. And if you look at human history the one thing that stands out is the fact that men are under the judgment of God.

Someone not so long ago said, "The Bible is full of bloody pages because the men of the Bible are violent men." And what a difference there is between the Bible and other books. If you pick up Marx's works you discover that what we're heading for is a kind of stainless steel paradise upon earth. But the Bible is realistic. The Bible paints us as terrible characters because that's exactly what we are. The Bible paints us as bloody men because we are men with blood on our hands. And it paints us as violent men because we are violent, and intractable, and rebellious against God.

When Hegel looks at humanity he looks and says that ultimately what we're going to have is a wonderful, perfect, pristine state. And when Americans look at human events

and at human history we have the American dream. This is one of the most idealistic Pollyannas that I have ever read about in all of my life; the American dream. That is, endless material progress and prosperity. Everything's going to be wonderful and it's going to continue to be wonderful. And finally we're going to reach a state in which everybody has everything that they want materialistically. And then we're going to have heaven upon earth. That's the American dream. That's a nightmare. [Laughter] That's exactly what it is. It is a nightmare because it is so contrary to the truth of God.

Well, our author says, "But now, but now," and he could say it today. "But now we see not yet all things put under him. But," he said, "But we see Jesus," and of course this is the divine solution. The divine solution is a Savior who is sovereign by reason of the fact that he has suffered. And it is by reason of these sufferings that he has gained for man potentially that which man lost in the Garden of Eden. Now we see Jesus and we see this Jesus made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. We see him crowned with glory and honor. And that, of course, is to pledge and guarantee that God's purposes are ultimately going to be realized but they are going to be realized in God's way. We're not going to bring in this kingdom of God upon the earth. It's the kingdom of God. Remember that. We're not going to bring in this stainless steel paradise. God doesn't want that kind of paradise to start with. It is by reason of that which Jesus Christ has done, our author says, that we can expect to see the purpose of God ultimately realized in the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Now this, of course, would have been rather startling to a Jew. To tell a Jew that the Messiah must suffer is a strange thing. Now, Mr. Schoenfeld credits Jesus with a great deal of understanding. He credits him with understanding that the messianic prophecies signified that the Messiah should suffer. And if he had that understand, of course I believe that he had that understanding. But on his human plane if he had that human understanding he was absolutely unique. It's rather startling to me that a man can suggest that Jesus took a potion which drugged his senses and enabled him to carry out death,

burial and resurrection -- counterfeiting the whole process -- can still credit him with being such an intelligent human being as to figure all of this out and to work it out so that he fooled everybody except Dr. Schoenfeld. [Laughter]

The idea, however, that Jesus Christ must suffer; this would have been a rather startling thing. Now, if I were a Jew and addressing this author who has told me that man is going to regain his authority over the creation by reason of a person who has suffered I would say, "Where did you get that idea? Where do you get the idea that someone is going to suffer and gain these things for us? We have read the Old Testament and we believe that he is going to gain these things by his mighty conquests. But the idea of gaining them by suffering? Where did you get that? Why must he suffer?"

Now, our author tells us why and in telling us why he gives us three very simple and succinct reasons why Jesus Christ came. And so in the remainder of our time I want to briefly take these three reasons out of our text and add them to the other reasons why Jesus Christ came. He states first of all that Jesus Christ came that we might have a perfected author of salvation. Will you look at the 10th verse? "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Now, this is language that we do not understand in the 20th century and so a must kind of briefly describe the background out of which he writes.

He thinks of God as the God who is related to people by reason of a covenant. And he thinks of men and women as people who may become related to God by reason of covenant. And he realizes that in order for this God to be related to these people it is necessary for a covenant to be consummated in a sacrifice. Now you see he writes out of an Old Testament background and so it's necessary for us understand in order to understand his. To him this was ordinary language. Everyone would have understood it. God is separated from men. He is a holy God and righteous God, and consequently there must be an action on God's part to bring us into fellowship with him. And he knew

about covenants because God had made covenants and had to school them in the covenant idea, and knew about specific covenants in the Old Testament.

And so our author states that this God is a God who is maybe related to men by reason of covenant. And we need a covenant and he has said that Jesus is the covenant making and keeping priest, and he has come and he in life has demonstrated that he is within himself capable of being the priest of the covenant because he is a person who has been chosen by God. And throughout every stage of his earthly experience has demonstrated that he is the kind of person who can spotlessly intervene between God and men. And not only that, he has come at a point in time and he has offered the covenant sacrifice and that sacrifice was offered upon the cross at Calvary. That was the sacrifice that validated the covenant between God and men. And it is on the basis of the covenant sacrifice that the covenant God is related to the covenant people. And so out of this he writes and says, "It became him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain (the mediator) the final leader of their salvation, perfect through sufferings."

And so by reason of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary, we have a mediator between God and men, the Lord Jesus Christ. And furthermore, he is the captain of their salvation.

Now, you know it's wonderful to think of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. But did you notice that in our text here our author says that he wanted to bring many sons unto glory. This is the Christmas season and we think about the Son of God, who was born in a manger in Bethlehem. We've kind of stressed through the years, of course, that this man was no stranger when he was put in that manger in Bethlehem, no stranger to the human scene. He had been here as the angel of Jehovah. He had led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt into the wilderness and into the Promised Land. He was no new comer in the manger in Bethlehem. He was the Son of God who had been here before.

It's rather startling to read here that in bringing many sons unto glory God desired to make him perfect. For you see, it's evident from this that God was not happy with just one son, but he wanted many sons. Isn't it wonderful to realize on the Christmas morning like this when we celebrate the fact that the Son of God has come that we may also celebrate the fact that we in the son may become sons, too?

Dr. Schaeffer used to have a series of messages, which he called, "Populating Heaven". And this was the theme of the messages in bringing many sons unto glory, "Populating Heaven". To make the captain of his salvation? No, our text does not say, "his salvation". I am amazed. You know, as I read the New Testament over and over again I'm constantly amazed after all of these years at the exactness of the language of Scripture. Our text does not say, "To make the captain of his salvation." It says, "the captain of their salvation." You see, our Lord Jesus did not need a Savior. He did not come in order to provide himself a Savior. He came in order to Savior others. And so our text said that God desired to perfect the author of their salvation, to make him perfect through sufferings. So he didn't die just to show us how to die. He died that we might be saved.

Now, if that language is repulsive to you I'm sorry. It's the language of God in his word. He died that we might be saved. We have a covenant. We have a God of the covenant. We have a people of a covenant. And we have a covenant sacrifice that has been made. And on the basis of the covenant sacrifice we can freely approach the covenant God through the priesthood which he has ordained, the high priest our Lord Jesus himself.

The trouble is we don't use him. We don't use him to approach God through him, but desire to approach him in every other possible way. You know, I've often heard some of my friends accused of teaching different methods of salvation because there are different ages in God's word. That, of course, is utterly false. There's only one method of salvation. I think I heard the limit this morning coming over to Believers Chapel. I was

listening on the radio and a minister. I didn't catch his name, he said there were two and a half million people in the world approximately. And there were two and a half billion ways of coming to God. Amazing thing. The strange thing to me is that we have this wonderful way of coming to God through Jesus Christ and we don't use that.

Did you notice Pogo's Christmas card this past week? The Christmas card was an amazing card. "God is not dead, he is merely unemployed." What's your relationship to God? Have you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know the covenant sacrifice? Do you know him who has been offered for you? Are you sure this morning as you sit in this audience that were you to pass in to eternity at this moment that you would go to be with our Lord Jesus Christ? Are you sure of that? Do you know that your hope rests upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus?

Well, we can be sure of this because we have a perfect author of salvation. Not only that, our author says in verses 14 through 16 that we have a deliver from the devil, another bad word. We don't like to talk about the devil today, do we? We kind of make fun of the devil. It's a little more dignified to speak of Satan. But the Bible speaks of the devil. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in likewise took part of the same; that through death he might annul," we who've had some personal experience with the demonic know of course that satan is not dead. He's very much alive. In fact, he's like a roaring lion. He goes around seeking whom he may devour. This word means annul. "That through death he might annul him that had the power of death, that is, the devil".

The background of this is Genesis chapter 3. And satan, of course, secured the allegiance of men through the fall that took place in the Garden of Eden. And as a result of that Satan had power over men. He conquered man in the garden and as a result of it he had that power until the time of the cross and the resurrection. And now as a result of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ we read in the Book of Revelation chapter 1 that Jesus has the keys of death and Hades. And so the legal release has been given.

Jack Ruby is under the control of the Dallas Police. He is not in the jail at the moment. But any well-known criminal in jail could understand, I think, the language of our text. For you see, it's legal language. In order for the jailer to release one who is in his custody he must have a legal release. It must be signed by the proper authorities. It must be presented. It must be accepted. The prison doors must be thrown open. Now, that is exactly what Jesus Christ has done for us. You see, men were in imprisonment. We were captives to sin and to Satan. Jesus Christ came. He died upon the cross. He paid the penalty. And on the basis of the work of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ a legal release has been secured for all men. The prison doors have been thrown open. And since the legal release has been secured through the blood of the covenant sacrifice now all may go free if they simply believe the message.

Now, of course, today our illustration is incomplete in that when the legal release is presented ordinarily any criminal will be happy to believe it. You won't ordinarily find a criminal saying, "Well, I don't really believe that's legal. I think I'll stay here until I'm sure." Because, of course, the jailer would be sure to tell him that it was legal and oust him from his prison. But God is not like that. You see, man is in the condition of having had a legal release obtained for him by the Lord Jesus Christ. But he still remains in his prison because he doesn't believe the message. And as a matter of fact, he kind of likes his prison more than he likes the idea of freedom in the will of God. But the text says that Jesus Christ took flesh and blood that through death he might annul him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And so we have a deliverer from the devil. We have a perfected author of salvation and we have a deliverer from the devil. And it's so wonderful to know that the Lord Jesus came in order to redeem us. That's why the author says in verse 16, "For verily he did not take hold of angels to help them, but he took hold of the seed of Abraham to help them."

It's wonderful to know that God had in his mind the salvation of man. Angels, I'm sure among those who have not fallen, angels must be wonderful beings. I think that's one of the things I want to do when I get to heaven. I want to sit down and have a long talk with Michael. I want to understand a lot more about the angelic beings than I understand at the moment. And I believe that one of the wonderful things of heaven is the discovery of just exactly the kind of beings that angels are. But you know, in the economy of God men are more important than angels. He didn't take hold of angels to help them, but he took hold of the seed of Abraham to help them.

As it has often been expressed by Bible expositors, Jesus left the glory of heaven, passed by the angels, and came to sinful men in order to redeem them. I've always been impressed by a section in one of G. Campbell Morgan's books in which he describes Mrs. Browning's poem "The Seraphim". It's a poem that I cannot recite for you, but you know its meaning. Mrs. Browning is describing the Seraphim as they are watching the work of the Son of God upon the earth. And at the last when finally the seraphs seem to be comprehending exactly what it's all about, one seraph looks at the host of ransom souls, at the church in vision, and he says, "Hereafter, shall the blood bought captives raise their passion song of blood." And the other replies, "And we extend our holy vacant hands toward the throne crying, 'We have no music'." It's true. The angels do not know the wonderful music of, "He loved me and gave himself for me,".

We have a song, it's a wonderful solo. It's a song that's entitled, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is What the Angels Sing". And this is the chorus. "Holy, Holy, Holy, is what the angels sing. And I expect to help them make the courts of heaven ring. But when I sing redemption's story they will fold their wings, for angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings." That's what this text means. He did not take hold of angels to help them. He took hold of the seed of Abraham to save them. And so it's wonderful, you know, on Christmas morning to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is a perfected author of salvation. The covenant has been completed in his blood. And not only that, but he has

delivered us from the power of the devil and from the fear of death. Death itself is not so terrible, but it's what comes after death that is. And our author speaks of that in the ninth chapter when he says, "It's appointed unto men once to die." Every one of you must. Every one of you. That's your appointment and you must keep it. It is appointed unto us for men. It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment. That's the thing that we are afraid of. We're going to be judged.

And finally, in our text here our author says that we might have an advocate for sin. He says in the 17th verse, "Wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Therefore, because Jesus Christ has come we not only may know the salvation that he provides by reason of his covenant and the deliverance from satan and satanic powers, but we have someone at the right hand of God; an advocate who at every point in our life when we sin and disobey God he brings our case before God and wins the case always. That's what it means when it says that he has become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Hebrews is rather unique. In Paul you read, "incarnation", "propitiation", "priesthood". That is, Jesus became a man in order that he might die upon the cross, in order that he might become or priest and that we might become priests. Hebrews is different. Hebrews speaks about incarnation. Jesus Christ became a man in order that by reason of the sacrifice he might offer that which a priest must do, and become a priest and then that he might offer for sins and sanctify for the sins of the people. You see, what he means is not the sins that we commit when we are lost, but the sins that we commit after we have been saved. And Jesus Christ came not only to restore the relationship between God and men by reason of the covenant which was consummated in his blood, but also that he might be a priest to minister at the right hand of God and

when a mans sins he has an advocate at the right hand at the Father who pleads his case, and he wins that case.

In the Old Testament this is illustrated in a wonderful incident. It's in Numbers chapter 16. The children of Israel begin to murmur against Moses and Aaron. And as a matter of fact, Korah, and Dathan, and Abiram begin to desire the priesthood. Moses was very much upset over this because he saw this as rebellion and murmuring against God. And consequently he went to the Lord, and as a result of this God brought a great judgment upon Korah, and Dathan, and Abiram and the princes who were associated with them. And after the judgment that had been pronounced upon them in which God opened up the ground and swallowed up these who were rebelling against God, the children of Israel begin to murmur against God because of the judgment that he had pronounced and executed upon those who were rebellious. And death began to move out in the congregation of Israel. And again, Moses was very much disturbed and he told Aaron to go to the alter and take a sensor, that is an instrument in which you can take fire from off of the alter. Take that instrument and put incense upon it and move back and forth among the people in order that the plague might be stayed. And as a matter of fact, Moses went on to say, "And make atonement for the people." Have you ever heard of atonement by means of incense? No, you don't often hear that in the Bible. Do you know why? Because atonement is made by blood.

There is no way to God except through the blood of the cross of Calvary. Consequently, any kind of method of salvation which bypasses the blood of the cross is diabolically wrong, and false, and misleading. But once we have come to know God then there may be propitiation, for that's the meaning of the word in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. There may be propitiation for the sins of the people. You see, the people belong to God by reason of the covenant, but now they're murmuring as children of God. And so as a result of this, atonement comes to pass through incense. Now, incense taken from off the alter was simply a reminder of the sweet savor of the finished

work of the Lord Jesus for the altar, you see, was the place where the animals were slain and where the blood was poured out. And so the fire from the altar, that is the fire of Calvary's cross, always is a sweet savor to God. And so that fire taken and put under the incense brought a sweet savor typically so that God smelled something sweet amidst the scent of the people. There was atonement by reason of incense, atonement by reason of a reminder of what happened at the cross at Calvary. And you know, it's a wonderful thing. And the Epistle to the Hebrews is written to people who were backsliding. They were in danger, some of them, of apostasy. And many of them had turned away and had begun to disassociate themselves with the people of God. They needed some assurance of the fact that for backsliders there is restoration. And so as a result of this our author says that the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of the Father as a great high priest and he makes propitiation, he makes satisfaction, for the sins of the people.

And it works something like this: if I sin as a Christian, the moment I sin my case comes before the heavenly court. And I have an accuser. To use the biblical terminology, I have an accuser. There is Satan himself, the accuser of the brethren. And he said, "Ah, Lewis Johnson has committed a sin. Now, what about that?" This doesn't go on in heaven, mind you. This is kind of putting it in our language, 1966. Our Lord Jesus steps forward. I have not even recognized my sin yet. The moment that I sin I have an advocate with the Father. "He's Jesus Christ the righteous and he's the satisfaction for my sins," John says. And not only that, for the whole world, too. But he's the satisfaction for my sins.

And so Jesus Christ steps forward and says when Satan accuses me of having sinned, now what's going to happen? What about the judgment because of sin? Jesus Christ steps forward and said, "I have died for that sin. That sin was paid for in the blood of Calvary's cross. Sins past, sins present, sins future. All sin is covered by the cross of Calvary." And so Jesus Christ stands forward as my advocate. And God looks at Jesus

Christ and remembers the sweet savor of Calvary's cross and says, "Acquitted." And I stand acquitted.

Now, it's a great thrill to me to know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. It's a great thrill to me to know that God loves me because Jesus Christ has come. It's a great thrill to know that he's my example. It's a great thrill to know that he died for me. It's a great thrill to know that he's the perfected author of salvation, my covenant mediator. And it's wonderful to know that he's delivered me from Satan. But I want you to know too as a Christian it's a thrill to know that when I fail him Jesus Christ does not renounce me then, but he steps forward immediately before I even know I have sinned and stands there at the right hand of the throne of God as my advocate.

You know we have a wonderful Savior and we have a complete Savior, too. Satisfaction of the sins of the people. And the last wonderful thing about it is that it's something that he can feel himself. "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Now, he doesn't sympathize with our sin. He had to die for that. But he sympathizes with our testing. And let me remind you of this, that Jesus Christ knows our testing far more than we could ever possibly know it. Do you know why? Because he has endured a testing that is greater in degree than we could ever endure it. If we were in a classroom I'd like to draw you a diagram right now. Or if we had an overhead projector. By the way, the elders want to have an overhead projector in the new building which we're building next year the Lord willing. But I'd like to draw you a little diagram at this point to point out to you that Jesus Christ has suffered and has endured a testing that is far beyond anything that we could ever endure for we have fallen out long before it has become intense. And he knows testing; he knows temptation in a way that you and I could never know it. And consequently he knows every sense that we have of testing. He knows the five percent degree, the ten percent, the twenty, the thirty, the fifty. And he knows beyond that place where we have fallen

and cannot know because we have fallen. He knows it. But in addition he has the power to help. And consequently, he's a merciful and faithful high priest.

Well, it was for great reasons that Jesus Christ came. A perfect author of salvation, a deliverer from the devil, an advocate for sin. His greatness should prevent apostasy but it also should lead to devotion to him. As we close this morning may I ask you again, what is your relationship to Jesus Christ? Wouldn't it be a terrible thing to come to Christmas morning, hear a message about our Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done, and still not be a Christian? Have you put your trust in him? Do you know all that you need to? Not joined the church. Not pray through. Not be baptized. Not be confirmed. Some of these things are very good. Not do good works. The only thing that God requires of us is to recognize that Jesus Christ has done it all and to say to him, "Thank you Lord Jesus for dying for me. Thank you for bearing my judgment, my punishment. I accept, Lord, what you have done. I stop trusting in my good works, stop trusting in my baptism, stop trusting in my religion, stop trusting in my prayer life, stop trusting in my devotions, stop trusting in all of the other things in which I have trusted. And I trust the covenant sacrifice made by my priest who has restored relationships between God and men. Thank you Lord for dying for me."

And do you know the moment that that decision is made in your heart you become a new man? God gives you in a supernatural work called the new birth, regeneration, new life. New life, not old life plastered over. New life. Absolutely new. Different life. God's life in a miracle of God. That's the new birth. May God help you to make that decision. May we stand for the benediction?

As we're quiet for just a moment, perhaps God is leading you to say to him, "I thank Thee, O God, for Jesus Christ who gave himself for me." And if God is leading you to make that decision may you do it. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "For God so loved the world

that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Make that decision.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of preaching the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for him who loved us and gave himself for us. And in the Christmas season may the spiritual side of our Lord's ministry come home to us. And now may

[RECORDING ENDED ABRUPTLY]