

Why Did Jesus Become My Brother?

Why do we do what we do? When I was growing up, preparing for Christmas was always an elaborate process. We went out and cut down a tree. We went into the cold attic and dug out the decorations. We put on the lights. We put on the garland and tinsel. We put on the bulbs. And there was a certain point as I was growing up when I asked my mom “Why do we do this? We do we go to such work to get this tree ready?” Her answer was “This is what we do in this family to get ready for Christmas.”

Why do we do the things we do? Sometimes it’s out of habit. Sometimes it’s out of tradition. And sometimes it’s for very important reasons. When our thoughts turn away from the Christmas tree and toward Jesus, at some point we ask the same sort of question: Why did Jesus have to become a human being? He’s God, right? He could have made a command and sin would have been gone forever. Why did Jesus take on human flesh and blood and become my brother?

In the words we look at this morning, the writer to the Hebrews give us an answer. In chapter two, we read: *“Heb. 2:14 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— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. 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.”*

Why did Jesus become my brother, with flesh and blood and everything else that makes us human? He did this to set us free. And notice how the writer to the Hebrews unfolds this truth. He speaks so very clearly. In order to speak clearly one has to say not just what something is, but also what something is *not*. Jesus as a faithful High Priest set us free. But free from what? *“Heb. 2:14 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— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. He set us free from fear. That is Satan’s most powerful weapon. We were slaves to fear. And what were we so afraid of? We were afraid of death—not just ceasing to breathe, but ceasing to be sustained by God. Or in other words, we were afraid of Hell.*

And we have every reason to be afraid. When God gave us life here on this earth, we were slaves to Satan. We were *his* children. We followed *him*. We did not know Jesus and what we did know we hated. But Jesus set us free from Satan. We are no longer his children. Instead, we are children of God.

Jesus shared in our humanity to ‘destroy’ the Devil. And here is where we pause for a moment. The word there doesn’t really mean to destroy in the sense of causing someone to cease to exist. It means to make useless; to completely take away someone’s power. And that’s exactly what Jesus did. Satan now has no power over us. We can say with the apostle Paul, *“1Cor. 15:55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”*

Jesus set us free from the Slavery of Satan and the fear of death. But he also set us free *for* something as well. He set us free so that he could be just like us in every way. He had the same sort of skin and muscles as we have. He has the same sort of thoughts and emotions as we have. He is our brother. But that’s not all. He also set us free so that we would be like him. Because he shared our humanity, when he died and rose from the dead he made us like him. He made us a people who are righteous and holy in his sight.

The writer pours out for us all these wonderful reasons why Jesus became our brother. But there is where we find our sin. Reading these words for us is so much like opening a Christmas present and finding in the box the same exact toy we received last year. It’s as if Mom and Dad took our favorite toy off of the shelf and put it in a box for us. If this happened on Christmas we would be angry and insulted, right? We wanted something new and shiny. Instead, we got something old.

We sin when we hear the wonder news that Jesus became our brother to save us from Satan and for unity and our response is apathy. Jesus became our brother! And our response is a sigh of boredom. Jesus is your brother. And our response is a shrug of apathy. How sad it is that it is easier for us get excited about who is playing in the Super Bowl than in this old and priceless gift that God’s word peaks to us.

And my brothers and sisters, what a great gift it is. Our faithful High Priest, Jesus will never tire of showing us how much he loves us. He will never stop waking us up from our apathy. He will never stop wrapping and re-wrapping this gift for us to receive and enjoy.

Rejoice then, for Jesus became your brother to set you free. And in these words we find another reason why Jesus became our brother. In verse 18 we read: *“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”*

For all of us, there have been times in our lives when we have been tempted to say: “God, you do not know what I’m going through. You do not know what it’s like to be me”. And, if we were talking to one of our friends or family we might be fully speaking the truth. But, it’s not true when it comes to Jesus. Jesus was tempted in every way as you are. But there’s one *huge* difference. He never gave into those temptations—not even once. Even more than that. Not only did he not give in once, he was punished for all the times you *did* give in. He was punished for every lust, every despair, every greed or pride—all of those temptations that pushed you into sin.

So, do not say to your brother and Savior that he does not know. Because he does. And when you are tempted, he will be there to help you. First of all, when you are tempted you can pray to him and he can relate to you. Have you ever told your parents something important to you, and they just didn’t understand you? Jesus knows exactly what you are going through because he went through the same temptations.

Second, not only can he relate to you, but you can also relate to him. He is not just a distant, far away God that we have nothing in common with. He is our brother. He is our friend. He feels and thinks just like we do. How can we not feel drawn to and relate to a Savior like that.

And third, Jesus promises to help you. He promises not just to hear your words, but to help you when you are tempted. The apostle Paul fleshes out that idea when he says: *“1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*

Jesus, our brother promises to give us a way out, a shelter from the storm and power of our temptations. So then, why would you not go to that sort of Savior? What would hold you back from going to him with all our troubles, worries and temptations? He knows you. He hears you. He helps you.

Go to him in your prayers. Thank him that, out of his great love for you he became your brother. Praise him that even-though he could have made you his child from worlds away, instead he took on human flesh and blood and became your brother. Tell him of your temptations and trust that he will help you in you time of need.

Why did Jesus become my brother? He became your brother to set you free from the fear of death. He became your brother to help you when you are tempted. Amen.