

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

**09.28.2023 | Who was Conceived by the Holy Spirit and Born of the Virgin Mary |
Hebrews 2:14-18 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor**

As you find your seat, I hope that you'll take a Bible and find Hebrews chapter 2. That's where we're going to be this morning. I'd invite you to turn there with me to Hebrews chapter 2. We're going through the Apostles' Creed and we are considering it really doctrine by doctrine as best we can. Last week we began this kind of section on Jesus Christ, on the Son of God. We really considered last week that the person of Jesus, we were considering the fact that we believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. That really led us to consider who Jesus is, that Jesus is a historical. He is someone who walked on this earth, who lived, who died. But he was not just a person.

While fully man, he is also fully God, the only Son of God or God the Son, fully divine as we talked about last week and we will consider this week. And as such, he is Lord over all. He is Lord over all creation. He is Lord over the church and that means he is Lord over each one of us. Now what we're going to be doing as we go throughout this section, really throughout the whole Apostles' Creed, but as we consider different sections, is we're going to see some themes and some doctrines repeated. So last week as we were considering who Jesus is, it led us to consider that he is a person. He is fully man, but also that he is fully God.

This is something that we're going to consider this morning as we consider this phrase that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Now I began our service by reading from Matthew chapter one. You can read about the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit and the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary in Matthew's Gospel and in Luke's Gospel. But I thought this morning instead of us just going to those Gospel accounts and seeing kind of what happened, I wanted us to go to this passage in Hebrews chapter two, which gives us kind of more of a theological unpacking of what happened at Jesus's birth. Not just what happened at Jesus's birth, but really why Jesus's birth happened.

This section of Hebrews helps us to understand what we are proclaiming as we speak of Jesus's miraculous conception and birth and what it means for us and for our faith. So Hebrews chapter two, our text this morning is verses fourteen through eighteen. I mentioned this morning that a lot of our focus being on the birth of Jesus, a lot of our songs focusing on that topic. It can feel a little bit like Christmas has come early. You know, but we are eighty eight days from Christmas. It's going to be here before you know it. I hope you've already started your Christmas shopping. I have to tell you, I really have come to love the Christmas season. I don't know if it's having kids, getting to kind of have traditions and celebrations with them, but I just love that time of the year that's coming up at.

One of the things I love about Christmas time is that as secular as our culture has gotten, there are still so many traces and hints of the true meaning of Christmas that show up all around our culture. One of the things that you'll notice at Christmas time is that there is this belief that something extraordinary can happen, something magical can happen, even something miraculous could happen. We still have the phrase in our culture that there's a Christmas miracle. That miracle could be that you got the present that you didn't think you were going to get. Like you know, all the presents have been opened, but yet there was one hidden behind the tree. Or there really is a Lexus in the driveway with a big red bow on it. You know, maybe the miracle happens is that someone is able to make it home for Christmas and you're able to be together. Maybe the miracle is that there's this change of heart in a Scrooge or a Grinch and they really grasp the true meaning, the spirit of Christmas. Whatever it is, our culture still seems to hold on to this idea that around Christmas time, we believe that something magical, even something miraculous can happen. And that is actually a faint trace of what the true meaning of Christmas is. It's a shadow, if you will, that's very dim these days, but it is still there being cast from the true substance of what Christmas is.

Because you see, what we focus on at Christmas time is the birth of Jesus. And what this Apostle's Creed statement is helping us to remember is that the birth of Jesus is a miracle. We speak about Jesus being conceived by the Holy Spirit. We are saying that he is born of a virgin. We are saying this is a miraculous work that has happened. This child that has been born is born in a unique way that has never before happened and never again will happen. That there is a miracle that takes place. And what I think this passage in Hebrews does is it helps us to consider what's really happening in this world. This miracle of Jesus's birth. But then also, what does that mean?

In other words, why did Jesus's birth happen? What miracles does the miracle of Jesus's birth lead to? What impact does it have on our lives? That's what I want us to consider this morning. By looking into these few verses from Hebrews, I want us to consider what happened at Jesus's birth, but also why did it happen? What was the result? What did Jesus's birth lead to? So first, what happened at Jesus's birth? When we say we believe that he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, what are we actually proclaiming? And what we are saying is that we believe that God became man.

The big word for this in Christian tradition is incarnation. So if you're following along in your bulletin, there'll be these blanks for kind of us to fill in these sometimes big Christian theological words. But they're very important to our faith and so I want us to know them, but also want us to clearly understand them. That what we're remembering and what we're proclaiming as we say Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, is we are saying that God became man. We're saying that we believe in the incarnation. Now we began to think about this last week. Again, some of these themes will be repeated as we walk through these Apostles Creed. Last week we considered when Paul wrote to the church in Colossae that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the visible expression of the invisible God that we can't see.

Paul said in that passage that in him, in Jesus, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And even in this passage of Hebrews, even before we started reading in the preceding verses, the author of Hebrews speaks of the fact that God the Son is the creator of all things. That he has always existed as we saw last week. He was there in creation. All things were created through him and for him. So God the Son, the second person of the Trinity is fully God, but there came to be a moment in which he became also fully man. In which he was conceived, in which he was born. This is what the author of Hebrews speaks of in this passage.

He puts it like this in verse 14. He says, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things." The children there is talking about the offspring of Abraham that he refers to in verse 17. Or it's talking about us as people that Jesus came to save. The author of Hebrews makes it very clear Jesus did not come to save spiritual beings. He didn't come for the angels, he came for people. Therefore he partook of the very same flesh and blood that we have. He became like us. That's what he goes on to say in verse 17. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect. Therefore he was made like us in every way. He partook of flesh and blood. This is what we remember as we come to the table this morning. That Jesus was born, he took on flesh and blood. He partook of the same things that we have. He was made like us in every way.

It's important to always remember that Jesus is not just God disguised as a human. Sometimes we can think about it like that. We can think maybe this was just God kind of clothing himself in kind of a human disguise just so that he could be around us. Or maybe sometimes we can think that Jesus is like Hercules or something where he is half God and half man, this kind of mixture. But what the Apostles' Creed is helping us to consider is that the one we've just talked about, Jesus Christ, God's only Son, the Lord was really conceived in his mother's womb. He really developed in Mary's womb. Just like any other child, he had that period of being in his mother's womb for nine months and then he was born to his mother. As we just sang about, he was a baby, a child. When Jesus was first born into this world, he could not. He is the Word, but yet in those moments he could not speak. The He, the fully God, is also made fully man. This is the incredible truth of the incarnation that he partook of the same things that we partake in. In terms of having flesh and blood, he had the exact same experiences that we have. He grew as a child. He learned. He experienced the transition from being a child to a teenager that he had. And then even into adulthood. He grew in the same way that we do. He was like us in every way.

In so many ways, this is such a really hard concept for us to grasp, this miracle. To think about the fact that God, an infinite God, took on flesh and dwelt among us. We start to often maybe lean to one side or the other where we think maybe more about Jesus' humanity or more about. And trying to consider both of those is really hard and that's what makes it a miracle. That's what makes it so miraculous that it is something beyond our comprehension, something that could not happen outside of God's divine intervention. But you know for many people, when they think about the incarnation, I think the struggle isn't so much on how it happened, but how could it happen? Not so much of like how God was able to become man, but why would God become man?

I don't know if you've ever talked to people of different religions. If you ever talked to people who are of the Islamic faith, if you ever talked to Muslims, so often I find that the incarnation is a stumbling block to them considering Christianity. And it's not so much on how could God do this, but why would God do To them it seems very blasphemous that God would become a person, that the holy God who is set apart would come and become like us in every way. But for us as believers, as Christians, it's not so much that we are speaking about God being humiliated, but rather God's. It's not blasphemous to speak about God becoming man because we aren't diminishing at all God's greatness, but rather just speaking more about His goodness. That out of His love, out of His mercy, out of His desire for us to be with Him in the way that He created us to be, God came in

The second person of the Trinity was conceived in his mother's womb, born of a virgin, lived on this world because He loved us, because He was pursuing us, because He wanted to be God with us. In some ways, maybe that is the great miracle of the incarnation. Not so much that how God did it, but why God did it. I mean isn't it such an astonishing fact to consider that God loved us, sinful people, people who had strayed from Him, people who had rebelled against Him, people who did not give Him the glory that He deserved. And yet He pursued us, He came for us to save us from our sins. This miracle is one that we should not just consider at Christmastime. It is an important miracle. It is put there at the beginning of this statement about who Jesus is in the Apostles' Creed for a reason.

It is central to our faith. In fact, C.S. Lewis said that the incarnation is the central miracle in the Christian faith. Here's what Lewis said. He said, "The central miracle asserted by Christians is the incarnation. They say that God became man. Every other miracle prepares for this, or exhibits this, or results from this." Now you might disagree with C.S. Lewis, but I think he's got a good point here. He says what is central to our faith is the fact that Jesus is God in the flesh, that God became man, that the incarnation really happened. What he says is that all the miracles beforehand were actually preparing us for God to come and be with us. The miracles that Jesus performed were displaying this, that He really was, is God in the flesh. And all the other miracles that come in Jesus' work and life are a result from this one.

And that's what I want us to consider this morning. As we stand together and we say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born We are saying, we believe that God became man, but why? Why is that so important? What are the resulting miracles? What are the resulting works that happen because of the incarnation? Well, I have four for us this morning that I think we find here in this passage, and we're just going to unpack them really briefly. Why did Jesus' birth happen? What is the result of the incarnation?

First, God became man. Jesus was born so that Jesus could live a sinless life. The word we'll give for that is perfection. It's not necessarily a big theological word, but it describes what we are saying here. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, so that He could live a perfect sinless life. That's important to know that before Jesus was conceived and born, while He was God the Son, as He always has been for all of eternity, He was perfect. It's not that He was lacking in anything or that He was missing something. He is fully God, always perfect in His fullness from before time. But until Jesus became man, until He was conceived of the Spirit, born of the Virgin, until He partook of the flesh and blood that we have, He was not able to live a sinless life here on this earth. Jesus had to be born as a person so that He could live the life that we were supposed to live, live the perfect life.

The passage here speaks about it at the end of the passage that we read in verse 18. After He had just said that He partook of the same things, made like us in every respect, it says, Now we're going to get to the second half of that verse in just a little bit, but consider the first half of that verse. It says that Jesus suffered when tempted. In other words, when Jesus was born into this world, He had an experience that He did not have pre-incarnation. And that is He faced trials, testing. He faced temptation. And He had real opportunity to make a choice and each time He chose to live according to He lived a sinless, perfect life. The author of Hebrews goes on to reiterate this fact just a couple of chapters later. In chapter 4, this is what he says in verse 15. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are and yet without sin. Jesus is the embodiment of perfection. Jesus was born into this world so that He could live a sinless life.

Last week we considered the fact that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In other words, we said last week, if you want to see God, look at Jesus. Today we consider the same truth, but just from a slightly different perspective. That not only is He the image of the invisible God, but He is the true image bearer. He is the one who lives perfectly the way that

we were created to live. In other words, if you want to see God, look at Jesus. But if you also want to see what it truly means to be human, look at Jesus. Jesus in His life gives us the perfect example of how we are supposed to live. If you want to know how you're supposed to live on this earth, look to Jesus. See His patience. See His gentleness. See His humility. See His love. See the way that He proclaimed the truth. See the way that He called people to turn from their sins, to repent. See the way that He forgave people. This is how we are supposed to live. Jesus came to give us this example that we might be followers of Him, that we might be imitators of Him. That's actually what the word Christian means. It means really like a little Christ. First used in a derogatory way to speak about these people who are trying to live as little Christ. This is our call to imitate Christ.

And I just want to call us to that this morning because I think there is often such a tendency for us to want to imitate and sometimes even idolize other people. Sometimes we can look to other people and say, "Well, that's what I want my life to look like." That's why I would like to live my life. And it's true, there are very good, godly people that we should seek to imitate in many ways. Paul even wrote to people that he had led to the faith and said, "imitate me as I imitate Christ." So there's good people for us to look to and to follow. People that give us modern examples of what it looks like to be a Christ follower, to be a godly person. The only way we'll be able to know if they are imitating Christ is if we know Christ. The only way we'd be able to follow their example as they follow Christ is if we regularly not just look to people, but look to Christ.

I want to encourage you this week, would you just spend a few minutes each day looking to Jesus Christ? Maybe you take just a gospel account and you read through Jesus' life. Maybe find ways in the scripture and prayer to consider who Jesus is. But even now, would you just in your notes, make yourself a note, give yourself a reminder on your phone that for just a few minutes each day you're going to look to Christ so that you can see how we are actually called to live. We can see the perfect example. Jesus was born into this world to give us this picture of perfection, to show us how God wants us to live. Jesus was born so that we might see a sinless life, but also Jesus was born so that he might die a sinner's death.

Here's a big theological word for you straight from the text. It is propitiation. Why was Jesus born? So that he could live a sinless life. Perfection. Why was Jesus born? Why did the incarnation happen? So Jesus could die a sinner's death. Propitiation. We'll get to that word in just a moment, but I want us to consider the fact that the author of Hebrews is helping us to see here that until Jesus took on flesh and blood as God, he could not die. But when Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, when he remained God but also became fully human, it became possible for him to die. That is why he was born into this world. Go back to the beginning of this passage again, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things. He took on flesh and blood." Why? "That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death." That is the devil.

The author of Hebrews is saying Jesus was born so that he might die. He took on flesh and blood so that his body might be broken and his blood might be shed. Again, the author of Hebrews goes on to reiterate this in verse 17. So we just saw him talking about him being made like us in every respect. Verse 17. He had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people. That word propitiation that the author of Hebrews uses there, it means to satisfy wrath by a payment. So what the author of Hebrews is saying is that Jesus is a high priest, the high priest, the mediator between God and man. And the reason he can be is because he offered the ultimate sacrifice himself to cover the judgment that we were due. The wrath of God that was due us as sinners, Jesus paid for it in his death that we might be reconciled to God.

Now again, these are great truths that we're going to be considering time and again. In the coming weeks we're going to be considering Jesus's death, how he descended to hell or to the dead. Some weeks after that we'll be talking about the forgiveness of sins that we experience. So we'll be considering these things even more. But just this morning I want you to consider this fact, that Jesus was born so that he might die and he came so that he might die in your place. Consider the fact that you were under the wrath of God. You were under the judgment of God. But Jesus came and took your place under God's wrath. Jesus came and bore the judgment that was due you so that you are forgiven of your sins. And I'm speaking in this tense that you were under the wrath of God to those who are believers in Jesus Christ.

But I do just need to make it clear that if you're here this morning and you've not yet trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you've not yet believed in who he is and what he has done, the Bible says that the judgment of God is

actually still due you. That you're actually still under the wrath of God. When John speaks of the incarnation in John chapter 3, he says Jesus came into the world not to condemn us because the fact is we were already condemned. He came to save us from condemnation. The Bible says that before you trust in Jesus because of your sin, because of the way you separated yourself from God, you are under his judgment. But if you will believe in Jesus, the one who came and lived a sinless life but died a sinner's death, the one who lived the life you couldn't live and died the death, you should have died. When you believe in him, the wrath of God is removed from you. The forgiveness of God is given to you. You are clothed in Jesus's righteousness.

This is what we proclaim as we come to the table this morning. That our hope is in Jesus's broken body, a body that was fully God, fully man, perfect in this world, not deserving of any punishment or death but yet broken on. Innocent blood was shed on the cross for our sake. Jesus was born so that he might die in your place. Have you believed that? Have you received the forgiveness that is in his name? And so many times it's easy for us maybe as Christians to consider those important truths. That Jesus was born, the incarnation happened so that Jesus could be the perfect example and that he could die in the other of Hebrews also helps us to see a couple of other great realities that have come about because of the incarnation that I just want us to consider this morning before we close.

That Jesus not only came to set the example and to save us from our sins but also to sympathize with us as we just read in Hebrews chapter 4. He came to help sinners and sufferers. The words we'll use here is compassion. I don't know there might have been a better word, I couldn't think of one. But I think what the author of Hebrews is helping us to see is that Jesus has compassion on you and I. Yes, he came to set an example. This is how you're supposed to live. Yes, he came to save you, offer you forgiveness. But it wasn't like he just did that and just left us right where we are. But he came that he might walk alongside of us, help us, Hebrews 4 said, sympathize with us in our weaknesses. I love some of the words of that song that we were just singing and quite a few proclaimed it but the idea of our Redeemer being brought low. How the experience of Jesus becoming man meant that he was walking with us in our weaknesses. I'm not saying Jesus was not fully God, he was, he is. It's not that he set aside his power or his deity at all but when fully God becomes fully man, he embraces the human experience. He knows the weaknesses, the sufferings that we face.

I don't know if you've ever felt like no one can relate to you. Have you ever felt like nobody has walked a mile in your shoes? The author of Hebrews is trying to help you to see that Jesus has. He's been made like us in every way that he might come alongside of us as sufferers and sinners. He experienced the weaknesses, the pains that we experience. I love the way that the church father Augustine put it. He said, man's maker was made man, that he, ruler of the stars, might nurse in his mother's breast. That the bread might hunger, the fountain thirst, the light sleep, the way be tired on its journey. That the truth might be accused of false witness, the teacher be beaten with whips, the foundation be suspended on wood. That strength might grow weak, that the healer might be wounded, that life might die.

Jesus was born into this world so that he might know what you are going through and be able to walk alongside of you. In the midst of your weaknesses, in the midst of your suffering, even in the midst of your temptation to. In both passages of speaking about Jesus here in Hebrews as the great high priest, it speaks about the ways that he is able to help us in our moments of temptation. Verse 18 of chapter 2, "For because he himself suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Jesus can not only relate to you in your experience, but he is there to strengthen you as you face the temptation to sin. It is not that Jesus just paid the price so that you are forgiven of your sin, but he also wants to empower you so that you do not have to live in sin any longer. As a Christian, you are not only freed from the penalty of sin, but you are being freed from the power that sin has over you.

The way that we do that is we have the great one, the strong one who always resisted temptation there to strengthen us when we face temptation. Sometimes I think when we think about Jesus being fully God and fully man, we can downplay the temptation that he faced. We say, "Well, yes, I mean, he was not like us, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, meaning he did not inherit the sinful nature that we have. He wasn't stained by original sin like we were, and that's true. But the reality is, Jesus did face the same situations that He had every opportunity to sin, even in the garden, the night before he was crucified. We see him wrestling with the reality of doing things his way or the Father's way. And every time he resisted temptation.

You see, sometimes when we think about Jesus being the God-man, we could think he doesn't really know what it's like to face temptation. But I would actually argue that Jesus knows more about temptation than when you think about it like this, imagine you had some people up on stage, and you told them to hold out their hands, and that you were going to weigh their arms down with weight until it reached 300 pounds. Let's just say most of the people up there weren't that strong, like me. I don't think I could hold 300 pounds. And at some point, their arms gave way at 50 pounds, 100 pounds, 200 pounds. At some point, they could not hold the weight anymore. But yet one person held all 300 pounds. That person knows the full weight. Bible says that so often when we are tempted, we give in. Maybe at 50 pounds, maybe at 100 pounds, 200 pounds. We give in to temptation, we sin. But every time, Jesus felt the full weight of temptation and yet never sinned. And that strong presence is there in your life when you face temptation.

Maybe you just think back over the course of this week, what were you tempted by? How did you respond to that temptation? Did you give in quickly? The Bible says that Jesus was born so that he might strengthen you in your moment of temptation. Do you turn to Christ when you are tempted to sin? Do you look to your merciful and gracious high priest, the one who lived a sinless life and is there to strengthen you in your moment of need? Do you believe in his spirit that he has given you to strengthen you to resist temptation? He's not only freed us from the penalty of sin in his death, but he is giving us the ability to live free from the power of sin in our lives. To live in the freedom that he has for us. And this is the final reason that Jesus was born. He was born to live a sinless life, to die a sinner's death, to come alongside, to help sinners and sufferers, to lead us as sinful people, to live in freedom.

We use the word liberation here. Jesus came to liberate us from the slavery that we experience as sinful people. He came to set us free from the power that sin has over us. And it's not just the draw or the temptation to sin, but even the fear of what sin brings. Author of Hebrews says that Jesus was born so that he might die. That through his death he might set us free from the fear that enslaved us. This is how the passage began. One last time. Verse 14 and 15, since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things. That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

He says there is a great enemy. He says he has power over death. That's not exactly true in the sense that he was not the one who was over life and death. But our enemy is the author of death. He brought sin into this world, meaning he brought death into this world. He is the one who accuses us, keeps us enslaved by our fear to sin and death, keeps us in our guilt and shame. The Bible says Jesus was born so that he might die, that he might disarm and destroy our enemy. And in doing so he might liberate us, set us free to live in the way that God called us to live. Specifically it says here, set us free from the fear of death that we so often live under.

You know sometimes it's easy for us to probably think we don't live in a fear of death. Maybe on a day to day basis we don't think about death. I think the fear of death was a little bit more palpable. People were often very afraid for their lives. I'm not saying it's wrong to take precautions and want to be safe and all those things, but I think there was a fear of death that was especially exposed in moments like that. So often we want to do whatever we can to prolong our lives, to make our lives more comfortable, to prevent death from coming. Why? Because for most people in this world, death seems so it seems to be the end and so it brings fear into our lives.

In the play Hamlet, Shakespeare said that death is like the foreign country from which no traveler has ever returned. So it makes cowards of us all. So often we feel that fear of death because it seems so final, but what we're saying in the creed is that Jesus was born so that as we'll talk about in the coming weeks, he traveled to that far country of death and he returned victorious, setting us free to live not in fear but in faith. Not under the power of sin, but in his power and his strength. This is what we are proclaiming again as we come to the table, not just that Jesus died in our place, but that he lives right now. So that we might live in freedom. As you this morning partake of the bread and of the cup. Would you remember not only Jesus's death on your behalf, but would you remember his presence with you in your moments of weakness, in your moments of temptation? Would you feel the freedom that he has provided for you to live not in fear but in faith in what. Would you experience that freedom not only as we come to the table this morning, but as you go out from here this week, live in the freedom, victory over sin. Live in the freedom of not having to fear what sin brings because we have one who is born into this world, who died in our place and who lives forevermore.