

Well, as Janet said last weekend, was a very special Easter celebration, wasn't it? Good Friday and Easter Sunday. They were great services.

And Ben's message on Sunday ended with a snippet from a famous debate that happened between Richard Dawkins and John Lennox. This is part of the debate.

Yes, well, that concluding bit rather gives the game away, doesn't it? All that stuff about science and physics and the complications of physics and things, it all, what it really comes down to is the resurrection of Jesus.

And there's a fundamental incompatibility between the sort of sophisticated scientists, which we hear part of the time from John Lennox. And it's impressive, and we are interested in the argument about multiverses and things.

And then having produced some sort of a case for a kind of deistic god, perhaps, some god, the great physicist who adjusted the laws and constants of the universe, that's all very grand and wonderful.

And then suddenly we come down to the resurrection of Jesus. It's so petty, it's so trivial, it's so local, it's so earthbound, it's so unworthy of the universe.

A somewhat shocking quote. Suddenly we come down to the resurrection of Jesus, says the atheist Richard Dawkins. It's so petty, so trivial, so local, so earthbound, so unworthy of the universe.

It got me thinking, I wonder if Richard Dawkins has ever read Hebrews. I don't know. And not the whole Bible necessarily, but just Hebrews, because if you read Hebrews, it's hard to not be struck by the overwhelming truth that Jesus is worthy.

Amen? He's worthy to be worshipped, he's worthy to be revered, and ultimately to be obeyed and to be glorified. This morning, we continue our series Christ in Scripture.

We've looked at the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and then we went back to the beginning and looked at Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and now we're back in the New Testament looking at Hebrews, James, and Jude, and

we're looking throughout the whole Bible for the glorious traces of pointers to Jesus. Here in Hebrews, again, in the New Testament, and sometimes it's not hard to see Jesus.

In our always ready green book, the study guide, there are five passages that we've used for devotions, and I hope it doesn't scare you, but the plan is, like you can see on the handout, we're going to move quickly through those five passages and ask

the question, worthy or unworthy? You might, if you have a pen or a pencil, you might like to fill in some gaps if you decided to have taken the handout.

We're not going to do that as a matter of course every week, but just this week we thought it would be helpful. Is Jesus worthy? Richard Dawkins said he is unworthy of the universe.

So we're in Hebrews this morning. Hebrews is written by an anonymous author. We don't know who wrote it, but we know that the author was known by the apostles and clearly respected.

We do know that the author was highly educated and he knew the Old Testament. It's most likely it was a he, knew the Old Testament very well. And he wrote in a very polished style of Greek, even more refined than Paul.

And he's written the Book of Hebrews, the letter, to Christians who are probably in a large city and they are predominantly Jewish people.

They really know their Old Testament well and these believers are under pressure, under pressure from multiple directions.

They are suffering persecution, social rejection, a loss of property and they're very much tempted to go back to Judaism, the familiarity of temple worship and sacrifices.

So it would seem to be pretty obvious that this is pre-70 AD when the temple was destroyed. So there's still sacrifices going on, maybe late 60s AD. The author's purpose is clear.

He is saying Jesus is better. Jesus is better than the angels, Moses, Joshua, the priesthood covenant sacrifices. So let's dive in and look at these passages and see for ourselves, is he worthy and why?

Gary read for us chapter one, one to four. So I won't read it again, but I just want to highlight some of the verses that tell us about the worth and worthiness of our Lord Jesus.

1. GOD SPEAKER

Verse one, in the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. Isn't that extraordinary?

When you see a picture of a person, would you agree that it's helpful to hear their voice? When you hear the voice of a person, you are drawn in, in a greater depth of understanding.

A lot of these texts, these verses, they just sort of roll off the tongue when you read them. But I want to sort of stop again and again and just ask the question, is that actually true? Is he the God Speaker?

Well, Scripture says yes. He spoke the words of God. In a different way to the prophets, this is God in human flesh.

If you ever wondered what God would sound like, this is God speaking in the form of a man, Jesus, who is the incarnate God. Hallelujah. This is the God Speaker.

2. UNIVERSE MAKER

And the writer to the Hebrews just throws in, Jesus is universe maker, whom he appointed heir of all things, the Bible says, and through whom also he made the universe. This is Jesus.

John chapter one says, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God. And the word was the Logos, who is Jesus.

So when we read in Genesis chapter one, that God said, let there be, and the universe was created, the creative utterance of God is the Logos. This is Jesus. Pre-incarnate Jesus at the origin of the universe.

Isn't that extraordinary? I think at this point, just two into 22 ideas, as I was writing this, I stopped myself and I said, do I believe that? Is that even possible that there could be a human being walking around to stop and think about this?

It's not that long ago. Go back in a time machine, 2,000 years. And someone says, that guy over there, yeah, right?

That guy, Jesus of Nazareth, he made the universe. That's what we're saying. He made the universe.

I would put it to you, Richard Dawkins hasn't read Hebrews. There is no lack of oomph in the description of who this Jesus is. He's certainly not petty, and he's the radiance representer.

3. RADIANCE REPRESENTER

The sun is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

We've just finished studying the Torah, and God is glorious, and he reveals himself in strange ways, sometimes pillars of fire, pillars of smoke, and doing massive, just incredible, miraculous events. God is other. God is other.

He is perfect, holy, eternal, righteous. He radiates glory.

There is an energy that comes from the living God when he turns up in some way as spirit and makes himself manifest before people that we read about in the Old Testament, and people fall to the ground.

There is an energy that is wonderful and powerful. Jesus carries that. He is the radiant's representative of the living God.

And Hebrews tells us that he didn't just make the universe, but he sustains all things.

4. ALL-THINGS SUSTAINER

He is the all things sustainer, sustaining all things by his powerful word. He holds the atoms of the universe together. Colossians 1, 17 beautifully says, In him all things hold together.

What does that mean for us today? Means he supports the weary, amen. He holds the universe together.

Again, do we believe that? If that's true, can I encourage you? He can do something about what you need held together, amen.

He holds together the weary. He establishes the groundwork for peace. He holds together nations, people, families, generations.

He breathes life into life, the all things sustainer.

5. SIN PURIFIER

And he, scripture says, is the sin purifier. After he had made, he had provided purifications for sins. We've just been in Leviticus.

We saw how humanity, because of the fall, because of sin, they are unclean. And God wants a relationship with humanity in the story. The grand story of the Bible is God making a way for human beings to come close to him.

He is the sin purifier. Leviticus taught us that life is in the blood and sin causes death. And in some way, in God's wisdom, he wanted blood to be poured out and sprinkled over people.

And in seemingly a barbaric way, it represented what was required for sin to be fixed, for sin to be purified, for the putrid to be purified. Christ came and offered his perfect blood to purify those who would believe. Hallelujah.

He's the sin purifier and he's the cosmic commander.

6. COSMIC COMMANDER

He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. When Jesus rose again from the grave, he ascended to heaven and he's in heaven now as a glorified, resurrected human being.

Such that when Stephen, the first martyr, was about to be killed, the scripture says in Acts that he looked up and said, behold, the son of man, I see him at the right hand of the father. Like literally there. This is Jesus who he knew.

He is the cosmic commander. It's been said, the gospel can be explained in three words. Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is Lord. He's not only our saviour, but our Lord, the cosmic commander, at the right hand of the father, with all power and authority. It's what Philippians 2 tells us.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place. Why? Because he did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped and held onto, but he made himself nothing in the form of a servant.

He obediently went to the cross. Because he did that, he has been given the name that is above every other name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue acknowledged that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He's the cosmic commander. Has Richard Dawkins got it right or wrong about Jesus?

That's the question. Gary read for us our second passage, which is Hebrews chapter 2, 14 to 18. The scripture says, He too shared in their humanity.

7. HUMANITY SHARER

He is the humanity sharer. When Dawkins says Jesus of Nazareth is so local, so earthbound, he's actually acknowledging one of the essential components in the Saviour of the world.

It was humanity's problem, so there needed to be a human there on the cross, but only God could fix it. So we needed this God man. We needed someone who was earthy, and that's exactly who Jesus is.

He's the humanity sharer.

8. CHAIN BREAKER

And yet he's also, we're told, the chain breaker. By his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery. Jesus breaks chains, amen.

He's the chain breaker. Jesus sets captives free. Jesus affects our everyday lives.

He affects our relationships. He affects our family legacy. Generation to generation, he is the chain breaker.

Sometimes we just need to be reminded of these truths. He can break chains. Let's go and ask him.

Beg him to break the chain that's holding you back from a life that's flourishing in the kingdom.

9. ATONEMENT PROVIDER

Scripture tells us he is the atonement provider, that he might make atonement, he being Jesus, make atonement for the sins of the people. What does atonement mean? At one meant.

Sin separates us from God and actually makes us enemies of God, but Christ dying on the cross for the sins of the world has made a way available for us to be reconnected at one meant.

He's the atonement provider and he's the temptation rescuer because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

10. TEMPTATION RESCUER

Does anyone know what it's like to be tempted? From Adam and Eve, the plight of humanity has been one where every human knows what it is to be tempted. It's a plague, it's what sin has done to this world.

Tempted to do that which gives birth to death, not life. Jesus is, we are told by the writer to the Hebrews, someone who knows what it is to be tempted, yet he did not sin. Hebrews 4, 14 to 16.

Therefore since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet he did not sin.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

11. FAITH BUILDER

Jesus is the faith builder. He's the faith builder. Because of what he has done, the writer tells us we can hold firmly to the faith we profess.

The writer knows not just the people in this city that are the first recipients of this letter, he knows that everyone who will follow in the weeks, months, centuries to come will have pressure from society, from the flesh come up against their faith. He's encouraging them, hold on to your faith because Jesus will walk with you. And he, faith comes by hearing the words of Christ and he will build your faith.

12. WEAKNESS EMPATHISER

Jesus is the weakness empathiser. Have you ever heard that as the title of Christ? The weakness empathiser.

We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weakness. We just talked about temptation. We know what it is to feel weak, but he has been there, hallelujah.

He's been there. He knows the fragility of humanity and he can find a way through for us. He is our weakness empathiser.

13. INVITATION SENDER

I love this idea. He's the invitation sender. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence.

Who can say that? Only someone who has made a way. He has made a way for us to run like children into their mother or their father, who's the CEO of the company, run into their office and just jump on their desk.

He's the invitation sender. Come, come to the living God. All who are weary and burdened and sinful and guilty and shamed, come.

There's an invitation that's been sent to come to the mercy and grace of God. Hebrews 10, 19. Can someone help me out?

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way open for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us

draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings. Having our hearts sprinkled declares us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. who promised is faithful.

14. GATE OPENER

Hebrews says he is the gate-opener by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain. That is his body.

If you studied Leviticus and the Torah, you know there's a barrier between people and God, and God was in the tabernacle and the temple, right there in the Holy of Holies, and only a high priest could go in once a year behind the curtain into his holy presence. Jesus is the gate opener, the way, the truth, and the life. He makes a way open for us to enter into the presence of our holy God.

15. CONSCIENCE CLEANSER

Hebrews says he's the conscience cleanser. We often don't talk about the conscience, but the Bible does. Having hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience.

Anyone find they have a guilty conscience? Your conscience testifies against you. Remember, Romans says if your conscience will testify that you have been righteous and also that you've been unrighteous.

That every mouth may be silenced and come under the accountability of the living God. Romans 3 talks about. We can have our conscience cleansed.

Praise God. He's the conscience cleanser. It's what he does.

16. BODY WASHER

He's the body washer. What a powerful way to describe the holistic transformation that Jesus gives us by faith in him. It's not just like a little thing, a soul, this concept of some little spiritual thing. It's us.

And anyone been baptised by immersion? Baptist Church. I'm looking for hands.

There's lots of hands out there. Come on. Not that we don't love those who weren't baptised by immersion.

When I was baptised by immersion in 1987, the overwhelming sense I remember was going under and feeling completely wet and clean. This sort of wonderful, probably a coldish time of the year.

And I went under and was like, wow, every part of me is covered by this. And it's a beautiful picture of being washed by the grace of God. It's not the holy water, but it's faith in Christ.

His blood has done enough. He washes us wholly clean. Praise God.

How good is that? The body washer, washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

He's the hope retainer.

17. HOPE RETAINER

Every generation needs fresh hope. We do, and right now, we're going through a hard time, it seems, where there's plenty of anxiety around in the world. We need hope.

Every generation has always needed hope. And the scripture tells us, you can hold on unswervingly to the hope we profess, because of the hope retainer. Because we look to the one who our hope is in, and he's worthy of our praise.

We have one last passage.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

This is another title you've not heard put on to Jesus.

18. SAINT SURROUNDED

He's the Saint Surrounded. We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. What I loved about this when I was considering it is that Jesus has done work in other people's lives.

And we don't know if this is in the heavenly realms or it's just while we journey through life. But what we do know is we are surrounded by others who can testify that Jesus is trustworthy. Amen.

He is faithful. We are surrounded by others. In fact, millions of people who have trusted Jesus and they can testify he is good and worthy of your whole life.

He's the race perfecter. Many of us know this portion as the memory verse, let us run with perseverance, the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus. Is that in the terms of a life, is that a sprint, that race?

Doesn't tend to be. It tends to be a marathon. And he can get us through Heartbreak Hill.

He gets us through the race that is marked out for us. He is sovereign and good.

19. RACE PERFECTER

He's the race perfecter. What's your race like at the moment? The race you've been called to run, Paul says, to the end.

Run, keep running till you get to the finish line. It's hard to keep running sometimes, but he's the race perfecter.

20. CROSS EMBRACER

And he's the cross embracer for the joy set before him. He endured the cross, the cross. The first time I heard that, that quote that Richard Dawkins wrote was when Ben played it on Sunday.

I had not seen that before. And I immediately thought, you don't know the Bible. And he doesn't, he's an atheist.

But 1 Corinthians says, the cross is foolishness. To those who are perishing, but to those who believe, it's the power of God for salvation. The cross is seemingly petty, seemingly insignificant, seemingly a failure, but it's not.

And Jesus knew that and he went to it with a great sense of joy because he knew what it was achieving and it was out of his love for us. He went to the cross.

This idea of sin that Jesus has died to solve and save us from started in the garden, the Garden of Eden, and it was an event that involved shame. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and immediately they felt shame. They covered up their nakedness.

The scripture tells us that Jesus reverses the effects of sin.

21. SHAME TAKER

He is the shame taker, scorning its shame. We all know what it's like to feel shame because of sin. All of that shame was heaped on the one who was hung on a tree, cursed, the Bible says. He's the shame taker.

22. HEART PROTECTOR

Finally, he's the heart protector. Consider him who endures such opposition from sin so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Why does Hebrews write that?

Because it's really likely that we do what? Lose heart. We can easily lose heart, lose the drive to keep living the right way for God and His glory, for His Son, through the power of the Spirit.

Our hearts are vulnerable, but we're called to live wholeheartedly. Amen? As we saw in Deuteronomy, the Shema, love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your inmost being.

And we're told in this passage that he is the one who can look after our weary heart, that we don't lose heart.

CONCLUSION

Richard Dawkins famously said, the resurrection of Jesus is so petty, so trivial, so local, so earthbound, so unworthy of the universe. Hebrews would disagree.

And the point of today's message is slightly a bit of fun in a way, but fun that has a lot of power behind it. Because we've just seen from a very quick analysis of five passages from the Book of Hebrews.

He is God-Speaker, Universe-Maker, Radiance-Representer, All Things Sustainer, Sin Purifier, Cosmic Commander, Humanity-Share-A-Chain-Breaker, Atonement Provider, Temptation Rescuer. He's the Faith Builder, Weakness Empathiser, Invitation Sender, and Gate-Opener. He's a Conscience Cleanser, Body Washer, Hope Retainer, Saint Surrounded, Race Perfecter. He's the Cross Embracer, the Shame-Taker, and Heart Protector.

Is he worthy or unworthy? I would say that he is clearly worthy. And if you don't know if he's worthy, there's a whole lot of saints that are surrounding you that are a cloud of witness if you want to ask them about whether he is worthy.

Rather than petty, he is poignant, really. Rather than trivial, triumphant. Rather than earthbound, he is heavenbound and unworthy.

He is worthy. And in fact, if you were to be able to be transported to heaven right now, there are countless angels singing that exactly, Revelation 5 says, Amen. Worthy is the lamb.

They are singing it now. Worthy is the lamb. Lord God, as we think of your scripture, the letter to the Hebrews, it feels like glorious truth pouring over us, like a stream or a shower just filling us with a refreshment.

I pray that would be the case for our souls. I pray for the weary in this room that have been drawn towards a question of whether you're worthy, Lord Jesus. I pray you would strengthen our feeble legs and knees.

Help us look up and see from where our hope comes from. You, Lord Jesus, are truly worthy of it all.

We thank you for your grace this morning that enables a group of failed humans in this room to come boldly before the throne of grace and give our worship. We praise you, Jesus, you're worthy of everything we can offer. Amen.