

Hebrews

Our Great High Priest

Hebrews 4:14-16

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CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION:

The author of Hebrews, up to this point, has shown us that Jesus is superior to angels, that He is superior to Moses, that He is superior to Joshua, and now He is about to expound on the fact that Jesus is superior to every high priest including Melchizedek and Aaron. This theme is going to continue clear through chapter 10 because it is so important for His readers who have not fully committed themselves to Christ to hear.

And with this message he also wants to show that the new covenant is better than the old so He shows the supremacy of Jesus over every other individual connected with the old covenant.

So why is it so important to portray Jesus as the perfect High Priest? It is because mankind is on earth and they are locked in sin and God is way out there and He is locked in holiness, and we need somebody to mediate in the middle. Right?

It has to be **a somebody** who knows God and **a somebody** who knows man and can bring them together. And that is what a priest does. Right?

And so what is it that we need? What is it that the Holy Spirit wants to present to these Jewish people? It is that Jesus is that great High priest who brings God and man together in a love union and restores their relationship with each other. And that is why throughout the whole Book of Hebrews the priesthood of Jesus is exalted.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NASB95)

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Prayer

So in our passage this morning, Who do we meet again? It is our great High priest in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the great High priest who brings God and man together. That was always the task of the high priest, to usher men into the presence of God. When the high priest would go into the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement and offer the sacrifice there, he was in effect bringing the sins of his people into God to be atoned for. He was bearing the people before God. And if one was to be a perfect High

Priest He would know God perfectly and He would know men perfectly and Jesus knew both. Jesus knew God perfectly for He was God; Jesus knew men perfectly because He was man. Therefore He becomes the absolute perfect High Priest, who brought God and man together in His own form and who continues to bring God and man together by faith. His dying on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in front of the Holy of Holies was ripped from the top to the bottom to signify that we now had direct access to God and we no longer needed earthly priests. And so the letter of Hebrews rings clear all the way through with the claim that Jesus is God's **eternal** High priest, who can bring us to God.

Now, I want you to see three features this morning that make Jesus our great High priest.

- His Perfect Priesthood.
- His Perfect Person.
- His Perfect Mediation.

I. His Perfect Priesthood.

First of all His perfect priesthood.

Hebrews 4:14 (NASB95)

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Once again we see the word "Therefore" and we have to ask the question "What is it there for?"

"Therefore" is always pointing back to what was just said. It is pointing back to those Jews who were on the fence and had not made a total commitment to Christ in their lives. That is why the writer of Hebrews is telling them that since Jesus is such a great high priest, "**let us hold fast our confession**". And then he is going to expound on what made Jesus the Son of God that perfect high priest.

The fact that He "**has passed through the heavens**" is very interesting. Before the high priest could ever go in to the Holy of Holies, he had to atone for his own sins first. Then he could go back and take care of the people. To enter into the Holy of Holies, he first had to pass through the temple, and then the tabernacle, and then enter into the Holy of Holies. Once he entered the Holy of Holies, he could not stay there beyond the Day of Atonement or he would die, because he was a sinner. He had no right to be in the Holy of Holies where God dwelt, except by the graciousness of God once a year.

Jesus, our great High Priest, did not pass through the temple or the tabernacle but through the heavens. The scriptures say that there is a third heaven, right? The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven where the clouds of heaven exist and the birds fly. The second heaven is where the stars of heaven reside. The third heaven is the abode of God.

So Jesus Christ passed through heaven number one, heaven number two, and entered into heaven number three into the very **presence** of God. But when He entered the third heaven, God did not tell Him that He had to get in and get out quickly. When He got there what did He do? He did something that no earthly priest could ever do: He sat down. In fact in the holy of holies there was only one mercy seat and you did not dare sit on that. Christ sat down because His work was finished. He had made a perfect atonement for all

sins for all time. All of the earthly sacrifices before that were but pictures of that perfect sacrifice. The ascended, resurrected Christ carried Himself past the two outer heavens into the abode of God and when He got there He sprinkled His blood on that divine eternal heavenly mercy seat.

Now you may ask "On what basis did He have the right to enter into the presence of God?" It was on the basis that He had perfected His work on earth, correct?

John 17:4 (NASB95)

⁴ I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

Can you imagine what a glorious homecoming that would have been when Jesus returned to His Father?

In Philippians it tells us how perfectly Jesus accomplished the will of His Father while He was on earth and how He was highly exalted by God.

Philippians 2:8-11 (NASB95)

⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In essence this is saying that Jesus had perfectly accomplished His priesthood work. He performed a redemptive act that brought God and man together in an **eternal** relationship. This was something that no earthly priest could ever do! The best a priest could do was atone for sins year after year after year. He also had to offer sacrifices daily for the people.

But Jesus Christ offered a perfect priesthood. Not only was He the High Priest, but He was also the perfect sacrifice. In one single act, His death on the cross, Jesus forever cleansed all the sins of them that are His. This is referred to as sanctification.

The Bible says that the remission of sin is based on the shedding of blood, and so Jesus Christ shed His own blood on our behalf that God might be satisfied with the price He paid for our sins, and we by faith in Him, have our sins covered by His blood because of that sacrifice.

It is an interesting thing that less than 40 years later the temple was destroyed and the whole nation of Israel ceased their sacrifices. If you were to ask the Jews today why they are not doing the sacrifices they would say that they are not sure. **But we know why, don't we?** It is because Jesus accomplished, in a perfect priesthood, the end to the sacrificial system. There is no need for it anymore.

The second feature that makes Jesus our great High Priest is because of His perfect person.

II. His Perfect Person.

Hebrews 4:14-15 (NASB95)

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, **Jesus the Son of God**, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus is our perfect high priest, not only because of what He accomplished for us, but also because of who He is. He is "**Jesus the Son of God**". Here together are His human name, "**Jesus**", and His divine title, "**Son of God**". These two parts of His nature are also reflected in verse 15.

As we learned earlier a perfect priest would bring God and man together. Jesus was the perfect priest because He was God and He was man. He was Jesus the Son of God. The perfect High priest would have to be a perfect combination of God and man to bring the two together. And Jesus was that one person. He allows us to have a living relationship with the God of the universe. We do not have to wander around trying to figure out what our existence is all about. We now can have direct communication with the creator of the universe and we can learn of our destiny. That is because Jesus Christ who knows everything about you and those things that concern you and at the same time knows God because He Himself **is** God. Thus He is the perfect person to bring you and God together in a living relationship. He is the perfect person to be our high priest.

This reminds me of a song entitled "He's Everything to Me". The last part of it goes like this.

'Til by faith I met Him face to face
And I felt the wonder of His grace.
Then I knew that He was more
Than just a God who didn't care
That lived away out there.
And now He walks beside me day by day.
Ever watching o'er me lest I stray.
Helping me to find that narrow way.
He's ev'rything to me.

Most people seem to think of God as being far removed from human life and concerns. Jesus was the very Son of God, yet His divinity did not prevent Him from experiencing our feelings, our emotions, our temptations, or our pain. God became man. He became Jesus, to share triumphantly the temptation and the testing and the suffering of men, in order that He might be a sympathetic and understanding High Priest.

When we are troubled or hurt or strongly tempted, we want to share our feelings and needs with someone who understands. Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. Our great High Priest is not only faithful, but is also merciful and full of grace. Christ is **merciful** in that even though we are sinners He allows us to live without the punishment that we deserve. His **grace** allows us to receive His blessings that we do not deserve. He has an unequalled capacity for sympathizing with us in every danger, trial, or situation that comes our way because He has been through it all Himself.

You may say, "Yes, He did experience temptation, anguish, and grief. But He never sinned. How could He know what it was like to be a sinner?"

ILLUSTRATION:

Let me try to illustrate it this way. If you had a chance to be operated on in a hospital, would you choose somebody who had been operated on before and knew what that was like or would you like to have a doctor who had performed many of those operations and knew what the operation was all about?

If you were on trial in court would you want to have a judge who was a criminal himself and understood what that was like or would you want to have a judge who was moral and could stand qualified to judge on what was required to be a criminal?

Jesus never sinned. And it is because He never sinned that He had to be more in tune to what sin was. He endured every form of testing that a man could endure and yet He did not sin. How severe was his testing?

Matthew 4:1-11 (NASB95)

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

⁵ Then the devil *took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and *said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command His angels concerning You'; and 'On *their* hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

⁷ Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸ Again, the devil *took Him to a very high mountain and *showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus *said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" ¹¹ Then the devil *left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.

Do you also remember when Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus how He wept and was deeply moved. And how as He was in the garden of Gethsemane as His disciples were sleeping, how He was praying so earnestly to God that He said "**Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done**"? He prayed so earnestly that His sweat, as it were, great drops of blood!

Can you imagine how hard Satan was pressing Him to back out on all of the pain and agony that He knew He was about to face? He deliberately underwent every human experience so that you could go to Him and He could say, yeah, I know, I have been there. Which leads us into His Perfect Mediation.

III. His Perfect Mediation.

Hebrews 4:16 (NASB95)

¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Unlike the earthly high priests who entered into an earthly Holy of Holies, Jesus Christ entered into heaven and sat down at the right side of God. Do you know why He is sitting there? It is because He is interceding for us, isn't He? It was not like the old covenant priests who had to come back out quickly and could not go back into God's presence for another year. Jesus stays there and He just keeps interceding for our behalf.

1 John 2:1b-2 (NASB95)

...if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.

Jesus paid the extreme price for our sins with His blood. That is what propitiation means. He stays at the right hand of the Father being an advocate for us and taking care of our sins. I want you to realize that that does not mean we do not sin anymore. It just means that we are forgiven by the grace of God because He is satisfied with the fact that Christ paid the penalty for all who believe.

The Holy Spirit exhorts these Hebrews who have only an intellectual knowledge of the Good News of Christ to come all the way to the throne of grace and obtain salvation. What throne is it? It is the throne of God. It used to be a throne of judgment, but when Jesus sprinkled His blood there He turned it into a throne of grace. This is just like when the high priest went into the holy of holies he sprinkled the blood there and he turned the judgment seat into a mercy seat. So when Jesus entered into heaven He turned God's judgment throne into a throne of mercy and grace.

That is a perfect mediator. Without Him we will receive the justice that we deserve.

Verse 18 ends with this: " **find grace to help in time of need.**" We need to come boldly all the way in to God's throne because Jesus has turned that throne of judgment into a throne of grace and mercy. Do not sit on the fence. Come all the way in and receive grace and mercy when you need it before it is too late and your heart becomes hardened and God's today for you is over.

CONCLUSION:

Since His priesthood is perfect and His person is perfect and His mediation is perfect, He is therefore our great High priest and there is none like Him.

Therefore do not think that you can, by your profession of faith in Christ and your religious activity, fool God into believing that you are for real when you are not. That is impossible. Everything is open and naked before him. It is as if our physical activities and the things of our heart are all portrayed on a video screen before God. He is able to see everything that everyone from the beginning of time has done or thought.

Therefore consider what a High priest we have! He sympathizes and He saves, what else could we ever ask for? The period of opportunity is called today. God desires that all will repent and obey His commands. **We must act Immediately!** Today does not last forever. It is appointed for man **once** to die. And we do not know when that will be. It could end for one of us tonight. Jesus may come tonight. Your heart may become hard tonight to the point that you cannot turn back. Then your today will become tomorrow and the promise will end for you, and God's rest will be lost forever.

What A Day That Will Be.