

Our Great High Priest

Hebrews 4:14-16

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

INTRODUCTION:

- **Review**
 - **Paul’s Objective in writing to the Hebrews**
 - **The Theme—“Move Forward For Christ”**
 - **Paul is writing to 3 different audiences of Jews**
 - **The Saved, but Intimidated**
 - **The Shallow, but Intellectually Convinced**
 - **The Simple, but Unsaved**
 - **Paul is writing to all 3 to call them to move forward for Christ**

- **The Saved—be made confident to live for Him**
- **The Shallow—be warned to be saved**
- **The Simple—be convinced to be saved**

- **Paul’s Argument for all 3 is “the Superiority of Christ”**

- **“Better” and “New” and “More Perfect”**

- **Jesus is better than the Old Covenant**
- **Jesus is better than the Old Priesthood**
- **Jesus is better than Moses**
- **Jesus is better than the Old life**

- **That is NOT to say that the Old Testament (Covenant) was wrong**

- **It was ordained by God**
- **It was instituted by God**
- **But it was never able to make a person right with God**

Hebrews 10:1-4—“*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. 2 For then*

would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

- **God’s design for the Old Covenant was to prepare His people for the New Covenant—Christ**
 - **In the Sacrifices they would see Christ’s sacrifice**
 - **In the priesthood they would see Christ’s priesthood**
 - **In the Temple they would see the Heavenly Temple**
 - **In all the observances (holidays) they would see bits and pieces of the person and work of Christ**
 - **So that when Jesus would come—they would know Him for Who He is**
- **Arguments that Paul has given for Christ’s superiority**
 - **Greater than the prophets**
 - **Greater than the angels**

- **Greater than Moses**

- **Paul’s Pleadings For Genuine Faith**

- **He has warned them to not neglect so great salvation**
- **He has warned them not to harden their hearts—like ancient Israel did in the wilderness**
- **He has warned them of missing out in God’s rest**
- **He has warned them of God’s sifting judgment upon them**

- **Holding Fast Our Profession**

- **In our passage—Paul continues to plead for them to have genuine faith—“*let us hold fast our profession*”**
 - **“I am pleading for you to have faith that will abide”**
 - **“I am pleading for you to be really saved—and not just intellectually convinced”**
 - **“I am pleading that your faith would be real enough to survive anything”**
- **His pleading for them at this point shifts its emphasis**

- **Before he was pleading with them from the perspective of God’s sifting judgment**
- **Now he is pleading for them from the perspective of missing out in God’s goodness to them**

NOTE: It is good for believers to warn the lost of their impending judgment that awaits them if they will not be saved. At the same time it is good for believers to lay out the blessings of God that will be missed if a person chooses not to be saved.

That is what Paul is doing.

- **Paul’s argument for Jesus being greater than the High Priest**
- **He calls Him our GREAT HIGH PRIEST**
- **Background on the High Priest**
 - **When God delivered Israel out of her 400 year Egyptian bondage—He set up a system in which Israel could worship Him**
 - **They were to be HIS PEOPLE and He was to be THEIR GOD**
 - **He Gave Moses the plans to build a structure in which they could meet with their God—Tabernacle**

- **But God would be withdrawn from them behind 2 veils within this tabernacle**
 - **1st veil separated all of Israel away from “the Holy Place”**
 - **2nd separated “the Holy Place” from “the Most Holy Place”**
 - **It was within “the Most Holy Place” that God would reside**
 - **No one was allowed to go in their except for one person—the High Priest**
 - **The High Priest could only go in their once a year—On the Day of Atonement—for a short time**
- **There was only one person who could fit into the role of the high priest**
 - **Of the tribe of Levi**
 - **In the line of Aaron**
 - **Whom the Lord singled out to be high priest**
- **Paul’s argument is that Jesus is greater than that high priest**
- **His purpose is—if you choose not to be saved—you miss out in the blessings that the “Great High Priest” has to offer you**
 - **And His blessings far outweigh the blessings of the high priest of Israel**

CIT: How Does Jesus Fit as Our Great High Priest?

I. He is Our Great High Priest Because of His Perfect Priesthood (vs. 14)

—“*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*”

A. Jesus has passed into the Heavens

1. Israel’s high priestly work

a. Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)
the most important holiday of the year for Israel

i. Passover was important for Israel—but not near as important as Yom Kippur

ii. Yom Kippur was the holiday that occurred in the 7th month of the Jewish calendar (Tishri) in which the high priest of Israel would make atonement for the sins of the nation that previous year

iii. Atonement—covering—Israel’s sins would be covered for another year

iv. Everything rode on the back of the high priest

b. The importance of the high priest being ceremonially clean

i. Because there was only one high priest it was important that on Yom Kippur that he be ceremonially clean

ii. To guard against uncleanness—he would leave his home a week before—and lodge in the high priest quarters

iii. That week he would be sprinkled twice with the ashes of a red heifer to circumvent the possibility that he became unclean

iv. There would also be a substitute for the high priest—in the event he were to become ceremonially unclean, or was to die

c. During the week before Yom Kippur the high priest would alone, conduct all the sacrifices of the Temple

i. Sprinkling of blood with his thumb and forefinger

ii. Burning of incense

iii. Lighting the golden candlestick

iv. Rehearsing his movements throughout the Temple

v. There could be absolutely no mistakes on that Day

d. The consequences for mistakes on Yom Kippur

- i.** Monumental Catastrophe
- ii.** Humiliation for the nation
- iii.** Israel's sacrifices would be disqualified
- iv.** The sins of the people would remain uncovered
- v.** The high priest could be killed—by God

e. Procedure of that day

i. The Morning Service

- At dawn the high priest was required to totally immerse himself in a special golden bath near the court of the priests
- This was carried out a special linen curtain which revealed the shadow of his movement to the public view
- Everyone could see that no changes were made to the required procedures
- After his ceremonial bath—the high priest would put on his garments prescribed by the Law of God

- He would put on his majestic purple robe that was hemmed with tiny golden bells
- On top of his robe he wore a golden breastplate which was studded with 12 precious stones—that were a symbol of the 12 tribes of Israel
- This was a reminder to him that he was a representative of Israel to God

- After dressing, the high priest washed his hands and feet to perform the regular daily service
- Following the morning service the high priest would return to his bath chamber to change into his white linen garments for Yom Kippur
 - Five times that day he would change clothing
 - Five times he would ceremonially bath

ii. The Afternoon Service—the main part of Yom Kippur

- It would begin with the high priest's confession of sins
 - A young bull would be brought into the temple by one of the priests
 - The high priest would take that bull—lay his hands upon his head—and confess his sins
 - This procedure indicated that this bull would be the sin offering of the high priest
- The two goats
 - After his confession the high priest would be escorted by 2 priests over to the eastern side of the bronze altar
 - There at the altar would be two goats that were identical in size, shape and color

- The high priest would cast lots to determine which goat would be made the “sin offering” (for the people of Israel) and which would be the “scapegoat”

- Sin offering for the priesthood
 - The high priest would then return to the young bull (that he had pronounced his sins upon) and would slaughter it
 - The blood of that bull would be collected in a golden bowl and would be handed to a nearby priest who job was to stir the blood so that it would not congeal
- Burning the incense
 - The high priest would then head to the brazen altar which

stood outside the temple

- He would take live coals from off the altar and proceed to carry them into the temple
- On his way into the temple he would also be given two handfuls of incense
- The high priest would then enter inside the first veil—into the holy place—where was the golden candlestick, the table of showbread, and the golden altar
- He would come then to the second veil—which separated the holy place from the most holy place
- There inside the most holy place (the place where God dwelled) (the Ark of the Covenant)—the high priest would pour his incense upon the live coal—and allow the

smoke to fill up the room

- Then he would exit the temple

- Sprinkling of Blood

- The high priest would take the bowl of the bull's blood and return into the Most holy place and sprinkle the blood the blood 7 times upon the Mercy Seat
- Then the priest would again exit the Temple to go to the goats
- There he would slaughter the goat—that had been determined to be the sin offering
- He collected the blood of the goat in a golden bowl and again entered into the Temple (most holy place)
- There he would sprinkle the blood of the goat upon the mercy seat 7 times

- After this he would exit the temple for the last time—and take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it outside of the veil of the temple (he would repeat with the blood of the goat)
- The scapegoat
 - Attention of the people would then turn to the remaining goat
 - The high priest would go to that goat and lay his hands upon that goat and confess the sins of the people upon that goat
 - Then the goat would be led into the wilderness—some 10 miles outside of camp—and let go never to return to Israel
 - The people would wait for the return of the man—to say that

the goat had been released

- The high priest would then finish the day by reading and quoting the OT passages that concerned Yom Kippur—testifying that all had been accomplished

f. The high priest had a very high standing among the people because of what he would do that day for the people

i. Up until the time of the Kings of Israel—the high priest was the leader of the nation of Israel

ii. During the time of the Kings—the high priest balanced out the power of the King

2. Jesus' high priestly work—*“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”*

a. Jesus is greater than the high priest ever was

- b. His work was greater than the high priest's work ever was
- c. His atonement work did not exist in a temple made with hands
- d. His atonement work was made in heaven

- i. The high priest would enter into a veil that allowed him access into the most holy place

- ii. Jesus—our great high priest—entered into the heavens—that allowed Him access into the (real) most holy place—the throne of God—and offered (not the blood of bulls and goats) but his own blood—that he shed on the cross

- iii. And there atonement was made once and for all

- e. If the high priest received so much honor for what he did (that could never take away sins)—how much more should Jesus!

B. The Title of Our Great High Priest—“*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God*”

1. He is Man

- a. Jesus is his earthly name
- b. It was given to him at his birth

2. He is God

- a. He is the Son of God—which means God in flesh
- b. The only way man's sin could be accurately dealt with is that One Who is both MAN and GOD make atonement for him

APPLICATION: Paul's point to the Jews is that if they take Jesus lightly—they miss out in the atonement that only he can give. The high priest of Israel could never really do that. Only Jesus, the Son of God—who entered into the heavens with his own blood.

II. He is Our Great High Priest Because of His Perfect Person (vs. 15)—“*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*”

ILLUSTRATION:

Star Trek: Spock (the Vulcan) and Captain Kirk were discussing the nature of human beings in comparison to the Vulcans.

Spock makes the note that human beings get comfort from each other when others have gone through the same things that they are going through.

A. The Inability of the Israel's High Priest

1. The High Priest of Israel could not adequately Sympathize with his people

a. He was limited

i. He could not minister to all Israel—though he ministered *for* all Israel

ii. He was a man with limitations

- Limited in time
- Limited in ability
- Limited in location
- Limited in holiness

iii. He could not know all the temptations of men at the level that men know temptation

- He could not have experienced all the temptations of mankind

b. He was separated

i. His very position forced him to be withdrawn from his people

ii. He could easily become ceremonially unclean and unusable to serve God in the manner in which he was required

B. The Ability of Jesus the High Priest—“*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*”

1. Jesus was touched with all our feelings of infirmities

a. He knows how mankind feels

i. He knows what it feels like to be loved and to be hated

ii. He knows what it feels like to be concerned

iii. He knows what it is like to be disappointed, grieved, frustrated

b. He knows our feelings on an infinite level

i. He is not limited in knowing

ii. He knows our feelings to the infinite degree

2. Jesus was tempted in all points of sin

a. Three different points of sin

i. Lust of the flesh

- Cravings of the flesh that are forbidden by God

ii. Lust of the eyes

- The perverse use of the eyes
- Leads to discontent, covetousness, idolatry

iii. Pride of life

- Arguably the reason for all sin
- The desire to be in control and to throw off the restraints of God
- It is to elevate self above God

b. Jesus understood sin's temptation at an infinite level as well

i. Jesus was tempted far above what any man was/will be tempted in every point of temptation

ii. Jesus has felt every infirmity of man at a greater level than any man will ever feel

c. Explanation of Jesus' ability to sympathize infinitely

i. Men have limitations to everything

- Pain—men are limited in their experience of pain
 - Once the level of pain has reached the limit—the body will develop a temporary numbness, or faint, or go into shock
 - The human body has a way of shutting off the pain so that it does not overwhelm the person
 - Man's pain level is limited

- Temptation—men are limited in their experience of temptation
 - God keeps man from being tempted above his ability to resist

I Corinthians 10:13—*“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, **who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.**”*

- If man was tempted above his ability to

resist—he would succumb to the temptation

ii. Jesus is unlimited in strength

- So that when He bore our feelings—he bore them to a level in which we will never comprehend
- When he born the temptation of sin—he bore them at a level we could never comprehend

3. Jesus was without sin

4. No high priest of Israel could ever sympathize with man like the Great High Priest—Jesus Christ

APPLICATION: Paul’s point: if we neglect Christ, not only do we fall short of the atonement that he alone provides, but we fall short of his ability to sympathize with us in our everyday life.

III. He is Our Great High Priest Because of His Perfect Provision (vs. 16)—“*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*”

A. Come Boldly to the Throne

1. The High Priest of Israel could not be boldly approached

- a.** He was distanced from the people
- b.** He was forced to be separate from the people

2. Many rulers cannot be boldly approached unto for anything

3. But Jesus sits on a throne of Grace

- a.** This throne invites all men and women to come boldly (expectantly)
- b.** Grace is God’s favor toward man

NOTE: This throne is the same throne that is also a throne of judgment to those who refuse to come.

But it has been made into a throne of Grace to those who see their need for atonement and sympathy from Christ.

B. Obtain Mercy and Grace

- 1.** Mercy is forgiveness
- 2.** Grace is salvation

C. The Time of Need is Now

CONCLUSION: