
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews

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Hebrews 4:14-16: *Jesus our High Priest!*

General idea: We have a great High Priest; we do not need anyone to mediate between God and us as Christ is God and we can go directly to Him. We cannot claim our own salvation, work for it, inherit it, or earn it in any way or fashion. Rather, it is a gift purchased through extreme suffering by our Lord Jesus Christ, the One true God who cares for us and intercedes on our behalf. He gives us mercy and undeserved redemption. Thus, we can trust and cling to Him with our trust and obedience, for He cares for and hears us. He fully understands who we are, our situation, opportunities, and our weakness in temptations, as He faced them for us too. Yet, He did not sin; so since we do, we must hold fast to Him even more and receive His grace and mercy because we need it! As our High Priest, Jesus Christ is fully God and chosen by God; He is no mere man who is a go-between, as in the days of Aaron and the high priests. Prior to the coming of our Lord, those in the spiritual leadership of Israel were chosen by God and man. These priests, who took sacrifices to appease God and His wrath, were the mediators between people and the Holiness of God.

Contexts and Background:

This passage is a reminder that the chapter divisions are not inspired; here we have a chapter cut off in mid-thought. Now the object of this faithful trust is Christ, and He reveals even more of Himself. We are shown that we are in desperate need for forgiveness and a Savior to give us mercy and grace. So Christ willingly participates in our humanity without compromise and sin and becomes the High Priest to not only represent us, but also to pay our debt of sin. He sees our utter exposure before God and covers us by His suffering atonement. The benefit is that He can help us not just in salvation but also in our daily life of weakness, actions, and thought (Psalm 110:4; mark 12:35-37).

Commentary; Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *A great high priest.* A title and name for Jesus, referring to the reason why Christ became incarnate (fully man and fully God, born into this earth) and died for us. This also stresses, to the Jews, Christ's superiority over Aaron and the Levitical priesthood. He had to become one of us and pay the price for our sins by His atoning sacrifice. Jesus, as the High Priest, became His own offering, our "substitute" and the only payment that could appease a just God's wrath for our sin, a payment by his grace and mercy (Lev. 16:20-22; 17:11; 1 Sam. 2:25; Heb. 2:17-18; 3:1-6; 5:2). In theology, this means God is merciful as the "expiatory sacrifice" for our sins. We are sinners before a just and angry God, but Christ the "mediator" paid

that penalty, broke the curse of sin, and thus appeased the wrath of God (Luke 18:13; Rom. 2:23-26; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:5).

- *Son of God.* This is a declaration that Jesus is the eternal God, effectually and in reality, and has finished His work as Messiah and as our High Priest by means of His suffering atonement and resurrection. This saying is often defined by the Church as a title for Jesus Humanity and Divinity on how He identified with us and paid for our sins. Jesus is God's Son; yet, He is God, and He is distinguished from the Father—One God, two distinctions or Persons, *three* including the Holy Spirit, the Trinity. The end result is through Christ we have redemption, life, and purpose. Christ is the eternal Son and He has always been the Son of God (1 Thess. 1:10; 1 John 1:7; 4:15; 5:5). (For more, see Hebrews 1:5-14 study)
- *Gone through/passed through the heavens.* Means a place of worship and eternal rest, and an image of the Jewish High priest passing in front of the people to go into the Temple, they went through the outer court, then the Temple's main building to go into the Temple's inner sanctum, the "Holy of Holies (the earthy facsimile of heaven)," once a year on the Day of Atonement. Here, it is mainly using this imagery for referring to Christ being raised from the dead, ascending into heaven, and who now sits at God's right hand as He eternally ministers to the universe and serves as our High Priest performing the final perfect eternal and perpetual sacrifice accomplishing humanities redemption (Lev. 16:15-17, Acts 1:9-11; 2 Cor. 12:2-4; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:5; Heb. 7:26; 8:1-5; 9:11, 24; 1 Pet. 1:4; Rev. 4:1-11).
- *Hold firmly to the faith/hold fast our confession.* Means to hold onto your faith with confidence and passion and not be afraid to profess and maintain it. This is all about our reverence and trust in Christ; you can trust Him in your current situation, coming dire circumstances, or in overcoming your past hurts. This is a confession of faith, a response you are called to make as you hear the call of God. This was a warning to the original hearers of the Epistle to be careful and not let their faith slip by. Everyone is totally exposed to God; He knows your sins and weaknesses and yet is merciful. Thus you can trust Him and confess to Him and live a life of faith in and for Him (Heb. 2:1, 17-18; 3:1-6, 14; 4:11-13; 10:23).
- *Sympathize with our weaknesses.* Means He feels our pain, identifies with us and knows our realities and even suffers with us. He has a far greater capacity to know and identify with us that we can imagine. Jesus is the One who saves us from God's wrath, which arose because of our sin. We are not worthy of salvation from a Holy and pure God. Thus, Jesus came to appease God's wrath, to take our punishment, our place of torment. This also means God empathizes with us, sees our sins and temptations, and has mercy on us as His life on earth allowed Him to identify with us.
- *Who has been tempted in every way/respect.* This in theology is called the "Sinlessness of Jesus." This simply means that Jesus was perfect and totally sinless and perfectly obedient and did this on our behalf too (John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb.

4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22-25; 1 John 3:5). This was necessary to please God, so He took our place by living a perfect life in our behalf; this is called “propitiation” (Rom. 8:7). All have sinned, and we are separated from God because of sin (Rom. 3:23; 8:7). Only Christ, who pleased God for us, was sinless. Because Jesus is sinless and knows all about the power and effect of temptation; He was able to resist and overcome them. He is able to help us overcome what we have been through or whatever we may face. He took on and experienced every temptation we could ever encounter and remained clean and sinless, paying that sin atonement before God on our behalf. Thus He knows what we face, yet His sympathy enables Him to still have mercy that we are not willing or able to venture in this life sin free (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 2:18).

- *Approach/draw near...with confidence.* This means we have clear, uninhibited access to God. We do not need to go to an altar or a priest, since Christ fills that role Himself. In ancient Israel, only the High Priest had access to God personally and only once a year after an extensive purification ritual; now we can go before Him anytime and anywhere. The purpose of drawing near is to provide an offering of thanksgiving; the point to us is, *are we filled with gratitude for who and what He has done* (Matt. 27:51; Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:13-22; Heb. 7:19; 10:19-22; 12:28; 3:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:4-10)?
- *Throne of grace* means the presence of God and His sovereignty and that we can come to Him as He dispenses His grace at any time because of His benevolence (Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 4:15; 9:8; 12:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:7). This refers to the Ark of the Covenant, which was once unapproachable, but now through Christ, we can approach God. This is a theme of God’s judgment to those who refuse to accept His grace and a great comfort for those who are His. It is both a terror and a wonder, and even in the darkest times of our human temptations and sins, He is there with His grace and sympathy with His hand reaching out to take us through it (2 Sam. 6:2; Psalm 22:3; 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16; Jer. 3:16-17; 1 John 1:9-2:2; Rev. 20:11-15).
- *Receive mercy.* Christ is our Advocate who forgives us! This shows our need for forgiveness and a Savior and His attribute of mercy to give it to us willingly, even though we are undeserving. In context, this also means Christ gives us empowerment and support to avoid and overcome temptations.

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Temptations are something we cannot escape or avoid, they are all around us and get worse as time goes on because our culture gets more and more decadent. Yet, Jesus knows our reality and in this, we are called to have strong faith and reverence for Christ. This reverence is practical, because what we get is vastly more than what we think we are leaving behind. Jesus will save us, as in guide us through them; He will lead us out and even forgive us. He will give us the faith and resources to keep away from temptations and overcome past hurts and failings, but we must allow Him to do so! The key is our focus! We have a Great High Priest who intercedes for us, who loves,

cares, and is more than kind to us, *to you!* See His mercy and compassion! See His work and go to Him with confidence of faith, leaving behind what hurts and tempts you.

Are your eyes upon Christ as Lord? Do you have hurts or ideas, trends or personal agendas that are in His way? What about your trials and circumstances? Do they cloud you from Him and your faith and trust in what He can do? Be faithful and look to Him. Do not fear what lies ahead. Rather, have confidence in God. It is all about trust in His plan and care as you belong to Christ. Allow Christ to be formed in you. Do not harden your heart by past hurt, experiences, failed expectations, or being fearful of mistreatment by others. Rather, trust and embrace Christ as Lord. You can come to Christ at anytime, in need and in jubilation. He is the God who is here, the God who cares and the One Who gives you the help you need and the grace when you fall (Psalm 95:6-7; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:19; James 1:14; Heb, 2:18; 1 John 3:5).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. When did you make a really big mistake, and someone forgave you? How did you feel? Have you ever done that to someone else—forgiven them when they did not deserve it?
2. What does it mean for your faith that you have clear, uninhibited access to the presence of God and can go directly to Him at anytime?
3. How does this passage show you that you must trust and cling to Him with your faith and obedience? How does the fact that Christ cares and He hears you come into play? How does this fuel your spiritual passion?
4. What does it mean to you in times of strained faith or past harm or temptations or trials that Jesus fully understands who you are, your situation, opportunities, and weakness? What about the fact He too faced temptations and extreme trials?

5. What does it mean that Jesus did not sin, and we do? Why must we adhere to Him even more and receive His grace and mercy?
6. How have you been shown that you need forgiveness and a Savior? How can your church communicate forgiveness better?
7. How can you communicate to others Christ's attribute of mercy that He gives it to us willingly even though we are undeserving?
8. Have you ever needed a warning to be careful not to let your faith slip by? How did that warning help? What kind of warning would be good or effective to someone in stress or headed for trouble?
9. How are our passion and conviction of who Christ is and has done? How can this reach you more deeply?
10. How are you encouraged that Jesus knows your sins and weaknesses and yet is merciful? What can you do to show these fruits to others and encourage them to confess to Him and live a life of faith in and for Him?
11. What do you need to do to keep your focus on Christ in the midst of your hurts, enticements, and difficulties?
12. How can Jesus lead you out of what has you bound? How can you receive His forgiveness? What is the key? How can you model this to others? How can your church teach and model this?