

CHRIST, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST: THE SYMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST HEBREWS 04:14–16

Introduction

Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is the Supreme High Priest. This glorious truth begins a new discussion on the greatness and supremacy of Jesus Christ. He is the great High Priest, by far the greatest High Priest who has ever stood between God and man. The implication is unbelievable: as the great High Priest, He is able to sympathize — to actually feel every experience that we experience — no matter how painful. Jesus Christ not only feels for us. He feels right along with us. He is our great and sympathetic High Priest — the One who meets our every need and carries us through all the sufferings of this life. (Note: this passage and the next passage deal with the same subject, the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are split into two parts because of their length. However, a person may wish to combine them and make them one message or lesson and study.)

- I. The identification of the great High Priest (v. 14).
- II. The significance for man (vv. 15-16).

I. *Hebrews 04:14 Jesus Christ, The Great High Priest*

The identity of the great High Priest. Note the word great. It is being used to set Jesus Christ apart from all other High Priests. Aaron, who was the first High Priest, was considered by the Jews to be the greatest of the High Priests. But this passage is declaring that Jesus Christ was the greatest High Priest. Two reasons are given.

1. Jesus Christ has “gone through the heavens.” He is before the very throne of God; He is in the very presence of God Himself. An earthly High Priest ministered or *went into* the most holy place of the earthly temple. But Christ *went into* or ascended into heaven and ministers in heaven. He ministers in the very presence of God Himself. Therefore, He is greater by far than any earthly High Priest including Aaron.
2. Jesus Christ is “*Jesus* the Son of God.” His earthly name *Jesus* speaks of His human nature and sympathy for man. Jesus was a man just like all other High Priests. He suffered all the trials and temptations that other men and High Priests suffer; therefore, He can *sympathize* with all those who come to Him as their High Priest.

Heb 2:17 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

But note: Jesus Christ was also “the Son of God.” This was His heavenly name. He was divine, the very Son of God Himself who came to earth to deliver and save men from sin, death and condemnation. He came to save us completely (Heb. 7:25) —

to carry us before the very throne of God. He came to make it possible for us to live in the very presence of God Himself. How can He do this? Because He is the Son of God. As the Son of God He has the power to save us completely — to make us acceptable to God. No other priest can do this. Therefore, Jesus Christ is greater than all other priests. Jesus Christ alone is the great High Priest.

Rom 1:3-4 *Regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Col 2:9 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*

Heb 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

Heb 8:1 *The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.*

The point is this: let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. Jesus Christ alone can save us. He alone has gone into heaven. If we wish to go into heaven, we must confess Christ and hold firmly to the faith we profess. We have to be genuine; we have to hold firmly if we are to enter heaven and live with God.

Heb 3:6 *But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.*

Heb 10:23 *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

Rev 3:3 *Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.*

Rev 3:11 *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

II. **Hebrews 04:15–16 Significance of Jesus' High Priesthood**

The significance of Jesus' High Priesthood for man is fivefold.

1. We have a High Priest who feels with us. The word “sympathize” (sunpathesai) means to feel and suffer with. It means to sympathize and feel with a person to the point that the hurt and pain are actually felt within one's own heart. The idea is that Jesus Christ actually suffers when we suffer. He knows and suffers right along with us when we...

- become sick
- lose a loved one
- suffer trials

- face temptations
- have an accident
- lack clothes
- lack purpose
- fall into sin
- are hungry
- sense emptiness
- face death
- lack money
- feel lonely
- suffer persecution
- are stricken with suffering

Name the trial or pain, temptation or suffering — name the infirmity or weakness — name any and all human experiences — Jesus Christ actually sympathizes and feels with us. He actually suffers and hurts right along with us. We could ask for no greater Saviour; we could crave no greater Intercessor; we could long for no greater High Priest to stand before God *for us*. Jesus Christ is our *great High Priest*. He is our representative before God. He is the One who carries on the glorious ministry and intercession for us, and He “sympathizes with our weaknesses” — with all of our human weaknesses and frailties.

John 14:1, 18 *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

John 14:21 *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”*

Psa 103:13 *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.*

Heb 4:14 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.*

Isa 63:9 *In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

2. We have a High Priest who was tempted in every way just like we are, yet He was without sin. We must remember this glorious truth and never forget it, for it is the very basis of man’s salvation. No man will ever be saved unless Jesus Christ did live a sinless life. Why? Because some man has to live a sinless life and secure the ideal and perfect righteousness that covers sinful men. Apart from Christ there is no ideal righteousness that can stand before God and be acceptable to God. And only perfection, only the ideal, can stand before God. Therefore if Christ has not secured the ideal and perfect righteousness for us, then there is no righteousness to cover us — no righteousness in which we can believe and place ourselves — no righteousness to make us acceptable to God.

But this is the glorious gospel, and it is the point of this verse: Jesus Christ was sinless. He was tempted in every way just like we are, but He never sinned. He went

through every experience and every trial and temptation that we go through. And He bore them all, never sinning. William Barclay points out that Christ even bore more than what we ever have to bear — much more:

“He is like us in all things — except that He emerged from it all completely sinless. ... The fact that Jesus was without sin necessarily means that He knew depths and tensions and assaults of temptation which we never know and never can know. So far from His battle being easier it was immeasurably harder. Why? For this reason — we fall to temptation long before the tempter has put out the whole of his power. We are easily vanquished; we never know temptation at its fiercest and its most terrible, because we fall long before that stage is reached. But Jesus was tempted as we are — and far beyond what we are. For in His case the tempter put everything he possessed into the assault, and Jesus withstood it. Think of it in terms of pain. There is a degree of pain which the human frame can stand — and then when that degree is reached a person faints and loses consciousness; he has reached his limit. There are agonies of pain he does not know, because there came collapse. It is so with temptation. We collapse before temptation; but Jesus went to our stage of temptation and far beyond it and still did not collapse. It is true to say that He was tempted in all things as we are; but it is also true to say that never was man tempted as He was” (The Letter to the Hebrews, p. 38).

John 8:46 *“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?”*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

Heb 7:26 *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

Heb 9:14 *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

1 Pet 1:19 *But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 Pet 2:22 *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

1 John 3:5 *But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

3. We can call upon God — boldly. But note two things.
 - a. God is sitting upon a throne, the seat of authority, power, honour, glory, respect and reverence. Therefore, we are to approach Him in respect and reverence.
 - b. God is sitting upon the “throne of grace.” Grace means that God is love, and He longs to shower His love and blessings upon man. But how could God, who sits upon the majestic and glorious throne of the universe, be so gracious to man? How could God care for man, care for a creature who is such a small part of so vast a universe? Care for a creature who has cursed, denied, ignored and rebelled against the Sovereign Lord of the universe? Because of Christ Jesus. Christ is there in the throne room of God, and He is seated there as the Saviour of the world, as the Ideal and Perfect Man who sacrificed His life for the sins of the world. He is there pleading our case before God. And the one thing God does is listen to His Son. Whatever Jesus asks, the Father does. Jesus Christ is our Representative, our Intercessor, our great High Priest before God’s throne. He has turned the throne of God from a throne of judgment into a throne of grace. Therefore, “let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence.” We have the right, so let us do it. Let us approach God through Jesus Christ, and God will do whatever we ask through Christ. God’s throne is now a throne of grace; it is now opened up for any person to approach, no matter how bad and terrible a life he has lived. God will receive him through Christ Jesus.

***Eph 1:7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.*

***Eph 3:11-12** According to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

***Heb 4:16** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

***Heb 10:19-22** Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened 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 in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

***1 John 4:17** In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.*

4. We can now obtain the mercy of God. We need God to have mercy upon us because we have sinned against Him. We have done everything imaginable against God...
 - ignored Him
 - rejected Him
 - neglected Him
 - denied Him
 - cursed Him
 - disobeyed Him
 - rebelled against Him

God will forgive our sins; He will have mercy upon us. But we must come to the throne of grace and ask for mercy. We must acknowledge that mercy comes only through Christ Jesus, the great High Priest. He and He alone knows our need for mercy; He and He alone bore our sins and paid our penalty and condemnation. He and He alone can represent us before God.

***Eph 2:4-10** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

***Titus 3:5** He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

***Lam 3:12** He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows.*

***Micah 7:18** Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.*

5. We can now find grace to help in time of need. What a glorious promise! Help is now available to carry us through life. No matter what confronts us — trial, trouble, tribulation, temptation — help is available, the very help of God Himself. God will pour out His marvellous grace upon us — all of His strength and blessings. God’s grace will strengthen us to walk right through the trial and trouble. His grace will help us conquer and triumph over all circumstances and situations. But remember why God is able to do this: because Jesus Christ has suffered the same experience. He has been upon earth Himself, suffering through the very same trial. Therefore, He knows how to walk through and conquer the trial and suffering. All we have to do is come with confidence before *the throne of grace* and ask Him.

***1 Cor 1:4-5** I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way — in all your speaking and in all your knowledge.*

***1 Cor 10:13** No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

***2 Cor 9:8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

2 Cor 12: 9 *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.*

Eph 2:7 *In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Phil 4:13 *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Phil 4:19 *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” ■*