

"Our Great High Priest"

Part 1

Hebrews 4:14-8:5

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study in the book of Hebrews we have come to chapter 4:14. With the entrance into this verse we are now embarking into a new section of the book in which the writer is going to consider the "Position" of our Lord as our Great High Priest. Before we step into this section there are some things we need to consider.

In the Old Testament under the old Covenant a man could not be both a king and a priest. He could be a prophet and king or he could be a prophet and a priest but he could not be a king and a priest. Let me show you what John Phillips says concerning this:

"No man in Israel could be both king and priest, for the priesthood was to be a counterforce in the nation to offset abuse of power by a monarchy that, in itself, existed to guard the purity of Israel's religious codes. Often, however, both kings and priests were failures, at which times prophets surfaced. A prophet could be a king, a priest, or one of the common people. His work was to speak with authority from God regardless of opposition."

In the Old Testament a man had to be a descendant of Aaron in order to qualify to be a priest. Now under the New Covenant in the New Testament the priesthood is centered in Jesus Christ. The priesthood of the Old Testament was a shadow of something better that was to come. That Something better was now here and His name was Jesus Christ. His Priesthood was and is far superior to that of the Old Covenant. The old has been done away with for now the Fulfillment of the shadow has arrived. So in the mind of the Hebrew believers whom the writer was addressing there would have been the question, "How does Jesus qualify to be a High Priest when He is of the tribe of Judah and not the tribe of Levi?" This is exactly why we have such a long section of Scripture focusing upon Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest. The writer will be very gentle in the way he presents the Priesthood of Jesus Christ so as not to offend his Hebrew readers.

Now as I had said in the Old Testament there were prophets, priests and kings and a king could not be a priest and a priest could not be a king. But Jesus was all 3. He was Prophet, Priest and King.

When He came to this earth and lived for 33 years He was a Prophet. You see a prophet in the Old Testament was God's spokesman meaning he came to represent God to man. That is exactly what Jesus did when He came to the earth.

John 17:1-3

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

² *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

³ *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

I John 5:20

²⁰ *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

These are just 2 verses but we can see that Jesus came to manifest God to the world. He was therefore a Prophet.

Now when He returns to this earth at the end of the tribulation he will then be a King. He will rule and reign on this earth for 1000 years. So we see the Him as Prophet and we see Him as the King but what about the Priest? This brings us to where we are tonight.

I. **His Position**

Notice Hebrews 4:14

There are several points we need to see within this verse. First of all we need to consider the context. The words "**seeing then**" refer back to what the writer has recorded previously. But we need to understand exactly what the writer is thinking here in order to grasp the TRUE meaning. The way in which the writer takes his readers into this section is very interesting. The words "seeing then" sweep back to everything he has already said. But what did he already say?

In **1:1-3** he showed how Jesus was superior to the prophets. Their messages were fragmented. He was the fulfillment of their prophecies.

In **1:4-14** he showed how Jesus was superior to the angels because of He is God. He created the angels.

In 2:5-18 he showed how Jesus is superior to the angels because of His humanity. He could identify with the suffering of the Hebrew believers.

In 3:1-4 he showed how Jesus is superior to Moses because of His work. Moses was faithful as he served God in his house which was Israel but Jesus built the house of Israel.

In 3:5-6 he showed how Jesus is superior to Moses because of His Person. Moses was a servant but Jesus was a Son.

So the writer collects all of this together and his mind goes back to Hebrews 2:17-3:1.

Notice Hebrews 2:17-3:1

Here in 3:1 he called them to consider Jesus as their Apostle and High Priest. Now as he records the words of 4:14 he goes back to this thought again and he brings with him all that he has thus recorded. That is the context.

Now let us get to the next thought in this verse.

Notice Hebrews 4:14 again.

We see that as our Great High Priest He has "*passed into the heavens*". This statement is so very important to grasp here. In order to understand what the writer is saying we need to consider the service of the High Priest in the Old Testament.

Once a year on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would enter into what was known as the Holy of Holies. On this day he would take the blood of the sacrifice and he would sprinkle it on the mercy seat as a sin offering for himself and for the people of Israel.

Exodus 30:10

¹⁰ *And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.*

Leviticus 16:14-15

¹⁴ *And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.*

¹⁵ *Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:*

Now there was a vail that separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies. The priest had to purify himself before he could enter into the Holy of Holies because in the Holy of Holies was the presence of God. So once a year the high priest entered into the presence of God in order to make intercession for himself as well as all the people of Israel.

Now let us get back to Hebrews 4:14. The phrase "passed into the heavens" literally means "to pass THROUGH the heavens". Listen to this! Just as the high priest in the Old Testament passed through the vail and into the presence of God out of the sight of the people so our Great High Priest has done the same.

The heavens over us are a vail in the sense that we cannot see God. When I refer to the "heavens" I am speaking of the stars and the planets. Jesus passed through them and is not seated at the right hand of the Father. He has entered into the Holy of Holies. He offered the GREATEST sacrifice of all when He died ONCE FOR ALL for our sins. After that sacrifice He has passed into the presence of God as our High Priest to do the work of our Great High Priest. Notice the words of Matthew Henry. Henry says we see the greatness of our High Priest this way:

"By his having passed into the heavens. The high priest under the law, once a year, went out of the people's sight within the veil, into the holiest of all, where were the sacred signals of the presence of God; but Christ once for all has passed into the heavens, to take the government of all upon him, to send the Spirit to prepare a place for his people, and to make intercession for them. Christ executed one part of his priesthood on earth, in dying for us; the other he executes in heaven, by pleading the cause, and presenting the offerings, of his people."

Let me show you something that the writer of Hebrews said in chapter 1.

Hebrews 1:3

³ *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:*

He sat down after He had He made the sacrifice for our sins. Now let me show you another couple of verses.

Hebrews 10:10-12

¹⁰ *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

¹¹ *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:*

¹² *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God:*

In the Old Testament the priests were never able to sit down because their work was never done. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin but it only covered sin. The sacrifices had to continue year after year. But Jesus offered ONE sacrifice for sin and He sat down. Why? Because there are no more sacrifices to be offered. Jesus' death on the cross satisfied once for all the demands of the Father.

Now let me show you yet another passage.

Hebrews 7:25-27

²⁵ *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

²⁶ *For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;*

²⁷ *Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

The writer says he ever liveth to make intercession for us. The point is when we sin and Satan accuses Jesus is quick to intercede on our behalf. Therefore we can say we have a GREAT HIGH PRIEST!

Now let us get back to our verse again.

Notice Hebrews 4:14 again.

The next point we need to consider in order to see just how GREAT our High Priest is would be His name. He is Jesus the Son of God. This name speaks of the fullness of His deity. Our High Priest is not just another man as those of the Old Testament he is the God Man. He is God. With that said the writer encourages his readers to hold fast their profession. This is again a plea to the Hebrew believers to stay the course. To turn back to Judaism would be to go back to the Levitical priesthood which was a shadow of our Lord's

Priesthood. To follow Jesus as High Priest is far superior to what Judaism had to offer. That we shall see in the next 2 verses.

Notice Hebrews 4:15

The first word introduces the reason for holding fast to their faith.

Here the writer points back to the humanity of our Lord. He is a High Priest that can relate to every test which we will ever face in our lives. The word "tempted" here means "tested". When Jesus was "tempted" by Satan He was "tested" with the very temptations which we face in our lives.

1. **He was tempted with the "lust of the flesh".**

Matthew 4:1-3

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

² *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.*

³ *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

2. **He was tempted with the "lust of the eyes".**

Matthew 4:8-9

⁸ *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;*

⁹ *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

3. **He was tempted with the "pride of life".**

Matthew 4:5-6

⁵ *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,*

⁶ *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

Now please understand that these tests which our Lord faced were not to see if He could resist sin. These tests were to PROVE He was sinless.

Notice Hebrews 4:15 again.

He was tested but He was without sin. So He endured the very same temptations/tests which we face every single day but unlike us He was sinless. Let me explain another phrase here.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;"

This literally means that we have a Great High Priest that can ***"sympathize with us when we are faced with times of weakness"***. Jesus knows exactly what it is to face temptation. He knows what it is to have Satan tempt you in a time of weakness for He already experienced the very same tests. Those 3 temptations in Matthew 4 were far more tempting than most people understand. Let me show you.

Matthew 4:1-3

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

² *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.*

³ *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

This was an appeal to His weakness.

Matthew 4:5-6

⁵ *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,*

⁶ *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

This was an appeal to test the goodness of God. Just as we may be tempted to step into sin knowing that God has promised eternal security.

Matthew 4:8-9

⁸ *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;*

⁹ *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

This was an appeal to bypass the cross. Jesus will rule the world when he returns. God's plan for Jesus to rule the world was by going to the cross. Believers face this same temptation when we are tempted to take the easy way instead of following the will of God.

October 7, 2015

Hebrews Study #29

Conclusion:

We will look more at this next week. But as we close I want you to know that whatever you are facing Jesus knows the pressure you feel. He is our Great High Priest.