

Our great high priest

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Now let us turn to Hebrews chapter 4 and looking at verses 14 to the end where the writer says, Seeing then we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.

Let us hold fast our profession, 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.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now the writer has been telling us that we are all under the scrutiny of God. And you remember how David puts it in Psalm 139 when he says, If I ascend up to heaven thou art there, if I make my bed in hell thou art there.

And he goes on to say, Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. And David is really saying this, that God understood him.

[1 : 22] God knew him. Everything was revealed before God as far as his own life was concerned. And he could hide nothing from God. And that is precisely the point that the writer to the Hebrews is making to these Jews.

And as we saw last Sabbath, and we look at it here in verse 13, he says this, Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

We cannot hide from God. We cannot hide anything from God. We cannot hide what we do from God.

These lies of ours are open. They are exposed to the scrutiny of the Almighty. God sees us. God knows us.

God knows us. If I go into a corner there in the darkness and try to do something that I know is positively wicked and positively wrong, and if I think to myself that by going somewhere like that I can hide from God, I can't.

[2 : 37] Even the night shall be as the day to God. Nothing can be hidden from him. And the point, you see, that the writer is making to these Jewish people is this.

You cannot pretend to God. You cannot offer anything by way of pretense to him.

And so he urges these people to submit to the authority of God, to the word of God. He says God has given to you his word. God commands you to do certain things.

God is asking you to follow in his way. You must do it. And he takes them back to the incident that happened to their fathers in the wilderness when they left Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

And what happened to them? They failed to arrive at the land of promise. And why did they fail to arrive at the land of promise? Well, says this writer, because they were disobedient.

[3 : 45] They refused to submit to God's will and to God's authority. And so they died there in the wilderness. And their carcasses were bleached there in the wilderness simply because they refused to listen to God.

Now he says to these Jews who had come out of Judaism, you be careful and see that you submit to God's will and do what God is demanding of you otherwise.

What happened to your fathers may happen to you. And instead of arriving at the land of promise, you may find yourself locked out.

You may find yourself on the wrong side at the end of your day. And that is why he says to them, God understands you.

And God sees through your hypocrisy. He sees your falsehood. He sees your vanity. He sees every sin that you may commit.

[4 : 52] And as the writer emphasizes these things, it might well fill these Jews with dread and with alarm. And of course, that's how it affects you and that's how it affects me, isn't it?

To think that God sees us. To think that we cannot pretend. To think that God penetrates the hypocrisy of our lives.

To think that God knows all about the sham. To think that God knows our falsehood, our vanity, and as I've already said, every sin that we commit, it cannot be hidden from God.

Well, these Jews might say, well, that leaves us in a predicament. Because our fathers, when they had sinned, and when they felt the burden of sin, they could at least go to a priest.

And they could confess to the priest their sin. And not only that, but they had one particular high priest who was appointed. And on the day of atonement, this high priest could go in and make an atonement for the souls of our fathers.

[6 : 14] What a predicament we are in. We've got nobody to do that for us. Ah, this writer says, we have. And we have a greater high priest than our fathers ever had.

And so he goes on to say, 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.

Oh, he says to these Jews, what a privilege you have. Your fathers never had this kind of a high priest. Look at what you've got.

You've got a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, who has gone through the heavens, and who is now in the presence of God himself.

God has provided Jesus as our high priest. And just as that must have come as a great deal of comfort to these Jews long ago, to these Hebrews, so tonight, does it not come as a great comfort to you and to me that we have a great high priest?

[7 : 40] That here I can turn to my high priest, Jesus, my Savior, my friend, and I can bring to him all the sin that I have.

And not only that, but I can bring to Jesus, my high priest, every problem that meets me in life, every difficulty, and he understands, because we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted, like as we are, without sinning. Let us look at this. Christ Jesus, as our great high priest, is now in heaven. and that is what the writer is saying.

We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. That's how it can be interpreted. Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

This great high priest is none other than Jesus, the Son of God. Now why does he say that our great high priest is Jesus, the Son of God?

[9 : 09] Why does he use these two names? Jesus, the Son of God. Well, he is doing that because he is emphasizing here this important truth that we must never forget about Jesus, and that is this, that he has two natures.

We only have one. You only have one nature, and I only have one nature, and it is essentially a human nature.

But this writer is telling us this, and for a very good reason he is telling us this, that this high priest whom we have got has got two natures. He's got two natures in the one person.

He is on the one hand, Jesus, the man. And on the other hand, he is the Son of God. He is the man who is in heaven.

And he is also the Son who is in heaven. And here is this unique thing, that we have a high priest who is none other than the God-man.

[10 : 39] You know, in the old economy, and when I say the old economy, I mean the old dispensation of the Old Testament. That's what we mean when we talk about the old economy of the Bible.

In the old economy, in the dispensation of the Old Testament, the high priest in those days was only a human priest.

And because he was only a human priest, he was limited in what he could do. Now in this new economy in which you and I live, in this New Testament dispensation, we have a high priest whom God has appointed.

And who is he? He is God's own Son who became human, who became Jesus. And so he is Jesus, the Son of God.

And he is our great high priest. And what does that mean? It means this, that because he is the God-man, he has perfect knowledge of God.

[12:07] No high priest ever had perfect knowledge of God. Aaron didn't have perfect knowledge of God or any of his successors.

They never had any perfect knowledge of God. They were, as it were, working in the dark, fumbling about. Oh yes, they were doing what God asked them to do.

But so often it must have meant, it must have been meaningless to them. Why should they have to do this or that or the other thing? Their knowledge, you see, was imperfect.

But here is Jesus, the Son of God, and his knowledge of God is perfect. And he knows what he is doing.

And not only did Jesus have this perfect knowledge of God, but because he was Jesus and because he was a man among men, and because he was the Son of Man, he has perfect sympathy for human nature.

[13:24] He knows our frailty. He understands our weaknesses. And even the high priest of the old dispensation never really understood his fellow men in the way that Jesus understands men.

And no wonder the writer here says, we have, not just a high priest, but we have a great high priest. He cannot find adjectives to describe enough the greatness, the character of this high priest.

There is no priest who has ever been like him. No priest ever equal to him. No priest ever understood fully human weakness as Jesus understood it.

And no priest ever understood the holiness and the majesty of God as Jesus understood it.

[14:42] And so we have this high priest, this great high priest. But the writer is also at pains to tell us that this high priest whom we have is no longer here on earth.

No, he tells us, he has passed into the heavens. or as it can be put, he has passed through the heavens into the very abode of God.

You know what our high priest did. A priest is a man who is a mediator and who intercedes between God and men.

That's what a priest is. And it's the function of a priest to propitiate the anger of God on behalf of men. Now what Christ Jesus did was he came down from heaven.

He clothed himself with our humanity. And he did that for a specific purpose. Why did he clothe himself with our humanity?

[16:02] In order that he might die. And when Jesus went to Calvary and when he was crucified on that cross of Calvary he was really our priest offering himself up to God as the sacrifice on our behalf.

Dying in our room instead. just as the high priest took the innocent animal and put it to death in order that the blood might pour out and be an atonement for the sins of the ancient people of God. Christ Jesus shed his blood. And it's the precious blood of a precious saviour.

And it's the blood of the priest himself. It's the priest himself offering himself as the sacrifice. Christ. And that is what Jesus did at Calvary.

And he died there. And he was buried. And he was under the power of death for a time. But he rose.

[17:28] On the third day he rose. and then forty days afterwards he ascended back to heaven. So that as this writer tells us he has passed through the heavens into the presence of God for us.

As one of the commentators has put it Jesus passed out of this time world through the veil of the visible heavens into the celestial world.

He went back to the abode from whence he came. But he went back to that abode from whence he came with his own blood which had been shed.

and which was the offering that was made to his father for his people. You know we are told that on the day of atonement that was the great day in the that was the great calendar day in the in the Israelites year the day of atonement.

That was the important day. That was when all the children of Israel gathered together around the tabernacle. Afterwards it was around the temple in Jerusalem.

[19:06] And here was this tabernacle a construction just like this church an oblong construction just as I say like this church.

outside we call it the court of the tabernacles. Inside this main body of the church we could liken it to the holy place.

Here at this end would be the curtain in the tabernacle and behind the curtain the most holy place the holy of holies.

And behind there was the ark of the covenant symbolizing the presence of God and the mercy seat. And what did the high priest do in those far off times?

He passed through the court of the tabernacles people watching him. Then he passed into the holy place with the blood of atonement.

[20 : 17] And then having passed through the holy place with the blood of atonement he went into the holiest of all. And there he sprinkled this precious blood on the mercy seat.

When I see the blood I will pass over you. And so what Jesus has done is this after having offered himself on Calvary's cross.

and having risen from the dead he left as it were the courts of the tabernacle and with his own precious blood he moved through the holy place into the holy of holies into the presence of God himself not with the blood of bulls or of goats or the ashes of an heifer but with his own precious blood there to propitiate God on our behalf.

Aaron and the successors of Aaron could only go into the holy of holies with animal blood the blood of sprinkling as it was called.

But as this writer emphasizes and he is writing to Jewish people but it comes so fresh to us too he is saying to these Jewish people look at these old priests that your fathers put their trust in all that they could do was to go into an earthly tabernacle with the blood of sprinkling.

[22 : 07] Ah but this is our high priest and he is not a he is not an earth bound priest. He is our great high priest and he has passed through the heavens into the immediate presence of God to atone for our sins and you cannot have more than that.

And that says the writer is the confession of our faith and so he says let us hold fast our profession or as the revised version puts it let us hold fast our confession.

This is what we confess. this is what we believe in. Hold on to it. Don't let anyone take it from you. This is the only way that you can get to heaven through the priestly work of Christ.

Isn't that wonderful? do you know Jesus as your great high priest? Have you come to him with your sin and with all your guilt and gladly left it with him and for Jesus to deal with it?

And when Jesus takes your sin what he does is he goes into the presence of his father where he is of course he is in the presence of his father and he appeals. and if you are one of his he says to his father I shed my blood for him or for her.

[23 : 56] I've made the sacrifice for them and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin for I have satisfied the requirements of the law for him or for her.

And tonight can you rejoice and say thank God Christ has satisfied the law for me. Thank God that Christ took my place at Calvary.

Thank God Christ atoned for my sin there on that cross. But notice this that we've got to look at that Christ Jesus is an understanding priest who sympathizes with us in our frailty.

That's what the writer says. 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.

You see the wonder of this high priest that we've got is this that he has been tempted tried in all points like ourselves without sinning and so he sympathizes with us sympathizes with us in our frailty.

[25 : 26] Now when the writer speaks about our infirmities he is not meaning or not just meaning or only meaning our sins.

He is talking about the infirmities or the frailties of our human nature. And here is Jesus and he understands the frailty of our human nature.

What are the frailties of our human nature? Well there are many but we can say this. One of the frailties of my human nature is the pain that I suffer.

And only God alone knows sometimes the pain that a man or a woman has to suffer. Christ understands it.

He has been through pain to a degree that you will never be through that pain. Another infirmity that I have in the frailty of my flesh is the suffering that I have to endure of one kind or another.

[26 : 54] And sometimes it is only God alone who knows the suffering that a man or a woman may have to endure of whatever kind. It might be suffering by way of a disappointment.

it might be the suffering caused by misunderstanding through other people. Ah, but here is this great high priest and he has gone through that.

And he knows what it is to suffer. To be misunderstood, to be misrepresented, disappointed too. And Jesus also has undergone the distressing difficulties that sometimes we have to undergo. He has been touched with a feeling of our infirmities so that he knows pain, he knows sorrow, he knows the darkness of life.

He has been tempted in all points without sinning. Let me put this to you, that in enduring temptations like this, in enduring these infirmities that we've been talking about, you know that Christ Jesus has gone beyond what we might ever be tempted to.

[28 : 44] You see, there is a point when we are tempted, tested, tried. There is a point when we can endure it no longer, and at that point in time we collapse under the strain.

We can't take anymore. We can't endure anymore. We've reached the limits of endurance.

But here is Christ who goes beyond the limits of endurance. And once Jesus goes beyond the limits of endurance, and indeed he has gone through the limits of endurance, we're talking about his humanity.

That is when the devil does his utmost, and that is when the devil attacks with a viciousness that we can never understand.

And so Jesus knows about our trials. He knows about our temptations, he knows about our sorrows. He knows about our pain, he knows and he sympathizes.

[30 : 17] And indeed we might go on to say this, that when the Lord's people are hurt, Jesus is hurt too.

Do you remember Saul of Tarsus? He persecuted the Christian church, he wasted it, he was merciless against the Christian church, until the day that Christ met him on the Damascus road, and what did Christ say to him?

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It's not these people you're persecuting, it's me, and why are you doing it to me?

me? It's Augustine, the great bishop of Hippo, who puts it like this, it was the head in heaven, when he is interpreting Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

He puts it like this, it was the head in heaven, crying out on behalf of the members who were still on earth, and crying out because he felt it, and you know, isn't it true to say this, that the best person that you can go to with a difficult problem, the best person that you can go to with a trial that you are going through, is the person who has gone through it before you, isn't it?

[32 : 07] It's no use going to someone who doesn't understand your problem because he just closes up and he doesn't listen to you, because he doesn't understand what's wrong with you. But when there is someone who has gone through that before, then that person will listen to you and say, yes, I know all about it.

God, I've gone through it myself, I know how you're feeling. And so this writer tells us, here we've got a high priest who has been touched with the feeling of our infirmities, in all points tempted like as we are, without sinning.

And so we can go to Christ, our great high priest tonight, knowing this, that he understands us, and he can sympathize with us, and knowing too that he cares for us.

have we trials and temptations, is there trouble anywhere? Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord, in prayer.

And then there is this point too, that Christ is freely accessible to us, when we approach him in prayer, and this man says to his hearers, you've got your problems and your difficulties, and you've been regretting that you don't have a high priest as your father's had, who was able to go into the tabernacle for them, and to plead for them.

[34 : 07] But, says this writer, I tell you, you've got something greater than ever your father's ever had. You've got a great high priest, a high priest who has been touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and because he is there now, seated at the father's right hand, let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

we've said that Jesus has passed through the heavens to God's right hand.

Jesus is now there, the son of God, beside his father, and being there in heaven beside his father, he is sitting at his father's right hand side.

he is sitting there upon his throne of grace, and thank God it's not a throne of judgment.

it's a throne of grace, and sitting on that throne of grace is the one who was crucified, the one who has risen from the dead, and the one who is now glorified in heaven.

[35 : 44] That's where the Savior sits at this moment. And if Jesus is our Savior, if Jesus is our friend, if Jesus is our brother, and that is what Jesus is to his people, then as this writer tells us we can come boldly to his throne of grace, grace.

A brother doesn't go in fear before his brother, cringing, except it be that his brother is a tyrant, and a cruel one at that.

man. Now if your brother is there, and a brother, as the Bible tells us, has been born for adversity, you go to your brother, not in terror, not as we have said, cringing in fear, but you go to your brother with your problem, with your difficulty, with your need, he's been born for adversity, and you tell him all about it, and he's there to listen, isn't he?

And so we come to this throne of grace, not as strangers, but we come filled with hope, and full of thanksgiving, because our brother is there, our brother Christ Jesus, who is our great high priest, he is there, and he says to us, come to me, all ye who are weary, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, come to me with your problem, come to me with your sin, come to me with all your need, if you do, you will obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, so we ask the question, why do we come to this throne of grace?

we come in order that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Sin, ah, yes, it starts to trouble us, doesn't it?

[38 : 19] And I'm speaking to those of you who are Christian people, there are times when your sin starts to trouble you, doesn't it? and you say, I wonder, has my sin been adequately dealt with?

Come to this throne of grace with all that sin of yours that's worrying you. You will obtain mercy. And you, Christian friend, you've been sinning, perhaps, in these recent times, doing things that you know that you ought not to have been doing.

Falling far short of God's perfection, and it troubles you. You, Christian friend, you've got into a bad habit, and this bad habit is controlling you, and you know it's wrong.

Come to this throne of grace, you will obtain mercy. is there some Christian here this evening, and you've been backsliding, foolishly backsliding, dabbling, and getting polluted in the gutters of the world.

Here is your great high priest, and the writer here urges you as a Christian man or a Christian woman, after all he's speaking to Jewish Christians who have just come out of Judaism, and he is saying to them, let us come boldly to this throne of grace, to where Christ our Saviour sits, that we may obtain mercy, and our Saviour will say, go in peace.

[40 : 12] grace. But not only that, he is there to impart grace.

This high priest of ours, it's not only that he gives us and grants us mercy, but he gives us grace to help in time of need. You know, just as the great high priest in the days of Aaron used to come out, Aaron himself in the days of Moses, and he would declare to the people that the offering that he had made to God in the terms of animal blood had been accepted, and he would pronounce blessing over the people.

So here is Jesus, our great high priest, and all that happened in the days of Aaron was just temporary until the time of the fullness of Christ was come, but here is Christ now, and he forgives, and he imparts grace.

What is the grace that we might need? Well, it might be the grace of wisdom, it might be the grace of understanding. Perhaps I need wisdom, perhaps I need understanding, perhaps I need patience. patience. Well, here is Christ, and he gives grace, in order that I might have wisdom, and understanding, and patience.

[41 : 51] And if I am an impatient man, I must ask the Lord to give me patience. it's the same when I have pain.

Maybe I feel I can't endure anymore, and so I cry out to this great high priest of mine, give me grace, yes, I'll give you grace.

I've gone through pain, I know what you're going through, I'll give you grace. maybe it is some disappointment.

Ah, says this great high priest, I understand your disappointments, I'll give you grace. Maybe it is I'm afraid to die.

And this great high priest understands that. Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And so we are able to come to him because he understands our fears.

[42 : 55] And he will say to us, I'll give you grace. Grace to die. Grace for the time of need.

Grace freely and lovingly given when it is asked for. My friend, what a great high priest we've got.

Our friend's friend's like, come to 20's. Did you come to see me? Done.

Need to things like,