

# Our High Priest

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*Hebrews 4:14-16*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. The fable among the Hindus about the thief and the king both being found guilty, Encyclopedia of 15 000 Illustrations, #11633.
  - 1. The point of this fable is quite simple: we have all sinned.
  - 2. I, like you, have a sin problem.
- B. Because you & I — and everyone else — have a sin problem, we need a high priest.
  - 1. The role of the high priest is to offer gifts and sacrifices to God for sin (Heb. 5:1).
  - 2. Jesus fulfills that role.
    - a. “Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5:2).
    - b. “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26).
  - 3. Jesus is our high priest. As our high priest, Jesus is —

## A GREAT HIGH PRIEST, v. 14

- A. Jesus is a great high priest.
  - 1. He is much superior to angels (Heb 1:4).
  - 2. He is much superior to Moses (Heb 3:3-6).
  - 3. He is much superior to the Aaronic priesthood — He does not need to offer continual sacrifices for sin.
- B. Our great high priest has passed through the heavens.
  - 1. Passing through the heavens obviously refers to Jesus’ ascension and exaltation.
    - a. Jesus ascended into heaven as his apostles watched (Acts 1:10).
    - b. Jesus has sat down at God’s right hand (Heb. 1:3).
  - 2. Jesus’ ascension and exaltation are significant.
    - a. Under the Levitical Code, the high priests would enter the holy of holies to make sacrifice for sin (Lev. 16).
      - 1) The high priest could only enter this place once a year.
      - 2) He could never really enter into God’s presence — There was a sense in which the high priest entered God’s presence, but there was another sense in which the high priest could never enter God’s presence.
    - b. But, Jesus is different.
      - 1) He remains in heaven — It’s not as though he goes there just one time a year to make atonement for sin.
      - 2) He really is in God’s presence — He sits at God’s right hand.
- C. Jesus is the Son of God.
  - 1. This isn’t merely some man going before God.
  - 2. This is God’s very Son who serves before God.
  - 3. You can easily see the obvious benefits of having God’s Son serving before God.
    - a. If you were on trial, wouldn’t you like the defense attorney to be the judge’s son?
    - b. That’s exactly the situation we have here — Jesus, the Son of God, defends us before God’s throne.

- c. Illustration about the boy's getting a ticket for a ride at the carnival because his friend asked his dad, Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, pp. 274-275.
- D. We can, therefore, hold fast to our confession.
  - 1. "Confession" refers to our faith.
    - a. In the Book of Hebrews, the Greek term for "confession" is used as a synonym Christianity, that which we believe.
      - 1) "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ" (3:1).
      - 2) "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (10:23).
    - b. Thus, "confession" means Christianity, our faith.
  - 2. The meaning here is that since we have a great high priest we can keep being Christians when we sin.
    - a. When we sin, we don't have to quit.
      - 1) Jesus is before God's throne.
      - 2) We can, therefore, pick ourselves back up and keep going.
    - b. What about you? Are you holding on to your confession?

## **HE IS SYMPATHETIC. v. 15**

- A. We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses — we have a High Priest who can sympathize.
  - 1. Those to whom this author wrote seem to have been afraid that since they had a heavenly high priest he didn't care about their struggles with sin and with temptation.
  - 2. Jesus does care about our temptations.
    - a. Jesus demonstrated great compassion for those who were suffering.
      - 1) When two blind men asked to be healed, Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes" (Mt. 20:34).
      - 2) When Jesus saw the widow of Nain weeping over the death of her only son, "He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'" (Lk. 7:13).
    - b. Jesus will have compassion on us when we are tempted and when we sin — "Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed to resist some temptation strong; When for my deep grief I find no relief, tho' my tears flow all the night long? O yes, He cares."
- B. Jesus can sympathize because he "was in all points tempted as we are."
  - 1. Jesus was tempted to sin.
    - a. Some have the idea that the only time Jesus was tempted was when he was in the wilderness.
      - 1) Luke records that Satan left Jesus "until an opportune time" (Lk. 4:13).
      - 2) Satan came back and tempted Jesus again.
    - b. There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus faced fierce, fierce temptations.
      - 1) Satan knew that if he could get Jesus to sin, he had won and all humanity would be cast into hell.
      - 2) Satan, I am sure, pulled all the punches he could in an effort to get Jesus to sin.
  - 2. Jesus was tempted as we are.
    - a. Jesus laced the same type of temptations we face.
    - b. Although the specific temptations may be different, Jesus faced the same type of temptations.
      - 1) Jesus faced all the different types of temptation you face.
      - 2) Jesus endured those temptations so that he could be your high priest.
- C. Yet, Jesus lived without sin.
  - 1. Jesus never sinned (1 Pet. 2:22).

2. If Jesus had sinned, we would not have a High Priest, but because he lived without sin, he can serve before God's throne on our behalf.

## **HE IS HELPFUL, v. 16**

- A. We can draw near to God's throne with confidence.
  1. This is God's throne of grace.
    - a. Before God's throne of grace, I can be forgiven of every sin.
    - b. Rabbis pictured God as having two thrones — the throne of judgment and the throne of grace.
      - 1) God's throne of judgment was where he sentenced individuals.
      - 2) Yet, when he forgave, he went from the throne of judgment to the throne of grace.
      - 3) We can approach this throne where God forgives.
  2. This we can do in boldness.
    - a. We can have boldness because we know Jesus has died for sin.
    - b. We can have boldness because we know God will forgive.
- B. We can receive mercy.
  1. Mercy is good-will toward someone who doesn't deserve it.
  2. God forgives us of sin even though we don't deserve it.
  3. Illustration about Napoleon, Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, p. 240.
- C. We can find grace to help in time of need.
  1. "Help" is an interesting term.
    - a. The word originally meant to run on hearing a cry.
    - b. The term was used of the help needed to avert disaster such as quick reinforcement of an army to prevent defeat.
    - c. Jesus comes to our aid when we need him (1 Cor. 10:13).
  2. We find this help in time of need.
    - a. Jesus doesn't wait until it's too late to come to our aid — he does so when we need him.
    - b. Illustration about the Battle of New Orleans in 1815.
      - 1) Andrew Jackson defeated the British troops in less than a half hour during which 289 British soldiers died.
      - 2) However, the Treaty of Ghent which ended the war had been signed two weeks earlier, but the treaty had not been ratified by the United States Senate.
      - 3) Ratification of the treaty came too late to save those soldiers.
    - c. Jesus' help doesn't come too late.

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. As our high priest, Jesus has made sacrifice to God.
  1. He sacrificed himself (Eph. 5:25-27).
  2. Other high priests would offer animals, but Jesus offered himself.
- B. Do you need to come to Jesus and have the forgiveness of your sins?