

Our Great High Priest
Hebrews 4:14-16

1. He is the superior revelation (the prophets, Heb. 1:1-3)
2. He is the superior mediator (angels, Heb. 1:4-2:18)
3. He is the superior servant (Moses, Heb. 3:1-6)
4. He is the superior priest (Aaron, Heb. 4:14-5:10; 6:13-7:28)
5. He is the superior covenant (OT, Heb. 8:1-13; 9:15-22)
6. He is the superior sanctuary (temple, Heb. 9:1-11, 23-28)
7. He is the superior sacrifice (animals, Heb. 9:12-14; 10:1-18)
8. He is the superior mountain (old covenant as Mt. Sinai and new covenant as Mt. Zion, Heb. 12:18-29)

Until this point, the writer's appeal has been primarily negative.

- These people are insufficient, each incomplete, like mirrors reflecting to Jesus, exit signs pointing to the real destination.
- If you don't trust Jesus, you are doomed and never enter God's rest.

It's a crime to yell "Fire" in a building that is not on fire but it is an even greater crime to not yell "Fire" when a building is on fire. This is what our author has done to this point. He is yelling "Fire" on a building on fire. The Temple is coming down – but even before that, even while it is standing, it cannot save.

But now the message turns from negative to positive. Not, "this is what is so wrong" but "this is what is very right."

Salvation is not just from something but to Someone and the Someone is such a sun that he outshines and so shines that he is all we can see, all we need to see.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 - *...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*

Note: In our world, unlike small gods we place on a shelf in our home or the Temple, modern idols are more difficult to identify, to a great extent, because most are culturally acceptable.

First: He Is the Perfect Priest 14

The writer has already discussed several 'better' aspects of Jesus's priesthood

- 1:3 - *After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*
- 2:17a - *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God*
- 2:17b - *to make propitiation for the sins of the people*
- 3:1 - *consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,*
- 4:1 - *Since then we have a great high priest*

A priest is a God-appointed mediator between God and people. He represents God to the people and the people to God.

The priests daily offered sacrifices for the sins of the people but only the High Priest could offer sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only on the Day of Atonement.

Day after day, year after year, the people and the High Priest made innumerable, unending sacrifices.

And the priest even had to make sacrifice for himself –

Under ordinary circumstances, for the individual might sacrifice a bullock, or a he-goat, or, in case of poverty, a pigeon; but in this case for the nation, as in the consecration of the priests, the ram is specified. (Leviticus 1:3, 10, 14; Leviticus 8:18). It is suggested that this animal was chosen for the offensiveness of its smell, in order to represent the odiousness of sin.

- How unlike Jesus that the high priest had to make atonement for his own sin

But on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest ministered alone. No one could go with him into the Holy of Holies. (verse 17). What an expressive figure of Christ (see Isaiah 63:3, 5; Zechariah 13:7; Matthew 26:31, 56; John 16:32)! No one could help Jesus in his great work of atonement.

- How like Jesus that the high priest alone could present the ultimate sacrifice.

We'll look at the priesthood of Jesus more in-depth in later chapters.

Jesus has done what no other priest did in

- a) The sacrifice he offered
- b) The reward he inherited

“...a great high priest who has passed through the heavens...”

- a) Through the first heaven – the sky
- b) Through the second heaven – outer space
- c) Into the third heaven – where God lives

2 Corinthians 12:2-3 - *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven...into paradise*

The holy of holies, the holiest place of all, is where God dwells and the holy of holies in the Tabernacle was simply symbolic of that place

Isaiah 6 – This is where “*the Lord is sitting upon a throne*” and his “*train fills the temple*” and the angels cry “*holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts...*”

Revelation 4:2 – *...a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.*

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”*

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

*¹¹ “Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”*

This is what Jesus meant when he said –

John 17:4-5 - I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Jesus didn't simply pass through the curtains in the Holy Place or then into the curtains and into the Holy of Holies, just to return home later that evening and have supper with the family before conducting tomorrow's normal routine of priestly activities

No. Jesus left the empty tomb for heaven itself to be seated at the right hand of God.

Little do the Jews know that less than forty years after Jesus's death, in A.D. 70, the Romans will destroy the Temple; the only place sacrifices can be made, and it will all coming down anyway. The Day of Atonement is now celebrated as Yom Kippur but without any sacrifice because there

is no priest. Even if a priest did claim to offer sacrifices, it is all invalid because the “great High Priest” has done what no earthly, priest could do.

Any priesthood – other than the priesthood of all believers – 1 Peter 2:5, 9) is invalid. Christ alone is the consummate priest.

His is the perfect priesthood, demonstrated by his ascension into the heavens.

Second: He is the Perfect Person

V 15 - *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Any human high priest is unable to “sympathize with our weaknesses” as Jesus does because no other high priest is related to us as Jesus is.

Sympathy = feelings of sorrow or pity

Empathy = the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

Another human can feel sorry for us or pity us but it is rare for a person to be able to empathize with us. Why?

Hebrews 12:1 - *... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

You have your lane. I have mine.

Romans 14:12 - *So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

Hebrews 2:17-18 - *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that*

- a) *he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God,*
- b) *to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

¹⁸ *For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

The extent of the incarnation is greater and deeper than we imagine and it all begins with Genesis 3:15 and its fulfilment -

John 1:14 - *...the word became flesh*

Body:

- He was born (Luke 2:7).
- He grew (Luke 2:40, 52).
- He grew tired (John 4:6)
- Got thirsty (John 19:28)
- Got hungry (Matthew 4:2).
- He became physically weak (Matthew 4:11; Luke 23:26).

- He died (Luke 23:46).
- And he had a real human body after his resurrection (Luke 24:39; John 20:20; 27).

Emotions:

- When Jesus heard the centurion's words of faith, "he marveled" (Matthew 8:10).
- He says in Matthew 26:38 that his "soul is very sorrowful, even to death."
- In John 11:33-35, Jesus is "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled," and even weeps.
- John 12:27 says, "Now is my soul troubled,"
- In John 13:21, he is "troubled in his spirit."
- The author to the Hebrews writes that "Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7).

Mind:

- Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52)
- "Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)

Will:

- "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." (John 6:38)
- Jesus prays to the Father, "Not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

Christ has put on our feelings along with our flesh
- John Calvin

No wonder Jesus is "...able to sympathize with our weaknesses..." He was indeed "...tempted as we are"

But he was also tempted "*without sin*"

Let's look at

Hebrews 2:17-18 - *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that*

*he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God - **Tempted** to make propitiation for the sins of the people – **Without sin***

¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

To be faithful to God he must be tempted without sin
To be faithful to me he must be tempted

If Jesus did could not, had no capacity to and not sin, how can he really understand my temptations?

Who understands temptation better? The person who succumbs or the person who withstands? The person who succumbs doesn't endure temptation, he or she yields to it. Only the person who does not surrender to temptation understands the fulness of it.

Hebrews 12:3-4 - *Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

Oh really? You've been tempted? Jesus endured the suffering and Hell of our sins yet without yielding to the temptation to not do so. He shed his blood for sin and endured its curse. Yet in the garden, when contemplating the choice,

No one has been tempted like Jesus.

Luke 22:42 - *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*

And how do we respond to such sympathy?

Third: It Is the Perfect Throne

16 - *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 - *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Those Hebrews reading the book should not only *not* go back into the Temple. They should go forward to the throne of grace.

Psalms 3:3 - *But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.*

- a) *Confidence = parrhesia = bold (8), confidence (6), openly (4), plainly (4)*
Freedom in speaking; free and fearless

Mark 8:32 - *And he said this plainly...*

John 7:4 - *For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly*

John 7:13 - *Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him*

John 11:14 - *Jesus told the plainly, "Lazarus is dead."*

Acts 2:29 – *Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried...*

Acts 4:13 – *And when they saw the boldness of Peter and John...*

- b) *Grace = charis = grace (130), favor (6), thanks (5), pleasure (2)*
 Good will, lovingkindness, favor

Luke 1:30 – *And the angel said to her, “Don’t be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God.”*

Acts 24:47 - *But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.*

- c) *Mercy = eleos = kindness, good will or compassion toward the miserable and afflicted*
 It is only translated as “mercy”

Mercy grants us forgiveness
 Grace provides us enablement

John 8:11 - *Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.*

Conclusion:

- 1 – Jesus saves
- 2 – Jesus sympathizes

*What more can He say than to you He hath said,
 To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

