

“Jesus is Better” – 4 Meditations from the Book of Hebrews

Meditation 4 - Christ is our Great High Priest - Hebrews 4:14-16

Introduction

Have you ever lacked confidence for something? I remember going into many exams in high school with a pit in my stomach and with no confidence whatsoever because I failed to study and do my homework. Thankfully, God helped change my study habits when I got to college and I did much better! Maybe you’ve felt a lack of confidence in an area of your own life – perhaps in the *workplace*, or in *sports*, or as a *parent*, or in a *relationship* when you first started to date someone.

1. The Hebrews here were lacking confidence *in* Jesus Christ. Because of certain trials going on they were tempted to let go of their confidence in Christ altogether. The preacher here provides great encouragement for why these Christians should onto Jesus in their pilgrim journey – he is our Great High Priest.

Jesus is not only a mighty prophet who reveals to God to us, and a King to rules over all things, but he is also a Great High Priest. 3 adjectives here describe his high priestly ministry that give us confidence. He is a high priest who is – supreme and sympathetic.

Supreme (v.14)

1. Here the greatness of Jesus as our high priest is highlighted for us. He is not only a high priest, but he is a GREAT high priest. Jesus is the only high priest in the bible who is described as great. WHAT makes Jesus so great?
 - a. First, because of *where* he is. Children, where is Jesus now? As the Apostle’s Creed puts it, he is seated at the right hand of God. This means that according to V.14, he has passed through the heavens!
 - i. Perhaps you remember where high priests had to go once a year in the OT to be in God’s presence? Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would go into the temple through the sections and would *pass through* the veil that separated the holy of holies from the holy place, and there he would go into God’s presence to offer a sacrifice for sin at the mercy seat. And as soon as he was done, he had to leave that place, or else he would die in God’s presence. But that temple he entered into was only an earthly temple. It was man made, temporary, and a symbol of an even greater reality.
 - ii. But we are told here that Jesus has passed through *the heavens*, he has passed through the heavenly curtain into the very presence of God. And there he *remains* as our Great High Priest. **Heb. 1:3**, “*after making purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.*” Unlike those numerous priests work in the OT, this high priest finished his work & sat down. Now he is enthroned as the supreme high priest over all. So Christians sing today, “*before the throne of God of above, I have a strong and perfect plea, a Great High Priest whose name is love who ever lives and pleads for me.*”
 - b. Second, he is Great because of *who he is*. Hebrews says he is Jesus, “the Son of God.” He is the one born of Mary, who came from Nazareth, as the Son of God. True God & true man. The preacher here highlights the humanity of Jesus to remind us that we have our own flesh &

blood on the throne in heaven. And he assures us that where he is, we may be also if we trust in him.

2. Therefore, we are exhorted to **hold fast** to Jesus because he has gone through the wilderness before us, & now he is at God's right hand. And where he is, we will be also if we trust in him. The text goes on to show us that although he is supreme, he is able to sympathize w/ us.

Sympathetic (v.15)

1. After magnifying the supremacy of Jesus as our high priest, the author wants us to make sure that we also know he is **accessible** to us here on earth.
 - a. Sometimes in our world we admire certain **untouchable people** b/c of their greatness – celebrities, sports stars, politicians, and so on. Sometimes these people of great status can't relate to the average joe very well. Although Jesus is supreme, he can sympathize with us as human beings.
 - b. The preacher uses **double negative** to prove this point. We have a high priest who CAN sympathize with our weakness. What does it mean to sympathize?
2. SYMPATHY means to enter into someone's experience to feel what they feel. It can literally mean, "to suffer with someone."
 - a. But it is not just feelings, but also active help. The NT calls Christians to this kind of sympathy when it says, "*weep with those who weep.*" And again, "*bear one another's burdens.*"
 - b. As our Great High Priest, Jesus can show us sympathy and help those who are helpless. Maybe we wonder, HOW is it that Jesus can sympathize with us?
3. First, he **experienced** temptation (v.15) – "who in every respect was tempted like us."
 - a. When someone wants to encourage you to understand their situation, they might say, "put yourself in my shoes." OR "Walk a mile in my shoes." God did that in Jesus Christ. He put himself in our shoes. He didn't just walk a mile in our shoes, but he lived a **whole life** of temptation.
 - b. He didn't suffer every single temptation we face, but he did experience **all kinds** of temptation.
 - i. His temptations were even **more intense** than ours. Although he was the Son of God, he did **not rely** on his divinity in times of temptation. But he lived as a **true man**, empowered by the Spirit just like us. And because he was completely holy, the evil temptations that came to him were even more intense – he experienced **direct** temptation from the devil in the wilderness, he struggled his whole life with the weight of the cross and was tempted to abandon his mission. Even at the cross they said to him, "if you are the son of God, come down from there!"
 - c. Jesus knows what is like to walk in the wilderness like us. Not only that, but...

4. He *overcame* temptation (v.15) - “yet without sin.”
 - a. The Son’s sympathy comes from the fact that he has suffered temptations but was also **victorious** over them. He overcame temptation in a way that we never have. He did *not* give into to sin in thought, word, or deed.
 - i. This was **essential** for Christ’s ministry, and necessary for our salvation. We need a Savior. A champion. Someone born from among us but greater than us who could save us.
 - b. Perhaps we think Jesus can’t sympathize with us *if* he never sinned, but that’s not true. As one commentator put it, “sympathy with the sinner does not depend upon the experience of sin, but on the strength of the temptation overcome.”
5. So WHY ought we to hold fast to Jesus? We can hold fast to Jesus not only because he is supreme, and because he can sympathize with us. Even now Christ still has a body at God’s right hand, he knows what it is like to help us in our weaknesses, because he has walked in our shoes. Therefore, our weakness does not disqualify us from coming to God. On the contrary. Because we are weak, he calls us to himself. To draw near to the throne of grace and find mercy and grace to help in time of need.

Conclusion

1. The Hebrew Christians needed confidence to hold onto Jesus, and at times we need courage and strength to press on as well. The word of God reminds us here that we have reasons here to **hold fast** to Christ in our wilderness journey. He is our Great High Priest who is *supreme* and *sympathetic* to our situation here on earth.
2. Therefore, may we hold fast to Jesus today. Let us continually come before God’s throne of grace with boldness. So, may we may find mercy and grace in time of need.