

JCI # 142 Our Great High Priest

Hebrews 4:14-16

The Book of Hebrews is a marvelous treatise on the surpassing glories of Christ Jesus our Lord. Its original audience was Jewish Christians who were being pressured by family and national interests to return to temple worship and render Christ as secondary to their faith. The author exalts Christ, warns true believers, and pronounces judgment on apostates. In every case, the issue is Christ, always Christ, only Christ!

As the author so clearly demonstrates, CHRIST IS BETTER! Christ is the fulfillment of the OT promises and pictures, the substance of OT shadows, and the object of the faith of the faithful in every generation.

In contrast to the “former days of the fathers” where we had angelic messengers, Moses the prophet, Aaron the high priest, a temple in Jerusalem, and the sacrifice of animals under the old covenant which was impotent to sanctify the offerer, we now have...

Christ the greater messenger than angels that brought the word of God to Moses. The angels were servants, Christ is the Son! Christ is even named “God” by the Father Himself. (1:8)

Christ the greater prophet/apostle than Moses. Moses was a servant, but Christ is the Son, the owner and heir of God’s house.

Christ the greater rest-giver than Joshua. Joshua brought the people into the promised land and gave ten temporary rest of their enemies in victory. But that rest was impermanent, physical, and forfeited by following rebellion. Christ provides the greater rest by His victory as conqueror of death and fore-runner bringing His many sons to glory into eternal rest in the Father’s house, forever subjugating His enemies under His feet, and exalting His people to everlasting rest.

Christ the greater High Priest than Aaron. We will focus our study on this in a moment.

Christ the greater dwelling place of God’s presence than the Jerusalem temple.

The Jerusalem temple was made by human hands, was on earth, was temporary, and often defiled. Christ is the very fullness of God (1:3), with an eternally glorified body, seated in heaven at the Father’s right hand.

Christ the greater sacrifice than the blood of bulls and goats. The blood of the animal sacrifices was symbolic and incessant. They could never stop being offered because they never took away sin and therefore never cleansed the offerer's conscience in a permanent way. Christ is the greater sacrifice as His blood, once and once only shed, fully and forever satisfied heaven's justice once for all time, once for all sin, once for all who believe.

Christ is the greater prophet of revelation, the greater victor of subjugation, the greater priest of mediation, and the greater sacrifice of reconciliation. Glory to Christ now and for all ages! Amen.

CHRIST THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST 4:14-16

While Hebrews has far more to say regarding the High Priestly call and ministry of Jesus both past and present than these three verses, we will content ourselves with these opening words...

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NAS95)

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Having reminded us that we are completely unhidden and spiritually "disrobed and dissected" before the eyes of the God to whom we must give an account, we realize how desperately we need a Mediator to plead for us before the Father. Oh blessed relief, inexpressible joy, glorious gratefulness we find we have a Mediator, a High Priest. But stop and consider this High Priest. He is unique! He is the divine Son of God! He is sufficient as both Mediator and Sacrifice. We have not just a High Priest. We have a GREAT HIGH PRIEST! Let us consider our blessed Mediator and gaze in wonder at such glory!

GLORIOUS SUPREMACY - OUR MAGNIFICENT, MAJESTIC, GLORIOUS HIGH PRIEST

1) He is a Great High Priest because He has a Greater Name: JESUS THE SON OF GOD

This same theme begins in 1:2-5, as the name of Jesus as SON is proof of His greater position and authority.

2) He is a Great High Priest because He has a Greater Nature: JESUS, GOD THE SON

Again, Hebrews 1:6-12 demonstrates that Jesus is declared to be God by God the Father Himself. This Great High Priest is not a mere mortal. He is God the King whose throne is eternal and whose worth is immeasurable.

3) He is a Great High Priest because He serves in a Greater Location: THROUGH THE HEAVENS...

Human high priests served in Jerusalem in an earthly temple, seeking to mediate between men on earth and God in heaven. Our GREAT HIGH PRIEST has gone into heaven itself for us.

4) He is a Great High Priest because He has a Greater Claim: WITHOUT SIN

Our Mediator is completely able to stand and plead for us because He

(ADDITIONAL FINDINGS IN HEBREWS)

He is a Great High Priest because He made a Greater Sacrifice: OFFERED HIMSELF 9:24-28

This is dealt with in wonderful detail in chapter 9-10.

He is a Great High Priest because He has Greater Access. AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND 10:12

He is sitting at the Father's right hand... Sitting because the work of sacrifice is completed forever... Sitting because the Father is pleased with Him... Sitting because the Father is now bringing all things under His feet as the eternal King.

He is a Great High Priest because He has a Greater Appointment: WITH AN OATH 6:20-22

Earthly Priests were appointed by lineage. Christ is appointed by divine oath!

GLORIOUS SYMPATHY - OUR SUNDERSANDING, IDENTIFYING, WELCOMING HIGH PRIEST

The greatness of our High Priest causes us to hold firmly, confidently to our faith in Him. Yet, as quickly as the glorious supremacy of Christ is given to strengthen our confidence, we are told of His glorious sympathy!

He is a Sympathetic High Priest because He SHARES OUR NATURE: SHARED IN THEIR HUMANITY 2:14

Christ not only knows us infinitely in His omniscience. He knows us intimately in His incarnation. His sympathy is such that He not only knows, but “has been tempted in all ways as we...”

He is a Sympathetic High Priest because He SHARES OUR WEAKNESSES: IN EVERY WAY 4:15

These are not moral weaknesses, but the weaknesses that come from living in a world and in a body that has been affected by the fall. Physical (weary, beaten, torn, afflicted), emotional (hated, rejected, abandoned, forsaken), mental (tempted, attacked, faced deception and lies), familial (rejected by his brothers, mocked by his home town neighbors.) He knows what it is to be worn and torn in every way we ourselves experience.

He is a Sympathetic High Priest because He SHARES OUR TEMPTATIONS: Tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin 4:15

The weaknesses of human existence after the fall were tested the utmost extremity by our Savior. He knows the attacks of the evil one. He knows the ways in which the devil seduces and attempts to deceive, misusing scripture, using even well-meaning friends that give godless advice.

He is a Sympathetic High Priest because He SHARES OUR SORROWS: In every way 4:15

As Isaiah predicted, Jesus was a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He is a sympathetic High Priest because He knows by bitter experience the seemingly endless tears and broken heartedness that comes from rejection, the death of loved ones, facing inescapable pain, and death itself. Our High Priest does not despise our weaknesses, but understands as no one else ever could. He shared in them all.

OUR GREAT, SOVEREIGN, SYMPATHETIC, SUFFICIENT HIGH PRIEST.

For both of these reasons, His Sovereign Sufficiency and His Sympathetic Sharing, we are told to come with confidence to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace in our time of need.

We come to the throne of grace in the name of our Mediating High Priest with confidence based on two things:

- 1) **Our Mediator is All Sufficient in His Glorious Deity** - He *can* fulfill our desperate needs
- 2) **Our Mediator is All Sufficient in His Sympathetic Humanity** - He *will* fulfill our desperate needs

We come to the throne of grace to obtain two things:

- 1) ***Mercy - this is needed because we are sinful.*** Mercy is focused on the sins of men. Our High Priest knows the full extent of our sins by His omniscience, and had made full atonement for them.
- 2) ***Grace - this is needed because we are weak.*** Grace is focused on the weaknesses of men. Our High Priest knows the full extent of our humanity and wills to lift us up and sustain us.

At the throne of grace, every need is met by the all sufficient, all sympathetic GREAT HIGH PRIEST, Jesus, the Son of God! Come! Come with confidence! Come, for we have a Great High Priest.

Isaac Watts Jesus My Great High Priest

*Jesus, my great High Priest offered his blood and died
My guilty conscience seeks no sacrifice beside.
His pow'rful blood did once atone,
and now it pleads before the throne;*

*To this dear Surety's hand will I commit my cause;
He answers and fulfills his Father's broken laws.
Behold my soul at freedom set;
My Surety paid the dreadful debt;*

*My Advocate appears for my defense on high;
The Father bows his ears and lays his thunder by.
Not all that hell or sin can say
Shall turn his heart, his love, away*

*Should all the hosts of death and pow'rs of hell unknown
Put their most dreadful forms of rage and mischief on,
I shall be safe, for Christ displays
His conqu'ring pow'r and guardian grace;*

SELF CHECK:

- 1) How does knowing the Sovereignty and Sympathy of Jesus our High Priest draw you to His throne?

- 2) What are the temptations you face that Jesus also faced? What are some of those “in every way” temptations that come from human weakness that you sometimes feel all alone in?
- 3) Do you ever lack confidence in coming to the throne of grace in prayer? Why? What do these truths about Jesus do to erase that hesitancy?

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Read Hebrews 4-10 and make a list of the truths about Jesus as Priest that are explained. List them under the two headings: Sovereign and Sympathetic

Consider the other passages on Jesus as Mediator - 1 Tim 2:5 1 John 2:1-2 Romans 8:34
What other passages can you find?

“O Sovereign, Sympathetic High Priest, I glory in your greatness and your grace. I bless You for being both Son of God and Son of Man. You are perfect God and perfect man. You are Conquering King and caring friend. In both of your natures, God and man, You manifest your glory and meet me every need. Be glorified in my life today! In Your name at your throne of grace I pray, Amen.”

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... Jn 9:4 Ron & Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable,
changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible
with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity,
owning nothing yet possessing everything
that matters and lasts.

We are Pilgrims in Paradox.

Welcome to THE JOURNEY