
Words of Truth

Hebrews 2:17-18

By: Brian A. Yeager

As we have been studying about Jesus being born in the flesh (Hebrews 2:14-16), we continue with these statements: *“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted”* (Hebrews 2:17-18). These two statements are leading us into things we will discuss from this point through the seventh chapter of this letter.

We know that the faithful are brethren to Christ (Mark 3:31-35). He is not ashamed of that fact either (Hebrews 2:11-12). The point being made in this text is that for Jesus to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, He had to be made like His brethren. Jesus took on the form of man (Philippians 2:7-8). The fact that Jesus was/is faithful is undoubtably true. We will be talking about that as we get into the next chapter (Hebrews 3:1-6). Later in this letter we will even discuss the aspects of obedience that Jesus learned (Hebrews 5:7-10). The fact that Jesus was/is our High Priest is something we will also spend considerable time studying throughout this letter (Hebrews 4:14-5:6 and Hebrews 6:20-7:28).

With those things coming in the future of our studies in more detail, let’s take some time in considering the role of Christ as the High Priest that came to make reconciliation of the sins of the people. Under the Law of Moses, the priests brought offerings to God for the sins of the people (Leviticus 4:1-5:13). Therefore, the Jews reading this letter had some understanding of the role a priest filled in this regard. The fact that Jesus is called a high priest should not be read into too much. For example, to be the high priest in Israel a man would be of the seed of Abraham, married, and expected to avoid the blind, lame, etc. (Leviticus 21:1-24). We know that Jesus did not fit those things. For one, His priesthood is not tied to Aaron (again; something we will study later in chapter seven). Secondly, He would have been defiled because He did not keep Himself from the blind, lame, etc. (Matthew 9:27-31, Matthew 15:29-31, Matthew 20:29-34, Matthew 21:14, and Mark 1:40-45). Thirdly, we have no record of Jesus marrying. So, I say again, His being called the High Priest does not tie back to the things taught under the Law of Moses and is not significant in that regard.

What Jesus did in making reconciliation for the sins of the people was also different than the priests of old. Instead of Jesus offering an animal unto God as a sacrifice, He offered

Himself. Consider this text as explanation: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him“* (II Corinthians 5:14-21). Later, in the Hebrew letter we will read similar points in different wording (Hebrews 10:1-18). Jesus was not just a priest offering the Sacrifice, He was the sin offering Himself. That had never happened before and will never occur again.

Jesus putting on the flesh of man to be a sin offering is amazing. It is wonderful. We who have sinned are able to be reconciled to God because of Jesus (Colossians 1:12-22). Yet, that was not the only reason He came in the flesh. As the text we are looking at teaches, Jesus came in the flesh to suffer temptation so that He could bring aid to those tempted. He was tempted like as mankind is and remained sinless throughout (Hebrews 4:14-16). He knows the sorrows, pains, etc. of life in this world. Do you remember the picture of anguish we can read about prior to His death (Matthew 26:36-46)? By living in the flesh and suffering through all that He did, Jesus serves as the greatest example for us to follow (I Peter 2:21-25).

Now, take a moment and think about something here. As God in the flesh (Romans 9:1-5), Jesus was able to experience what it is to walk in human shoes (so to speak). Having the understanding, the experience of physical life; He then gave man a covenant to keep. We live under the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). It is not a grievous [burdensome] law (I John 5:2-3). His yoke is not hard to bear (Matthew 11:28-30). Why? The answer to that is that He understands life in this world through experience. That is something God, our Father, cannot say. Jesus is also our Judge (John 12:48, Romans 14:11-12, and II Corinthians 5:10). Think about that.

As you look at the perfect law of liberty we live under and are expected to be doers of (James 1:18-27); think about our law-giver. He has not given us instructions that bind us. He has not given us impossible hurdles to jump. He has given us instructions to aid us. He knows life in this world. He also knows life in the world we seek to come. Look at His words as spirit and life (John 6:63). Understand His law is one of aid, not one of bondage. That was the lesson struggling first century Jews needed to learn about their new law, their new High Priest, and what was expected of them. Let's not miss those lessons in Christ!