
Words of Truth

Hebrews 4:14

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The Jews were accustomed to having a high priest. The position of a high priest existed under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 21:10, Joshua 20:1-6, II Kings 22:1-8, and Nehemiah 3:1). They continued to have a high priest in the days of Jesus and the Apostles (Matthew 26:3 and Acts 24:1). We know that Jewish Christians struggled with leaving the Law of Moses behind (Acts 15:1-35, Galatians 2:11-3:29, Galatians 5:1-11, Galatians 6:11-18, and Colossians 2:4-23). Jewish Christians needed to understand that there was a change in the priesthood. After writing about how man is exposed before God's all-seeing eyes (Hebrews 4:13), the writer of this letter moved on to teaching about the new high priest. Thus, the inspired penman of this book wrote these words: *"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession"* (Hebrews 4:14).

We have already seen this subject matter in this epistle (Hebrews 2:9-3:1). We will continue studying about the priesthood of Jesus throughout this epistle. The key for them was to understand that they had a high priest. That high priest was not what they were accustomed to. Jesus, as the new high priest, was not an earthly priest. This is a huge difference. His position did not expire at the end of His physical life. Later in this letter, this is written: *"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec... By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood"* (Hebrews 6:20, Hebrews 7:22-24). Now notice the benefit of the continual priesthood of Jesus: *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25).

Now think about what you've read. The Lord knows everyone. Jesus, as the high priest of our Father, makes intercession for the people of God. The work of the high priest coming before God on behalf of the people was not a foreign thought to the children of Israel (Leviticus 9:1-24). However, what they were accustomed to was flawed. It was flawed in that the priest not only offered up sacrifice for the sins of the people, but also for himself (Hebrews 7:27). The priesthood they were accustomed to was flawed in that death ended the work of that high priest. As we have seen, this is not the case with Jesus (Hebrews 7:28). It was also flawed in that the sacrifices were not able to take away sins. This was not the case with Jesus

(Hebrews 10:1-18). On top of all of that, and more that could be stated, our sinless high priest is not limited by earthly knowledge. He knows what is in man (John 2:23-25). He also understands what it means to live in the flesh. (We will discuss that more in our next study.) Therefore, when Jesus stands between us and our Father as our mediator (I Timothy 2:5-6), His actions are not like any high priest that held that office before He did.

For them, and for us, Jesus is our GREAT high priest for the reasons we have discussed and so much more. He is not here on earth doing His work. He is right next to His Father and our Father (Mark 16:14-19 and Hebrews 9:24). He has the ear of our Heavenly Father on a continual basis. He has a relationship with our Father that no high priest before Him ever had. He is the only begotten of our Father (John 1:14, John 1:18, John 3:16-18, and I John 4:9). We should be able to understand how that a son has the ear of his father. Jesus used that relationship of what a father will do for a child in His teachings (Luke 11:9-13). Jesus is able to do much more than any high priest that preceded Him.

Now we need to think about how that information helps Christians hold fast our profession. Earlier in this letter, Jesus was called the “High Priest of our profession” (Hebrews 3:1). Later in this letter, after writing about the remission of sins through the sacrifice of Christ, this was written: *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:19-25).

There is inescapable clarity in the words you just read. All saints should be able to hold fast because of the confidence we have in and through our high priest. We know that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus serves as our anchor for our hope (Hebrews 6:19-20). Since He is sure and steadfast, the faithful know that our labor will not be in vain (I Corinthians 15:58).

Jewish saints in the first century needed to wrap their minds around the changes in the law and the priesthood. We don’t have to learn the same lessons they needed. However, we can certainly be thankful that those lessons needed taught. We can benefit learning from their struggles to come to a greater understanding and appreciation for the priesthood of Christ. These lessons are not recorded in any other epistle. Therefore, take the time to enjoy the lessons taught here that we’d miss if we don’t study through this epistle. Such information should make you fall even deeper in love with our God and Savior (cf. I John 4:19).