

The Service of The Son Hebrews 4:14-5:10

The writer of Hebrews emphasizes the superiority of the Son, Jesus Christ, over all things that the Jewish people would revere and value, and by implication Jesus Christ is superior to everything and everyone we would value. In chapter one he emphasized the complete deity of the Son to whom our focus and worship should be centered. In chapter three the writer emphasized the faithfulness of the Son in his humanity, who is the apostle sent by the Father and high priest as the builder over God's house, his people. The Son is superior to the angels, and he is superior to Moses who was a servant in God's house. In our passage today the writer is going to emphasize the service of the Son as the superior high priest. The Son is superior to Aaron, the first high priest of Israel and all the priests from the tribe of Levi. The Son has a different kind of priesthood and therefore provides a different kind of superior service.

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

5 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ³ This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

⁴ No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷ During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. ¹

1. Accepted By The Father

The first point I want to look at in this passage is that the service of the Son as High Priest is accepted by the Father. This High Priest, Jesus Christ, has gone through the heavens. He is in the heavenly throne room. We know we have access to the Father because our High Priest is in the heavenly throne room. He is seated in the position of glory and honor with the Father as expressed in Psalm 110.

The atoning work of the Son is effective and final as he is in the heavenly throne room before the Father. Donald Hagner writes that “Through Christ our high priest we are able to “approach the throne of grace with confidence.” There, in the presence of God, we can find “mercy” and “grace” to help us “in our time of need.” Although

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Heb 4:14–5:10.

the primary application of this truth is to the original readers, it applies to Christians of every era. The God of grace is always ready to provide help to those in need.”²

N. T. Wright says that “The point is that Jesus, having died and been raised from the dead, was then exalted, in the ascension, through all the different layers of ‘the heavens’, right to the very heart, to the throne of the father himself. He didn’t, in other words, simply go to a convenient resting place in some spiritual sphere where he could remain, satisfied with having accomplished his earthly work. He went right to his father’s inner courtroom, in order that by representing us there, by interceding for us with the father, he might continue to *implement* the work he had *accomplished* on earth. Once again, Paul says something similar, this time in Romans 8:34.”³ In emphasizing that the people of God are secure and not condemned, Romans 8:34 says “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

Bruce Barton emphasizes the superior service of the Son as the greatest high priest when he writes that “Jesus is a great High Priest, better than all the high priests of Israel. Here is why: The high priests were humans who could offer sacrifices but could do nothing to take away sin. Jesus gave his life and died as the final sacrifice for sin. The high priest could enter the Most Holy Place only once a year to atone for the sins of the nation. Jesus has gone to heaven and has unrestricted access to God the Father. The high

² Donald A. Hagner, [*Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition*](#), ed. Walter A. Elwell, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 78.

³ Tom Wright, [*Hebrews for Everyone*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 45.

priests were human and sinful themselves. Jesus intercedes between God and people as the sinless Son of God, human yet divine. The high priests were the highest religious authorities for the Jews. Jesus has more authority than the Jewish high priests because he is both God and man. People could not approach God except through a high priest. When Jesus died, the veil that separated the Most Holy Place in the Temple was torn in two, indicating that Jesus' death had opened the way for sinful people to reach a holy God."⁴ The superior service of the Son on our behalf is demonstrated in the fact that his service is accepted by the Father as the Son has gone through the heavens and reigns from there.

2. Sympathetic to Human Weakness

The second point I want to emphasize is that the service of the Son as High Priest is sympathetic to human weakness. In his humanity the Son, Jesus Christ, was tempted in all ways humans can be tempted but he always remained without sin. He understands our weaknesses and our temptations. In the wilderness temptation account in the gospels Jesus overcame Satan's temptations as he began his ministry. But Satan did not give up as Luke 4:13 says "When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until and opportune time." In other words, Satan did not give up and he continued to tempt Jesus. The greatest temptation would have been in the Garden when Jesus submitted his will to the will of the Father to go to the cross to die for our sins.

Clinton Arnold writes "That Jesus was tempted "in every way" and "was without sin" are important to the author's argument. The experience of temptation gives Jesus, as our high priest, a basis for

⁴ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1023.

sympathizing with us as human beings (a requirement of a high priest, Heb. 5:1–3). Yet, his being without sin shows that Jesus is a high priest who is superior to the earthly priests, who had to offer sacrifices for themselves as well as the people.”⁵ David Peterson emphasizes that “As the true man and ideal high priest, he resisted sin and remained faithful to the end, so that he could rescue fallen humanity from the consequences of sin. This teaching does not question the reality of his humanity, as argued by some. Rather, like Adam in Genesis 2, Jesus is portrayed as having no history of sin before he was tempted. Unlike Adam, however, Jesus remained true to his calling and never sinned. He reversed the effects of Adam’s rebellion by his obedience to the point of death.”⁶

Donald Hagner writes “Since Christ has been tempted or tested, he can “sympathize with our weaknesses.” The point is not that Christ experienced every specific temptation that we do, but rather, that he experienced every basic type of temptation. He knows well what it is to be in our position of human weakness, and therefore he is able to stand with us and help us when we are in need. Thus, Christ is an ideal high priest, who represents us before God and whose full humanity makes possible not only the atonement that is the answer to our sin, but also an identification with human plight in situations of testing and pressure.”⁷ Tommy Lea notes that ““Because Jesus never yielded to sin, we know that he faced more intense temptation. Most of us say “yes” to sin before Satan has thrown all

⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#), vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 30–31.

⁶ David G. Peterson, [*Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London; Downers Grove, IL: IVP; IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 134–135.

⁷ Donald A. Hagner, [*Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition*](#), ed. Walter A. Elwell, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 78–79.

his weapons of temptation at us. Jesus said “no” as Satan hurled every arrow in his quiver. He resisted until he broke the power of Satan.”⁸

George Guthrie makes a great point for our needs, “Consequently, on the basis of the Son’s sympathetic high priesthood the author challenges the hearers of all Christian centuries to take action in two ways: to “hold firmly to the faith” and to “approach the throne of grace.”⁹ Holding firmly to our faith emphasizes our need to remain stable in the faith while living in this world. Approaching the throne of grace provides the heavenly resources we need to live the Christian life. The superior service of the Son is demonstrated in that he is sympathetic to our human weakness.

3. Eternal in Nature

The third point I want to make about the superior service of the Son as our High Priest is that his service is eternal in nature. Twice in this passage the writer of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 110 to indicate that the Son is a High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. William Lane notes that “The appeal to Melchizedek, who as the first priest mentioned in Scripture is the archetype of all priesthood, validates Jesus’ priesthood as different from and superior to the Levitical priesthood. Christ enjoys a preeminence that removes him from the sphere of comparison with Aaron. He was “without sin” (4:15), and he is summoned to be “a priest forever” (5:6). His priestly task is to create an order of salvation that is valid forever (5:9), which has the effect of rendering the Aaronic

⁸ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 74.

⁹ George Guthrie, [*Hebrews*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 179.

institution obsolete.”¹⁰ In Genesis we encounter Melchizedek as he blessed Abraham and received a tenth from Abraham. Melchizedek is called a king and a priest of God most high. In Israel’s history the legitimate king would be from the tribe of Judah, and all the priests would be from the tribe of Levi.

Bruce Barton notes that Jesus “did not have one significant requirement: he was not born into the tribe of Levi and had not descended from Aaron. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. Only Levites could be priests, and only descendants of Aaron could be high priests in the Jewish system. The book of Hebrews, however, tells how Christ’s priesthood was greater than the Aaronic priesthood by quoting Psalm 110:4: “You are a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek.” These words, coming from the inspired psalmist David predicted that the Messiah would come from a line of priests not traced back to Aaron. The priests in the line of Aaron were not priests forever. Jesus, however, is a priest forever. In addition, Aaron’s descendants were priests but not kings. Israel’s kings could not serve the functions of the priests.”¹¹ Kent Hughes emphasizes that “our author gives us a stupendous truth: Jesus is both eternal King and eternal priest. And it all came to him by the ordaining word of God the Father. Jesus did not seek it! Just as in eternity, he “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6, 7), neither

¹⁰ William L. Lane, [*Hebrews 1–8*](#), vol. 47A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1991), 123.

¹¹ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1024.

did he clutch the office of King and high priest. His only goal was to glorify God the Father.”¹²

N. T. Wright says the “point of the present passage is that the priesthood which Jesus holds, because he is the Messiah, was always intended by God. The scriptures make it clear that, when God eventually sent the Messiah, he intended to make him a priest, and a new sort of priest at that.”¹³ David Peterson says, “the incarnation, death and heavenly exaltation of the Son fulfil Psalm 110:1 and 4, qualifying Jesus to reign forever in God’s presence as our eternal mediator. As heavenly high priest, he continues to make it possible for us to draw near to God through him, ‘because he always lives to intercede for’ us.”¹⁴ The superior service of the Son is demonstrated by the eternal nature of his service.

4. Obedience Through Suffering

The next point in this passage is that service of the Son as our High Priest was demonstrated by his obedience through suffering. The Son was always obedient to the Father even though that obedience led to his suffering. Clinton Arnold writes “That Jesus “learned obedience” does not mean that he was disobedient and then became obedient. Rather, it means that Jesus followed fully and obediently the path of suffering the Father had designed for him. He experienced fully what it meant to be in complete submission to the Father. Also, his being “made perfect” relates to the completion of

¹² R. Kent Hughes, [*Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*](#), vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 140.

¹³ Tom Wright, [*Hebrews for Everyone*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 50.

¹⁴ David G. Peterson, [*Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London; Downers Grove, IL: IVP; IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 144.

his course of suffering—not that he was imperfect before, but he “ran the full course” of his sufferings and thus became fully qualified as our high priest.”¹⁵ George Guthrie reinforces this point. “When the author says that Christ “learned obedience” and was “made perfect,” he is not suggesting that the Son had been disobedient and flawed (cf. 4:15). Rather, Jesus’ call involved walking obediently all the way to the end of a path to which the Father had appointed him. That he “learned obedience” means that the Son arrived “at a new stage of experience,” having passed through the school of suffering. Perfection refers to the Son’s having “graduated” from that school, accomplishing the mission and making it to the end of that path of passion.”¹⁶ “We must grasp the significance of the terms *perfect* and *obedience* in this passage and see how they fit with the broader biblical concept of the “righteous sufferer.” Rather than conveying the idea of overcoming a moral deficiency, the aorist passive participle communicates the concept of “finishing” or “completing.” By making it all the way to the end of his Passion, Jesus was made “complete” in the sense of being able to fulfill his role as our high priest. He finished the course. He drank the full measure of the experience that was needed in order to come before the throne with a sacrifice with which our sins would be addressed. Moreover, that he “learned obedience” means that the Son said “yes” to the Father’s will in an extreme situation that he had not yet encountered.”¹⁷ Jesus prayed if there was any other way for our salvation and the Father heard his prayer. However, the suffering

¹⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#), vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 34.

¹⁶ George Guthrie, [*Hebrews*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 191.

¹⁷ George Guthrie, [*Hebrews*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 195.

death of Jesus was the only way our salvation could take place. Paul wrote that Jesus became sin, taking the judgment our sin deserves, so that we could become the righteousness of God. The superior service of the Son as our high priest is demonstrated through his obedience through suffering.

5. Source of Eternal Salvation

The last point in this passage is that the service of the Son as our High Priest is the source of our eternal salvation. Warren Wiersbe writes “Because He is the sinless, eternal Son of God, and because He offered a perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ is the “Author of eternal salvation”. No Old Testament priest could offer *eternal* salvation to anyone, but that is exactly what we have in Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ Bruce Barton writes that “Because Christ lived, died, and rose again, he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. These last words warned those who would turn away from Christ and turn back to an inferior system. Salvation comes only to those with complete submission to God and his will, even in the face of suffering.”¹⁹

I love Tommy Lea’s implications and conclusions for this passage. “What should be our response? First, we must approach. Worshipers used this verb in describing their movement into God’s presence. We are to come to God with all the reverence and awe which his worship demands. Second, we come to the throne of grace. This is a reverent reference to God’s presence. It is the place where God gives out his free favor. The term describes an attitude more than a place. The seeking sinner will find this throne of grace.

¹⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 293.

¹⁹ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1024.

Third, we come in an attitude of confidence. Although we must approach God with reverence, we can enter his presence with freedom and without fear. The term describes a boldness based on an awareness that God has all the grace we need. It is the attitude of customers coming to a store seeking an important item which they know is plentifully stocked. Fourth, we come for the purpose of obtaining mercy and grace. God's mercy prescribes pardon for our many failures. God's grace provides strength for the demands of God's service."²⁰ We can come to God with joy and celebration because of who he is and because of what he has done through the superior service of the Son.

²⁰ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 74–75.