



Our High Priest

December 11-17, 2022

MAIN POINT

God took on human flesh and dwelt among us, demonstrating the personal nature of God's grace.

INTRODUCTION

Share about a time when someone spoke up on your behalf.

Share about a time when you hoped that someone would speak up for you but they didn't.

How has Jesus spoken up for us? How has he stood up for us?

Jesus, who is fully God, took on human flesh and dwelt among to glorify God by identifying with us. He became our advocate before God, our savior, and our means of overcoming temptation.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [HEBREWS 4:14-16](#).

The book of Hebrews was likely written to Christians who were experiencing severe persecution. In Hebrews 4:14-16, the writer sought to encourage these Christians to persevere in their faith by considering how Jesus came from heaven to earth to be our representative.

What is the significance of Jesus being our "great high priest" (v. 14)?

Why did Jesus have to be fully human in order to fulfill his role as our "great high priest?"

How might considering that Jesus "passed through the heavens" encourage us to persevere in our confession that Jesus is Lord?

[Hebrews 2:17](#) tells us that Jesus "had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." The high priest would enter the most holy place once a year to make a sacrifice for the sins of the people. Jesus had to be completely human and completely pure in order to make propitiation for our sins.

The writer of Hebrews mentioned that Jesus passed through the heavens in order to emphasize Jesus' transcendence. Though He is God, Jesus chose to become our great high priest by sacrificing Himself for our sins. Emphasizing that Jesus is co-equal and co-eternal with God demonstrates the depth of God's mercy in determining to identify with us and serve us as our great high priest. When we are mindful of the depths of God's mercy, we can remain faithful to Christ in the midst of any circumstance.

READ [PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8](#).

Paul called believers to imitate Christ. He admonished Christians to have the same disposition or attitude that our Lord exhibited in His birth, life and death.

What do we learn about Jesus from Paul's description of Him?

Of the words and phrases in this passage, which gives you the best idea of the attitude of Christ Paul calls us to imitate?

What does that attitude look like when lived out? How does it change the way we relate to God and to others?

What do you think it was like for Jesus to leave heaven and become human? What did He give up in doing so? What did we gain from His action?

Though culture often views humility as a weakness, in what ways did Jesus' humility convey and require strength?

Paul pointed to Christ's love for others and His obedient service to God as examples for his Philippian friends. We are to live with an attitude of humility as we relate to others. Doing so is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Being strong does always mean boldly demonstrating your strength, having power and choosing to set it aside in service of others is a more profound demonstration of strength. This is exactly what Jesus did in order to die on the cross for our sins and restore us to a right relationship with God.

READ [MATTHEW 4:1-11](#).

Why do you think God's Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry?

Jesus is tempted by Satan in verses 3, 6, and 9. What, in your own words, was the devil tempting Him with in each of these instances?

The Devil tempted Jesus initially in the area of physical need (v. 3), then He tempted Jesus to question God's plan for Him (v. 6), and finally, Satan tempted Jesus with power (v. 9). In each temptation, Satan was questioning God's character, plan, and goodness. Satan was tempting Jesus to embrace a worldly view of Himself and to deny God's definition of Him.

By facing and overcoming temptation in the wilderness, Jesus demonstrated His power over sin. Jesus' victory over temptation gives us hope that He can transform our identity from those who are powerless to overcome to temptation, to those who overcome.

What does Satan want us to think about ourselves? How does he try to distort our identity?

How did Jesus respond to each of Satan's temptations?

Satan's temptations were an attempt to make Jesus exalt Himself and neglect the glory of God. Jesus responded to each of Satan's temptations by quoting Scripture. Jesus refused to define Himself by the Devil's definition and continued to root His identity in what God said. By humbling himself, remaining pure, and offering Himself as our great high priest, Jesus redefines our identity from sinners to children of God.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How might you remind yourself daily of the character of Christ this week?

In what areas of your walk with Christ are you most tempted to give up?

How might remembering that Christ is our great high priest help you persevere?

In what area of your life are you most tempted to listen to the lies of Satan?

How might we as a group support each other as we seek to root our identity in Christ?

PRAYER

Thank God for making Jesus our great high priest at great cost to Himself. Pray that we would draw strength to overcome temptation from Jesus' victory over it. Thank God for making Jesus our representative, our savior, and our source of strength in the battle against sin.

COMMENTARY

HEBREWS 4:14-16

4:14. This passage introduces the theme of Jesus' high priesthood. The epilogue for this section appears in [10:19-23](#). In between the superiority of Jesus to the priests of Aaron is explained. Three statements about Christ as our high priest appear in this verse.

First, Jesus is a great high priest. Perhaps some Jews were claiming that Christianity had no priesthood like that of Aaron. But Jesus was superior to the priests of Aaron. Both his character and his work are important. Second, Jesus has gone through the heavens. This means that he had entered God's very presence. Third, Jesus is called the Son of God. This statement identifies the historical Jesus as our high priest. It also presents Jesus as one who perfectly combined humanity and divinity in his ministry for lost sinners. His human name was Jesus, but in reality he was the Son of God.

4:15. How can we hold fast to our faith? Has God done anything to make this possible? This verse answers these questions. The writer of Hebrews had already declared the ability of Jesus to help the tempted (2:18). He now states negatively what he had earlier stated positively. Why would he change from a positive statement to a negative statement? He may have tried to deal with some people who felt that Jesus Christ was too remote from human need. He stated three facts about Christ which would help readers know that Christ was no stranger in helping struggling human beings.

First, Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Weaknesses is broad enough to include any form of human stumbling, bumbling, or failure. Christ has sympathy for the needy. Second, Christ has been tempted in every way, just as we are. This statement may mean that he faced the full range of temptations we face. It need not mean that he met each specific type of temptation which we face. A sample of the entire range of options for sinning fell on Jesus. 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 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 ([Hebrews 2:14](#)). Third, Christ was without sin. Jesus was completely a human being ([Hebrews 2:17](#)), for he became like his brothers in every way. Must a person experience sin in order to be human? No! Jesus had no sin or deceit in his life ([1 Peter 2:22](#)).

4:16. Given the fact that we have a sinless Savior, what can we do? What should be our response? First, we must approach. Worshipers used this verb (Heb. 7:25) 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 (Luke 18:9-14). 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.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

2:5. Paul held up Christ as the model his readers should emulate. The phrase make your own attitude literally is "this be minded in (among) you." The words could mean each believer was to have Christ's mind-set or that Christians as a whole (who were in Christ Jesus) were to activate the mind-set they already had received. The first interpretation seems most likely: Paul exhorted believers to have Christ's mind-set, which the apostle presented in poetic form. Of course, if each Christian exhibited Christ's attitude, that attitude would pervade the whole church.

2:6. Verses 6-11 form a hymn. Possibly, Paul himself composed this hymn to point to Christ as the supreme example of humble selflessness.

2:7. Rather than selfishly clasp the prerogatives of His Deity, Christ emptied Himself. Paul's phrase does not mean Christ divested Himself of Deity for a short time. In His incarnation, Christ was fully God and fully human; He never ceased to be God.

Paul stressed that Christ took on the form of a slave. He was God incarnate, yet He came "to serve" ([Mark 10:45](#)). The phrase taking on the likeness of men literally is "having become in the likeness of men." Paul's point was that at a moment in time, Christ took on human flesh. The phrase the likeness of men means more than His merely appearing to be human. His external form was that of a human being, which He truly was in every respect, except that He committed no sin.

2:8. Even though Christ was Deity in human flesh, He humbled Himself. That is, He had a clear grasp of His identity as the Suffering Servant who would give Himself for people's salvation. Instead of claiming an elevated status among His people, He chose the path of self-sacrifice. As God's Son, Christ was consistently obedient to His Heavenly Father, even when His obedience resulted in His opponents putting Him to death. Moreover, in His obedience, He submitted to and endured the most humiliating and painful form of execution devised to that time: death on a cross.

MATTHEW 4:1-11

4:1. These verses describe the moral testing of the King. Jesus' testing here is more of a powerful demonstration of His capacity than an "I-wonder-if-He-will-pass" kind of test. God Himself has recognized such testing as a necessary part of Messiah's ministry. Jesus' preparation for ministry involved a combination of pleasant experiences (the affirmation at His baptism) and unpleasant experiences (His fasting and temptation). God uses the same pattern in our lives, and we should be surprised at neither great outward blessing nor great

trials in our lives.

4:2. It is possible to fast forty days without food, but not without water, especially in an arid, hot climate like the Judean wilderness. The understatement about Jesus' hunger is intended to show that Jesus fought His battle with a serious handicap but still came out victorious.

4:3-4. Satan's words in Jesus' first temptation indicate that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and Satan acknowledged the fact. This might be better translated, "Since you are the Son of God." Satan was not questioning the fact of Jesus' Son-ship, but he was tempting Him to misuse it. In this first temptation Satan was tempting Jesus to rely on His own self-provision, rather than on the provision of God. Jesus often insisted He would do nothing of His own will. He came to do the Father's will only.

4:5-7. The highest point in Satan's second temptation refers to the high southeast corner of the temple platform that overlooked the great depth of the Kidron Valley. This was a temptation to be "showy," to do miraculous works to draw attention. Again Satan used a conditional statement, If you are the Son of God (see 4:3). Again, he was not challenging Jesus' sonship, but he was using it as a basis to argue to a false conclusion—that it is appropriate to "force" God into supernatural demonstrations of His faithfulness to intervene for our good. In this temptation Jesus was tempted to exercise improper dependence to "force" divine intervention. That is sin. Satan, in quoting Psalm 91:11-12, misused Scripture in his attempt to deceive and mislead. It was a subtle challenge to Jesus to prove His deity. In response to Satan's second challenge, Jesus took the matter back to Scripture and quoted Moses from Deuteronomy 6:16, which prohibited testing God in this way. Jesus refused improper dependence.

4:8-10. The third temptation may have been the most appealing of the three to Jesus because Satan's offer would allow Him to rule the earth without going through the sacrifice of the cross. God the Father had a plan for the certainty of the restored kingdom and great glory for Jesus. Satan offered an "even better" plan (both deceptive and impossible)—a kingdom and all its glory, minus the suffering. Satan tempted Jesus to believe that someone else could provide for Him in a better way than God could. That is always the satanic appeal, whether it involves work, power, money, success, or some personal interest. Again Jesus reached into Scripture, interpreted it accurately, and sent Satan on his way.

4:11. Satan's departure from Jesus followed the King's authoritative command, Away from me, Satan! (4:10). It is ironic that Satan had just offered to be the benevolent master to Jesus, but Jesus' authoritative response and Satan's cowering obedience demonstrated who was the real Master.