

A Study of Hebrews

Lesson 5

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Jesus is Sympathetic

(Hebrews 4:14-16)

Note the following about Jesus: 1) He is a great high priest. 2) He has passed through the heavens. 3) He is the Son of God. 4) He can sympathise with our weaknesses. 5) He was tempted in every way that we are.

Jesus is a high priest that is different from the Jewish high priests. They passed into the holy of holies, but Jesus passed through the heavens. Because Jesus is such a high priest we must “hold fast our confession.” Christ has done the work through his death that allows us to draw near to the throne of God, but believers need to be involved by remaining faithful to Christ.

Hebrews 4:15 is an amazing and encouraging verse of Scripture. Our Lord Jesus can understand our trials because he was tempted in all the ways that we are tempted; yet he did not sin.

A major theological question arises with this verse. The question is this: “Was it possible for Jesus to sin while he was in this world?” Some say it must have been possible or his temptations were not real. Others say that since he was God, it would have been impossible to sin because it would have violated his nature.

Perhaps the best answer to this question is to agree that because Jesus is divine (God in the flesh) it would have indeed violated his nature to commit a sin; yet the temptation for him was as severe as for any person. In fact, since he was sinless the temptations he faced must have been even more painful than the temptations that sinful man endures. Jack Cottrell quotes Joseph Stump when he

It has been suggested that 1 John 2:16 lists the three types of sins that people can commit. This passage says, “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.”

If this is true, Jesus must have faced temptations that fall into these three categories. Can you think of any sin that does not fall into one of these groups: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride in possessions?

Think back to the first sin in the Garden of Eden. Does it fit into one or more of these categories?

writes, *“we can subject pure gold to the most extreme test, all the while knowing it will stand the test because we know it is pure gold. The test is no less real, even if the result is not in doubt.”*¹ It was necessary for Jesus to live as a human and to live sinlessly otherwise he could not be our Saviour since a perfect sacrifice was necessary to pay the penalty for our sin.

The throne of grace shows that God is in **control** ruling as King. Since this is a throne of **grace** we are reminded that God love us and that he wants to forgive us. As children of God we can approach this throne with **boldness** not because of anything that we have done, but because Jesus has paid for our sins as our high priest.

1. What does it mean to you to say that we must “hold fast our confession?”

2. Compare and contrast the relationship we have with our high priest as Christians with that of God’s people in the Old Testament.

3. The word translated as “sympathise” is used only here and in Hebrews 10:34. It literally means, “feel with.”² How does this help you to know that Jesus understands your temptations?

4. What does the word “boldness” mean to you and what method do we use to approach God’s throne?

Jesus Our High Priest

(Hebrews 5:1-10)

The Old Testament high priests were required to be taken from among the people and to have a call from God. These high priests were to represent the people before God and to deal gently with the people because they too were weak and sinful. Because of their own sin, they were required to make sacrifice for themselves and their family as well as for all the people (Hebrews 9:7, 25).

¹ Cottrell, Jack. *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today*. p. 229.

² Lightfoot, p. 63

The Jews were impressed with the splendor of the high priest. He was adorned with fancy robes, elaborate breastplate, and was the religious leader for the entire nation. In Hebrews 5:4, we have the first mention of Aaron. In following passages the Hebrew writer will show Jesus to be far superior to Aaron and those high priests who followed him.

Just as the Old Testament high priests were appointed by God, Jesus our high priest did not appoint himself high priest. He was placed in this position by God. According to the Old Testament the high priesthood was hereditary and the high priest must come from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron. Jesus did not fulfill these qualifications, but verses 5 and 6 tell us that Jesus qualifies because he is God's Son (Psalm 2:7) and he is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). We will discuss Melchizedek in detail when we reach Hebrews 7.

Jesus Learned Obedience and Was Made Perfect

Hebrews 5:8 has the very interesting statement that Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered." It would be wrong for us to think that Jesus learned obedience in the same manner that we learn obedience. After all, he was sinless. He never rebelled against his father, but always submitted to his will. His learning was an experience that came to him because of his faithfulness.

Hebrews 5:9 tells us that Jesus was made perfect. Again, this is not to show that he was lacking in any way, but that he was obedient. In Hebrews 2:10 we had previously learned that Jesus was made perfect through suffering. The word "perfect" can have the idea of maturity or completion. The meaning is that through his obedient sacrifice Jesus completed his mission and "became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."

In Hebrews 5:7, we read that Jesus prayed with "loud cries and tears" referring to his prayers in Gethsemane. He prayed to the one who could save him from death and the Hebrew writer says that he was heard because of his "reverence." From Matthew 26:39 we read the words of Jesus, **"if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."** God heard and answered the prayer of Jesus that the will of God be done. Luke 22:44 describes this prayer of Jesus when it says, **"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."** This was a painful experience, but one in which Jesus completely submitted to God's will. In doing so he took upon himself the sin of the world and died a cruel death.

Refer to your Bible and the Lightfoot textbook to answer the following questions:

5. What does the passage for this lesson teach us about Christ?

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6. What does the passage for this lesson teach us about prayer?
7. What does the passage for this lesson teach us about the love of God?