

Hebrews 8 chapters 4-6

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Hebrews 4:14: *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

He is saying, 'We have a great High Priest Who is actually in Heaven, ministering before God on our behalf. We have an advocate who speaks directly to God for us, Who never ceases to pray for us. Therefore, let us be strong and courageous, not fearing in the face of persecution of every kind.'

¹⁵ ***For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.***

Not only is He in Heaven, before God on our behalf, not only is He truly God in human flesh, but He is also **human like us**, in every way, except that He does not have a nature to sin and He has never sinned, but He was tempted like us in all ways. He understands us in every way and we can trust Him to hear us, to love us, to forgive us, to strengthen and encourage us, to be our advocate and champion always.

¹⁶ ***Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

Whether our need is for strength and encouragement in time of temptation or for forgiveness when we sin... He commands us to trust Him and to come boldly and quickly, immediately to His throne of grace, mercy and love. He is our great High Priest Who loves us with an everlasting love that will never change, that will never be less and which could never be more.

Hebrews 5:1: *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.*

The High Priest had a specific and important role in the religious life of Israel. The King represented God to the people but the High Priest represented the people to God. He came to God in their place. He brought the people to God. No one else could approach God. No one else could enter the Holy of Holies to bring sacrificial blood to be sprinkled on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant which happened only once each year, on the Day of Atonement. The High Priest would enter in with the blood from the sacrificial bull and goat; he would enter past the heavy veil into the Holy of Holies with a cord tied around his waist and bells on the bottom of his robe. As long as the other priests heard the bells, they knew that the High Priest was still alive and had not been struck dead because of his own sin or improper actions within the Holy of Holies. (The rope around his waist is not found in Scripture, but it is understood from Jewish tradition. If he died in the Holy of Holies, if they no longer heard the bells, they could drag Him out.)

The Day of Atonement in Hebrew is Yom Kippur... or... Yom Ke Purim which means 'the day like Purim'... a day of deliverance and salvation. (The Jewish holiday Purim is in memory of Israel's deliverance through Ester.)

It happens only once a year and is the time when God accepts this sacrifice for the sins of the people. It prefigured the once only, once for all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

The Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur is the most solemn and important holy day of the Jewish calendar. In the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement was the day the High Priest made this atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people. This act of atonement brought reconciliation between the people and God.

The Day of Atonement was a yearly reminder that all of Israel's daily, weekly, and monthly ritual sacrifices and offerings were not sufficient to atone for sin. It was the only time during the year when the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the innermost chamber of the Temple (or Tabernacle) to make atonement for the sins of all Israel. Atonement means "covering." The purpose of the sacrifice was to bring reconciliation between man and God by covering the sins of the people. The sacrifice of our Great High Priest however did not merely cover our sins... it actually did away with our sins... they are no more... as far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our sins from us. Psa 103:12

God, residing on the Mercy Seat within the Holy of Holies, symbolized the future reality of God residing within our hearts when our faith and trust is in His true sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

On this day, the high priest would remove his official priestly garments; he would bathe and put on a simple, pure white linen robe to symbolize repentance. Next, he would make a sin offering for himself and the other priests by sacrificing a young bull and a ram for a burnt offering. Then he would enter the Holy of Holies with a pan of glowing coals from the altar of incense, filling the air with a smoky cloud and aroma of incense. Using his fingers, he would sprinkle the blood of the bull on the mercy seat and the floor before the Ark of the Covenant.

The High Priest would cast lots between two live goats that had been brought by the people. One goat was killed as a sin offering for the nation. Its blood was then added by the high priest to the blood already sprinkled inside the Holy of Holies.

The high priest would then place his hands on the head of the other, live goat and confess the sins of the whole nation before the altar of burnt offering and finally, that goat would be carried outside the camp or later, outside the walls of the city, and set free into the wilderness. Symbolically, the "scapegoat" would carry away the sins of the people.

The high priest was the representative of the people to God. God spoke through the Urim and Thummim which were behind the breastplate worn by the high priest. This was symbolic of God speaking to the people through the heart of the high priest and symbolic of His now speaking to us, His people, through our hearts. The people had no direct contact with God; they were sinful and could not approach God. It was only by God's grace that the High Priest could approach Him, representing the people.

The Urim and Thummim were two stones... thought to be one black and one white. The High Priest would inquire of the Lord and then reach into the pocket which held the two stones. Whichever one he brought out would be the answer the Lord was giving... very much like we talked about last week of how we can inquire of the Lord... that He answers us by giving us His peace (the white stone) regarding the way He wants us to go, and by giving us a lack of peace (the black stone) regarding the way He does not want us to go.

Eph 3:15 in the amplified Bible: 'And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ **rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise** in your minds...'

'In these last days,' remember from Hebrews 1... 'He has spoken to us through His Son...' no more through the prophets... no more through the Urim and Thummim... no more through the High Priest... now He speaks directly to us Himself, through His Son, through His Holy Spirit Who dwells within our hearts. When He was crucified, God Himself tore the veil, which had closed off the Holy of Holies, from top to bottom, signifying that now, through the Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, we can have direct access to God Himself.

Verse 3: *Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. ⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.*

The Old Testament High Priest had to offer sins for himself also... he was a sinner just like everyone else. If he entered the Holy of Holies in an unworthy manner, he would die. No one could claim the office of High Priest for himself; he had to be called and commissioned by God Himself. Aaron, Moses' brother, was the first High Priest. After that, it was always someone from the priestly tribe of Levi. Jesus Christ, however, was from the tribe of Judah... a complete break from the Old Covenant's priestly order.

2 Chronicles 26:18 says, 'And they (priests) withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.' ***Not even the King could approach God in ministry... only one called and ordained by God.***

That is a major reason that the Church is in the terrible shape it is today... the Great Apostasy, the Great Falling Away happening all around us as we draw ever closer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Rapture.

Countless men *and women* have '*gone into the ministry*' but who were never called by God. There are far too few true shepherds and far too many goat herders, too few men of God and too many hirelings.

Verse 5: *So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."*

Jesus Christ did not push Himself forward; He did not seek the work He came for. He never did tricks while He was growing up. There is no indication that anyone suspected who He really was.

In Matthew it says, 'When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?" ⁵⁷ So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." ⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Matt 13:54

To the people of Nazareth, He was just a guy, the carpenter's son. On the other hand, when we see Him with His mother at the wedding in Cana, she appears to understand that He is capable of miraculously handling the situation of the host's having run out of wine. She knows He can fix an unfixable problem. Think about that... how did she know? Just guessing, but perhaps He had done something in her presence... showing her the reality... perhaps He had told her what His true mission was, but maybe He hadn't told her about the reality of His being the Lamb of God to be sacrificed for sinners. If she had known that much, I think she would have tried to keep it secret for as long as possible.

John 1: And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." ⁴ Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do *it*."

She obviously knew more than she is letting on to us, the readers.

Once more... seeing all the clues... using our imaginations to understand ***more than what is clearly stated***.

He was the Son of God. He knew it and Mary knew it. Not one moment of the angel, Gabriel's, visit 31 years before had faded from her memory but she also remembered what Simeon had said when they brought Jesus to be circumcised. 'Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ (*yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also*), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Luke 2:34

All Scripture is tied together and it all points to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ... born to die as our sacrifice, born to live as our great High Priest and King of Kings.

Verse 6: *As He also says in another place: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'*

Remember, Melchizedek was the priest who seemed to come from nowhere when Abraham was returning from rescuing Lot. It says, in Genesis, 'Then Melchizedek, ***king of Salem brought out bread and wine***; he was the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." Gen 14:18

Most believe Melchizedek was a Christophany... an appearance of Jesus Christ before His incarnation at Bethlehem. There are several other Christophanies in the Old Testament. Notice here, as Melchizedek, He comes out with bread and wine... prefiguring our communion with Him in remembrance of His crucifixion.

He is the King of Salem... Salem wasn't a town, it means King of Peace. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace and He is the King of all Kings.

We'll hear more about Melchizedek later in Hebrews.

Verse 7: *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

In the days of His flesh: it means while still in His earthly body, before His crucifixion and resurrection into an eternal glorified body... (like which, ours will be also... never forget what's coming, what God has promised.) He vehemently cried with tears... that doesn't fit our idealized vision of Jesus sitting by a large rock with moonlight shining down on His long, perfectly combed hair, and then walking into His crucifixion. It was a time of agony for Him and even though we don't see it in the Gospels, we have it here in Hebrews, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Luke hints at it, telling us His sweat was like drops of blood and that He asked three times to not have to go through it. He was human and He didn't want to go through that any more than we would... but He willingly did it for us because He loves us and He wants us and He is now preparing a very special place for us to share with Him forever as we rule and reign with Him forever. That's why He did it. He went through it and learned complete, perfect obedience by it. God, the Father, could have saved Him, He could have kept Him from going through it but He didn't, because He loves us, because it was necessary for our complete salvation... a complete and acceptable, holy and righteous sacrifice, once for all time and for all our sin.

Verse 9: *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.*

Having been perfected... The word *perfected* is the Greek word, 'teleioo' which means: to make perfect, to complete, to accomplish, to bring to an end, to bring to a close or fulfillment by event of the prophecies of the scriptures. On the Cross, He said, 'It is finished.' It was the same word.

When He completed the work for which He was born... when He fulfilled all the Law... when He lived a perfect and sinless life... when He offered Himself willingly as the Blood Sacrifice in full payment for all the sin of all those that God, the Father had given Him... when He finished walking in complete obedience and submission to the will of God... He became the author of our eternal salvation... of all who obey Him.

What does the writer mean by '*all those who obey Him?*' Is it all those who keep the 10 commandments? All those who obey all the law? Because if it means that... then He is the author of no one's salvation... because no one could be saved... no one has ever obeyed all the law except the Lord Jesus Christ. He obeyed it all for us. So what does it mean, 'all those who obey Him?' ***There is only one commandment we must obey to be saved. Every other command, the Lord Jesus Christ obeyed and kept for us.***

There is only one command that He could not keep for us that we must keep or be lost and go to Hell.

John wrote, 'And this is His commandment: **that we should believe** on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.'^{1John 3:23}

Paul told the Philippian jailer, '**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...**' Acts 16:31

Jesus said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who believes has eternal life.**' John 6:47

John wrote, 'but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing you may have life** in His name.' John 20:31

There is **only one command we must obey** to be saved: **to believe!** And there is **only one work we must do** to be saved.' Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, **that you believe in Him** whom He has sent.' John 6:29

Verse 10: *'called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"*

The Lord Jesus Christ was chosen and called by God. We are chosen and called by God and He has chosen to love us completely like He does His Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 11: *'of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.'*

The writer will add much more about Jesus Christ as High Priest and about Melchizedek who is also Jesus Christ before His incarnation, before He came in human flesh, but they are not yet ready to hear it. He will continue to teach them line upon line, precept upon precept until he lays out everything the Holy Spirit intends to tell his readers and the many more Hebrews through the following centuries and he will teach us also.

Verse 12: *'For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.'*

Sufficient time had passed since an Evangelist had brought the good news of the Gospel to the city where this group of Hebrews lived, that they should have been more advanced in their understanding of the Gospel but something had kept them from growing to maturity in Christ. Maybe it was persecution, maybe sin or just the cares of this World. They should have been growing and teaching each other. In reality, the fault would have lain with the leader of this group... their pastor. They had the written Old Testament which, as the writer of Hebrews is showing them, does very effectively point to the Lord Jesus Christ. If their leader had been seeking God in prayer and study, he could have been helping his congregation to grow in the Lord. They were not growing and he was not teaching with any depth. He was only teaching the first, elementary principles of the Faith. Whatever the traveling Evangelist had taught them when he established this Church, that was all their teacher had been teaching ever since.

Verse 13: *'For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.'*

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, ' And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. ² I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 1 Cor 3:1

By reason of use... through practice they have exercised their senses to discern both good and evil... right and wrong... left or right... up or down. The Urim and Thummim of the heart.

Earlier, we looked at Col. 3:15... about learning how to recognize God's peace within us in order to discern His will, in order to understand how He is answering every question we ask Him.

God intends for us to grow in His Word. He expects us to study it and understand it, to allow Him to teach us from His Word by His Holy Spirit. Paul wrote to Timothy, 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.** 2 Tim 2:15

The first, elementary principles of the Faith are very important, they lay the foundation for a correct understanding of all that God has revealed in His Word. Peter wrote, ' Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 1 Pet 2:1

However, after a proper foundation has been laid, a Pastor or teacher must move forward, bringing his congregation to a deeper understanding of God's Word, which is exactly what the writer of Hebrews begins to do at the beginning of the next chapter.

Heb. 6:1 *'Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, (same word again) not laying again the foundation of **repentance from dead works** and of **faith toward God**, ² of the **doctrine of baptisms**, of **laying on of hands**, of **resurrection of the dead**, and of **eternal judgment.** ³ And this we will do if God permits.*

Look at the things the writer of Hebrews lists here as being elementary principles, milk but not meat: the very things that so many churches and worldwide ministries harp on as being the deeper things of God.

The elementary principle of **'Repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.'** Of course, what he means in writing to these Hebrews is repentance from the now ineffectual and unnecessary rituals and sacrifices of Judaism... the things which God had established to point them to the coming Messiah. Now that He had come, there was no longer any place for them. What was necessary now, all that was necessary, was faith toward God, faith in the person and work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God.

There are, however, applications to us Gentiles also. What is the most prominent **'dead work'** supposedly coupled with **'faith'** promulgated by so many today, especially the TV charlatans? **Tithing**... giving lots and lots of money to the serpents who tell their followers that God only pays attention to those who give till it hurts... but it never seems to hurt the TV preacher at all. They say, 'make your faith work for you... your faith is activated when you give your money to me... I mean... to God.

Modern tithing has actually been set up to take the place of the Judaic sacrificial system. Giving money is put forth as the modern way of bringing a lamb to sacrifice. Think about it.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to give money to help with effective work of the Gospel, whether it be to the local Church or an outside ministry; It is good and commendable... but if it is done with the motivation of currying favor with God, it is a dead work and completely worthless in God's eyes... although it will help the TV charlatan buy a new \$50 million jet, even though he doesn't even know your name and couldn't care less. This is the heresy of the '**Prosperity Gospel.**'

The elementary principle of **Baptisms and laying on of hands.** Following the Lord Jesus Christ in water baptism is very important for every believer but it is an elementary principle. How many churches base their entire ministry around what they deem 'proper' baptism? How many churches teach that the most important thing possible for a believer is having hands laid on them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and to speak in tongues? Nothing is more important than that, to so many pastors and teachers... nothing that is, except tithing and giving money... but second most important is laying on of hands, baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. That's just the way it is... that is reality in so much of the Church today.

The elementary principle of **resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment...** these are all elements of the Christian Faith which should have been taught early in the believer's Christian walk and then the pastor should have moved on to a deeper and more mature understanding for his flock... he had not done so.

And today... how little do we hear of **resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment?** Of the **Rapture** and the **Second Coming of Jesus Christ...** that we believers will stand before Him and give an account of our lives in order to receive or suffer the loss of eternal rewards... or that every unbeliever who walks into a Church... how often do they ever hear that they will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ in Judgment and suffer eternity in Hell unless they place their faith and trust in Him alone and His finished work on the Cross?

These are all crucial but elementary.

Now the writer of Hebrews is going to take his readers on a journey into the deeper things of God... some of the things which God commissioned Paul to teach to the Gentiles. The writer of Hebrews, however, must lay a more carefully crafted foundation because his audience are Hebrews who have grown up in Judaism, believing that they knew the answers to a life that is pleasing to God. They must first be untaught of their deeply held belief system and then retaught correctly according to God's revelation through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul didn't have to do that with Gentiles... they were like unbelievers today... believing anything, everything and nothing... all at the same time.