

Last week's study concerned the writer of Hebrews reminding believers about a most alarming fact—especially for his readers of the time: Jesus the Christ is superior to the highly esteemed Moses. To a group of believers who adored Moses and even used his name as a synonym for the Scriptures

A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:

WHY DO WE NEED TO HOLD ON TO THE FAITH FIRMLY? HOW DOES SABBATH REST TEACH US TO DO THAT?

(cf., Mark 10:3; Matthew 22:24), declaring Christ's superiority was world-shattering. And bewildering. All of their lives had been spent in learning "what Moses said" and "what does Moses say about ...". Now the epistle of Hebrews tells us not to hold onto Moses, but to Jesus.

The writer claims Jesus the Christ, as the Son of God, is *the* definitive revelation of the Lord God Jehovah. Furthermore, contrary to popular thought at the time, Christ is superior to angels—no angel was ever given the universe to rule nor the privilege to sit beside Father God's majesty. Additionally, Christ became human, just like us, so He could learn (understand experientially) what we feel as "flesh and blood." His humanity made Him a faithful priest, a merciful priest, and the One who could atone (propitiate) our sin. It was through His suffering and temptations that He was, is, and shall be able always to help us through our suffering and temptations.

This is the exclusively exceptional fundamental of the faith—God Himself condescended to earth (Genesis 3:15, Matthew 28:6, and Hebrews 2:14-15), taking on human form so He could learn about us, and we about Him. Without His deity, we could not be saved from our weaknesses and sins. Without His humanity, we could not learn just how righteous, how just, and how loving the Lord God Jehovah is. It was for this reason that the Lord God Christ came to earth—to demonstrate publicly the righteousness of Father God.¹⁷

☛ This week we see the writer declaring Jesus the Christ to be the new and only high priest. And, he continues his warnings about the implications of disobedience and unbelief. Previously, the writer wrote about believers drifting away; now he emphasizes and re-emphasizes God's wrath for those who disobey.

☛ Bottom-line: drifters will not enter into God's "rest, i.e., His dwelling place."

¹⁷ "[Father] God presented Him [the Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith *ἐν* Jesus."—Romans 3:25-26

Hebrews 4:1-13. *The gospel has no value if hearing it is not combined with faith.* God's offer of rest (dwelling with Him) is still on the table—let us not be spiritually stupid and fail to grasp the Lord God's promise.

Now we've received this great news just like our forefathers, but their hearing was not combined with faith in the Lord God. We who have combined hearing with obedience will enter the promised rest, just like God said.

His work has been completed—on the seventh day God rested. Yet, God has said those who disobeyed and did not believe shall never enter My dwelling place. God has set, therefore, a certain day, "today," when people will have to choose. David said it quite well: *Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.*

If the first Yeshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. So? There remains, then a Sabbath-rest for God's people. Anyone who enters God's rest, also rests from his own work—just like the Lord God did on the seventh day.

Remember, the Word of God is alive—Holy Spirit is sharper than any two-edged sword. His influence penetrates to the very *raison d'être* of us. Holy Spirit judges our thoughts and attitudes. Nothing, nothing, nothing is hidden from His sight.

Everything is out there, right there for Him to see and to Whom we are held accountable.

- Q Why do people ignore and/or disobey the news that God's has still an open-ended opportunity to dwell with Him?
- Q What part of God's work is finished? Is there not "work" to do still? New heavens? New earth? Judgment? A Millennial reign? Casting Satan and his angels into hell?
- Q What is the promise of Sabbath-rest for believers? [Is this not a call to observe the principle of Sabbath? Or, is it rest from trying to "do it on our own" or both, just as in Sabbath?]

HEBREWS 4:1-13

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ²For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith [many manuscripts read *because they did not share in the faith of those who obeyed*]. ³Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

"So I declared on oath in my anger,

"They shall never enter my rest.'" [Psalm 95:11]

And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." [Genesis 2:2] ⁵And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

⁶It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. ⁷Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." [Psalm 95:7-8]

⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

¹²For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- Q Why do we need to hold on to the faith firmly? How does Sabbath rest teach us how to do that?
- Q How is the work of Holy Spirit (here identified as the “word of God”) living and active? Sharp? Penetrating? Judging our *raison d'être*’s attitudes and thoughts?
- Q What are the spiritually pragmatic implications of recognizing that nothing, nothing, nothing is hidden from the Lord God, and thus we will be held accountable?

THE CHRIST AS HIGH PRIEST AND DEITY: HEBREWS 4:14-5:6

Hebrews 4:14-5:6. *The Christ is not only God, He is also High Priest.* Our Jesus, as the Son of God, has become our high priest in heaven. Therefore, let us hold firmly to the faith we teach, proclaim—the very faith by which we live and die.

Remember, our High Priest is not like the knuckleheads in Jerusalem, sinful, and politically correct, always.¹⁸ Unlike the priestly intelligentsia living in Jerusalem, our High Priest is in heaven, having lived on earth and therefore knows our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way, yet He committed no sin—He was never separated from Father God.

So, in times of need, let us approach our High Priest confidently—He is not only God Himself, He has been human. Consequently, we can approach His throne of grace, not in terror, but confidently seek mercy—*forgiveness for our shortcomings*, and grace—*the power to be righteous*.

Consider the nature and role of the high priest. He is selected from among men, and is appointed to represent people to God, offering gifts and sacrifices on their behalf. He’s able to do this gently with the ignorant and weak for he too has weaknesses. So when he offers up sacrifices, they’re not only for the congregation, they are for him as well.

HEBREWS 4:14-5:6

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone into heaven, [or *gone through the heavens*] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

¹⁵For 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. ¹⁶Let 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.

⁵¹Every 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. ²He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ³This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

⁴No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵So 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." [Psalm 2:7]

⁶And he says in another place,

"You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." [Psalm 110:4]

¹⁸During Christ’s time on earth as Jesus of Nazareth, the office of high priest was controlled by the family who had bought control of same.

No priest can take this honor upon himself—he must be called by God, just as Aaron. Similarly, Jesus the Christ did not take this honor upon Himself, He was called by Father God. The Psalmist expressed it this way...

“You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” [Psalm 2:7] “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” [Psalm 110:4]

- Q Why was it important to the initial readers of Hebrews to see the Christ as *the* High Priest? [Hint: 70AD; priest politicization and incestuous leadership]
- Q Why was it important to modern readers of Hebrews to see the Christ as *the* High Priest?
- Q How and why is the Christ particularly qualified to be our High Priest?
- Q Who do we humans often substitute as high priest in our lives? Who would you add to this list?

