

## 8. Understanding the Ministry of Christ as Our Great High Priest

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to explain to others how to enter into the eternal rest that God has promised. We saw that people must enter that rest by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. In this topic, we are going to see that Christians can begin to enjoy this eternal rest immediately even though we are still here on this earth. This is due to the fact that Christ is our Great High Priest who speaks for us to the Father.

Hebrews 4:9-10 says, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His.” Here, we see that the writer of Hebrews reminded the Jews that there is a rest (this word for “rest” is used only here in the New Testament so this is our eternal sabbath rest) for the people of God. Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, Ephesians 2:14-18 says, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” As a result, this rest is the privilege of all Christians whether we are Jews or Gentiles.

In Hebrews 4:3-4, we are reminded, “For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest,”’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.’” God said that our eternal rest was finished before the foundation of the world. As a result, we enter that eternal rest at the moment of salvation. Just as God ceased from His works of creation and rested on the seventh day, so as Christians we have ceased from our efforts to try and earn salvation. As a result, we entered the eternal rest that God has prepared for us at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ.

That is why we want to help our children begin to enjoy the spiritual blessings that God has given to all Christians. Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.” Here, we see that we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing because we are in Christ. Since those blessings are in the heavenly places, this chapter in Hebrews will tell us how to enjoy those blessing in the present.

Hebrews 4:11-13 says, “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.” To “be diligent to enter that rest” means to make sure that we have stopped depending on our

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Updated July 2023

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works and have come to Christ through faith. If someone has not entered that rest, that person is following the example of the disobedience of the people of Israel in the wilderness.

That is why we are to know that the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is sharp on both sides of the blade. It will reveal the heart of any professing Christian who is still depending on his or her own works for salvation. Since God looks at the heart, we see that God says that His Word will also discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word will reveal to those people, who are only professing Christians, that their heart is still evil.

We see why the Word of God is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart and show who believes and who does not. First, the Word of God is living. 1 Peter 1:23 says, “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” In this verse, we see that the Word of God lives. In fact, it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit brings conviction of the sin of unbelief according to John 16:9 which says, “of sin, because they do not believe in Me.”

Second, the Word of God is powerful. The word translated “powerful” means *active or effective*. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:9, “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries.” Paul had an effective door opened for him to share the Gospel. In Isaiah 55:11, God said, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.” God causes His Word to be effective because it goes right to the heart.

Since the Word of God reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart, the Word will bring conviction to the heart and the Holy Spirit will convict those who are professing Christians but have never really repented of their sin to realize that they face a choice. John 16:8-11 says, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit will convince them of their sin of unbelief. The Holy Spirit will also convince them that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One who paid the penalty for their sin. Then, the Holy Spirit will convince them that Satan has already been judged and that those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment. At the same time, this makes it possible for the Father to draw some of them to Christ because they realize the choice that they face.

For those who have repented of their unbelief and placed their faith in Christ, Hebrews 4:14-16 says, “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. 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. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Here, we see that every person that has become a true Christian has a greater high priest than Aaron, the first high priest. Christ is our great High Priest. A true priest speaks to men for God and speaks to God for men. When Christ came to this earth, He spoke to mankind for

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God.

Today, Christ has passed through the heavens and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Christ will certainly not condemn any true Christian. Instead, we see that Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father. The word translated “makes intercession” means that *Christ is speaking on our behalf to the Father*. When Satan accuses us of sin, Christ says that He paid for our sin and that we accepted that payment by placing our faith in Christ. The Father says that He is satisfied with the payment and the accusation is dismissed.

We are also reminded that Christ understands each temptation that we face. The word translated “be touched with the feeling” means that *Christ understands us when we are tempted and has compassion on us*. He was tempted in the same three ways that we are tempted. 1 John 2:16 says, “For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” Christ was tempted to satisfy His flesh by turning stones to bread when He was hungry. Christ was shown all of the kingdoms of the world and Satan offered to give them to Christ if Christ would worship him. Christ was tempted to pride when Satan told Him to jump off the highest point of the temple to show His greatness to the Jews. Christ was victorious over each of these temptations and answered Satan with Scripture.

Christ understands each temptation that we face. He has compassion for us and speaks to the Father for us. That is why we can come boldly to the throne of grace. Hebrews 7:24-25 says, “But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” The Father will always listen when Christ intercedes for a person that has placed their faith in Christ because the Father is satisfied with the payment that Christ made.

As we come boldly to the throne of grace, we will obtain mercy and the Father will show His grace to us in our time of need. Hebrews 10:19-22 says, “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” We can come into the presence of the Father because of the fact that Christ created a new way for us to come with His blood. He is our High Priest. We can now come before God with a true heart instead of avoiding God because of an evil heart. We can come by faith and know that our conscience has been renewed. We can also know that all of our daily sins are forgiven because Christ blotted out our sins and now provides daily cleansing as we confess our sins to Him. Understanding this will give our physical and spiritual children great boldness as they come to the Father. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest.