

Our Great High Priest

Jim Rooney

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“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.”

(Heb. 4:14)

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Preface

This book is a commentary on the book of Hebrews in the Holy Bible. Hebrews is a book that many do not read or study. At times it seems difficult to understand. However, it is truly an amazing book in the New Testament that explains how Jesus Christ of Nazareth is our Great High Priest. In the book of Hebrews Jesus Christ is shown to be greater than Moses, the angels, and the priesthood. We see that the Old Testament sacrifices, ritual, and symbols have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

I wanted to write this book to show the importance of Hebrews and to share my commentary on it. In this easy to read book we will see that Jesus Christ has made all Christians a priesthood. We now have open access to the Father through the one time sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. I hope this book will be helpful and interesting to those who might not have previously read or studied the book of Hebrews. It is as relevant today as it was when it was written.

Introduction

When Was Hebrews Written?

We don't know when this book was written. It mentions that Timothy, the Apostle Paul's son in the faith, was recently released from prison. Scholars think this book was written between 65 - 95 AD.

Who Wrote Hebrews?

This is a very interesting question. The simple answer is we do not know. However, it is believed to have been written by one of the Lord's apostles. The one who did write it had a thorough understanding of the Old Testament priesthood and the Lord Jesus Christ's priesthood. Many feel it was written by the Apostle Paul. However, there is a notable difference between this book and the other biblical books Paul wrote. Paul always addresses the people or persons he was writing to in an affectionate way in his introductory comments and identifies himself as the one writing. In Hebrews, the author does not. His purpose in writing this book is to make the case that Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest and removing the need for the human priesthood. However, this author does mention Timothy by name at the end of his letter, and Paul was very close personally to Timothy. The author said that he and Timothy would visit together with those the author is writing to if Timothy came within a short period of time. Perhaps the mystery surrounding the authorship of Hebrews has created even more interest in this book. Christians will get the honor to talk to this author one day in glory and find out who he was and why his name was not given.

Who Was Hebrews Written To and Why?

We don't know for sure who the author is writing to as he does not mention who he is addressing in this book. It appears he was writing to Jewish Christians who were lapsing back into the Old Testament traditions and worship. He wanted to make sure these Christians who were either new or weak in their faith understood there was now a New Testament or New Covenant in Jesus Christ that was far superior than the Old Testament types, symbols, and observances. The Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices were just temporary and pointed to the future work and priesthood of Jesus Christ. The New Testament in Christ fulfilled the Old Testament.

However, in a larger sense the author is writing to everyone, Jew or Gentile, Christian or unbeliever. What he has to say is important for everyone to know and understand. It tells us everything we need to know about how to be saved from God's wrath to come, how to live our lives, and how to properly worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is our Great High Priest.

When Did The Jewish Priesthood Begin?

Moses, by the power of God, led the twelve tribes of Israel out of bondage under Pharaoh of Egypt in the Exodus. Although we don't know exactly when that took place, some put the date around 1400 BC. On Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, the laws of God, and the way the Jewish people were to worship Him. God established the priesthood who would be from the Jewish tribe of Levi and represent the people before God in the tabernacle in the wilderness and later in the temple in Jerusalem. The priests would maintain the house of God and be responsible for overseeing the

animal sacrifices. The animals were brought by the people to be slain on an altar and sacrificed as a way for them to be pardoned for their sins. God established in the Old Testament law a plan of substitutionary atonement or pardon. Instead of the Jew having to face the penalty for his sins, God provided for the Jew to bring an animal, without spot or blemish, to be sacrificed on the altar of the tabernacle or temple. By the shedding of its blood, the sacrifice satisfied the wrath of God for that person's sins. It was to be a spotless animal, often a lamb, because it had to be one of the best of the flock. God wanted this to be a real sacrificial offering for the Jew. It had to be of value or costly to him. We must always give our best to the Lord.

The Old Testament symbolism of the spotless animal being sacrificed to pay the penalty for the sins of the people pointed to the New Testament sacrifice of the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, who would give Himself to be a sacrifice for all those who would believe in Him.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)

The High Priest

The Jewish priesthood always had a high or chief priest who was appointed and presided over the priesthood. Only he could go into the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle or temple once a year on the Day of Atonement and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat. He did this for the forgiveness of both his sins and the sins of the people.

The Tabernacle and Temple

After God brought Israel out of Egypt they were punished for not having faith in Him to help them defeat the nations in the Promised Land of Canaan. They refused to go in and defeat the nations who were there. As their punishment, God made them wander in the Sinai wilderness for 40 years. God had given Moses instructions on how the people would worship Him. They were to construct a very large portable tent called the tabernacle. Here the people would come and offer their animal sacrifices on an altar. Behind the altar was a tent divided into two rooms by a thick, ornate curtain. The first room was called the Holy Place. The next room was called the Holy of Holies. Later, the large, beautiful and ornate temple of God was built by King Solomon in Jerusalem. The temple was built in a similar way. The holy items in each room were there just as they were in the tabernacle.

What was the Difference Between a prophet of God and the High Priest?

A prophet was selected by God to deliver His message to the people. The prophet represented God to the people. The high priest represented the people to God. The high priest would offer up sacrifices to God for his own sins and the sins of the people. These sacrifices would provide atonement or pardon for their sins.

Jesus Christ was sinless. He offered Himself up to be a sacrifice for the sins of everyone who would believe and trust in Him. His sacrifice provided full atonement or pardon for the sins of Christians and satisfied the wrath of God for their sins. God, to be just, has to punish the sinner. In His grace God instituted a plan where His justice would

be satisfied by punishing His beloved Son in place of the sinner. What amazing grace!

Jesus fulfilled the role of the Great Prophet, the Great High Priest, and the Great King. Jesus is the King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14).

Chapter 1

God Now Speaks Through His Son Jesus Christ

Heb. 1:1: God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

Before the coming of Jesus Christ to earth as a human being, God spoke to His chosen people Israel through different prophets or holy men of God. Oftentimes the prophet, by the revelation of God, would tell the people of future events and coming judgment on them for their sinfulness, idolatry, and intermarriage with pagan peoples. God would communicate His messages to these prophets by speaking directly to them like He did to Moses, or by dreams, visions, and angels. Many of these holy men wrote down these messages from God and it became preserved in the different books of the Old Testament.

² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,

However, since the time of Jesus Christ coming to earth, we now hear from God through His Word. Jesus Christ is the Word of God who became flesh (John 1:1, 14). We are in the last days so we need to be careful to listen to what has been revealed to us in God's Word, the Bible. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the truths and mysteries of the Word of God (John 16:13).

whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

The Father has given all of creation to His blessed Son. Jesus is the heir or beneficiary of all that has been created. This would seem evident as

Jesus Christ created all things (John 1:3; Col. 1:16). He made the worlds so He owns them.

³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power,

This phrase proves that Jesus Christ is God. What else can we conclude? If Jesus has the same glory, appearance, and power of God, than He must be God. Here we see the duality of Jesus Christ as both man (Son of Man) and God (Son of God). We also see a glimpse of the Holy Trinity (Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Spirit). One God who exists as three separate, divine persons. Please refer to my e-book, Did Jesus Christ Claim to be God on www.free-ebooks.net for a more in-depth explanation of Jesus Christ as God the Son. Jesus holds all things together by His power (Cor. 1:17).

when He had by Himself purged our sins,

How did Jesus purge or cleanse us of our sins? As mentioned in the introduction, Jesus sacrificed His life as an atonement or pardon for our sins. He is our redeemer. He took the punishment or wrath of God for the sins of everyone who would become a Christian. He paid our sin debt by His crucifixion so that we would not have to pay for our own sins in the lake of fire. Our sins have been cleansed by His shed blood. He did this as our High Priest offering Himself to the Father in our place.

sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

When Jesus ascended into heaven after his crucifixion and resurrection, He sat down on the right hand of the Father as He had finished the redemption of Christians (1 Peter 3:22). Right before Jesus died on the cross He said, "It is finished." What is Jesus doing now? He is making sure the plan and will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

He is interceding on our behalf as our advocate before the Father as Satan accuses us. He is preparing a special place for us in heaven. He will one day return from heaven in the clouds with His holy angels and holy saints. Saints are not super Christians who have been designated saints by men. All believers in Christ are referred to as saints in the Bible (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2). He will bring forth the consummation (the judgment, paradise for Christians, and damnation in the lake of fire for unbelievers).

⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Angels are far superior to humans. They are more powerful and can travel great distances in the blink of an eye. However, they are far weaker than God. Angels are heavenly messengers of God who protect God's people, worship Him, and do His bidding. However, Jesus Christ is God's Son and no angel has that position of preeminence. Jesus' name is truly more excellent than any of the angels for His name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6)! Yes, Jesus Christ is truly God as this verse states and He has inherited all of creation.

The Son is Superior to the Angels

⁵ For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?

Although angels have a special relationship with God they are not as close to Him as Jesus Christ. None of the angels were ever called "My Son" by the Father. Only Jesus has that special title as the Son of God. If Jesus is the eternal Son of God, how is it said by the Father, "Today I

have begotten You.”? One explanation is that Jesus was begotten of the Father when He was born in human form by the power of the Holy Spirit who overshadowed the virgin Mary and caused her to be pregnant with Jesus (Luke 1:35). That is the day the word “today” is referring to in verse 5. However, Christ did not begin His existence at His earthly birth. He was always with the Father even before time (John 1:1, 2, 14). The more accurate explanation is that the Son was eternally begotten of the Father. This is difficult for our finite minds to understand.

⁶ But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

Jesus is the firstborn of the dead. (Col. 1:18). What does that mean? It means that when Jesus rose from the dead at His resurrection He was the first person to receive His eternal, glorified body. We too will one day receive glorified bodies at our resurrection when Jesus returns in power and glory (1 Cor. 15:51-58). Although Jesus has been worshiped by the angels before time, He should certainly be worshiped by them now because of His wonderful work of redemption for sinful mankind.

⁷ And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.”

Angels were created by Jesus. They reside in heaven. The fallen angels called devils or demons have been forcibly removed from heaven by God for trying to overthrow Him. Their evil demonic leader Satan, also called the devil, wanted to be God and rule in God’s place. Some of these demons are chained up in hell waiting for their judgment and eternal damnation in the lake of fire. Others have been allowed by God a certain amount of freedom to roam the earth. However, they too will be judged and eternally punished in the lake of fire.

Angels do not have bodies like humans but are spirits. We can't see them but they are always close by protecting believers from harm. They can be in many forms. Sometimes they appear as men and can also be ministers of God who will one day cast unbelievers into the lake of fire.

⁸ But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom."

Here God the Father is speaking to God the Son Jesus Christ. He calls Jesus "O God" which proves the Son is also God. The Father states that the Son will be on His throne forever. Jesus as King of kings will rule over the world in righteousness. He is the King of righteousness. What a comfort for believers to know that Jesus Christ will rule in righteousness, always doing what is right and good for them (Rom. 8:28).

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

Jesus always has loved righteousness. He hates sin, evil, and lawlessness. Jesus commanded us to love God and to love others. The Father has anointed Jesus with the oil of gladness. Our Lord has a greater measure of gladness than any created being. More than His disciples and more than His friends. He is glad beyond measure as He was chosen to redeem mankind from their sins. Only Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was found worthy to do this. (Rev. 5:4-9)

¹⁰ And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands."

The Father continues talking to His Son. He honors Jesus by calling Him "Lord" and states that Jesus is the Creator of all things.

¹¹ They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment;

All of creation will grow old just like all tangible things do. The Bible tells us that when Jesus returns on the last day the heavens and earth will be destroyed in a great fire. (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13) Then God will create a new heaven and a new earth and the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven where all Christians will live with Jesus in righteousness. (Rev. 21) Even though the heavens and the earth will perish, Jesus Christ will remain as the eternal and immortal One.

¹² Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.”

Jesus will fold up all creation like a coat as He dissolves it with fire. The creation changes and wears out but not Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow! (Heb. 13:8) Jesus Christ is eternal. He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, and the Alpha and Omega. (Rev. 1:8, 11)

¹³ But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?

To again emphasize Jesus’ superiority over the angels, the Father reminds us that He never told an angel to sit at His right hand until He made their enemies their footstool. However, that is exactly what the Father has said to His Son, Jesus Christ.

⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Angels have many important purposes as they serve God. One of those purposes is to minister to and protect Christians. Think about all the many times you almost had an accident, especially when driving. Perhaps an angel prevented you from having an accident.

Chapter 2

Pay Close Attention to the Word of Salvation

1Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

Now that God speaks to us in these last days directly by His Son, the Word of God, we need to pay close attention to His Word. Why is that? One reason is because we are in the last days. Jesus can return at any time so we need to be ready. Two, we don't want to drift away from the truth of God's teaching and backslide into sin. Reading and studying the Word of God daily will keep us close to God and help us remain faithful.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,

Angels are messengers of God. The elect angels (1 Tim. 5:21) are holy and only speak the truth of God. Those individuals or nations that did not heed the Word of God sent from angels received the just punishment for their sins and disobedience. That punishment was both earthly and spiritual. The ultimate judgment for rejecting Christ, the Word of God, is eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

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