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**HEBREWS**

**Hebrews 4:15 “**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

Once again the author of Hebrews refers to Jesus as our “Heavenly High Priest”. Jesus is ultimately the only one who can go before God on our behalf, and certainly the only one with the power to absolve us of sins, being both the High Priest and the sacrifice as well.

**Hebrews 4:16“**Let us then approach God’s throne of **grace** with confidence, so that we may receive **mercy** and find grace to help us in our time of need.” <>

Grace – Blessings that we *don’t* deserve.

Mercy – Pardon from the punishment we *do* deserve.

**Hebrews 5**

**Hebrews 5:1-6*“****Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.****2****He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.****3****This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.****4****And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.*

***5****In the same way, Christ did not take on 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*

***6****And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” Psalm 110:4*

The Priesthood - *“Kohanim”*

In Israel, the Priests of God would be the only ones who could sacrifice and go before the Lord’ presence (particularly the High Priests). They would do it on behalf of all the people for forgiveness of their sins.

How were they chosen? The descendants of Jacob’s 12 sons become what is known as the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel”).

These are their names; *Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.*

The only tribe however, whose people could be priests, was Levi. That’s why all priests of Israel are from this tribe (Levites). (Any time you read of a priest in the Bible, you know that they are from the tribe of Levi.) Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin (a was Paul), David was from the tribe of Judah (as was Jesus), Moses however was from the tribe of Levi (as was Aaron, who was the first priest of Israel).

When the children of Israel crossed the desert from Egypt and reached the promised land, they were each given an allotment of land to live and dwell, except the Levites. They were to dwell in every area of the country performing their priestly duty in the tabernacle and eventually the temple.

The land was still divided into twelve parts because Joseph’s allotment was split in two, and named after his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and they were considered *half tribes*.

So how could Jesus be a priest if He’s not a Levite? He is “*a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”.*

*“*Melchizedek” is a strange character who visited Abraham hundreds of years before the tribe of Levi ever existed. He was a priest who existed before the priesthood was ever established so he couldn’t be an ordinary Levite. He is called a “Priest of God Most High.” This is the type of Priest Jesus is. Not like Aaron or any of the priests that succeeded him.

**What exactly was a High Priest**

The high priest was the highest religious leader among the Israelites. The position of the high priest was passed on along family lines beginning with Aaron, the brother of Moses, of the Levite tribe to every High Priest who came after him.  
  
The high priest’s primary role was to offer sin offerings not only for the sins of the people, but also for himself.  
  
The most important duty of the high priest was to conduct the *Tabernacle or Temple sacrifices* on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) every year. Only he was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) behind the veil to stand before God.

He would make a sacrifice for himself and for the people, he then brought the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, to make atonement for the people for all their sins committed during the year. (Exodus 30:10).   
  
**Why was this so important?** - Here's why…

When God called Abraham and told him that His descendants will be the Chosen People of God, it came with several promises;

1. That his descendants would become a great nation. (Israel – The Jewish people)
2. That his descendants would be given the promised land (The land of Israel).
3. That ALL families of the earth would be blessed through him. (Jesus the Messiah)

When Moses lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt and across the desert, it seemed that these promises were coming true. God called His Chosen People the *Children of Israel*, and eventually just “Israel”. He would dwell with them, lead them, guide them, give them His word, protect them and bless them far above any nation on earth.

**Deuteronomy 7:6** "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.”

This warning was true of the nation of Israel.

**Luke 12:48** “To whom much is given, much is required”.

With the honor and privilege of being called God’s chosen people, and having His Holy Presence dwell with them regularly, came one very important rule. NO SIN!

They could not sin, or allow sin to take place in the camp. It had to be kept completely free from sin (like how an operating room, must be completely clean and sterile free from all contaminants.

Otherwise God would withdraw His presence, or worse, allow them to suffer severe consequences (i.e. famine, disease, death at the hands of their enemies). In fact, the basic premise was that anyone who sins should die. That ruled remained in the law for some of the worst sins that were committed among the people.

The problem is that due to mankind’s fallen nature, people inevitably DO sin. So because of this, God made provision. Instead of withdrawing and reneging on His promise to His people and going out to find some other nation to choose, He gave them strict instructions (The Law “Torah”) on what to do about removing the stain of sin in the camp and among the people when there is sin.

The basic rule was that if you sin you should die. However there were many sins that can be “atoned for”. That means *you* don’t have to die; you can have your animal die for you. Not just any animal, only certain animals, who were acceptable offerings at just the right time and in just the right manner. This is the primary work that the High Priest was in charge of. He would offer the sin offering and sacrifices in strict adherence to the ”Levitical Law”. This would cover the people’s sins making them acceptable to be called “*God’s Holy People”.*

There was no way to have your sins forgiven by any other means.

***Doesn’t this make you eternally grateful for Jesus?***

His death on the cross was the once and for all atonement for all sins. His blood fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, so that we can be forgiven of our sins, and God can dwell freely with us not in a temple, or in a tabernacle, but in our hearts.

* + **Heb. 9:26** “But now, *once for all time*, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice.”
  + **Heb. 9:12** “He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place *once for all* by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”
  + **Heb. 10:10** “we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*.”

Jesus paid it all! And offers that forgiveness, redemption and eternal life to all who believe!

**Hebrews 5:7-10 “**During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. **8**Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered **9**and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him **10**and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”

The author is referring to what Jesus went through internally on His final night before He became that once-for-all sacrifice on the cross. *“He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death…”*

Because of His reverent submission and obedience from what he suffered; He became the source of eternal salvation. KJV uses the phrase *“The Author of Eternal Salvation”.*

Never forget that He truly did suffer, He fully knew the fate that awaited Him the very next day; horrible humiliation, torture, betrayal, denial, the scourging of whips, and death on the cross. He was obedient to do the Father’s will however, because He knew that He was our only hope, and our only source of eternal salvation.

**Matthew 26:36-42 “**Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” **37**He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. **38**Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

**39**Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, *if it is possible*, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

**40**Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. **41**“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

**42**He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, *if it is not possible* for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

It’s very important to know what was at take when Jesus died on the cross. It was not simply just a case of a good man being killed by evil men. There was so much more happening that had eternal consequences for all of mankind. This is the essence of the story of salvation and the *“elementary truths of God’s word”.*

*This is in fulfillment of one of the most important Messianic Prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures;*

**Isaiah 53:4-6** “Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The author then addresses the readers who may or may not fully understand these truths, or don’t try to understand the importance of Jesus’ atonement for our sins, once-for all.

**Hebrews 5:11-14“**We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you *no longer try to understand*. **12**In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the *elementary truths of God’s word* all over again. You need milk, not solid food! **13**Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. **14**But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”<>

When our children are babies or still very small, we give them milk. As they grow, we introduce solid foods into their diet, then they begin to grow taller, stronger, and more mature. If we only gave them milk their whole life, their development would be stunted and they would remain physically undeveloped.

This is how the author addressed the readers of the book of Hebrews. The goal is to be mature believers, with a steady diet of God’s Word. This can only happen by reading, studying and sitting under edifying teaching from God’s Word. If you starve yourself of His word, or only read some of it, you will not mature in the things of God.

This is why we place such an emphasis on the rightly divided teaching of God’s word every week. Not just gimmicky, shallow, ear candy, sermons with *clever culture comments*. We want our church to hear and know the full Word of God, and have the Holy Spirit lead us into deeper truths.

Paul says to the Corinthians;

**1st Cor. 3:1-3** **“**Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?”

I believe one of the most common challenges we face today are *immature Christians* who are given a voice in society without having a firm foundation of the “*elementary truths of God’s word”.* Much of the heated rhetoric, and conflict that takes place among Christians online, and in the news is fueled by comments and positions that do not have a mature scriptural basis. Often time when scripture is used to support an argument, it is used out of context or in an incomplete manner.

It's easy to get entangled in arguments and heated exchanges with these folks, but our job as mature Believers is to know the word ourselves, and be led by the Holy Spirit to impart God’s truth into every situation we are able. But we must be kind to everyone, not resentful, and able to teach those who oppose us, in hopes that God will grant them repentance, and lead them to a fuller, more mature knowledge of His truth. Our hope is that that they can escape the traps of the Devil who has taken them captive.

Closing:

**2nd Timothy 2:15-16, 24-26“**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. **16**Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.” **…**

**24**And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. **25**Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, **26**and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” <>