

HEBREWS 2:16-18 completes the lesson from May 23

We will finish this lesson and begin the study from a few verses in Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

STUDENT NOTES...

May 30, 2021

Hebrews 2:16-17. Made like his brothers

16. For most certainly, he doesn't give help to angels, but he gives help to the seed of Abraham. 17. Therefore he was obligated in all things to be made like his brothers, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people.

16a. “For most certainly, he doesn't give help to angels

The author emphasizes throughout chapters 1-2 that the Son (Jesus) is superior to angels. In this verse, the author is emphasizing that the Son didn't come to earth and die on the cross to help angels. He came to save people.

16b. “but he gives help to the seed of Abraham

The allusion is to Isaiah 41:8-11, where God, through the prophet, speaks of “Abraham my friend,” and promises, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you away. Don't you be afraid, for I am with you.”

Keep in mind that the author is writing to Jewish Christians, so they would identify with “the seed of Abraham.” They would consider themselves sons and daughters of Abraham.

But Christ came to save, not just those who are descendants of Abraham by blood. As Paul says elsewhere, “Know therefore that those who are of faith, the same are children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7).

I KNOW WE MENTIONED THIS LAST WEEK, BUT THE GENEALOGY WAS IMPORTANT TO THE HEBREW PEOPLE...AND THIS PROVIDES A SIGNIFICANT COMMENTARY ABOUT JESUS DIRECTIVE TO MINISTER TO THE GENTILES.

- Jesus' genealogy includes two Gentiles, Ruth and Rahab (Matthew 1:1-17).
- He ministered to Gentiles (Matthew 4:25; 8:28ff; 15:28).
- He spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven being “like a dragnet, that was cast into the sea, and gathered some fish of every kind”—a veiled reference to Gentiles (Matthew 13:47).
- Matthew reports a Roman centurion saying, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).
- Jesus concluded his ministry by telling his disciples, “Go, and make disciples of all nations” (28:19).

17a. “Therefore he was obligated in all things to be made like his brothers that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people

Jewish law established an elaborate sacrificial system to atone for the sins of the people. The high priest was responsible for the administration of the sacrifices. He alone was permitted in the Holy of Holies (the dwelling place of God)—and only on the Day of Atonement.

Christ assumed the role of “a merciful and faithful high priest”—the ultimate high priest.

17b. “to make atonement for the sins of the people

In my study for this verse, I found that the Greek word translated here as atonement is also translated “propitiation” or “expiation”—words calculated to put people to sleep in my opinion—but the distinctions among them are worth noting.

ATONEMENT has to do with making amends for sins or repairing the spiritual damage caused by sins. It also has to do with restoring relationships that were broken by sin—in particular the relationship that we enjoyed with God prior to the introduction of sin into the world.

Our sin, therefore, creates a conflict for God. On the one hand, God is repulsed by our sin, but on the other hand, he loves us. On the one hand, he cannot bring himself to invite us into full fellowship while we are tainted with sin, but on the other hand, he cannot bring himself to dismiss us totally.

I love that this describes God with Human emotions...

Here we get an introduction to *substitutionary atonement* — “substitutionary” meaning that God will accept a substitute to absorb the punishment for our sins and “atonement” meaning that we can be restored to full fellowship with God. Christ’s death on the cross became the ultimate sacrifice.

WHERE HAVE WE SEEN THAT CONCEPT IN OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES??

Some people interpret PROPITIATION to mean appeasing the wrath of God by offering a sacrifice. They believe that it was inappropriate to use the word propitiation in relationship to God, because they understand God as gracious and loving, not wrathful, and not requiring sacrifices to appease his anger.

However, I also learned that propitious means “favorably disposed” or “gracious”— and another Greek word also defined as which *kind* or *gracious*.

EXPIATION, on the other hand, involves the removal or forgiveness of sin.

I have learned that Most Christian scholars today favor the words atonement or expiation rather than propitiation.

Hebrews 2:18. Because he suffered temptation, he can help us

18. For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

18 a. “For in that he himself has suffered being tempted

We find the story of Jesus’ temptation following his baptism in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). However, we should regard those as accounts of his initial temptation. If he was tempted as we are, Satan must have tempted him on a regular basis. Luke seems to confirm that, saying, “When the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him until another time” (Luke 4:13).

18b. “he is able to help those who are tempted

For me, this brings to mind Alcoholics Anonymous, whose recovering members (those not currently drinking) reach out on a regular basis to help struggling alcoholics (those who are currently drinking). The recovering members are able to relate to the struggling alcoholics, because they have been there and done that. They know the temptations, the excuses, and the deceptions and aren't easily taken in by the things that alcoholics say in their own defense or the promises that they make.

I wouldn't want to press that metaphor too far, however, because AA involves drunks helping drunks. The situation with Jesus is different. He has been tempted as we have been tempted, but he didn't succumb. He is a sinless man helping sinful people.

But though Jesus didn't succumb, he has the kind of sympathy that comes with having suffered temptation. That doesn't mean that Jesus can't be critical—witness his opinions of the scribes and Pharisees. But he is ready and willing to help—and to forgive—the repentant sinner.

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AND NOW THE LESSON CONTINUES IN CHAPTERS 4 AND 5

Hebrews 4:14-16. Having then a great high priest

14. Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold tightly to our confession. 15. For we don't have a high priest who can't be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who has been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin. 16. Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace for help in time of need.

14a. “Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God

In Israel, the high priest was responsible for administering the sacrificial system that God had established for various purposes, atonement for sins being the most important. You remember we have often discussed that only the high priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies only on the Day of Atonement.

The High Priest presided over the Sanhedrin, the highest authority over all matters in Israel, both religious and civil.

WHERE HAVE WE SEEN THAT POSITION USED TO LEAD TO DISCIPLINE AND EVEN DEATH IN BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STORIES?

Jesus assumed the role of high priest—our intermediary with God and the ultimate arbiter of salvation.

The author notes that Jesus is a great high priest—one “who has passed through the heavens.” He is thus superior to earthly high priests, whose access to God’s presence was limited to one day a year in the Holy of Holies.

14b. “let us hold tightly to our confession

The Greek word *fir* confession expresses the sense of a shared belief or confession. Paul uses this word in 2 Corinthians 9:13, where he defines the *confession* as “the Good News of Jesus Christ.”

The Christian community was allowed to differ on many things, but the central tenet of their faith was “the Good News of Jesus Christ.” This was the one thing on which they could and must agree.

The author of Hebrews says that, since Jesus is our high priest, who has passed through the heavens, we can and must hold tightly to our confession of faith.

15a. “For we don’t have a high priest who can’t be touched with the feeling of our infirmities

A more literal translation would be “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.”

15. “but one who has been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin

FYI..Each of the Synoptic Gospels has an account of Jesus’ temptations at the beginning of his ministry (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13), but we shouldn’t imagine that those were his only temptations. Luke tells us that, “When the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from (Jesus) until another time” (Luke 4:13).

Nor should we imagine that the devil (or Satan) would tempt Jesus only occasionally.

Having experienced human life to its fullest, Jesus can sympathize with us when we turn out to be weak—sinful.

16a. “Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace

The Greek word for boldness has to do with freedom in speaking. However, it evolved to mean confidence or boldness, particularly with regard to speech. I SPEND A LOT OF TIME ENCOURAGING COLLEGE SPEECH STUDENTS TO BE BOLD...

The author encourages us to approach the throne of grace with confidence or boldness—ready to speak.

I believe that's quite a privilege.

What would happen if we were invited to approach the throne of the king or queen of Great Britain? Well here is what I found on Wikipedia (and we know that can't be wrong), but it gives a pretty clear picture of expectations.

- We would need to use proper wording to accept the invitation.
- Women would wear white gloves and hats, and men would wear morning dress or uniforms (with decorations, of course).
- In the presence of the queen, women would curtsey and men would bow.
- The queen would be addressed as “Her majesty.”
- The king/queen would take the initiative with regard to conversation, and we would NOT be expected to steer the conversation in a different direction. No personal questions, of course! No questions about state policy.
- And that's only the beginning.

We shouldn't imagine that we will approach God's throne of grace only after our death and resurrection. Every time we go to God in prayer, we are approaching his throne of grace.

A SIDE NOTE: I gave a blessing at a meal recently, and one of the persons setting near me, said you pray like you are a personal friend just having a conversation. I was FLATTERED.

16b. “that we may receive mercy, and may find grace for help in time of need

Both mercy and grace imply that we have not earned God's favor. Instead, God has given his favor on us freely (whether we call his favor “mercy” or “grace”), in spite of the fact that we have not deserved it. Both grace and mercy result in salvation (Romans 3:24; Titus 3:5).

In any event, the promise of this verse is that we can expect both mercy and grace when we approach God's throne.

YOUR HELP REQUESTED FOR: Hebrews 5:1-6. A priest after the order of Melchizedek

1. For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2. The high priest can deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray, because he himself is also surrounded with weakness. 3. Because of this, he must offer sacrifices for sins for the people, as well as for himself. 4. Nobody takes this honor on himself, but he is called by God, just like Aaron was. 5. So also Christ didn't glorify himself to be made a high priest, but it was he who said to him, “You are my Son. Today I have become your father.” 6. As he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

Based on what we have discussed to this point and from other studies, what do verses 1-6 mean to you. We'll discuss the briefly, and you may remember we have studied Melchizedek in our study of Paul's writing. See if you can locate those verses as part of our discussion.

Thank you for helping me teach!!

Hebrews 5:7-9. The author of eternal salvation

7. He, in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and petitions with strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, 8. though he

was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered. 9. Having been made perfect, he became to all of those who obey him the author of eternal salvation.

7a. “He, in the days of his flesh

With these words, the author reminds us that Jesus was a flesh-and-blood historical figure.

7b. “having offered up prayers and petitions with strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear

In my opinion, the Greek word for *godly fear* would better be translated “reverence” or “devotion” rather than “fear.”

At the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” An angel came to strengthen him, and Jesus, “in agony, prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground” (Luke 22:42-43; see also Matthew 26:38-39; Mark 14:34-36).

If we might be inclined to interpret Jesus’ prayer and perspiration as weakness, we need to remember that he followed through with the cross to save the world from its sin.

8. “though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered

Luke gives us a glimpse of Jesus as a boy, going with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem, where he separated himself from Mary and Joseph to amaze the teachers in the temple with his understanding. Mary and Joseph went a day’s journey before they realized that he was missing—and then had to make the journey back to the city, worrying all the way. EVER HAPPEN TO ANY OF YOU...

When they found Jesus, Mary asked, “Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your father and I were anxiously looking for you”—and Jesus sassily (I like the word sassy because of our son Kevin...but that’s another story) replied, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?

That answer would not have pleased my mother, Bertie, I can assure you. But then Luke tells us:

“And (Jesus) went down with them, and came to Nazareth.
He was subject to them,
and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.
And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,
and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:42-52).

I think it is important to know that from the beginning, Jesus had to grow in four ways—in understanding and physique—and spiritually and socially.

But the growth that the author mentions in this verse is growth in obedience.

9. “Having been made perfect, he became to all of those who obey him the author of eternal salvation

Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). In doing so, he ushered in the possibility of salvation for all mankind.

AND...THAT'S NOT ALL, BUT IT SETS A CLEAR PATH TO THE SALVATION GIVEN BY CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION. THOUGHTS.

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