

Jesus - High Priest of His People

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 January 2011

Preacher: Alex Cowie

[0 : 00] Let's turn back then to the letter to the Hebrews. And we're going to look in chapter 2 again.

! Speaking of the Lord Jesus, For indeed he does not give aid to angels, but he does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

Therefore in all things he had to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to give aid to those who are tempted. Hebrews 2 then, verses 16 to 18. And the title on this one is quite simply, Jesus, High Priest of His People.

[1 : 53] Now, this is about the difference between the right way of doing things and the wrong way of doing things in the things pertaining to God.

The rules are set. If you think about it in a general sense, we function like that all the time.

By that I mean in a general way, we accept that to belong to an official group or a club or a recognized institution, certain rules have to be followed if the benefits are to be accessed.

It's just the order of life. If we accept that, we don't question that, we recognize that if we want to belong to this club or that club, this recognized institution, that our rules should be followed and that's it.

We go along with the rules or we lose the benefits. We can't access them. And if you think about it, even something as basic, at least to drivers anyway, car drivers, as car insurance, the rules need to be followed.

[3 : 14] If we are to benefit from a car insurance policy, then we've got to follow the rules or we will lose the benefits or it may be the benefits will be withdrawn.

And why people have such difficulty when you turn this over and look at the things of God just shows that the sinner will find any way to move away from the rules God has laid down.

When we think about man's access to the living God and the benefits he promises his way, man has difficulty with God's rules.

But the living and true God has made the rules for access to himself and for access to the benefits that he will give.

And access to God and the benefits that are available from him are in and through his own dear son.

[4 : 24] That is abundantly clear. It was abundantly clear in the Saviour's own words to the disciples as he was anticipating the way of the cross.

I am the way, he said. I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father. Utterly and absolutely no one comes to the Father except through me.

It pleased the Father that that's the way it should be. And here in this passage the writer to the Hebrews shows that it is to this end that Jesus became man.

So that we would have rules to follow God's rules for accessing him, the living God, and the benefits he gives us.

We would have a way to the Father. We would have the truth about him and about all the Old Testament shadows and tides that we would have life in his son.

[5 : 31] And with that life, access to the living God. We need to follow his rules further.

If we're going to access him, and if we're going to be benefited by him, we need to do the thing his way. I want us to consider just the benefits secured in Jesus, the high priest of his people.

And secondly, we're going to look at his ongoing ministry to his people and for them. And the first thing we discover in this connection is Jesus is portrayed here.

Jesus, sympathetic, high priest. For indeed, he does not give aid to angels.

Now if you look in your margin, if you've got one in your Bible, you'll see another translation of this, and I think a better and clearer translation is, it's quite simply, he does not take on the nature of angels.

[6 : 51] but he takes on the seed, that is the nature of the seed of Abraham. That's what this is about. So first of all, in thinking about Jesus, sympathetic, high priest, we observe he is truly man.

You see, back earlier on when we were reading this, what we see, verse 9, we don't see the universe put under man's dominion as yet.

We see a little of it, but not the whole story. But we see Jesus, who was made for a little while lower than the angels for the suffering of death.

we see him now crowned with glory and honor. And what the writer is saying here is the first thing to notice about Jesus, our sympathetic, high priest, is this, he is truly man.

We don't forget that he was truly God, and continued to be that. The very opening chapter in this wonderful letter to the Hebrews exalts him in the most august language, the highest descriptions possible are laid upon Jesus.

[8 : 18] Let all the angels of God worship him, we read. And you, Lord, speaking about Jesus, the Son, and you, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth.

Hebrews 1, verse 10. He is infinitely exalted above the angels. He is the eternal Son of God. But at a point in time, he took into union with himself, our nature, yet without sin. was absolutely necessary in following God's rules for accessing him and his benefits that the Son of God, the eternal Son, should become man.

God's God's God's name. And the people under the Old Testament order were taught to look forward to his coming as the true and perfect high priest of his people.

And that's why we read here, I think this is a much clearer reading of verse 16, although it's in the margin in this Bible in front to me. it is, in a lot of the translations, it simply reads, he took, he did not take the nature of angels, but he took the nature of the seed of Abraham.

[9 : 51] And actually, the background of the letter deals with Jewish speculations on the angels, or some of them anyway, the archangels, as being intermediaries between God and man, messianic personages.

That is something that in the Jewish writings was found. That they had this teaching about, it was speculation, of course, philosophical, but nonetheless it carried weight.

and they had these angelic persons coming in messianic capacities. But you see, God made it his rule that the priestly ministry would be taken from a man man.

I don't suppose when you read this you think really, we read in chapter 5, why it said they're taken from among men. The short answer is God's rule.

God's rule in order that they function for men. And the ironic line, imperfect though it was, had a function.

[11 : 17] They were appointed as men for men in things pertaining! to God. That's what we read in Hebrews 5. But further, the people were taught that Jesus' priesthood would be of another order, of the order of Melchizedek.

We read, by the time we got to the end of chapter 5, we were reading that the father said of his son, you are a priest forever. Not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek, the king of righteousness.

So as truly and perfectly human, he was and therefore is fitted to enter into our struggles and our temptations and our trials here in this world.

God purposed it that way. It was a rule of the father that it should be that way.

And we therefore have to appreciate that and be content with his way of access to him through his not only truly divine son, but truly human as well.

[12 : 48] Now, we need to emphasize here that his becoming man was not becoming a human superman, but a sinless human.

He came in a sinless human frame. That was God's rule for him and us.

that we might have him as our sympathetic high priest. Truly human. Secondly, he is merciful. We read that in the passage.

It was God's purpose. Therefore, in all things, verse 17, he had to be made like his brethren. Well, we've looked at that, truly human.

purpose clause, that he might be a merciful high priest. That he might be merciful.

[13:57] We've been thinking in the prayer meeting, we study on the compassion of Jesus. And merciful here is tenderly compassionate.

In a way that he really gets involved with our sufferings, and he is personally able to take us to his heart, and take to his heart all our miseries and griefs.

We're looking at that. He has borne our griefs. He has carried our sorrows. He is merciful to us. He carries our burdens and fears and anxieties, and he wants us to realize that.

This is another part of the rule for us, that we recognize him not only as truly human, made in all things like his brethren, but also that he might be tenderly compassionate.

This is why the Bible says cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain you, and whatever it meant, and however much it meant to the Old Testament believers, it ought to mean far more to you and me.

[15:21] We have in Jesus our sympathetic high priest, one who carries our burdens. Jesus today ministers to us directly by his own spirit.

That's the promise to us that for the believer it is the spirit of Christ who works in us, who enables us, who sustains us, who quenches our fears, and our anxieties, who gives us peace in the way, who heals us from the effects upon ourselves of sin.

We were singing that this morning in Psalm 107, verse 13 and 20. We hear there, we read there, of how he comes and he helps us and heals Jesus.

Those of you who know Joseph Scrivens, we him, what a friend we have in Jesus. You may recall his question, are you weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of cane?

Jesus, only as a refuge, we take it to the Lord in prayer.

[16:49] And we must be therefore careful, you see, that we let no one else stand in the position that belongs to him. We need each other, that's true.

In the fellowship of the Lord's people, we ought to be a help and support to each other, pray for one another, bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Of course, that goes without saying. But what I'm saying here is we must never stand in the place that belongs to Christ in relation to our fellow believer.

He is tops. He has that position by right. He is tenderly compassionate.

as our sympathetic high priest. And I say again, we need to be careful that we keep him exalted, but we keep near to him as well.

[17:49] We recognize how equipped he is to help us. And the third thing within this point is he is faithful.

It's there in the text. Verse 17, that he might be a merciful, tenderly compassionate, and faithful high priest.

It's true, of course, of Jesus that he's faithful in all that he does. But the writer here is focusing on how he watches over his own.

He's got a special interest in them and commitment to them. He watches over them. John Owen says, John Owen's work on the letters to the Hebrews is a massive work and an excellent work.

I was telling somebody recently, I think it was Alistair, that I have the nine-volume set. There's two sets. One is a four-volume, but it's a pretty, chunky four-volume set.

[19:00] But the standard one was nine volumes on the letter to the Hebrews. It takes up about nearly two feet on the shelf. And the stuff in it is absolutely superb.

And Owen comments here on his faithfulness, on his watching over his own. And he says this, he says, Christ as high priest is trustworthy, exact, constant, and careful in attending to his people, amidst all their varied temptations and sufferings.

Trustworthy, exact, he says, careful, and constant. Christ is, if you like, care supreme, faithful, in his care.

We hear a lot about care. Some of us need care, imported care. but ultimately we need to think about this, that Jesus is truly the one who cares for us.

Care is his business. He cares for me. It's a wonderful thing to know and to say in relation to him.

[20:40] Truly human, though always eternal son of God. He is tenderly compassionate and he is faithful.

And this takes me back to the point I was making a moment ago. We need to be cautious about putting anyone in between Christ and ourselves.

We need to be clear in our thinking about this very fact. Too many in the church talking about the church broadly. You see it in the Roman outlook on things.

It's Mary and the saints. They're far more able to support. That's a grave error. This exalts people, mere mortal sinners, to the place that belongs to Christ.

And whatever benefit we derive from each other's support, and we should, it ought never to move us away from Christ.

[21 : 51] It ought to make us all the more appreciative of the fact that whatever help we receive, he has put it in our way. He knows us all through and through.

He knows who to bring into our path, who to speak the right kind of word to us at a given time. It's all about what Christ is doing. And we must see it like that.

Truly human, perfectly human, tenderly compassionate, and faithful.

People today, so many people, tap into the horoscope, to the mediums, to the witches, to the false prophets, hoping for some certainty as to the future.

They get some help, they get some psychological boost for a wee while. But you see, these things are condemned by the word of God.

[23 : 00] The word of God doesn't say you can't get help in these areas. What it says is, this is a futile way to go. Jesus alone is tenderly compassionate.

Jesus alone is faithful. He knows the future. It's his. And he will guide us into it and through it and onward.

he is truly our sympathetic, our unailing and all powerful high priest.

We can find no one so faithful as him. The last thing I want to look at is Jesus' self-giving high priest.

Then the verse 17 we read in things pertaining to God. And then we read to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

[24 : 13] For in that he himself has suffered being tempted. He is able to help those who are being tempted.

The first thing we're told here about his self-giving is that he makes propitiation for the sins of the people. The authorized version makes reconciliation and the NIV makes atonement.

We'll come to the precise meaning of the word in a moment. But the first thing we have to grasp here before we look at his self-giving nature as our high priest is that if we are taught by the spirit of God through the Bible then we will have such a view of God and ourselves that will make us say we must have someone between God and us.

between the infinitely holy and pure God and ourselves as sinners. We need to have one in there.

We need to have immediate the biblical view as we well know and ought never to forget is that man in his natural state is a rebel.

[25 : 40] He is separated from God by sin. And we are told that the Bible tells us that God is angry with the sinner every day. That being an unforgiven sinner is a terrible thing.

We are separated from God. And you see if God is working in our hearts we say of ourselves justly I deserve to be cast away from God.

I deserve to be banished from his presence forever. When God is teaching us these are the things we think and that's why we appreciate the self giving of Jesus as our high priest.

You see it reminds us of the nature of Christ in giving himself. Jesus as our self giving high priest willingly became the sacrifice for us specifically we're told here to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

And if you go back to our introduction we were talking about rules for accessing! the benefits! If we are to access the benefit of being right with God of having the knowledge of sins forgiven and peace with God then it is through his appointed way and part of that is seeing in Jesus in his self giving the priest who became the sacrifice.

[27 : 40] We must have him like that if we are to have the benefits. And we are to ask ourselves am I resting on this?

Do I rest on his capacity in this way that he gave himself that he offered himself through the eternal spirit on the altar of Calvin a propitiation for my sins one who deals with the wrath of God in my place and he did that once he did an unrepeatably we've said before and we must say it again his offering of himself is a once and for all that is it is unrepeatable it did the job it was intended to do he offered himself once without blemish and to God a wrath exhausting sacrifice a guilt removing

sacrifice a justice satisfying sacrifice and to have him in this way is to enter upon the experience of him as our sympathetic high priest and as our self giving high priest!

And let us see that more clearly tonight than we've seen it before let us lay hold afresh of this for ourselves and be satisfied with the teaching in the word of God here in him alone which is the point of this in his work on our behalf we have a certain future the glory of him he acts for us as he acted back then at Calvary he continues his work on our behalf he is our merciful and faithful high priest whose help here in this world makes a real difference to our lives not only has he given himself as our propitiation but he gives himself to us as the one who has himself been tempted in order to help us see what it says for in that he himself has suffered being tempted he is able to help those who are being tempted there's a benefit here too

Jesus has been at the cutting edge of temptation the like of which we'll never have to face and he has been there to a degree of intensity we'll never experience sometimes we hear people say oh so and so has come from an awful background and so and so now is a great Christian and can help you and get alongside you sometimes folks say oh I need somebody who's been where I have been maybe I've heard that they'll say the folk in here don't know they've never been where I been that's a mistaken view Jesus simply couldn't be where many sinners of mankind have been in terms of the actual sin but he was without sin he couldn't enter into that area at all he has been tempted nonetheless beyond anything we'll ever experience we must be very careful here that we don't develop this mentality that's all too common in the church today oh you must go and hear so and so so and so has had this terrible life and so and so will get alongside you and help you that's a slightly to say the least off beam it's got some truth in it but it may make us miss the point of the perfect adequacy of

Christ to support us in our temptations you see it's real help comes from folk who have not succumbed to temptation and folk who have been there in the face of temptation and who have overcome have been so humbled by it that they are helpful to us not because they've fallen but because they've been able by the grace of God to overcome and that is true in a far greater way of Jesus Jesus has this great difference in all his temptations he never sinned he never yielded for a moment to temptation he never had a corrupt thought for a moment a sinful thought like you and me does that render him inadequate to help us not at all it establishes his capacity to help us far more than we realize and the writer here is saying for in that he himself has suffered being tempted and has triumphed goes without saying he is able to help those who are being tempted he is not at the disadvantage because he never fell to sin not at all no rather he is all the more able to help us and willing to help us he doesn't come to us and say you fool you should have known better perhaps we did know better that's the problem isn't it we know better often than we do

[34 : 49] Paul himself said oh wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death when I would do good evil is present but Jesus doesn't come to us and and chide us and mock us and laugh and say poor fool you succumbed didn't you no no he comes to us as truly human sinlessly so he comes to us with tender compassion he comes to us with faithfulness he comes to us as one who can say look I've given myself for you simply rest in me and there's no condemnation there's no reproach come to me from where you are as you are and that's true for the

Christian believer tonight as well as it is for anyone who's yet not come to Jesus we don't tidy ourselves up and then go feeling alright I'm okay now time to come to him no we come as we are we come with our faults and failings and shame of face to one who is ready and able to help us and it's important for us to really take on board just what a wonderful and sympathetic high priest he is and able to reach out to us and able to speak peace to us and lift us up he has suffered being tempted far beyond anything we'll ever know no corrupt thoughts no sinful thoughts no fall into sin at all but wonderfully able to help us when we are being tempted those who are tempted to doubt their salvation if

I was a Christian I would be this and this and this and this I might say if I was a better Christian than I am I would be this and this and this you'll get nowhere like that you'll go round in circles like that friend Christian cast himself entirely upon Christ as his great high priest as one who is touched with the feeling of our weaknesses for he knows our fame he took it on he made it his own and the fact that he he he wasn't in sinful flesh the fact that he never sinned doesn't render him I say inadequate it renders him far more adequate to help you and me to take us beyond where we're at tonight and if it means that he's saying to us look get away from this notion that you've got to reach this standard the standard is you take me as

I am as I take you as you are that's it follow his rules and you'll be free from doubt and fear and maybe and should I or shouldn't I it's the same for us who have professed the faith every time we come back to the Lord's supper and anticipate it we wonder what progress have I made what advances have been made but we're not going there because we've advanced we're going there because ultimately because we have a savior who is our great high priest our faithful friend who says do this in remembrance of me lay to heart these wonderful words for indeed he does not take the nature of angels but he does take the nature of the seed of Abraham therefore in all things he had to be made like his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining!

[40 : 00] to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people and there's more for in that he himself has suffered being tempted tempted may he bless his word to us