

Session 11 The Great High Priest

Before the Silence: A Study of Hebrews

Session 11 | Hebrews 4:14-5:4

Hold Fast And Come Boldly (Hebrews 4:14-5:4)

Session 10 concluded the warning about Israel's promised rest. God's living Word exposes every heart, and every hearer stands accountable before the One who sees all things. The argument now turns from exposure to provision: the Hebrews have **"a great high priest,"** Jesus the Son of God, through whom they

may approach the throne of grace.

The passage first presents Jesus as the sympathetic High Priest through whom the Hebrews may approach God (4:14-16), then describes the calling, compassion, work, and limitation of the Aaronic high priesthood (5:1-4).

Hebrews 4:14 - Jesus The Son Of God

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Exegesis

- **"Seeing then that we have a great high priest"** returns to the Priest introduced in Hebrews 2:17 and 3:1. The priest the Hebrews need is already in office and greater than every Aaronic priest.
- **"Passed into the heavens"** pictures Jesus passing through the heavens into God's presence, as Israel's high priest passed through the sanctuary and veil.
- **"Jesus the Son of God"** joins His historical human name with His divine and royal identity. The suffering man Jesus is the Son established throughout chapter 1.
- **"Let us hold fast"** calls the Hebrews to retain their confession of Jesus as Messiah and Son under pressure to turn away.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Hebrews 2:17-18** - Jesus was made like His brethren so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest able to help the tested.
- **Hebrews 3:1, 6** - The Hebrews must consider the High Priest of the confession and hold their confidence to the end.

- **Hebrews 6:19-20** - Jesus enters within the veil as forerunner and High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Text And Translation Notes

- **"Profession"** means confession—what is acknowledged or spoken together. It does not mean an occupation.
- The KJV italicizes **"our"** because the Greek says **"the confession."** The supplied pronoun makes natural English but should not become the basis of a separate doctrine.
- **"Passed into"** may carry the sense of passed through. The plural **"heavens"** supports the picture of ascent into God's presence.

Theological Insights

- The Hebrews' perseverance rests upon Jesus' true humanity, divine Sonship, and effective heavenly priesthood—not confidence in themselves.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** define **"profession"** as a religious career or make Jesus one high priest among equals.
- It does **not** say the Hebrews may abandon the confession because their Priest is sufficient; His sufficiency is the reason to hold it fast.

Hebrews 4:15 - Touched With Our Infirmities

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Exegesis

- The double negative—**"not ... which cannot"**—strongly affirms that Jesus can sympathize with the Hebrews' weaknesses.
- **"Touched with the feeling"** means to suffer or feel together with another. His sympathy arises from real incarnate experience.

- **"Our infirmities"** include weariness, hunger, suffering, and vulnerability. Weakness itself is not always sin.
- **"In all points tempted"** means tested in every relevant manner. It does not require Jesus to have encountered every specific circumstance experienced by every person.
- **"Like as we are ... yet without sin"** affirms genuine human testing while marking the decisive difference: no sinful nature, desire, consent, or action was found in Him.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Matthew 4:1-11** - Jesus experiences real temptation from the devil and answers every test in obedience to God's written

Word.

- **Hebrews 2:14-18** - The Son shares flesh and blood, suffers testing, and is therefore able to help His tempted brethren.
- **1 Peter 2:21-22** - Christ suffers while committing no sin and speaking no guile.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Touched with the feeling”** translates *sympatheō*, the source of English **sympathy**.

Hebrews 4:16 - The Throne Of Grace

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Exegesis

- **“Therefore”** rests upon the identity of Jesus as the exalted Son, sympathetic man, and sinless High Priest.
- **“Let us ... come”** is an invitation to priestly approach. The Hebrews need not remain at a fearful distance when their High Priest represents them.
- **“Boldly”** means with confidence and freedom of speech, not casually or presumptuously.
- **“The throne of grace”** joins kingship and priesthood. The throne of the King is also the place from which gracious help is given.
- **“Obtain mercy”** concerns compassion toward weakness; **“find grace to help in time of need”** is aid arriving when required, especially under pressure to abandon the confession.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- The KJV supplies the italicized **“we are”** to complete the comparison in English. The comparison affirms real human testing; **“without sin”** defines its boundary.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say Jesus had a fallen nature or experienced every identical temptation faced by every individual.
- It does **not** make His temptations unreal. Sinlessness means He never yielded, not that no pressure was felt.

- **Hebrews 2:18** - Christ can help those being tested; Hebrews 4:16 tells them where to seek that help.
- **Hebrews 7:25** - The living High Priest saves to the uttermost those approaching God by Him and continually intercedes for them.
- **Hebrews 10:19-23** - Boldness to enter by Jesus’ blood leads directly to drawing near and holding fast without wavering.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Boldly”** describes confidence, openness, or freedom of speech. It is confidence in the Priest, not confidence that the worshipper has no weakness.
- **“Obtain”** means receive rather than earn; **“in time of need”** describes help at the fitting moment.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** define boldness as demanding anything one desires or detach grace from the High Priest and His sacrifice.
- It does **not** erase the chapter’s warning; timely grace enables the Hebrews to hold fast and respond faithfully.

Hebrews 5:1-4 - The Aaronic High Priest

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Exegesis

- **“For”** explains the priestly office behind the invitation of Hebrews 4:14-16. The writer describes the familiar Aaronic pattern before showing how Christ fulfills and surpasses it.
- The high priest was **“taken from among men”** and **“ordained for men.”** He represented the people because he shared their humanity and was appointed to act on their be-

half before God.

- **“Gifts and sacrifices for sins”** gathers bloodless offerings and sacrifices involving blood. The categories overlap, but not every gift was a blood sacrifice.
- He could **“have compassion”** on the ignorant and straying because he was himself **“compassed with infirmity.”** His weakness surrounded him and kept him aware of his own need for mercy.
- Because the Aaronic high priest was a sinner, he had to offer sacrifice **“for himself”** as well as for the people.
- **“No man taketh this honour unto himself.”** Priesthood required divine authorization; ambition, ability, or political influence could not legitimately create the office.
- **“As was Aaron”** anchors the appointment in Israel’s history. God named Aaron and established his house for the Levitical priesthood.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Exodus 28:1-3** - God takes Aaron and his sons from among Israel and appoints them to minister in the priest’s office.

- **Leviticus 9:7** - Aaron must first offer for himself and then make an offering for the people.
- **Leviticus 16:6, 11, 15-17** - On the Day of Atonement the high priest offers for himself before entering with blood for Israel.
- **Numbers 16:1-35** - Korah's rebellion shows that religious zeal and Levitical status did not authorize someone to seize Aaron's office.
- **Hebrews 7:26-28** - Jesus needs no offering for personal sin; the sinless Son is the High Priest brought to completion for evermore.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Ordained”** means appointed or placed in charge. Here it describes Israel's high-priestly office, not a Christian ordination ceremony.
- **“Have compassion”** expresses measured gentleness—neither indifference to sin nor uncontrolled harshness toward the weak.
- KJV **“compassed with infirmity”** preserves the image of weakness surrounding the Aaronic priest.
- **“Called”** in verse 4 means named or appointed by God. Under

the law, priestly succession normally operated through Aaronic descent rather than a private mystical experience.

Theological Insights

- The Aaronic office supplied a real God-given pattern: an appointed representative approached God with an offering for the people.
- That priesthood also announced its own limitation whenever the priest had to deal first with his own sins.
- Because God alone establishes priesthood, He has authority to declare a priest after an order other than Aaron's.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** call a Christian pastor a sacrificing priest.
- It does **not** use Aaron's appointment to require a mystical call before a man may desire the office of a bishop.
- It does **not** say Aaronic sacrifices were meaningless; they fulfilled their appointed covenant purpose while pointing to the need for a better Priest.
- It does **not** permit Christ's sinless priesthood to be treated as though He also needed sacrifice for Himself.

Teaching Summary

- Jesus the Son of God is the great High Priest who has entered the heavens and gives the Hebrews reason to hold fast their confession.
- He genuinely shares human weakness and testing, yet no sinful nature, desire, consent, or action was found in Him.
- Through this sympathetic and sinless Priest, the Hebrews may approach the throne confidently for mercy and timely grace.
- Aaronic high priests represented Israel before God by offering gifts and sacrifices, but they were themselves surrounded by infirmity.
- Because the Aaronic priest was also a sinner, he had to offer sacrifice for himself as well as for the people.
- No man could seize priestly honor. Aaron's appointment came from God, preparing the argument that Christ's priesthood must also rest upon divine appointment.