“Jesus Intercedes for Us”

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

January 18, 2015

www.WORDFORLIFESAYS.com

(Please Note: All lesson verses and titles are based on International Sunday School Lesson/Uniform Series ©2010 by the Lesson Committee, but all content/commentary written within is original to wordforlifesays.com unless properly quoted/cited)

Introduction:

How oft have we felt alone and unfought for in this world? Times come when we are at our wits end and there is no one to speak up for you; no voice to be heard that will defend your cause, or no one who can sympathize with your predicament.

Wouldn’t it be nice if there were someone close enough to God to be able to speak up for a hurting and confused people; someone, whom when our faith is being challenged and slipping, will step in and be out go-between; our mediator with God?

The good news is there is! His name is Jesus and He is still alive, in heaven, working and interceding on behalf of His people.

Hebrews 4:14-16

4:14) “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.

4:15) 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.
4:16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The writer of Hebrews, to which no one can surely claim authorship, opens his book with the exaltation of Christ as being over all and declared that God “hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things,” (Hebrews 1:2).

“Therefore,” Hebrews 2:1 tells us, “we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

Many believe the recipients of this letter are Jewish Christians whose faith has come under attack and they needed encouragement to hold on to the words of Christ; hold onto the gospel message lest they “let them slip.”

When one “slips” it is usually a backward path into old ways and this is what was threatening their current faith. That was the fear plaguing the faith of these new converts. The old ways; the old religious system that came before Christ was trying to prevail and draw people backwards. The writer of Hebrews explains that Christ is greater than the old way. He is greater that Moses and greater than the old religious system and priesthood, the angels and all that came before Him. He is simply greater in every way.

I know old is comfortable to some but he was trying to push them out of their comfort zone and step out on their new found faith and believe that Christ is the greater choice.

Our rest, he states, is now found in the promises fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 3:18-4:3).

With that our lesson opens, stating, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest.” Back in Leviticus 8:12 we see Aaron being anointed as the first high priest. From then until Christ, the old religious system of sacrifices, ritual laws and offerings were in place and the high priest stood as an intermediary between God and the people.
The fallacy in those who wanted to revert back to this old system is that now “we have a great high priest.” Adding the word “great” shows that He is more excellent in every way compared to the high priestly system to which they wanted to go back to.

What made Jesus a “great high priest?” Not only did He fulfill the role of high priest on a natural level, but he is the only priest/prophet/King/sacrifice that fulfilled everything on a spiritual level.

Jesus stood in the gap where the common man cannot. He became a “merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,” (Hebrews 2:17). So, not only did He offer sacrifices (as the role of the high priest), but He Himself would “make reconciliation for the sins of the people,” by His own blood. Colossians 1:20 says, “And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven.”

For the people, the danger of falling back into the old system would cause them to act in unbelief of what Christ accomplished on the cross. This in turn would cause them to forfeit the promise, as did their ancestors when they failed to believe God and enter their promise (see Hebrews 3:12, 18-19; 4:1-3, 9, 11).

Following Christ, the ultimate high priest, is the only way to enter into that “rest.”

Other high priests were able to enter into the most holy place after much sacrificing for their own sins. But Christ went even further. He “passed into the heavens.” As the “Son of God” He was able to go above and beyond what any mere man or normal high priest could do. As a matter of fact, Hebrews 7:26 states that He as high priest was made “higher than the heavens.” Jesus is AWESOME!

“Let us hold fast our profession.” Because of whom Jesus is and His perfect work as the high priest for us, we have the responsibility to hold on to our faith and not let it slip away. Don’t be easily swayed this way and that with the moving of our circumstances and our emotions and just plain old life itself. Stay planted in your faith. Don’t be uprooted but hold on!
Over and over again we are encouraged to take a stand for our faith and to continue therein (see Colossians 1:23 and 1 Peter 5:9). Later, the writer of Hebrews will reiterate the need to “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, (for he is faithful that promised),” (Hebrews 10:23). “Wavering” is littered with doubt and unbelief. But the one that promised is faithful to keep what He promised if we would just hold on and believe.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Most parents know what it is to see a child reaching for something harmful and in a panic yell “stop” or “no” because we know by experience the outcome of what grabbing hold of that harmful thing may be.

Experience is a great teacher of life. As a matter of fact, it was Albert Einstein who said, “The only source of knowledge is experience,” (Brainy Quote). Why is that? Because, unless you really have been there and done that and gone through this, you really don’t know on a personal level how it feels.

Christ, as our high priest, knows how this life feels to us. Serving as a human, He experienced what it was like to “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” He experienced “in all points” the frail nature of the human body with all its passions. Yet, He overcame all temptation “without sin.” Even Pilate, during his own human inquisition, testified and said, “I find no fault in this man,” (Luke 23:4).

Other verses tell us, “For he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted,” (Hebrews 2:18). Because of what He experienced personally, He knows how to help each one of us, in each one of our situations, personally. No matter how hard it may appear to us, Jesus knows how to HELP!

In light of all that we have learned so far about our “great high priest;” “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Since Jesus personally knows and since Jesus personally serves as our high priest, our connecting link to God, we can with confidence draw near to God through prayer to seek “mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”
We have access to God. Don’t hold back your privilege as a child of God of going before the Father to get some help. There are times of humbling; times of desperation when we all need to approach the throne of the King for a little more grace and mercy. No we don’t deserve it, but yes, He gives us access to come anyhow.

So, come boldly, with the confidence of the King’s kid, to find that help you need. Jesus is there waiting, at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf. There’s no reason not to go. He beckons, “Come and get some help!”

Hebrews 5:1-3

5:1) “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in all things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

5:2) 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.

5:3) And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.”

The job of the high priest was to take care of “all things pertaining to God;” meaning they had the charge and responsibility of all things in the service of God on behalf of the people being “ordained for men.” These tasks also included the giving of “gifts” and the offering up of “sacrifices for sins.”

If you were to do a real good study you find that just dealing with the system and rituals and law regarding sacrifices were quite the operation. There were burnt offerings, heave offerings, grain offerings, wave offerings and peace offerings (each had their own specifications that had to be followed). There were rules to be followed for the animals involved and for the people involved. There were obligations that if not followed could disqualify one for the priesthood. THERE WAS A LOT INVOLVED and all to make sure the services of the holiness of God and “all things pertaining to God,” would go off the right way (this is just scratching the surface of all involved in their duties).
These men, who would play the role as the go-between of God and man, themselves, were “compassed with infirmity . . . so also for himself, to offer for sins.” The human priesthood in place with animal sacrifices before Christ served its temporary purpose but to supply eternal life on the level that Christ would offer in His priesthood they were unqualified because they themselves suffered weaknesses and flaws of humanity and had to make sure their sins were taken care of as well (compare to Hebrews 9:6-7). That system was just a “shadow of good things to come” (Hebrews 10:1).

By the old system “every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins,” (Hebrews 10:11). But with Jesus as high priest, doing what man or the blood of bulls and goats couldn’t do, became the “mediator of the new testament,” (read Hebrews 9:11-15); “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God,” (Hebrews 10:12) and it is from that place and position where He, as our perfect high priest, is interceding on our behalf. Glory!

Hebrews 5:4-6

5:4) “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

5:5) So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

5:6) As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Aaron didn’t call himself to be a high priest and neither did Jesus. Regarding Aaron, God instructed Moses, “Take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office . . .,” (Exodus 28:1, emphasis mine). God selected Aaron to serve as “priest” and God is also the one who spoke the words confirming Jesus’ role, “Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee,” (see also Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33 and Matthew 3:17, just to name a few).
The old line of priesthood was through Aaron (the tribe of Levi), but now the new was established in Jesus. The priesthood was changed (Heb. 7:12), by “the bringing in of a better hope . . . by the which we draw nigh unto God,” (Heb. 7:19).

Perfection could not be achieved through the Levitical priesthood and there was a need for something better (Hebrews 7:11). In comparison, the priesthood of Christ would be marked by the same characteristics of Melchisedec in that like Melchisedec, Jesus would serve as King and priest (see Genesis 14:18), and also like Melchisedec, His priesthood would be enduring and “for ever” (Heb. 7:17). There is no recorded beginning or ending for Melchisedec but “made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually,” (Heb. 7:3).

Jesus’ priesthood would be marked by the “power of an endless life,” (Heb. 7:16) which is in sharp contrast to the Levitical priesthood where they could not “continue by reason of death,” (Heb. 7:23). Thereby, Christ has an “unchangeable priesthood,” (Heb. 7:24), “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” (Heb. 7:25).

Jesus, in His priesthood, lives forever to save and to make intercession for them; for us.

Hebrews 5:7-10

5:7) Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

5:8) Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

5:9) And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

5:10) Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”
Jesus “suffered.” Can we wrap our minds around that? There are some with a false supposition that Christ could endure all of this because He was the Son of God. They make it sound like it was nothing for Him to go through what He went through. Boy, are they wrong! Jesus suffered because He was the Son of God; “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Let’s go back to the Garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus prayed, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done,” (Luke 22:42). Sometimes I believe we hear this verse so much that we become desensitized to the agony behind the prayer.

If you continue to read it states, “Being in agony he prayed more earnestly,” (Luke 22:44a). He was already feeling the trauma of what was about to take place and it was wreaking havoc on Him. He was in agony! He was tormented at the thought of what was soon going to come to pass. So much so, “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground,” (Luke 22:44b). Look at what His body was going through and He wasn’t even on the cross yet. He “suffered” and “he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death.”

He didn’t have an easy time getting through the suffering because He was the Son; rather He suffered harshly because He was the Son. Even Isaiah prophesied of the pain of His suffering: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken,” (Is. 53:7-8).

Jesus would fulfill His role as our King and our priest, but it would be at the expense of His own battered, bruised, beaten and dead body.

Because He reacted and responded in “obedience,” and endured the shame and the suffering of the cross, He “became the author of eternal salvation unto all
them that obey him.” Jesus became the “source” of salvation. When He obeyed unto death and entered the holy place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, He “obtained eternal redemption for us,” (Hebrews 9:12).

“Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” Once again, the writer of Hebrews reiterates that this calling was not of His own doing; rather, He was “called of God.” God preordained this to be so. Psalm 110:4 says, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” That word “order” gives the impression of one being in the same style. Once again, He would serve not only as King, but He would fulfill priestly duties as well, forever.

Conclusion:

Jesus is still seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.