

Hebrews 4:14 – 6:8

Day 1

Our Sinless High Priest. Read Hebrews 4:14-16

1. How does Jesus serve us in heaven? 4:14a (Cf. 2:17b, 3:1b)

- What is He doing for us? Romans 8:34 (See also Hebrews 7:25)
- What should that cause us to do? 4:14b

FYI: "The grand and great point of this for the author's Jewish hearers is the overarching superiority of Jesus, their great high priest...Some of them would, no doubt, look back through rose-colored glasses the Levitical system, over-imagining the comfort of having priestly mediation, and some would be in danger of being sucked back into the system. To such, this strong teaching was the antidote. There is simply no contest between the Levitical system and what is provided in Christ!"
- R. Kent Hughes (129)

"As the Aaronic high priest on the Day of Atonement passed from the sight of the people into the Most Holy Place (see Lev. 16:15,17), so Jesus passed from the sight of His watching disciples, ascending through the heavens into the heavenly sanctuary."
- NIV Study Bible (1863)

2. To what are we to *hold fast*?

- 3:6
- 3:14
- 4:14
- 6:18
- 10:23

Digging Deeper

See Jesus' heart of compassion: Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; Luke 19:41; John 11:35

3. How compassionate is our High Priest and why? 4:15 (Cf. 2:17)

FYI: "The *stoics* believed that the primary attribute of God was *apatheia*, the inability to feel anything at all...The *Epicureans* believed that God swelled in intermedia, the spaces between the worlds, in complete detachment. The Jews, of course, had a far more accurate picture of God. But before Jesus came it was incomplete, for He revealed the revolutionary Fatherhood of God – daring to address Him as 'Father' and calling His followers to do the same (Matthew 6:9).

But the assertion that God is not only a Father, but has such sympathy that He enters the suffering of this world was, and is, absolutely staggering. It is impossible for us, with our heritage of Biblical revelation, to appreciate how revolutionary the idea of a sympathetic God was."
- R. Kent Hughes (129,130)

"The ancient Greek word translated **sympathize** literally means 'to suffer along with.' What makes the difference is that Jesus added humanity to His deity, and lived among us."
- David Guzik

4. Because of Jesus' position, what are we able to do? 4:16a (How do the commands in 4:14b and 4:16a relate?)

5. What two things do we find at His throne of grace? 4:16b How does that make you feel?

FYI: "His throne is even called grace. Isn't that comforting? It's not called truth, justice, or the American way. Jesus doesn't sit in a courtroom, robed in condescension, scowling down from His bench to bring a gavel down on our lives as we stumble over our humiliating confessions. No, His throne is not a smug courtroom but a sympathetic confessional – a throne of grace."
- Charles Swindoll (79)

6. What does 4:14-16 teach about Jesus' humanity and deity?

7. How does the access we have in Christ compare to the access people had to God in the Old Testament?

- Exodus 19:16-25
- Leviticus 16:2,34

8. How intimidating was it to approach God's throne? Isaiah 6:1-5

- What happened when Christ died? Mark 15:37,38

9. From the following what do you learn about the nearness of God and what we receive? Mark any phrases that are especially meaningful to you.

- 1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.
- Philippians 4:6,7,13 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus...13 I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.
- John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.
- John 10:27-30 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."
- Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me....
- Ephesians 3:16-20 I ask that out of the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then you, being rooted and grounded in love, will have power, together with all the saints, to comprehend the length and width and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us,

Applying the Word: *How approachable do you perceive God to be? Is there anything that you feel you can't talk to Him about? What does Jesus constantly interceding for you say about that?*

Day 2

Mortal and Eternal Priesthood: Read Hebrews 5:1-10

10. How was a high priest chosen? 5:1 (See also 5:4)
- What role did he serve? What service did he perform? 5:1b
11. From Exodus 28:8-12,17-21,29, where was the high priest to carry the names of the children of Israel? What would that signify?
12. Besides being "selected among men", what was the next quality a priest had? 5:2 (Xref 4:15; Compare Isaiah 53:6.)
13. For whose sins did he offer sacrifices? 5:3 (See Leviticus 16:1-6)

FYI: "The 'gifts' offered were for thanksgiving; the sacrifices were for repentance, to seek forgiveness."
– The Defender's Study Bible

14. Why couldn't people work to earn a priestly position? 5:4 (See Exodus 28:1) *How important would that be?*

Digging Deeper
What happened when king Uzziah tried to appoint himself to the priesthood? 2 Chronicles 26:16-20

FYI: "The true **priesthood** and **high priest** came from a specific line of descent...Every priest came from **Levi**, one of Israel's twelve sons. God set the tribe of Levi apart as a tribe to serve Him and represent Him to the whole nation of Israel (Exodus 13:2 and Numbers 3:40-41).

Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Each of these family lines had their own duties. The family of **Gershon** had care of the tabernacle's screen (veil), fence, and curtains (Numbers 3:25-26). The family of **Kohath** had care of the tabernacle's furnishings, such as the lampstand, altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant (Numbers 3:31-32). The family of **Merari** had care of the boards and pillars of the tabernacle and the fence (Numbers 3:36-37). These families were not properly *priests*, though they were *Levites*.

The priesthood itself came through **Aaron**, the brother of Moses, of the family of Kohath. Aaron's family and their descendants made up the priests and the high priest, those able to serve in the tabernacle itself and to offer sacrifice to God...the priesthood was not popularly elected but chosen by God."
– David Guzik

"In Christ's day the high-priestly office was in the hands of a family that had bought control of it."

– The NIV Study Bible (1863)

15. How did Christ qualify (“*in the same way/so too*”) to become our high priest? 5:5 (See Psalm 2:6,7)

- Instead of elevating Himself, what steps did Christ take to come and minister to mankind? Philippians 2:6-8

FYI: “Christ met all requirements for the priesthood, except that of descent from Aaron. However, he was of another priestly order, greater even than that of Aaron and Levi.” - The Defender’s Study Bible

“Jesus did not make Himself High Priest. Instead, just as much as Jesus was declared to be the **Son** (in Psalm 2:7), He was also declared to be a **priest forever** (in Psalm 110:4). It is easy to see why the priesthood of Jesus was difficult for early Jewish Christians to grasp. Jesus was not from the lineage of Aaron. Jesus neither claimed nor practiced special ministry in the temple. He *confronted* the religious structure instead of *joining* it. In Jesus’ day, the priesthood became a corrupt institution. The office was gained through intrigue and politicking among corrupt leaders.”
- David Guzik

16. In what other ways does Jesus qualify?”

- 5:6a (See Revelation 1:8)
- 5:6b,10 (See Psalm 110:4)

FYI: “Like Aaron, Jesus was appointed as a priest by God. To prove this the writer refers again to two Psalms – Psalms 2 and 110...Melchizedek, like Jesus, was both priest and king – two offices which were never elsewhere combined in Israel in Old Testament times.”
- W. M. Henry (50,51)

“Christ met all requirements for the priesthood, except that of descent from Aaron. However, he was of another priestly order, greater even than that of Aaron and Levi. Melchizedek was the mysterious priest/king who met Abraham when he returned from defeating the marauding confederation of kings from the north (see Genesis 14:17-19). In the Genesis account, he is merely called ‘king of Salem’ (meaning ‘peace’) and ‘priest of the most high God’ (the Hebrew name is *El Elyon*, ‘highest God’). The identity of Melchizedek has been vigorously debated.”
- Defender’s Study Bible



Video: “*Abraham and Melchizedek*” (5:09) <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/abraham-and-melchizedek/>

17. How did Jesus respond to suffering? 5:7a

- Why did God hear His prayers? 5:7b (Read different translations.)

FYI: “Jesus did not shrink from physical suffering and death but from the indescribably agony of taking mankind’s sin on Himself (Matt. 27:46)...He was heard. His prayer was granted by the Father, who save Him from death – through resurrection.”
- The NIV Study Bible (1864)

18. How does Jesus qualify as a priest that can truly represent us? 5:8 (Crossref. 2:14,17,18)

FYI: “*When He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears:* The agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-39, Luke 22:44) proved He struggled with the difficulty of obedience, yet He obeyed perfectly... This answers the question, ‘How can this glorious, enthroned Jesus know what I am going through down here?’ He knows; obedience did not always come easy for Jesus.. Jesus did not pass from disobedience to **obedience**. He learned **obedience** by actually obeying...Jesus learned the *experience* of obedience, and part of that learning was enduring suffering.”
- David Guzik

19. Because of His perfect obedience, what could Christ become for us? 5:9,10 What huge difference does this show between Christ's priesthood and the Levitical priesthood?

FYI: Perfect Strong's NT:5048 *teleioo*; to complete i.e. accomplish, or (figuratively) consummate (in character)

"The temptations He faced were real and the battle for victory was difficult, but where Adam failed and fell, Jesus resisted and prevailed. His humanity was thereby complete, 'made perfect' and on the basis of this perfection He could become 'the source of eternal salvation. (see 9:12)"
– The NIV Study Bible (1864)

"The thought here is not that Jesus suffered from a deficiency of character or nature and that through suffering He underwent moral improvement. Rather, the perfection of Christ concerns His qualification as Savior. The appointed way to Saviorhood followed the path of testing. In the face of even the most pressing hardship and suffering, Jesus remained obedient to His Father. Having successfully endured the trial of life, He was proven fit to be the Savior for God's people."
– Zodhiates

"The Jewish Christians to whom this letter was addressed were tempted to abandon their Christian faith and return to Judaism under the threat of persecution. Some of them had lost their property and had suffered public reproach on account of their faith (10:32-34). They were thinking, 'Hey, we didn't have it so bad as Jews! The Jewish religion was a good system. It spelled out how we should live. The rituals were familiar and satisfying. It was the faith of our forefathers for many centuries. Maybe we should just go back to the way things were.'

...The author of Hebrews was trying to convince people that a religious system of sacrifices, rituals, and rules that had been in place for over 1,400 years had now been replaced by a better way. He focuses on the supremacy of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of all that was written by Moses and the Jewish prophets. He introduces a theme that is only treated in the Book of Hebrews, that Jesus Christ is our high priest."

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-20-why-you-need-know-about-melchizedek-hebrews-71-10>

20. Underline the good that can come out of our suffering.

- Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. NIV
- Romans 5:3-5 Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.
- James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. NIV
- 1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. NIV
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. NIV

Applying the Word: Contemplate the fathomless understanding and supernatural power Jesus had during His ministry. Because of that, what kind of profound temptations did He face that no person ever has or ever will? What does that say about His compassion and ability to handle your fears, temptations, weaknesses, etc.?

Day 3

Warning Against Dullness of Hearing. Read Hebrews 5:11-14

21. Why was the writer having a hard time explaining these truths? 5:11 See *different translations*. (Contrast 2 Timothy 2:15)

FYI: No longer try to understand (NIV)/ **dull of hearing** (NKJ) / **poor listeners** (NAS) Strong's NT:3576; *Nothros*; sluggish, i.e. (literally) lazy, KJV - dull, slothful.

"The Greek word for 'dull' is used only here and in 6:12 in the entire New Testament. It means 'thick, slow, sluggish, indolent, lazy.' Interestingly, the original term is from two words, meaning 'no' and 'push.' A dull speaker, for instance, would be one with 'no push,' whose get-up-and-go got up and went. But seldom do we apply the word to the audience...

Christians who are 'dull of hearing'...fail to impact the lives of others or the culture around them." – C. Swindoll (91)

22. What level should they have achieved? 5:12a *In what sense can we all be teachers?*

- Instead, what needs did they have? 5:12b

FYI: "The Greek translated 'the elementary truths' actually means something like, 'the ABC's of the beginning of the words of God.' This refers to the basic truths of God's Word." – R. Kent Hughes (147)

23. What is the problem of someone who has only had "milk"? 5:13

- From 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, what did Paul identify as the cause of this immaturity?

FYI: unacquainted/not accustomed/unskilled Strong's NT:552 *apeiros*; inexperienced, i.e. ignorant "the words *not accustomed* mean 'without trial' or without experience of' and have the sense of meaning 'unskilled.'" – Charles Swindoll (91)

"Those who feed on the meat of God's Word must have first have a clear doctrinal understanding of the radical righteousness of God (e.g. Romans 1:17; 3:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21). However, there must also be practical righteous living. These two together...enable one to feed more and more on the solid Word of God." – R. Kent Hughes (149)

24. How is maturity defined in 5:14?

FYI: "'Senses' here means 'esthetic senses' (Greek *aistheterion*), used only this once in the New Testament. It implies a sort of spiritual intuition, by which the sensitive Christian can more or less automatically discern whether something is right or wrong. However, this sense is developed only by attaining real maturity in the Scriptures." [See Hebrews 4:12] – The Defender's Study Bible

25. For what did Paul pray? Ephesians 1:15-19

- What kind of growth did he want believers to have? Ephesians 4:11-16 What kind of immaturity would this prevent?

26. How can the characteristics in 5:14 be a part a mature believer's life from day to day?

- *solid food* (See James 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- *practice/constant use* (See James 1:22-25; Romans 6:17)
- *senses trained to distinguish good and evil* (See Philippians 1:9-10; Romans 12:2; Eph. 1:17)

27. What did Jesus say about those who fail to put His word into practice?

- Luke 8:14,15
- Matthew 13:12,13

28. Compare what Jesus pointed out as the shortcomings of the Sadducees. Matthew 22:29

- What other mistake did Jesus say that some of the Jewish leaders were making with scripture? John 5:39-40,46-47

Applying the Word: *Why is both knowing and applying (knowledge and acknowledgement) God's Word so important for maturity? What happens if one is ignored at the expense of the others?*

Day 4

Warning Against Apostasy. Read Hebrews 6:1-8

29. What exhortation is given in 6:1a? (Crossref. 5:12)

FYI: "Elementary principles: This has the idea of "rudiments" or "ABCs." They are basic building blocks that are necessary, but must be built upon – otherwise has only a foundation and no structure." - David Guzik

"These Jewish Christians...went back to this common ground to avoid persecution. Living in this comfortable common ground, one did not stick out so much. A Jew and a Christian together could say, 'Let's repent, let's have faith, let's perform ceremonial washings,' and so forth. This was a subtle yet certain denial of Jesus." - David Guzik

foundation. "Repentance and saving faith are essential in beginning the Christian life (Acts 20:21), but are only the beginning"
- The Defender's Study Bible

30. What “instructions” were they to move beyond? 6:2

FYI: Baptisms: *Baptismos* is the word used on three other specific instances to refer to Jewish ceremonial washings (Hebrews 9:10, Mark 7:4, and Mark 7:8).

The New English Bible translates....**doctrine of baptism** as “*instruction about cleansing rites*” - David Guzik

“Ceremonial washing and the laying on of hands were both integral to Judaism. In order to move on to maturity, there Jewish believers need to leave behind their confidence in ritualistic practices...Just as they were doing with dead works, some members of this church were placing their faith in ceremonial washings, not in the work of Christ.

The **resurrection of the dead** should not be ignored; it should never be far from the horizon of our thinking. But there are other teachings that should also be addressed by the maturing Christian.” - R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (88)

“Practically every item in his list could have its place in a fairly orthodox Jewish community (Bruce, in loc.).”
- Expositor’s Bible Commentary

“Because Christianity did grow out of Judaism, it was a more subtle temptation for a Jewish Christian to slip back into Judaism than it was for a formerly pagan Christian to go back to his pagan ways. ‘Part of the problem facing the Hebrews was the...similarity between the elementary tenets of Christianity and those of Judaism...’(Guthrie)

Of course, these Jewish Christians did not want to abandon *religion*, but they did want to make it less distinctively *Christian*. Therefore, they went back to this common ground to avoid persecution. Living in this comfortable common ground, one did not stick out so much. A Jew and a Christian together could say, ‘Let’s repent, let’s have faith, let’s perform ceremonial washings,’ and so forth. This was a subtle yet certain denial of Jesus.”
- David Guzik

31. Whose help do we need for growth? 6:3 (See Colossians 1:28,28)

FYI: God permitting “A common expression of dependence on the will of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7). Only the Lord can open minds and hearts and bring spiritual maturity.” - NIV Study Bible (1864)

Article: “*Mature in Christ*” by Mark Ross

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/mature-in-christ#:~:text=Being%20mature%20in%20Christ%20is,2%3A6%E2%80%9337>

christ#:~:text=Being%20mature%20in%20Christ%20is,2%3A6%E2%80%9337)



32. List the understanding and experiences of some of the people that had fallen away. 6:4,5

33. What were they doing to themselves? 6:6a (Contrast 2 Timothy 2:25,26)

- What were they doing to Christ? 6:6b

Digging Deeper

What did Paul say in his letter to the Galatians about going back to a works mentality? 5:1-4; 2:21; 1:6-9

FYI: “The warnings is that if, after accepting Jesus as Messiah and Lord, they go back to Judaism, they cut themselves off (See. Gal. 5:4), as there is no other Messiah to be looked for, and by rejecting Him they put Him to open shame.”
- The Companion Bible

See other commentaries on 6:5,6 at the end (pg. 10).

34. How does this “falling away” (6:5) compare to those who are “going astray” (5:2)? What difference do you think there is in one’s mind and heart attitude?

- How was *intentional* verses *unintentional* sin treated under the law? Numbers 15:25-31

35. What illustrations does the writer give about bearing fruit? 6:7,8 (See Titus 1:16)

- What does this say about growing in maturity? Compare Isaiah 55:10-13

FYI: “The warning (5:11--6:12) encourages the people to move on in their understanding of the revelation of God. If they don't move on they may find themselves in a situation similar to the generation which experienced the full revelation and miracles of Jesus, yet rejected Him and ultimately were cursed (6:4-12).” - Dr. Chris Miller

36. How does this compare to Jesus’ teachings in:

- John 15:1-6 (*Notice how we “bear fruit”/mature.1:5*)
- 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Food for Thought: “Repentance isn’t a one-time thing that you do at conversion and then move on. Nor is it simply a change of mind, not of behavior. Turning from sin ought to be a chief identifying mark of the believer...In Eastern Europe, unbelievers call evangelicals ‘repenters.’ That’s not a bad label! If you’re in God’s Word daily, it confronts you with ways that you are not pleasing to God. Repentance is the proper response...If your heart is tender towards God, and you are striving daily against sin, then you should be concerned about this warning, but not *excessively* concerned. Keep walking with the Lord and He will bring you safely into His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18)!”
- Steven Cole

Applying the Word: *Are there any “religious” activities you rely on for salvation rather than or in addition to a relationship with Christ? How can this keep you from maturing in your faith?*

*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,
but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin.*

*Therefore let’s approach the throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need.*

Hebrews 4:15,16

Commentaries on Hebrews 6:5,6
“Impossible...to renew them to repentance”

“Some think that the author is speaking about genuine Christians who fall away and that he denies that they may ever come back. This view sets the writer of the epistle in contradiction with other NT writers for whom it is clear that the perseverance of the saints is something that comes from God and not from their own best efforts (e.g., John 6:37; 10:27-29)... [Another] possibility is that the writer is talking about what looks very much like the real thing but lacks something...The writer is saying that when people have entered into the Christian experience far enough to know what it is all about and have then turned away, then, as far as they themselves are concerned, they are crucifying Christ. In that state they cannot repent.”

- Expositors Bible Commentary

“Many...hold that those who fall away are not true believers, but rather men and women who only appear so. They are people who have received a thorough exposure to the gospel – and have made an ostensible profession of faith and have been received into the fellowship of God’s people. However, at a later point they have abandoned their profession, even becoming opponents of Christ.”

- R. Kent Hughes

“Eternal standing of those written of in Hebrews 6:4-6 is a question with two answers. We may safely say that from a human perspective, they had all appearance of salvation. Nevertheless, from the perspective of God’s perfect wisdom it is impossible to say on this side of eternity... Still others think that this penalty deals only with reward, not with salvation itself. They stress the idea that it says **repentance** is **impossible**, not *salvation*..

This difficult passage is best understood in the *context* of Hebrews 6:1-2. The writer to the Hebrews means that if they retreat back to Judaism, all the religious ‘repentance’ in the world will do them no good. Retreating from distinctive Christianity into the “safe” ideas and customs of their former religious experience is to forsake Jesus, and to essentially crucify Him again. This is especially true for these ancient Christians from a Jewish background, since the religious customs they took up again likely included animal sacrifice for atonement, denying the total work of Jesus for them on the cross...

The message to these Christians who felt like giving up was clear: if you don’t continue on with Jesus, don’t suppose you will find salvation by just going on with the ideas and experiences that Christianity and Judaism share. If you aren’t saved in Jesus, you aren’t saved at all. There is no salvation in a safe “common ground” that is not distinctively *Christian*.

If someone falls away we must understand *why* he or she can’t repent – it is because *they don’t want to*. It is not as if God *prohibits* their repentance. Since repentance itself is a work of God (Romans 2:4), the desire to repent is evidence that he or she has not truly fallen away.

The idea is not that ‘if you fall away, you can’t ever come back to Jesus.’ Instead, the idea is ‘if you turn your back on Jesus, don’t expect to find salvation anywhere else, especially in the practice of religion apart from the fullness of Jesus.’”

- David Guzik