

**Titles of Jesus Christ (#3)**  
**The High Priest**  
**Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan**

So far we have studied two titles of Jesus Christ: The Messiah and the Advocate. Today we will study a third title of the Lord.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 4:14** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (Heb 4:14 ESV)

Here it says that Jesus the Son of God is our great high priest. What does it mean that he is our great high priest? In order to understand the meaning of this title, the high priest, first we have to look into the Law in the Hebrew Bible to understand the duty of the high priest.

**The duty of the high priest in the Hebrew Bible**

After the Israelites came out of Egypt, God gave instructions to Moses to set up a Tabernacle, which is a meeting place between God and the Israelites (Tabernacle simply means a tent of meeting). Inside there was a curtain that divides the Tabernacle into two parts: the first part was called the Holy Place, and behind the curtain there was the second part called the Holy of holies.

Every day the priests would enter the Holy Place, the first part of the Tabernacle, to offer daily sacrifices. But only once a year on the Day of Atonement ( **יום כַּפָּרִים** )

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in Hebrew) (Yom Kippur), the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month in the Hebrew calendar, the high priest would enter the Holy of holies – the second part of the Tabernacle – to offer sacrifices for sins. Since the high priest himself also committed sins, therefore he had to offer sacrifices for his own sins first, then he offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. The high priest also represented his people in other matters related to God: he interceded for the people, he also asked God for guidance on behalf of the people.

### **The Lord Jesus as the high priest**

Here this passage Hebrews 4:14 says that the Lord Jesus is called the high priest. What does he do exactly?

#### **1. The first thing: The Lord Jesus offered himself as the sacrifice for our sins**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 9:11-14** But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb 9:11-14 ESV)

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This passage says that our high priest the Lord Jesus Christ entered the Tabernacle – the tent of meeting not of this creation, nor made with human hands, which means it is made by Yahweh God, that is, the true Tabernacle in heaven. He entered not with the blood of sacrificial animals, but entered through his own blood. That means he himself is the sacrifice for our sins.

We just saw that the high priest of Israel had to offer sacrifice for himself first, because he also committed sins. But the Lord Jesus has no sin, so he doesn't have to offer sin offerings for himself, and neither does he offer sacrifices year after year. The Lord Jesus entered the holy of holies once for all, and instead of offering sacrificial animals he offered himself as the perfect sacrifice and obtained eternal redemption for us.

The sacrifices in the Old Testament couldn't really take away the sins of the people, they were simply reminders to remind the Israelites of their sins. But the blood of the Lord Jesus can wash away our sins and cleanse our conscience. As a result, we no longer feel guilty over our sins so that we can serve the living God.

This is the first thing the Lord Jesus does as a high priest. Please take note of this, if your sins have been cleansed, you won't feel guilty of your sins any more. On the other hand, if you still feel guilty of your past sins, it means that your sins have not been cleansed, in which case you will have to do something, you will need to repent of your sins and ask Yahweh God for forgiveness.

## **2. The second thing: The Lord Jesus always intercedes for us**

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 7:24-25** but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:24-25 ESV)

Here it says the Lord Jesus is the high priest forever because he lives forever, so he always intercedes for us. This is the second thing: The Lord Jesus always intercedes for us.

### 3. The third thing: We can draw near to God

<sup>NASB</sup> **Hebrews 10:19-22** Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10:19-22 NASB)

Here it says that by the blood of the Lord Jesus we can enter the holy place and draw near to the throne of God with a clear conscience.

In the Gospel account of the Lord's death, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two.

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<sup>NASB</sup> **Matthew 27:50–51** <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

This curtain separates the holy place from the holy of holies. The tearing of the curtain symbolizes that truth that the people of God can enter the holy of holies right before the throne of Yahweh God.

This is such a wonderful grace; how should we respond to such grace?

### **Our response to the wonderful grace of Yahweh God**

#### **1. We do not keep on sinning deliberately**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 10:26-29** For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:26-29 ESV)

Some non-Christians or even some Christians think that as long as we confess our sins every time after we sin, God will forgive us and everything would be alright. That simply is not true. This passage says that if we deliberately keep on sinning after

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having received the knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire that will consume the adversaries. We should never take sin lightly.

### 2. We offer up sacrifice of praise and good deeds

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1Pe 2:9 NAS)

Here it says that Christians belong to the royal priesthood, which means that every Christian is a priest. For the meaning of priests and the duties of priests, please refer to my earlier sermon in the series called Titles of Christians, specifically sermon #11 on “Priests”. But we don’t need to offer sacrifice for sins because the Lord Jesus offered himself once for all. Instead we offer a sacrifice of praise, for our praise to Yahweh God is a sacrifice to Him.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 13:15-16** Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. <sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Heb 13:15-16, ESV)

Do you know that when we give thanks for God’s name and when we do good and share with others, that’s our sacrifice of praise.