

Subject: *Coming to the Throne of Grace*

Scripture: *Hebrews 4:14-16*

Think back to a place or a time when you felt like it was your greatest honor just to be there. What was so special about it—a special place or person or event? Now think what it would be like if you could go back to that place again and again and again as often as you wanted. God has a place like that for His people.

Salvation not only saves us from sin and hell, it brings us eternal life and a relationship with God. When Christ becomes our Lord and Savior we enter into a relationship with Him. We are blessed because of who He is and what He does for us. Instead of death we receive life and instead of condemnation we receive grace. Through Christ we now have the privilege to approach God's throne without facing shame or judgment. For the believer God's throne is a throne of grace.

We all know what a throne is, but chances are that we have never seen a physical throne in person. In NT times people were familiar with thrones, but for most people a throne was off limits. If you were summoned to appear before a king on his throne it would probably not be for a good reason. So even for people who lived with the reality of a throne, it was not somewhere you expected to be or wanted to be.

1. THE PERFECT PRIEST – *we have a great high priest*

One of the main themes in Hebrews is that Jesus is our High Priest. He offered the perfect and final sacrifice for sins and He lives forever to make intercession for us.

- Heb. 1:3, *by himself purged our sins*
- Heb. 2:17, *a merciful and faithful high priest*
- Heb. 3:1, *the Apostle and High Priest of our profession*
- Heb. 4:14, *a great high priest*
- Heb. 5:10, *an high priest after the order of Melchizedek*
- Heb. 7:25, *He ever lives to make intercession*

Hebrews was first written for people who had a Jewish background. Some were saved and some were not yet saved. They knew the truth but were thinking about going back to their Jewish religion. All of these readers were familiar with the priesthood, but we are not. We need to understand something of the Old Testament background and the ministry of the High Priest in Israel.

- The High Priest was God's appointed mediator for the people
- The High Priest offered a yearly sacrifice on the Day of Atonement
- The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to offer blood on the mercy seat
- The High Priest did not sit down or delay in God's presence
- The High Priest repeated this again every year
- This process never ended because the priests and their sacrifices were not perfect

2. THE PERFECT PLACE – *who has passed into the heavens*

Jesus is our great high priest who ascended back to the Father. The Jewish high priest had to pass through three areas in the Tabernacle or the Temple. He took the blood and went

through the door to the outer court, then through another door into the Holy Place, and then through the veil into the Holy of Holies. After Jesus laid down His own life on the cross He passed through the first heaven (the sky), then through the second heaven (outer space), and then into the third heaven where God lives. Paul wrote about his trip to the third heaven.

2 Corinthians 12:2 *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.*

Why did Jesus go into heaven?

3. THE PERFECT PROVISION – the sacrifice of Christ himself

Hebrews 9:24-26 ²⁴ *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:* ²⁵ *Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;* ²⁶ *For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Hebrews 10:12 *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.*

When Christ died on the cross he cried, *It is finished* (Jn. 19:30), which means the debt of man's sin is paid in full. Unlike all the other Jewish high priests, Jesus went into the heavenly Holy of Holies and did not leave, but He sat down at the Father's right hand to indicate that His work was done and atonement for sin was made once and for all.

4. THE PERFECT PERSON – Jesus the Son of God

Our high priest is a perfect high priest and He has entered a perfect place after He had offered a perfect sacrifice. All this is possible because Jesus is the perfect person. Jesus is the perfect Son of God (deity), and He is the perfect man who understands our weakness, was tempted in all areas as we are, yet He is without sin.

- Jesus is both God and man

1 Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Because He was man He could die, and because He was God His death had infinite saving power. There is no need for any other priest except Jesus. The Jews still celebrate Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), but no priest is involved and no sacrifices are offered. There is no earthly tabernacle or temple. Jesus established no Christian priesthood for believers. But instead all Christians are priests unto God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9, "a holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood"). There is no need for a human priest to be a mediator on behalf of others. We only need one priest, the perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

- Jesus understands human weakness and temptation

Was Jesus really tempted like us? Yes, in fact, He was tempted more than any person who ever lived. We are tempted and we give in so we never feel the full force of temptation. Jesus was tempted but never gave in.

- Jesus is completely without sin

Unlike Aaron and the other high priests who had to offer a sacrifice first for their own sins, Jesus never sinned. He was completely without sin. He never sinned in word, deed, thought, or attitude. How can He understand if He never sinned? You don't have to experience something to understand it. A person can have surgery without understanding all the details of it. On the other hand, a surgeon can perform thousands of complicated operations without having surgery himself. It is his knowledge of the disease or problem and his skill in operating that qualifies him, not having the disease. He has great experience with the disease because he had dealt with it and confronted it. Jesus never sinned but He understands sin better than any other person. He has seen it more clearly and fought it more thoroughly than any of us could ever do.

Hebrews 7:26-27 ²⁶ *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;* ²⁷ *Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

Since Jesus is the perfect priest who went into the perfect place and made the perfect provision for salvation, and since Jesus is the perfect person to do all this..."let us hold fast our confession." This is a call to perseverance, to keep on holding on to Jesus by faith. The Bible also teaches that Jesus holds on to us (eternal security of the believer). Our holding on to Him is evidence that we are true believers and that He is holding on to us.

5. THE PERFECT PRIVILEGE – let us come boldly unto the throne of grace

Because of His work as our perfect High Priest Jesus has made a way for us to come directly to God. We can come "boldly" (freely, with ease). We come to a throne of grace instead of a throne of judgment. We need to understand this in the light of ancient times when no one came into the king's throne room without permission. Remember the story of Esther when she took the risk of going into the king's presence. She said, "If I perish, I perish." We don't have to worry about that. The King of kings invites us to come anytime.

When Jesus died on the cross outside the city wall of Jerusalem the Bible says something happened inside the Temple. The veil was torn in two from the top to the bottom, signifying that He had made the way for us to enter God's presence. We can go to the Lord for mercy and grace to help in time of need. Every time in our life is a time of need.

We tend by nature as sinners to look at our sins and be discouraged or to look at our goodness and be puffed up. Instead of that, we need to look to God who sits on a throne of grace. His grace will encourage us to come in spite of our sin and grace will keep us humble as we do so.

If God is dealing with you as a sinner in need of salvation, you will tremble at God's throne of justice, knowing that you are guilty and condemned. Then as a helpless soul you appeal to God's throne of grace, and God says "That's all I need to see. I forgive you and welcome you into my presence."