Hebrews 4:14- 16

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Hebrews 4:14–5:10*** (ESV)  
**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. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

1. Briefly summarize Hebrews 4:1-10.

Ch 1: Yeshua sits at the right hand of God. He reigns with God and as the Son of God reigns as God himself. He is greater than angels (messengers), therefore His words and teachings are greater than any message from messengers (whether heavenly or earthly).

Ch. 2: If the Torah given through messengers was reliable and to be followed, how much more so should we then follow the words of the Messiah. Even though Yeshua is greater than the angels, and his message is greater than that given by the angels to Moses, yet Yeshua was for a while lower than angels, having become man, in order to save man from slavery to fear and death. He was sent from God to be our merciful and faithful high priest.

Ch 3: Yeshua is an apostle and high priest, greater than Moses. Moses was a servant. Yeshua was the son. We must hold fast our faith in Him, and not allow sin to harden our hearts like our ancestors did when they disobeyed Moses. And we know the result of that! None of those who were disobedient were allowed to enter the promised land. Encourage one another not to fall away. Don’t be like your ancestors who didn’t listen to Moses, and didn’t receive God’s promises. NOW, listen to Yeshua, who is greater than Moses and who brings a message greater than that of Moses.

Ch 4: If we shema his Word, we receive the promise of His Rest. Our forefathers didn’t have the faith to obey. As a result they didn’t receive the promise of His Rest. Now we have been given His Word even more directly through Yeshua, and we still have the choice before us to believe and obey and receive the promise of His Rest. Don’t be disobedient like your forefathers. You will have to give account of your actions. No one can hide from power of the Word of God.

1. Heb 4:14 begins a new thought focusing on Yeshua as our great High Priest, and actually starts with the GR **oun** “therefore”. What is the connection with the past passage and about entering God’s rest and the all-powerful Word of God with this next section viewing Yeshua as our high priest? Hint: What is the function of a high priest and what does the phrase “who has passed through the heavens” really mean?

The earthly high priest passes through the veil into most holy place – into the presence of God. He enters on behalf of the people, and obtains atonement for the sins of the people, that they might be seen as righteous before God. This is all a picture, a metaphor, of entering into the fullness of God’s presence for all eternity.

Since we have a high priest “**who has passed through the heavens**”... The connection seems to be the phrase “who has passed through the heavens.” This refers to the ascension of Yeshua to the right hand of God. In other words, Yeshua has entered the Rest – the final promised land. He went there before us. He showed us the way. He showed us how to get there. He became man to show mankind how to truly live by faith, and what it looks like to walk in belief and obedience to the Word of God.

So the argument begins with the connection that we have a high priest who has demonstrated how we are to live, and has entered God’s rest. He didn’t just “make a way” for us to enter in some theological sense… he actually SHOWED us the way. He showed us how to live a life of faithful obedience to the Word of God. And then he received the promise. He entered God’s rest.

1. Still looking at Heb 4:14, “therefore…” what are we to do? How does this tie together with all the prior four chapters?

Therefore… hold fast to the confession! Keep the faith. Don’t shrink back from believing and obeying the Word of God.

The author has been building up his case for the importance of the Word that came through Yeshua. Yehsua. Yeshua is greater than Moses, likewise the Word of God through Yeshua is greater than the Word of God through Moses. Yeshua is greater than angels, but came to be like man, so he could save us from slavery to fear of death. He came to be our merciful and faithful high priest, showing us how to live in faithful obedience to God’s word. Don’t make the mistake of our ancestors and disobey because of their unbelief in the Word of God! They didn’t receive the promised of God… they never entered the Rest of God. Don’t think you can escape the consequences if you disobey. His word is a double-edged sword. It offers Rest to the obedient, but also punishment to the disobedient.

THEREFORE, don’t shrink back from following the Word of God brought to us through Yeshua! He showed us how to live, and then he received the promise. He went to God’s presence on our behalf, offering his ultimate sacrifice on our behalf. So follow him! Don’t cave in to pressure to abandon his Word and message. If you do so, you won’t receive the promise.

1. In Heb 4:15-16, what “tone” do you feel being communicated by the author? What is he trying to communicate, and how does he do it? What is his message?

He seems to be encouraging them. He recognized they are struggling. They are feeling great pressure to abandon their walk with Yeshua. The author shows sympathy and understanding. He tells them our high priest knows and understands how they are being tempted. Yet, he showed us the way through it. So we too can have the confidence to get through it.

1. The author says that Yeshua, as our high priest, is able to “sympathize with our weaknesses.” This not a new thought in Hebrews, although it wasn’t stated in exactly the same way before. Where was this same teaching brought out before?

***Hebrews 2:14–18*** (ESV)  
**14** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise **partook of the same things**, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. **16** For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. **17** Therefore he had to be **made like his brothers in every respect**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. **18** **For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

1. Heb 4:15 teaches that Yeshua was “without sin”. Where else does Scripture teach this? What does it mean? What did it look like for Yeshua to live that way? Is that how we are to live? Can we?

***1 Peter 2:20–24*** (ESV)  
**20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example**, **so that you might follow in his steps**. **22** **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

***1 John 3:4–10*** (ESV)  
**4** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. **5** You know that **he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.** **6** No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. **7** Little children, let no one deceive you. **Whoever practices righteousness is righteous,** as he is righteous. **8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. **10** By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

No sin means never disobeying God. Yeshua was completely obedient to the Word of God. He never disobeying God’s Word. He kept the Torah completely, and more important he kept it the right way, with the right intent of his heart.

He is our example. We are to follow in his steps. We are to live that way. We are to practice righteousness, and live according to God’s Word. But can we do it perfectly? No. We are not without sin. Which is why his sacrifice for us was necessary. He was the “perfect, sinless sacrifice, and thus was able to bear the sins of all.

1. Heb 4:16 speaks of “drawing near the throne of grace”. What is the throne of grace? Consider the context, and note that in Hebrew the only word used for throne is simply the word for “seat” (HB kisse).

In the context of the high priest passing through the veil and entering the holy of holies where the ark was located, the throne/seat or grace/mercy seems to refer to the “mercy seat”. This was the cover of the ark. Cover (HB kipporet) is from the same root as atonement (HB kippor) which was a covering for sin.

1. A tangential but somewhat related question is, “Why is the cover of the ark called a mercy **seat**”? Look up Rom 14:10, 2 Cor 5:10, Ex 25:17-22, 1 Sam 4:4, Ps 80:1, Ps 99:1, 2 Sam 6:2, 2 Kings 19:15, 1 Chron 13:5 and Ezek 10:1.

A seat can be a location, or place, as in “judgment seat” being the place judgment was given, but the term probably came from the fact that the judge was seated as a ruler and the subject came before him.

***Romans 14:10*** (ESV)  
**10** Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all **stand before the judgment seat** of God;

***2 Corinthians 5:10*** (ESV)  
**10** For we must all **appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

In the same way, the high priest appeared before the “mercy seat”. A place where mercy was granted by YHWH who was seated there. Scripture makes it cleat that YHWH was in some way “sitting” above the cherubim, which were integral to the “covering” of the ark:

***Exodus 25:17–22*** (ESV)  
**17** “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. **18** And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. **19** Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. **20** The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. **21** And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. **22** **There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim** that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

***1 Samuel 4:4*** (ESV)  
**4** So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who **is enthroned** (lit. sits) **on the cherubim**. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

***Psalm 80:1*** (ESV)  
**1** Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are **enthroned upon the cherubim**, shine forth.

***Psalm 99:1*** (ESV)  
**1** The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He **sits enthroned upon the cherubim**; let the earth quake!

***2 Samuel 6:2*** (ESV)  
**2** And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who **sits enthroned on the cherubim**.

***2 Kings 19:15*** (ESV)  
**15** And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said: “O Lord, the God of Israel, **enthroned above the cherubim**, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.

***1 Chronicles 13:6*** (ESV)  
**6** And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim that belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord who **sits enthroned above the cherubim**.

***Ezekiel 10:1*** (ESV)  
**1** Then I looked, and behold, on the expanse that was **over the heads of the cherubim** there appeared above them something like a sapphire, **in appearance like a throne**. (lit. seat)

1. In the LXX “mercy seat” is translated as GK **hilasterion**. “place of mercy, forgiveness or propitiation” In the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) GK **hilasterion** is used only two time, Heb 9:5 and Romans 3:25. What conclusions can you make now regarding the “throne of grace” in Heb 4:16?

***Hebrews 9:5*** (ESV)  
**5** Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the **mercy seat**. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

***Romans 3:21–26*** (ESV)  
**21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a **propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. **26** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Yeshua has become the “mercy seat” or the “throne of grace”.

1. So in summary, how are we to approach the “throne of grace”? How is this a parallel to the high priest approaching the presence of God?

With confidence. With belief and faith. Knowing that he will provide the grace and mercy that we need to be able to be in his presence. In other words, we can approach Yeshua, as our high priest and mediator with YHWH, so we can be in his very presence. In fact Yeshua is “His very presence”. And he became the “place of forgiveness” for us, so that we can now be in His presence as well.

Just as the high priest approached YHWH at the “mercy seat”, we now approach YHWH by way of the mercy seat = Yeshua.