

# +

# THE LOOKOUT

OCTOBER 2021

**Unit: HEBREWS (Part 2)**  
**Theme: HIGH PRIEST**

**Overview:** Sooner or later in life we need someone to represent us. When purchasing a home, we might need a Realtor. When executing a will, we might need a lawyer. When making arrangements for a funeral, we might need a funeral director. The Bible calls the representative between God and people a priest. In this unit students will learn of the character, calling, office, covenant, and sacrifice of Jesus our high priest.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

**Tabs** indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

**WEEK OF OCTOBER 3, 2021**

**LESSON AIM:** **Approach God's throne  
of grace with confidence  
that Jesus is sympathetic  
and merciful toward you.**

**UNIT:** Hebrews (Part 2)

**THEME:** High Priest

**LESSON TEXT:** Hebrews 2:5-18; 4:14-16

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Psalm 8

## A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST

BY MARK SCOTT

Catholic scholar Henri Nouwen called us to be wounded healers who demonstrate real compassion. He said compassion is not pity or sympathy or charity. True compassion is entering into another person's problems. Compassion means taking on the burdens of others and standing in their shoes. Jesus demonstrated real compassion as our merciful and faithful high priest.

The writer of Hebrews argued that Jesus was superior to angels (1:5–2:4). We might be tempted to say, "Well, duh." But in the early days, some may have pushed back against that argument. Some in the Qumran community taught that the coming age would be ruled by the angel Michael and his subordinates. The Hebrew writer made it clear that the merciful and faithful high priest would rule, but that rule would be very different from the typical monarchical style.

### **The Merciful and Faithful High Priest Understood Subjection**

*Hebrews 2:5-8*

Jesus would be able to subject the world to himself because he subjected himself to the world. He understood subjection (i.e., to line up behind or yield to). Angels are God's servants. But angels do not enter into the human sphere. In fact, Jesus taught that they always behold the face of the Father (Matthew 18:10).

Angels are not the epitome of God's creation. That honor is reserved for humankind. The writer quotes lines from Psalm 8. God was *mindful* of (remembered) humans because of their exalted state. The phrase *son of man* may here be metonymy (a type of figure of speech) for humankind. Even though humans are lower than the angels, they have dignity and worth. In fact, they will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). Humans became cocreators with God and stewards of all creation. The world is subject to them even though that is not evident at the present time. Jesus became fully exalted and totally human.

### **The Merciful and Faithful High Priest Gave Himself in Substitution**

*Hebrews 2:9-10*

The writer does something quite significant with Psalm 8. While the psalm celebrates the dignity and worth of humankind, the writer gives it a Christocentric twist. We may not see everything in subjection to humankind as it will be someday (Romans 8:18-25), but because Jesus subjected himself to the human condition through the incarnation, we do see him. As the ultimate God-man, Jesus was *made lower than the angels*.

Jesus has now been exalted *with glory and honor*, but when he came to earth, he *suffered death*. That death was vicarious. It was for others. He "tasted death" (an idiom meaning "died in place of") for everyone. This was called *atonement* in verse 17.

To get *sons and daughters* (people) to *glory* (God), someone had to blaze a trail. Jesus was that trailblazer. He was not only the Creator (*for whom and through whom everything exists*), he was *the pioneer* (leader or founder) of *salvation*. Jesus' sacrifice made people *perfect* (complete in God) through his salvific experience on the cross. This ultimate sacrifice did not come about without suffering.

### **The Merciful and Faithful High Priest Engendered a Solidarity with His People**

*Hebrews 2:11-18*

The solidarity that priests have with people is their humanness. The significance of the use of Psalm 8 is that Jesus was (and is) human. Jesus shared in the human condition; he was (and is) part of the human *family*. Even though we have, through sin, embarrassed ourselves, he was not embarrassed to call us *brothers and sisters*.

The writer collects phrases from Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17-18 to further this solidarity. Jesus not only experienced life as a human, he also experienced death as humans do. But Jesus' death was not the same as others. His death held power. His death destroyed death and the influence of death's chief enemy, *the devil*. In addition to this, the people (with whom he held solidarity) were liberated from their *fear of death*.

Jesus did not have to become an angel because angels did not need saving. He was made like humans because they did need saving. Jesus experienced the full weight of being human. His humanity and suffering qualified him to be a high priest. His death paid the punishment for sin. His temptations gave him compassion for those tempted.

### **The Merciful and Faithful High Priest Was Sinless**

*Hebrews 4:14-16*

Jesus' lack of sin was the striking difference between him and other high priests. High priests had to atone for their own sins when they went to the tabernacle or temple. Jesus had no sin. Jesus never caved in to sin. While he can *empathize with our weaknesses*, he never surrendered to them (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5). This allows believers to do two things: *to hold firmly to the faith* and *to approach God's throne of grace with confidence*. ■

## APPLICATION

### WHERE WILL YOU TURN?

BY DAVID FAUST

My wife, Candy, and I have lived in our current home for nearly eight years. We try to be good neighbors, but it's not easy to connect because people tend to keep to themselves. (Maybe it's that way in your neighborhood, too.) It takes time to develop trust and build relationships.

On the Friday night after Thanksgiving last year, a house three doors from ours caught fire and burned. It was nearly a total loss, and although we're told that homeowner's insurance is covering the damage, the rebuilding process has taken several months. Immediately after the fire happened, Candy decided we should take up a collection to help. She wrote a letter explaining the need and handed it out around our neighborhood. For several days, neighbors came to our door with cash or checks. In all, 38 neighbors pitched in. A 9-year-old girl gave \$3.00 of her own money. Our neighbors—many of whom barely knew each other's names—gave nearly \$5,000 to the woman whose house burned down.

#### Shooting Near a School

Earlier this year a shooting occurred in the parking lot of a public school in our area. The facts remain unclear, but evidently it resulted from a domestic dispute; a woman was shot near to where parents drop off their children for school each morning. No one else was injured, but it was a traumatic time for the school's families, teachers, and administrators.

Provisionally, for several years volunteers from our congregation have been serving the school—tutoring students, helping to clean up the grounds, providing juice and doughnuts for "Bring Your Dad Day," serving pie to the teachers, and even helping to pay off the school's lunch debt. So, when the shooting occurred, a trusting relationship was already in place. With the blessing of the principal,

volunteers from our church held an early-morning prayer walk on the school grounds, asking the Lord to protect those who learn and work there.

#### Where Will Help Come From?

Where will you turn when you need help? Do you have a support network of friends, neighbors, and family members you could call anytime day or night? Are you investing in relationships with others in your church and community so that when troubles come, no one has to face them alone? The Bible says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

At a pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry, the crowds turned away from the Lord, and he asked his twelve apostles, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-68).

When there's nowhere else to go and others drift away, the Lord will be there for you. He is "a merciful and faithful high priest" who empathizes with our suffering and "is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18).

Here's another question: Are you the kind of person others turn to when they need help? Are you staying so close to Jesus, our merciful and faithful high priest, that others know by turning to you they will find mercy and grace in their times of need?

**Personal Challenge:** Think of someone who needs help right now. This week, give them a gift, write them a note, take them to lunch, or do some other act of kindness to share God's love in a practical way. ■

## DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. During the past week, how, specifically, did you live in God's grace, as a member of his church and kingdom?
2. As you look back over the last week, for what are you most thankful?

Ask two people to read aloud **Hebrews 2:5-18; 4:14-16** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to summarize the passages in one minute or less.

3. How do these passages describe Jesus' compassion for and actions toward his people?
4. Let's dig deeper:
  - How do these passages compare humans to angels?
  - How do these passages compare Jesus during his time of ministry on earth to angels?
  - How do these passages compare Jesus now to angels?
  - How do these passages describe Jesus' relationship with believers?
  - What do these passages say is God's ultimate purpose for humans?
  - Why did Jesus need to become fully human?
  - What differences do you see between Jesus and other high priests?
  - Why is it important for Jesus as our high priest to understand our trials and temptations?
  - What purposes for Jesus' death do you see in these passages? (See especially 2:14-18.)
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
6. What do you learn about humans?
7. How are we to respond (in obedience) to what's written in these passages?
8. As followers of Jesus, God has made us, his people, into a "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5, 9). How can we, then, as Jesus' body on earth, join with our high priest Jesus' mission?
  - In what tangible way will you act as part of Jesus' "holy priesthood" this week?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What trials or temptations do you anticipate facing during the upcoming week?

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Hebrews 5:1-10; 6:13-20**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■