

1833 New Hampshire Confession of Faith – Article 4

Revised June 2017

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace,¹ through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God;² who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin;³ honored the divine law by his personal obedience,⁴ and by his death made a full atonement for our sins;⁵ that having risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in heaven;⁶ and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Saviour.⁷

1. What does it mean that salvation is “wholly of grace?”

It means salvation is completely unearned. If you're a Christian, God decided to save you because He wanted to – not because of anything you did. There is nothing you can do to earn merit or favor with God.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose,” (Galatians 2:21). He means that, if it *were* possible to become righteous and justified by keeping the Mosaic Law, then Christ died for no reason at all. If it were possible to do things to gain merit and favor with God, and be rewarded with salvation, then why did Jesus even need to come here? Of course, the Bible tells us it *isn't* possible to keep God's law perfectly and be righteous through it, so therefore Christ *did* have to come (see also Galatians 3:1-14).

So, there is nothing you can do to become righteous and gain points with God. The miracle of salvation is that, knowing all this, the Lord decided to save some people anyway. This is why it is “wholly of grace;” because we can never earn this favor.

As the Apostle Paul wrote, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast,” (Ephesians 2:8).

¹ Eph. 2:5; Matt. 18:11; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 3:5–7; Acts 15:11.

² John 3:16; 1:1–14; Heb. 4:14; 12:24.

³ Phil. 2:6, 7; Heb. 2:9; 2:14; 2 Cor. 5:21.

⁴ Isa. 42:21; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 4:4, 5; Rom. 3:21.

⁵ Isa. 53:4, 5; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 4:25; 3:21–26; 1 John 4:10; 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:1–3; Heb. 9:13–15.

⁶ Heb. 1:8; 1:3; 8:1; Col. 3:1–4.

⁷ Heb. 7:25; Col. 2:9; Heb. 2:18; 7:26; Psa. 89:19; 14.

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Salvation is entirely, completely and “wholly of grace.”

2. What is a mediator? How was Christ our Mediator?

A mediator is somebody who stands between two parties and resolves a conflict. Everybody is born into this world belonging to Satan. We are born as “children of wrath,” (Ephesians 2:3). We are spiritually dead through our trespasses and sins, which include both what we think and what we do. We naturally “follow the course of this world,” energized and influenced by Satan, “the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience,” (Ephesians 2:2).

That is one side of the conflict.

On the other side, you have God Himself. He created the world, sustains the world, gives you life, gives you a job, family, money, and all the blessings you have. Some people have more than others, to be sure – but everything *anybody* has is from God. He gives us life, and rules and reigns over all creation. In return, we should worship and adore Him, and obey His commands. After all, we’re under *His* jurisdiction and authority. And, because of all He’s done for us, we should love Him and want to serve Him.

But, we don’t.

That is where Jesus Christ comes in. He is our mediator. He stands in the gap and resolves this conflict between you and God. Salvation is wholly of grace, and God accomplishes it “through the mediatorial offices of the Son.” He sent Jesus to accomplish His people’s salvation. That is why there is no other mediator between God and man, except the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)!

3. When was Christ appointed by the Father to be our mediator?

God appointed Christ to be the mediator for His children before the world even began. The Apostle Peter wrote:

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- “He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God,” (1 Peter 1:20).

Jesus was always a part of God’s plan, and He appointed His eternal Son to this role before time *itself* even existed. All the Scriptures point to Jesus and His perfect life, substitutionary death, and miraculous resurrection from the dead for all the people the Father has given to Him.

Read what Jesus Himself said, after His resurrection, to two discouraged disciples:

- “And he said to them, ‘O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself,” (Luke 24:25-27).

Later that same evening, Jesus continued to explain:

- “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high,’” (Luke 24:44-49).

The whole Bible points to Jesus, and you need to realize the Father appointed Him to this job before the beginning of time. The Apostle Paul tells us this, when he writes,

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- “Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago,” (2 Timothy 1:8-9).

The last bit of the quotation means “before time.” If you’re a Christian, Christ was appointed to be your mediator before the world began.

4. Did Jesus grudgingly or reluctantly take on our nature?

Jesus took on a human nature “freely.” He did it willingly, eagerly, voluntarily. He wasn’t forced to do it, coerced to do it, guilted into it, or shamed into it. We all remember times when we “have” to do something, and we drag our feet and go along out of obligation – but we *really* don’t want to have anything to do with it! I feel that way every time I go with my wife to the mall, and take her to her favorite stores. I patiently follow her around, smile and tell her, “Don’t worry, take your time! I don’t mind!” Of course, I’m really *not* having fun.

This wasn’t Jesus’ attitude. He freely took upon our human nature. He counted Himself to be less than those He came to save. He humbled Himself, and made Himself nothing. He *emptied* Himself, stripped Himself of all the external trappings of divinity - like a king who hangs his royal robes in the closet and deliberately cloaks Himself in the clothes of a commoner, and suffers all the inconveniences and indignities that come with that lowly status (see Philippians 2).

Jesus did this because He was obedient to the Father’s will, and because He loves His brethren. Did you know that, if you’re a Christian, Jesus Himself – the spotless, co-equal and co-eternal Son of God - is proud to call you a brother or sister in God’s family!? Read what the writer of the Book of Hebrews has to say,

- “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage,” (Hebrews 2:14).

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Jesus took on our nature freely, willingly, voluntarily and eagerly. He did it so that, though death, He would destroy the curses of sin and death, and break Satan's power over His brethren.

5. What does it mean that Jesus “took upon him our nature, yet without sin?”

It means two things.

First, it means Jesus added a human nature to His divine nature.

Jesus didn't originally have a human nature. He only had a divine nature. But, at a particular point in time, Jesus *added* a completely human nature to His divine nature. This doesn't mean Jesus had multiple personalities, or that He was half man, half God. It means that, since His incarnation, He's been 100% man *and* 100% God at the very same time.

Christians in the fifth century had to deal with all sorts of heretical and blasphemous ideas about how Christ could be both divine and human. They took all the work that had been done by so many other Christians down through the years, gathered all the evidence about what the Bible teaches about Jesus and, like good detectives, they summarized this evidence into a statement that has endured for centuries – because it's so clear and so accurate. They wrote that Jesus should:

- “. . . be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ: as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.”⁸

⁸ From the *Chalcedonian Creed*, in *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols., ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 2:63.

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So, Jesus never had a human nature until He left the Father's side in heaven and was conceived by a miracle of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. There is one very special passage in the Bible that makes this all very clear. It's so important that I'll quote it here, for you to read:

- "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
- Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.
- Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," (Philippians 2:1-11).

This passage tells us many things. I'll number them and briefly explain each one:

- (1) The ultimate example of humility is Jesus Christ, who didn't stay in heaven and plead that He is too righteous, holy and pure to bother Himself with miserable sinners like us. He could have done, you know. But, He chose not to. He was humble for our sake, when He didn't have to be.
- (2) Jesus was "in the form of God." This means He had the same outward pomp, glory, honor and divine majesty that Yahweh Himself has. Nobody shares God's glory – except Jesus. To look upon Him is the same as looking upon God Himself.
- (3) Yet, despite all this, Jesus didn't consider this equality something to be grasped, held onto for dear life, or clung to stubbornly. He didn't plead His form, likeness or majesty as an excuse to stay put. No – He came anyway. He has always existed in the form of God, and yet He laid aside all the

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trappings, insignia, royal robes and clothing of divine majesty. He didn't consider it something to be held onto.

- (4) Instead, He emptied Himself. He made Himself nothing. He went from the very form of God, to nothing. He didn't *stop* being God. He just stopped claiming divine privilege. He put His royal insignia in the closet, shut the door, put on workers clothes and left the heavenly throne room for a while – for our sake.
- (5) He did this by taking on the form of a slave, by being born in the likeness and form of man, and by being confirmed to be just like men. He made Himself like us.

This is why we worship Jesus and adore Him – because of what He did for us. It's important you know the truth about Jesus. He is the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God. He is equal with God. He has always existed with God, in the same form as Him. And yet, He voluntarily and freely took upon Himself a human nature just like ours – except without sin. This leads to the next important point:

Second, Jesus made Himself a perfect person like Adam, not a sinful person like you

Some people think Jesus made Himself *exactly* like us. That isn't true – otherwise He would have had a sinful nature and been born as a child of wrath, belonging to Satan! So, why does this confession say Jesus took on a human nature, but was without sin?

To understand this, you have to ask, “well, what *is* sin, exactly?” Sin is more than just something you do:

- It's also something you think. After all, we think bad things, even if we never do those things. Jesus said we've committed adultery if we even think about lusting after somebody else. Jesus' point was that you're still a sinner even if you don't actually do anything - your own thoughts and your own heart condemn you.
- Sin is also a status, a state of being we're saved from. We were enslaved to sin, but now we're alive in Christ.

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This idea of sin as a *status* is the reason why you think evil things, and sometimes do them. So, when the Bible talks about how Jesus “knew no sin,” it means all three of these definitions:

- Jesus never committed a sinful act
- He never thought a sinful thought
- He was never in the state or status of “a sinner”

Where does the Bible teach that Jesus wasn’t born as a sinner? Read on:

- “And Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be, since I have no husband?’ And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God,’” (Luke 1:34-35).

Pay attention to what the angel tells Mary. She asks how she can conceive a child, because she isn’t married! The angel answers:

- This won’t be a normal conception, so her lack of a husband is irrelevant. How is that!?
- The Holy Spirit will come upon her, and the power of God will overshadow her. This is how the conception will happen - it will be a miracle
- Therefore, as a result of this miraculous conception, the child will be called holy. To be more specific, He will be the Son of God.

Here is the point:

- Nobody is born holy. We’re born as sinners. There is nothing we can do to perfectly obey God’s law. It actually isn’t possible for anybody born infected with sin to perfectly obey God. This is why, when Jesus added a human nature to His divine nature, He couldn’t add a *sinful* human nature – He added a pure and holy one, instead.
- When sinful men and women get together, they produce sinful children.

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- This is why Jesus was conceived miraculously - so He wouldn't be a sinner. This is why ("therefore") the child will be called "holy," because He *is* holy, because He wasn't conceived by sinful parents. He was conceived by a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

Here is another verse:

- "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens," (Hebrews 7:26).

In light of what the angel said to Mary, and because we know sin is more than an action, we can interpret this verse. It means Jesus is separate from us, somehow different than us. How? He lived a perfect life as a man. He is holy, blameless, and separate from us, in a class all by Himself. He isn't holy because He didn't sin. He didn't sin because He is holy!

He "knew no sin," (1 Peter 1:22), and "in Him is no sin," (1 John 3:5). Jesus is righteous, and we aren't (1 Peter 3:18). He couldn't be righteous if He had a sinful nature. Then, He'd be just like us. We're not "sinful people." We're "sinners," (Romans 5:8) and this means a *status* or a *state of being*. In just the same way that we're more than people from America (we're actually *Americans!*), we're more than just people who commit sin - we're *sinners*.

It's important to know that Jesus didn't come as a person with a sinful nature. He came as the second Adam. This is the way Paul talked about it in Romans 5. The first Adam ruined everything and imposed the curse of death on everybody. But, through Jesus Christ (the second Adam), we can be set free from that. This is what Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was all about; proving He succeeded where the first Adam failed.

Think of Jesus as a "ringer," who deliberately came out of left field and was conceived by a miracle of the Holy Spirit specifically so He could defeat Satan and live a perfect life for us, in our place, as our substitute.

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6. How did Jesus honor God’s divine law by His personal obedience?

He did it by perfectly obeying God’s law in your place, as your substitute and representative. Remember the temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-12). Jesus faced *continuous* trials and genuine opportunities to sin against God. He stayed holy and righteous. He rebuked Satan. This, in a nutshell, is what Jesus (as a man) did His entire life. He obeyed God’s law absolutely, perfectly and completely. He did it for you, as your representative and your substitute.

Jesus was conceived by a miracle of the Holy Spirit so that He would not inherit the sin nature the rest of us are cursed with (cf. Luke 1:35). He challenged the apostate Jewish leaders to prove He had violated the law (Jn 8:46). He declared that Satan had no power over Him (Jn 14:30), which is only possible if He was not subject to the curse of the Fall. The Apostle Paul declared that Jesus “knew no sin,” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Peter proclaimed, “He committed no sin,” (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus is the sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish (Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:20); that is, He is morally pure and undefiled.

The Apostle Paul explains:

- Therefore, [there is] now no punishment to those in union with Christ Jesus, because the law of the life-giving Spirit, in union with Christ Jesus, has liberated you from the law of sin and death. For [God did what] the law could not ever do, because it was weakened by the flesh. God sent His own Son as like a sinful man and, regarding sin, He imposed judgment against the sin while He was in the flesh, so that the requirement of the law would be fulfilled among us who are not living according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, (Romans 8:1-4; author’s own translation).

God sent Jesus to do what the Mosaic Law could never do. He sent Jesus to impose judgment against sin while He was incarnate here on earth. He did this so that the righteous requirement of the law would be fulfilled among those who live according to the Spirit. This speaks of our obligation to live by the Spirit if we’ve been set free from the law of sin and death. It also speaks about what Christ did;

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He fulfilled the perfect, holy and righteous requirement of the law for us, in our place, as our substitute.

7. What is atonement?

Sin is rebellion against God's law, by what you think about and do. This encompasses a whole lot of things, but the most basic idea of sin is about rebellion; the desire to make and live by your own rules, and not God's. Theologians call this *autonomy*. God made us, and gets to be in charge of us. He sets the rules. We're born as "sinners." Which means we don't want to live by God's rules or be under His jurisdiction and authority. So, we break His law. This makes us criminals.

Criminals are law-breakers. Criminals have to pay for their crimes. If somebody commits a crime, your community has a law that specifies an appropriate punishment. The bigger the crime, the bigger and more appropriate the punishment.

This punishment does two related, but distinct things:

1. It pays for the crime you committed. It, as it were, "squares things" between you and society. You've probably heard the phrase, "he paid his debt to society." This means the criminal paid for his crime, did his time, and now he's been set free. The slate is clean. He isn't a prisoner any more. In a sense, it means *justice* has been done.
2. It appeases the injured and offender party. If you beat somebody with a club and steal his money, that person has a legitimate "bone to pick" with you. He has a *moral right* to demand you be punished. Once you serve your time, his grievance has been resolved. Of course, the greater the crime, the greater the offense, and the greater the grievance. The sentence has to match the crime. If you murder somebody, the victim's family won't be happy if you're sentenced to three weeks of "community service." That isn't right, and they'd be correct to still have a grievance!

These simple examples from everyday life in our American criminal justice system help us understand what "atonement" is:

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- If you're a human being alive today, you're a sinner.
- If you're a sinner, then you're a criminal who has broken God's law.
- If you've broken God's law, then you deserve to pay the appropriate punishment – you deserve a sentence proportional to your crimes

Why is that? Well, for the two reasons I just mentioned! Only, this time, remember that *God Almighty* is the injured party. *He's* the One with the grievance. *He's* the One with the "bone to pick" with you:

- (1) You must pay for the crimes you've committed, or else things will never be "squared" between you, and
- (2) God is angry with you, and your proper sentence is the only thing which will appease His wrath because of your crimes.

The Bible teaches that punishment, when Jesus Christ returns, He will be:

- "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed," (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

Destruction will be eternal and everlasting, and it will be done "in flaming fire." The punishment will be eternal, sinners will be conscious of it, and it will never end. This is how serious sin against our God is.

When the confession reads that Jesus "made a full atonement for our sins," it means the Bible teaches that Jesus accomplished atonement for all His children.

8. How did Jesus' death make a full atonement for our sins?

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Atonement is presented in the Book of Leviticus as an object lesson for what Christ did. This is how the object lesson worked (this procedure is from Leviticus 4):

- A covenant believer (i.e. an Israelite, or a Gentile who has come to faith in God) sins
- The believer must repent, which means to *honestly* confess and decide to forsake his sin.
- The believer must bring an offering from his flock or herd, one that was spotless and without blemish. This represented Christ's moral purity and perfection.
- The believer must bring the offering to the temple. The believer must lay his head on the animal's head, signifying a symbolic transfer of guilt from himself to the animal.
- Then, the offeror must kill the animal *himself*. This means he has to cut the animal's throat *himself*, and watch the life-blood drain out of the dying animal. The blood of the animal represents life, and the parallel is that the animal's life was given in place of the believer's. He has sinned, and instead of taking his life, God will accept the life of a spotless animal in exchange. But, the animal *must* die. The object lesson is about substitution; its life for yours – all because of your sin.
- The Levite priest then takes the animal's blood, and sprinkles it onto the altar, and onto the horns of the altar. This means the sacrifice has been formally presented to God.

Jesus fulfilled this grand object lesson. The Book of Hebrews tells us all about it; "Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these," (Hebrews 9:23). Here is how He fulfilled it:

- Jesus bore our sins and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4-6); our sins were, as it were, *transferred* to Him. All our iniquity was laid upon His shoulders
- Jesus allowed Himself to be taken and sacrificed. His blood was shed in place of our own; His life for ours. He died for us, in our place, as our substitute.

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- When Jesus rose from the dead and returned to the Father's side in heaven, He presented *His own* blood to God, who accepted it, "thus securing an eternal redemption," (Hebrews 9:12).

The Bible teaches that, by His single and perfect sacrifice, Jesus fulfilled the object lessons from the Levitical law and secured an eternal, full and perfect atonement for all His children. "[H]e has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (Hebrews 9:26).

9. Why does it matter that Jesus rose from the dead?

This is a very important question, and many Christians don't think much about it. Christians often focus only on the Cross as the central act of Jesus' work. But, the apostles often focus on the *resurrection*. Peter, especially, does this often (Acts 2:24-46; 3:15; 4:10; 4:19-20; 5:29-32; 10:39-41). For example, in 1 Peter 1:3-5, the Apostle wrote that God:

- "has caused us to be born again in order to have a living hope, *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, in order to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, which has been reserved in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time."

You were born again for two purposes; (1) to have a living hope, and (2) to obtain an eternal inheritance. Peter is saying the resurrection is one way how God achieves our new birth in Christ. This is a bold statement; your living hope of eternity with God is achieved through *more* than the Cross – it's also achieved through the resurrection!

Why? What does the resurrection have to do with the new birth? If Jesus was already perfect for us (and He was), and if He already let Himself be punished and die for our sins (and He did), then why does the resurrection matter?

There are four basic reasons why it matters that Jesus Christ rose from the dead:

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1. Death doesn't apply to Jesus, because of who He is – *therefore death won't apply to His children, either*. If you're a Christian, that means you.
2. Jesus was resurrected as the "firstfruits" because the curse of death has no hold on Him – *therefore you will be resurrected to be with the Lord forever, too*.
3. Jesus must return to rule, reign, defeat all enemies, and set everything right that has gone so horribly wrong – *therefore, because He has risen from the dead, you know how this will all end!*
4. Jesus lives forever to make intercession for His children in the Father's presence in heaven (Heb 7:23-28)

Perhaps the best way is to explain this is to point you to a passage of Scripture. You should read 1 Corinthians 15, and follow along as I make a few points. I could say much more, but I'll say enough for you to get the point:

1. The Christian faith is useless without Christ's resurrection (1 Cor 15:13-14; 30-34).
2. Your sins are not forgiven if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:17-19).
3. Christ's resurrection is the "first-fruits" of all who have died (1 Cor 15:20-23). If Christ wasn't raised, you have no future after death. But, He did, and therefore so do you, too!
4. Christ must reign over everything and defeat all enemies, including the curse of death (1 Cor 15:24-26). If Christ isn't raised, He won't reign, He won't defeat any enemies, and He will have been conquered by the curse of death.
5. Then, Jesus must "hand over" all creation to the Father, in a sort of "mission accomplished" moment (1 Cor 15:28). If Christ isn't raised, He isn't going to hand over all creation to God – because *He's dead*.
6. Your physical (i.e. sinful) body must be replaced by a spiritual (i.e. holy) body – because flesh and blood (i.e. our sinful, corrupted physical bodies) cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:42-58; esp. vv.54-57). Our cleansed and righteous souls must be joined to cleansed and righteous *bodies* to be with the Lord in the new creation forever

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10. What does it mean to say Jesus is “enthroned in heaven?”

It means Jesus rules over the entire world, all the people in it, and even over the very forces of darkness (Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1-2). He is the King, and He is in charge. Of course, this isn't the full story. People *don't* obey Jesus' rule. They *don't* care about His authority. They *don't* respect His jurisdiction over their lives.

During His ministry here on earth, during the incarnation, Jesus told a parable to explain how He'd brought the Kingdom of God to the Israelites – it was right there, available, ready to be instituted! Read what He said:

- *But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.* When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters (Luke 11:20-23).

Jesus used a figurative illustration to make a simple point:

1. Satan is a strong man, who guards his palace and his goods (i.e. sinners, who are his slaves)
2. But, Jesus is the *stronger* man. He's assailed Satan and overpowered him. He's bound Satan and chained him up; Jesus proved that by the easy way He conducted exorcisms and rebuked and commanded demons!

What should these Jewish leaders have concluded, then? Follow the logic:

1. This man, Jesus, casts demons out of people and has power over these fallen angels;
2. The only one more powerful than fallen angels is God;
3. So, this man, Jesus, *must* be the promised Messiah who has brought the Kingdom of God to the world, through the Israelites!

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So, as I said, Jesus *is* in charge, but the world doesn't recognize His rule. That will change when He returns to take His throne here on earth, and impose holiness and righteousness on the whole earth (cf. Psalm 2; 110) – both this one, and the one to come. Revelation 19-22 tell us all about those events, but we'll save that for later.

11. Why is Jesus a perfect, holy and yet *understanding* Savior?

Jesus is an understanding, compassionate Savior because He took on a human nature, lived life in this wicked world, and understands first-hand the trials and tribulations of *real life*. But, unlike you, He defeated Satan and never sinned at all, in word, deed or thought.

The Book of Hebrews tells us all about this. The writer mentioned that God put everything in subjection to Jesus, even though things don't seem that way now.

- Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.
- For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:8-11)

He went on:

- Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham.

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- Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:14-18).

What does all this mean? It means Jesus came here as a flesh and blood man so that he'd be able to be a merciful, compassionate, faithful High Priest before God on *your* behalf.

What is a priest and why should you care? Why does the writer mention it? A priest is somebody who represents somebody to God on their behalf, who stands in the gap between you and God. This is why Jesus is called:

- An *advocate* (1 Jn 2:1)
- A *mediator* (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24)
- An *intercessor* (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25)

The reason why the Israelite priesthood isn't around anymore, and why the institution didn't carry over into the New Covenant, is because Jesus is our faithful High Priest who *perfectly* represents all believers before God. Jesus fulfilled the "shadows" (cf. Hebrews 10:1) the sacrificial system pointed to.

So, why does the Book to the Hebrews tell us Christ is a merciful and compassionate High Priest?

1. Because He knows first-hand how powerful Satan is
2. Because He knows what it's like to be poor
3. Because He knows what it's like to be tired and exhausted
4. Because He knows what's like to know what God wants you to do, and at the same time to be too exhausted and frightened to go forward without divine help
5. Because He knows what it's like to rely completely and totally on the Lord
6. Because He knows what it's like to feel alone and abandoned by friends
7. Because He knows what it's like to be persecuted by the authorities

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Most of all, though – Christ knows what it’s like to be handicapped by all these difficulties, but He still *perfectly overcame them* and defeated Satan anyway. Jesus can sympathize, be merciful and show *such a depth of compassion* to you because He’s been in your shoes!

His compassion is a real one, not an intellectual one. He knows everything you’re going through now, or will ever go through – because He’s been there and *defeated* your problems firsthand as your representative.

Why does the writer make it a point to say that Christ is a *faithful* High Priest? Because all the men in the OT, and in the beginning of the NT, who held that office messed it all up in some way (e.g. Eli, Annas, Caiaphas, etc.)! Christ is the perfect advocate, mediator, intercessor and High Priest because He’s perfectly faithful to do what God wants, the way God wants it done (cf. 1 Samuel 2:35)! He’ll never disgrace the office and fall short in representing us before God.

12. Why is it important to know Jesus is an “all-sufficient Savior?”

Because there is nothing for you to do. You can’t contribute anything to your salvation, your legal standing before God, or your eternal life. If it were possible for somebody to be good, righteous, holy and completely follow God’s law and earn His love, then Christ wouldn’t have had to come (Galatians 2:21). But, it isn’t possible, so Christ did come, and so He is an “all-sufficient” Savior.