

Jesus the Great High Priest

Hebrews 5:1-10

Introduction

Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, intercedes on behalf of sinful men before a holy God offering salvation in both time and eternity. The role of a priest is to represent men before God, thus Jesus fulfills this role. In the Old Testament, the priest oversaw the sacrificial system – the shedding of the blood from an innocent animal. This system was put into place by God in order to maintain fellowship with man. Because God is perfectly holy, apart from the sacrificial system, the sinfulness of man would keep him separated from a holy God. The priest acted as a mediator between God and man. However, the priest was limited in this role due to his own sin. Thus the sacrifices that bridged the gap between God and man had to be made over and over because these sacrifices were insufficient to fully atone for the sins of the people.

Because Jesus is the Great High Priest, there is now an eternal atonement for sin. A priest had to meet two qualifications: (1) he had to be a human appointed by God and (2) he had to offer sacrifices. When Jesus sacrificed His life to cover the sin of man, He met both qualifications. Jesus was the priest appointed by God (Heb 5:6) who Himself became the sacrifice.

Jesus the Great High Priest models the priesthood of Melchizedek. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was also a priest. While Aaron was of the Levitical priesthood of Israel, Melchizedek was different. He was both a king and a priest. In Genesis 14, Melchizedek blessed Abraham and, in return, Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. Not only is the order of Melchizedek responsible for reparations to God through sacrifice, but it is also the priestly order known for blessing. According to Hebrews 5:10, Jesus Christ is of the priestly order of Melchizedek, and therefore, He does for us what Melchizedek did for Abraham. Christ provided Himself as the sacrificial atonement for our sin, and because of that, He has blessed us. We offer our tithes to Jesus, not to receive blessing, but in recognition of the blessing we already have received. Jesus, in line with the character of Melchizedek, is the King of righteousness and Prince of peace bringing the blessings of righteousness and peace to His people.

Because Jesus, as the Great High Priest, mediates a brand new covenant (Heb 8:6) or a new way of operating, we are no longer under the Old Testament law. Now we operate under grace. We no longer need an earthly priest as a mediator between God and us because Jesus is now our mediator under grace. He is the overseer, or head, of a new nation. 1 Peter 2:9 says that believers are a nation of priests. We can now go to God on our own because Jesus Christ already provided the sacrifice which enables us to enter boldly into God's presence and authority (Heb 4:16). Jesus is our mediator before God and, as the priest overseer, He offers us divine assistance in times of need (Heb 4:14-16).

In the Old Testament, the priest in his humanity experienced the same struggles common to man. He could relate to the people He represented. In His humanity, Jesus Christ identifies with our struggles. In His divinity, He represents us before a Holy God, providing us help in the context of the human experience. The good news for us is a Christian never has to give up or throw in the towel. God's divine assistance is always available to us through Christ. Jesus is the authorized means by which we have access to God the Father. Believers always have a representative in Heaven: Jesus Christ our Great High Priest.

Getting Started

1. What truth about Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest resonated with you most from this week's sermon?
2. This week's sermon underscores the importance of understanding concepts from the Old Testament that relate to principles presented in the New Testament. Review why it is so important that Jesus Christ was of

the order of Melchizedek and not the Levitical order of priests in the Old Testament. What is the difference between the two orders, and why does that matter to us today (hint: review Hebrews 7)?

Let's Get Personal

1. Jesus Christ as priest and sacrificial lamb makes it possible for us to go to God on our own. Too many Christians don't take advantage of the incredible invitation for them to talk to the God of the universe on their own. How is your prayer life? Are you consistently taking your concerns to Him in prayer?
2. Jesus Christ as priest and mediator means that Jesus is our help. He sits at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf. In what ways do you need Jesus your Great High Priest to intercede for you?

Take the Next Step

1. Knowing that Jesus Christ is your help should lend confidence to your walk of faith. In difficult times, we can know that God is at work behind the scenes. In your group, take time to share with one another how you've been waiting on God to help you in a specific circumstance in your life. Has there ever been evidence in your life of a wavering faith?
2. How did today's sermon encourage you to continue moving forward with a settled faith in your Great High Priest? What steps will you take this week to move forward with an unwavering faith? Review Hebrews 10:22-25 to understand the actions of someone with unwavering faith.
3. Want to go deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Gen 14:17-20; Psalm 110:4; Rom 12:1-2; Heb 2:17-3:1; 4:14-16; 7:1-28; 1 Peter 2:5, 9

Renew Your Mind

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." – Hebrews 10:23
