

JESUS, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST; THE HOLY SPIRIT, OUR COMFORTER

Week 4 – Why is Jesus Our Great High Priest?

October 3, 2023

What can believers in Jesus do if we doubt and fail to obey? When failure occurs...when we are NOT abiding according to what God has told us in His word...a provision has been made. Our provision is Jesus, our great High Priest! When doubting, wondering about our belief, and disobedience become a personal reality, believers can come with confidence to our powerful, sympathetic High Priest. And so...

Heb. 4:14-16 - *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession (whom we profess to be ours). ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Let's understand the priestly ministry in the OT. Priests were appointed from among men. A priest in the OT functioned as a mediator between the people and God. The Levitical priesthood, from the tribe of Levi, began with Aaron, the older brother of Moses (Exodus 28:1-3). Aaron was the first High Priest. The Levitical priests bore the responsibility of offering the sacrifices required by the Mosaic Law "day after day."

Heb. 10:11 - *And every priest stands ministering **daily** and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins!!*

By these daily sacrifices, the sins of the people were temporarily covered until the Messiah came to take away their sins. GOD gave the children of Israel the sacrificial system to teach them the consequences of sin (you sinned...something had to die)...to provide the way – temporarily - for the children of Israel to approach Him/God, AND to point to the ultimate sacrifice – the Messiah – Jesus, the spotless, perfect Lamb of God!

Lev. 17:11 – God told the children of Israel, *For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you (I HAVE provided FOR YOU AND HERE IS THE ALTAR) to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'*

Atonement – *kaphar* (ka-FAIR) – to cover. Through atonement sins were covered (Rom. 3:25; Acts 17:30) until the ultimate sacrifice would be offered and that ultimate sacrifice would TAKE AWAY sin (Psa. 103:12; Jer. 31:31, 34; John 1:29). The sacrificial system was designed to cover sin UNTIL it was finally PAID FOR...taken away through the death of Jesus.

Since we need to understand the BIG PICTURE of Scripture...the ONE story of the Bible... here's the BACKSTORY re: the sacrificial system.

For God so loved the world. We need to **not** forget the LOVE among the Trinity!

And so...God desired a relationship with man and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam and Eve everything. God told them, *Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die* (Gen. 2:16-17).

Man disobeyed God's commandment. Man rebelled against God – man offended God! And, sin entered the world. BUT GOD immediately promised the Redeemer – the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). And God made tunics of skin, having slain an animal, having shed blood. And God

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clothed Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). The first sacrifice. Blood represents life. ...*the life of the flesh is in the blood....* (Lev. 17:11). Without blood a person could not live!

During the Israelites wilderness wanderings, because of God's love, He told Moses to tell the Jewish people... Ex. 25:8 - ...*let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.* God so desired to live with His people with whom He had made a covenant through Abraham. And, through the Mosaic covenant, God gave them 613 commandments instructing them how to live. And, the tabernacle in the wilderness was built. WHY? ...*that I may dwell with them.*

Moses did not design the tabernacle and then invite God to dwell in it. It was through God and His plan and love that the tabernacle was built (Ex. 25:9; Ex. 25:40). By the daily/yearly sacrifices, the sins of the people were temporarily covered UNTIL the Messiah came to take away sins. The sacrificial system displayed the ugliness of sin.

When someone sinned unintentionally, they were instructed in Leviticus 4 to offer an animal without spot or blemish to the Lord. Substitutionary sacrifice. "It's my sin that made the death of this innocent animal necessary! And the next time I sin, another innocent animal must die!" How would this impact a person's heart? Softening unto repentance? Or bitterness/hardness? The bottom-line question is "How can a holy God live in the midst of a sinful people?" Answer: His LOVE which provided the way for them to approach Him – the shedding of blood through a substitutionary sacrifice.

The Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur (Lev. 16)

Only the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16), divided by a curtain from the rest of the tabernacle. The veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies housed the Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat on top - which was the symbol of God's presence. Before entering the tabernacle, Aaron, the High Priest sacrificed a bull as a sin offering for himself and his family. The blood of the bull was sprinkled on the mercy seat on top of the ark of the covenant.

Aaron then took two goats. The goat for the Lord was slain and blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, making atonement for the tabernacle which was made unclean from the sins of the people. The second goat, the live goat, was called the scapegoat. The scapegoat was the sin-bearer.

Lev. 16:21- *Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. ²² The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.*

Lev. 16:34 - *This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.*

The Levitical priesthood was never intended to be permanent (Heb. 7:11).

When Jesus cried from the cross “It is finished,” the veil of the Temple separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn in two from top to bottom! The Holy of Holies was now open, fully accessible to all. We now come into God’s presence through Jesus.

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Heb. 10:19-20 - *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,* ²⁰ *by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.*

Jesus now serves as the believer’s Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).

Jesus is greater than any other Priest. The other priests were human from the Levitical priesthood. They were appointed from among men. **Jesus** is God, Who took on flesh in order to suffer death and serve as our High Priest (Heb. 2:9). As a man, He was subject to all the weaknesses and temptations that we are so that He could personally relate to us in our struggles (Heb. 4:15). Because Jesus is our “great High Priest”...because Jesus sympathizes with our struggles, and because He is God, we can **BOLDLY** come “unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

And, perfection could never come through the Levitical priesthood.

Heb. 10:1-4 – *For the law, having a shadow (an outline; a silhouette) of the good things to come, and not the very image (substance) of the things, can never with these same sacrifices (animal sacrifices), which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect (complete; to bring to the end of the purposed plan). ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? (but there was no ceasing; they continued to be offered year after year). For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those sacrifices (in the Levitical sacrifices) there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*

Through the Levitical priesthood there was no removal of sin.

Heb. 4:14 - *Seeing then that we have (to possess; to be joined closely)...because we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens (!!!), Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession*

When did Jesus pass through the heavens? When Jesus ascended, passing through the atmospheric heavens, the planetary heavens, and into the third heaven, the abode of God...Jesus entered into the presence of God because He had finished His work (John 17:4). By entering God’s presence on our behalf, Christ has secured for us an “eternal redemption”

Heb. 9:12 - *Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place (in heaven) once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

Passing through the heavens into the presence of God, Jesus then “sat down” (Heb. 1:3). He finished His work. (In the Holy of Holies in the earthly tabernacle and temple there were no seats!)

The Old Testament High Priest on the Day of Atonement would take the blood and he would go through three areas, he would go through the door into the outer court, through the door into the holy place, through the veil into the holy of holies, he passed through into the third place once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

Heb. 7:11 asks...if perfection came through the Levitical priesthood, why are we talking about Melchizedek (Psa. 11:1-4; Heb. 7:11)?? Melchizedek? Jesus is a “priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:11-12). Melech-tzedek – King of righteousness. And Melchizedek was a priest! We do not know Mel’s ancestry! Scripture does not reveal his lineage. Melchizedek is said in Heb. 7:3 to be *without father, without mother, without genealogy, having*

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neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

The writer of Hebrews explains that Jesus is of this order of priests – His priesthood is based on authority rather than on lineage (Hebrews 7:11-17). The Levitical priesthood was hereditary.

Melchizedek was not of the tribe of Levi. His lineage, his origin was unknown. There is no record of Melchizedek’s birth or death.

Melchizedek’s priesthood was universal! Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God, El Elyon, Sovereign Lord of the Universe, Lord over all...not just Israel! Jesus’ sacrifice is for all – Jews and Gentiles.

When Jesus is called our High Priest, it is with reference to both of these previous priesthoods. Like the Levitical priesthood, Jesus offered a sacrifice to satisfy the Mosaic Law when He offered Himself for our sins (Heb. 7:26-27). *The wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6:23). Death was the penalty for sin. You sinned – something has to die! Jesus died!

Unlike the Levitical priests who had to continually offer sacrifices, Jesus offered His sacrifice once, gaining eternal redemption for all who come to God through Him (Heb. 9:12).

Like Melchizedek, Jesus is ordained as a priest apart from the Law given on Mount Sinai (Hebrews 5:6).

Melchizedek is a foreshadowing of Jesus...a type in the OT of Jesus. Melchizedek was not a preincarnate appearance of Jesus as Melchizedek was an HISTORIC figure – the King of Salem.

Melchizedek, in several aspects of his life, foreshadowed several aspects of Jesus.

Heb. 7:25 - *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost (completely; forever) those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* Jesus is *eternally* available to intercede for us, and to offer us forgiveness, even *right now* (Hebrews 4:14–16; I John 1:9). He is God. Where a human priest would fall short, Jesus can save us *entirely*, since His priesthood is unending (Romans 8:34). What man's effort cannot achieve, Christ's finished work on the cross has already done (Matthew 19:26; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 11:6).

Jesus is greater than any other priest, therefore, He is called our “Great High Priest” in Hebrews 4:14, Who gives us the boldness to come “unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16 KJV).

QUESTIONS

Why is this specific topic significant? (This is a significant question!)

Anything new to you? If so – what?

What impacted you? What will you be sharing? Why?

Any issues with the lesson? If so, what are they?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Reread Week 4 with the Biblical references.

Write down your observations and questions re: the Bible passages covered.

Share what you’re learning with someone.

Read Week 5’s handout when you receive it.

Read summary on next page.

Jesus Is Our Great High Priest:

- Jesus’ sacrifice was ***offered only once*** (9:6-7, 11-12, 25-26, 28; 10:1, 10-12, etc.). The older sacrifices had to be repeated over and over again, year after year. Jesus’ finished work on the cross accomplished “once for all” what the Levitical priesthood could not.
- Christ’s sacrifice **removed sins** (9:9-10, 12; 10:1, 4, 11, 18). Sin was the problem addressed in sacrifice – it demanded removal. The repetition of the older sacrifices testified to their inability to deal with sin with finality.
- Christ’s sacrifice was ***accepted in heaven*** (8:2, 5; 9:1, 9, 11-12, 23, 24; 10:1)... accepted by God himself, in the true temple. Our forgiveness is assured!
- Christ’s sacrifice ***gained access to God*** ([Heb. 9:7-8; 10:19-22](#)).