

We have a great High Priest

Introduction:

Jesus is the true Prophet, Priest and King. Christians can be comfortable with the the terms Prophet and King when applied to Jesus:

- Prophet:- He revealed and declared the Word of God.

John 8:28

I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father."

- King:- His sovereignty:

Revelation 17:14b

"for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

How do you understand Jesus as the true Priest? Both you and I are comfortable using the word as Priest. This morning I will be utilising passages from Isaiah to assist us all to appreciate further the title the Author Hebrews gave Jesus – Our Great High Priest.

Opening Prayer:

We echo the Psalmist prayer; May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O LORD, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen

The Body:

"We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God."

Before we can understand the two verses from the Epistle to Hebrews this morning, there is the duty to grasp what the Author of Hebrews meant by the term **Great High Priest**.

We turn to the Old Testament book of Leviticus: I will be referring to Chapters 8 to 10 and chapter 16. Rest easy; I will not be reading through them this morning:

These chapters spell out the LORD's introduction of the sacrificial system and the role of Priest. The LORD summons Aaron and his sons – and gives them instruction through the Prophet Moses.

There is the slaughter of various beasts and the anointing with both oil and blood. These chapters record descriptions of correct uniforms and instructions on when and how the various sacrifices should occur. These instructions were to be taken in all seriousness in front of the whole congregation of Israel:

Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward, and washed them with water. ⁷ He put the tunic on him, fastened the sash around him, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him. He then put the decorated band of the ephod around him, tying the ephod to him with it. ⁸ He placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim. ⁹ And he set the turban on his head, and on the turban, in front, he set the golden ornament, the holy crown, as the LORD commanded Moses.

I know we can appreciate the importance of what is happening, the consecration of Aaron and his sons, to be inaugurated as Priest of God. In chapters 8-10 of Leviticus, instruction is given on how to carry out this vital role.

A very sobering lesson would be taught to the Israelites through the death of two Aaron sons:

Now Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered unholy fire before the LORD, such as he had not commanded them.² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed

The duties and responsibilities were explained, and those chosen to carry out the role was not to elevate themselves; they were to serve the LORD and the people. The following three points are a summary given by Dr Peter Adam, a retired principal of Ridley College.

- I. **The priesthood and sacrificial system was a provision of God for his covenant people.** He made them His people by His promise to Abraham and had redeemed and saved them from slavery in Egypt. God then gave them the law on Mount Sinai and sealed the covenant with them. As part of the Law, God provided priests, sacrifices and rituals as a way of maintaining fellowship and providing atonement, or forgiveness, for their sins.
- II. **The system was not about self-justification or offering sacrifices to win God's favour.** As God is in the Old Testament, he is in the New Testament a God of Grace. That is why the writer of Hebrews can use the Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices to teach us about Christ.
- III. **The Old Testament Sacrifices worked.** They were not effective as the sacrifice of Christ, as Hebrew shows us, but God still forgave his people through the priesthood and sacrifices of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was effective because God instituted it. He promised that it would be effective. It was a prefiguring of the perfect priesthood and sacrifice of Christ.

¹⁴ Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested^[d] as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of Grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find Grace to help in time of need.

The author of Hebrews teaches how superiority of Jesus:

to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested^[d] as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus can identify with you and I and the rest of humanity. It may be hard to comprehend fully, Jesus did not yield to temptation. He actually stood up against temptation: All three synoptic Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark and Luke, all have recorded the account of the temptation of Jesus:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

We all can appreciate that Jesus faced temptation throughout his life and not just these forty days in the wilderness.

Who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

One commentator stated, Jesus was the most tempted man in all of humanity, as he kept standing against temptation. Yet with our sin. The LORD provided in the Priest, and how they were to make offerings for their own sin, and undertake 'purification' before they could come before the LORD. Jesus did not require such rites. He was without sin and is one with the Heavenly Father.

I did struggle with the word boldness, in the following sentence: I thought it was arrogance, and we should be humble:

¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of Grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find Grace to help in time of need.

You and I can come before the LORD, with boldness, not ignorance, as we are invited to come into His presence through the Grace of God. That Grace, bestowed upon us by God's Son, our Great High Priest.

Jesus instructed His disciples, and all who have turned to him:

when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you

You and I can freely approach the throne of God because he permits it. We are invited into the presence of God through our prayers. This invitation comes from the great High Priest, Jesus Christ our LORD.

Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. (Romans 8)

Next week the area of atonement and sacrifice will be examined, yet today we are thankful and rejoice: we do have the Great High Priest, who has reconciled us to God and continues to intercede for you and I

To God be glory forever. Amen.

Resources

F. F. Bruce; The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament.

Dr Peter Adam; The Majestic Son; reading Hebrews today.