

**J**esus Christ is the High Priest and, as such, the mediator between God and man. He stated plainly: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The immensity of his position as High Priest can only be grasped by understanding the Hebrew scriptures. The topics of paramount concern are the tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood. These are major elements of the old covenant and furnish a shadowy type of the heavenly tabernacle and of Jesus Christ, the High Priest. A thorough reading of the first five books of the Bible is suggested since this article will only touch upon some important points recorded in the Greek scriptures..

### **Compassionate High Priest**

The book of Hebrews, more so than any other book, shows Jesus as the High Priest. He fulfilled the detailed pattern set forth in the Hebrew scriptures.

He was a man after the seed of Abraham, just as his forefathers were. He was not an angel and certainly not God.

Hebrews 2:16-18

For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The first major point communicated about our High Priest is that as a man he can empathize with us. Although Jesus Christ has been elevated to the highly esteemed position of High Priest, he is neither remote nor aloof. Rather, he is compassionate and able to help in our time of need. The word "succour" means to run to give assistance upon hearing a cry for help. Just like Israel, we need a high priest to make intercession for us. Unlike Israel, we have the great High Priest fully enabled to help us. We are told in a subsequent chapter of Hebrews that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us. The high priest of old interceded for the people

in a very limited, temporary tent. Jesus Christ, the High Priest, is at the right hand of God.

Romans 8:34

Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The Church today has unparalleled access to the throne of grace because of Jesus the Christ. Although the tabernacle signified the presence of God, it also boldly declared His separation from the children of Israel. Jesus destroyed enmity and all the obstacles that separated man from God. We now have available a relationship with God for which Israel could only hope.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

### **Melchizedek**

Although the Aaronic priesthood provides the detailed type for Jesus the Christ, there was another priest after whom he is patterned. Melchizedek was over 400 years before Aaron.

Hebrews 5:6

As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Psalm 110, one of the great messianic psalms, prophesied that Jesus would be after the order of Melchizedek. Of all the men written about in the Scriptures, only Melchizedek held the same dual position that Christ would: king and priest.

Hebrews 7:1 and 2

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed

him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

The Christ had to be anointed King after the manner of David. He was to be a descendant of David which meant that he would be from the tribe of Judah. The Christ also had to be anointed High Priest. Aaron and his children were of the tribe of Levi. Therefore, Jesus was not a priest after Aaron, but rather Melchizedek.

Psalms 76:2 says that Salem is the same as Jerusalem. Just as the Christ, Melchizedek was the king of Jerusalem and the priest of the most high God. Today, Jesus is seated at the right hand of God and serves as the High Priest. When he returns, he will rule the world as King and Priest in his capital city, Jerusalem, and fulfill the prophecy related to Melchizedek.

Connecting Jesus the Christ with Melchizedek ties him to the covenant made to Abraham which is far superior to the covenant given to Moses. The Abrahamic covenant is everlasting. The Mosaic covenant had an end. Jesus made a better covenant.

Verse 22

By so much was Jesus made a surety [guarantee] of a better testament.

A covenant has a solemn promise. Moses was given promises pertaining to this life. The covenant given to Abraham is associated with the covenant ushered in by Christ and relates to everlasting life.

Hebrews 8:6-9

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

The covenant Jesus ushered in was prophesied in Ezekiel and will be fulfilled when he returns, as was recorded in the book of Revelation.

Hebrews 8:10-13

For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

### Sacrifice

Starting with Cain and Abel, the Bible reveals that sacrifices were God-inspired and practiced by spiritually minded people. The brothers' sacrifices show clearly, right from the beginning, that those that are acceptable are offered in accordance with God's instruction. Abel's was honored, and Cain's was rejected because Abel obeyed God and Cain offered according to his own determination.

After the flood, Noah built an altar and offered from every clean beast and clean fowl a burnt offering unto the Lord. Throughout the patriarchal age, animal sacrifice was common. With Moses, God gave very specific detailed information (subsequently written in the Law) about the sacrifices. Once the tabernacle was built, all sacrifices were to be offered there by the priests.

God supplied precise information about the sacrifices that the priests were required to do. These included the following sacrifices: the daily (morning and evening), first day of the month, Feast of Weeks, day of blowing the trumpet, day of atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles. (See Numbers 28 and 29 for more details.) In addition to these required sacrifices, God gave exact instruction for the Israelites to make voluntary ones. The book of Leviticus contains full information about these sacrifices. The five sacrifices were the burnt sacrifices, meat offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering.

If the children of Israel would have literally carried out these many sacrifices, the brazen altar would have been perpetually burning. The smoke from the altar would be constantly in view. The odor of the burning meat would have continually penetrated the whole of the camp. The undesirable parts of the animals (such as their skin, heads, legs, unclean innards, and dung) were carried outside the camp to be burned. Therefore, another fire burned perpetually with a similar smoke and smell. God appointed thousands of Levites to carry out the tabernacle service which was indeed a monumental undertaking. When we consider all of this, we see that **SACRIFICES** were to be of primary importance to the children of Israel. They were constantly reminded by them of their sinfulness, separation from God, and the continued need for a substitutionary sacrifice for their sin. Sacrifice was so pronounced throughout Israel's history because it was central to God's plan of redemption. Reconciliation for mankind was contingent upon the perfect sin offering: Jesus the Christ.

II Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him *to be* sin [sin offering] for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The sacrifices and offerings of the Law were a type for the final and perfect sin offering. God's plan for redemption was ordained before the Law; therefore He set the pattern for Christ within the Law.

I Peter 1:18-20

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Some noteworthy specifications for the sacrifices should be acknowledged in that they relate to Jesus, the final and perfect sacrifice. The one offering had to do so by his own voluntary will. Any other motive would not suffice. God required the right heart in order for the sacrifice to be acceptable. The animal selected was to be without blemish, the best of the flock. The sacrifice was brought to the door of the tabernacle courtyard. The offerer placed his hands on the animal which represented that the sins of the man passed to the

sacrifice. The offerer then killed the animal. The priest took the blood of the animal and placed it on the designated location. The animal was then cut up by the priest as God had instructed. The appropriate parts were offered on the altar. The undesirable parts were taken outside of the camp to be burned.

Jesus offered himself according to his own voluntary will. Neither God nor anyone else forced him to surrender his life to the suffering and crucifixion. The animals were to be without blemish; in like manner, Jesus was perfect in every way. He was sinless and therefore without blemish. As the offerer is identified with the animal, so the believer is identified with Christ. Our sins were transferred to him, and he died in our place. The people for whom the animal died were the ones who killed it; likewise Jesus was killed by the people whom he came to redeem. Jesus brought his own blood into the holiest of all, heaven itself, and presented it for the atonement of mankind.

Hebrews 9:11-14, 24-26

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God....

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The offerer was required to do his part, but only the priest could make atonement for him. After God explained each sacrifice in the book of Leviticus, the following was repeated: "The priest shall make an

atonement for them, and it [their sin] shall be forgiven them."

The Levitical priesthood and the animal sacrifices were very limited in their effectiveness. However, they did provide a graphic pattern which Jesus Christ has followed. The atonement he provides is eternal.

Hebrews 10:1 and 2, 7-14

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

### **Mediator**

The high priest of old was the mediator between God and man. The children of Israel were to have utmost respect for him. When some rose up against Aaron, they were destroyed. God demanded that the people honor His anointed. The priest spoke to them on behalf of God. They were to obey his words. However, no direction is ever given that people worship the priest in the stead of God. Neither did they direct their prayers to the priest. Everyone understood that he was a mediator and was not God Himself.

Jesus is clearly set forth as the High Priest and, as such, the mediator between God and man.

I Timothy 2:5

For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Since Jesus the Christ offered himself on our behalf and continues to serve as our High Priest, indeed we are humbly thankful. We stand in awe and hold the deepest reverence and respect for him. He is our Lord, and we are to obey his words. However, while he walked the earth, he always insisted that his followers glorify and worship God. He never allowed himself to be worshipped in the place of God. He instructed his disciples to pray in his name to God.

Jesus is not God; rather, he is the High Priest. To worship him in the place of God denies all that for which he suffered and died. His ministry was, and is, to bring man back to God.

Jesus indeed is in a very esteemed position in that no man comes to the Father but by him (John 14:6). Righteousness and redemption are by the faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-25; Galatians 2:16). We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Through him we have received the atonement (Romans 5:11). Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are all graciously given to us by God through Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 1:30).

The Church Epistles (Romans through II Thessalonians) communicate that which has been accomplished for us by Jesus Christ. When he returns, those who have been faithful unto the end will realize all that has been promised to us by faith. In that day redemption, salvation, and righteousness will be manifested forth forevermore. Until then we are to remain faithful to our God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **King/Priest**

Jesus has ascended into heaven and is currently seated at the right hand of God. In the holy of holies, he faithfully serves as the High Priest. He will remain there until his enemies become his footstool.

Psalms 110:1

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

At the appropriate time appointed by God, he will return and reign as King and High Priest over all the earth. Then the resurrection of the just will take place. All those in the grave who have believed will be raised. Those believers who are still alive will be changed. Unbelievers will still inhabit the earth which will continue for 1,000 years, and the devil will be locked in

chains. During this time, the just ones will reign and serve with Christ as kings and priests.

Revelation 1:5 and 6

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince [ruler] of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,  
And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:9 and 10

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;  
And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed for a season after which he will be destroyed forever. The resurrection of the unjust will transpire. Those who are in this resurrection will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death. All evil, including the grave and death, will also be destroyed. After all of this, the

Kingdom will be delivered up to God (I Corinthians 15:24-28). Then paradise will be reestablished on earth, and God will dwell among His people.

Revelation 21:1-4

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.  
And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.  
And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.  
And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

When all of this comes to pass, the High Priest will no longer be needed. The righteous will be with God forevermore.

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This article is an excerpt from the chapter *High Priest* in the book *Jesus the Christ*. For more detailed information, please refer to that writing.