

## 15. Understanding Why Christ Is Our Great High Priest

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the purpose of the priesthood of Aaron. We will learn more about the priesthood of Aaron in future topics. However, in our topic today, we are going to see why Christ is our Great High Priest. These verses explain some of the many differences between the Old Testament priests and Christ and show us why Christ is much greater than any of the priests from the family of Aaron.

Hebrews 7:23-24 says, “Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.” Throughout the Old Testament, there were many men who served as priests in the nation of Israel. However, none of those priests had a continual priesthood. They served as priests for a certain period of time and then died. As a result, they could not continue as priests so there may have been as many as 84 men who served as the high priest of Israel from the time of Aaron until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

In contrast, we see that Christ has an unchangeable priesthood. The word that is translated “unchangeable” means that *it cannot be passed on to a successor*. Here, we see why Christ is called a priest forever. God gave Christ a priesthood that cannot be passed on to any other person. That is why it was necessary for Christ to have a priesthood that is after the order of Melchizedek instead of after the order of Aaron. Hebrews 9:14-15 says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Christ is eternal so there is no need for a successor.

That is why Hebrews 7:25 goes on to say, “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” The word translated “He is able” means *to be powerful or to be able to do something*. Hebrews 2:18 says, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” In this verse, we see that Christ is able to help those who are tempted. Here, in Hebrews 7:25 we see that Christ is able to save to the uttermost. The word translated “uttermost” means *completely or perfectly*.

Christ has all authority and power. He is able to save every person that comes to God through Him. Many people try to come to God in their own way. However, John 14:6 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” This verse in Hebrews reminds us that Christ is the only One who is able to give salvation and make it possible for people to come to God through Him. We want to help our children learn to clearly explain why Christ is the only way to come to the Father and receive the salvation that Christ provided by His death.

The writer of Hebrews wanted the Jewish Christians to know that Christ spoke for them. Christ

also makes intercession for us. The word translated “make intercession” means *to speak or make a request on behalf of another person*. In Romans 8:27, we read, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us so that our prayers are according to the will of God. Then, Romans 8:34 says, “Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Here, we see that instead of condemning us, Christ speaks to the Father on our behalf and intercedes for us.

That is why Hebrews 4:14-16 promises, “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. 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. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Christ understands what it is like to be tempted because Satan also tempted Christ. However, Christ defeated Satan each time that Satan tempted Him. As a result, Christ now speaks to the Father on our behalf when Satan accuses us.

We go on to see why Christ is able to save us completely because He is superior to any other priest. Hebrews 7:26-28 says, “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.” Here, the writer of Hebrews gives us a description of the reason why Christ is a High Priest who is fitting for us.

First, Christ is holy. In Revelation 15:3-4 we read, “They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.’” In His relationship to the Father, Christ is the only One who has never committed sin.

Second, Christ is harmless. The word translated “harmless” means *without guile or free from any guilt*. John 8:46 says, “‘Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?’” None of the Jewish religious leaders could show that Christ was guilty of any sin. That was why Christ could become sin for us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ is without sin and He is also able to place His righteousness on us so that we can stand before God without sin.

Third, Christ is undefiled. The word translated “undefiled” means *unsoiled or free from any spot or blemish*. 1 Peter 1:19 says, “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Then, 1 Peter 2:22 adds, “‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His

mouth.” Christ never committed sin or committed any form of deceit.

Fourth, Christ is separate from sinners. The word translated “separate” means *to separate or depart*. Christ can serve as our Great High Priest because He is without sin. 1 Peter 2:23-24 says, “Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Christ never sinned so He could have our sin placed on Him and die for our sins. In Christ, we died to our sins and now have been raised to a new life through Christ.

Fifth, Christ was made higher than the heavens. Hebrews 8:1 says, “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” Here, we see that we now have a High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is higher than the heavens.

In the Old Testament, the Jewish high priest offered daily sacrifices in the outer court. On the Day of Atonement, He offered a sacrifice first for his own sins. Then, the high priest would take the blood from the outer court, through the holy place and into the holy of holies where he would place that blood on the mercy seat. He would do the same thing with the blood of the sacrifice for the sins of the people. These same sacrifices had to be offered every year because both the priests and the people continued to sin. In contrast, Christ did not offer a sacrifice for Himself. Instead, He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins so He offered that sacrifice only once because He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself. He then ascended through the heavens and sat down at the right hand of the Father.

The Old Testament law appointed men who sinned themselves as high priests. These high priests offered their sacrifice for themselves first because of their own weakness and sin. Then, they could offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people as a covering for the sins of the people. In contrast, God confirmed Christ as our Great High Priest forever with an oath because Christ could offer Himself as a sacrifice for us once for all. Hebrews 9:12 says, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” Redemption has three parts. First, Christ bought us back from sin. Second, He removed us from further sale. Third, He set us free. Here, we see that our redemption is eternal and will never need to be repeated again. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be able to explain to others clearly why this made it possible for Christ to be our Great High Priest. The ministry of Christ is so much greater than any other priest because it eternally took away our sin. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain to others why Christ is our Great High Priest.