

God Listens

Hebrews 10:11-22 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Big Idea: God sent Jesus into the world to be our Great High Priest.

A Word about Priests

We need priests. They represent the listening ear of God. Since the beginning, divine worship has been a major facet of human life. In most cultures of the world, people have believed that God or gods exist and that when they dwell around us they occupy sacred space that we call temples. Temples are the palaces of gods and they are where people go to worship the gods and make requests of the gods. Like any high power, no one had direct access to the gods but had to go through priests. Priests were the direct servants of the gods and protectors of the temples. They made sure that the gods' needs were met and that requirements were observed for proper worship from worshippers. The overseer of the priests was the high priest who would have special rights and access to the god beyond the others.

After God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, He intended to dwell with Israel and lead them directly as their King. Therefore, God established a sacred space that He would occupy – the tabernacle – and instructed Israel on how to conduct themselves in His presence and worship Him properly. He set apart an entire tribe of Israel, the Levites, to serve as priests, and one line within the Levites, the sons of Aaron, to serve as High Priest. The Levitical priests would set up and take down the tabernacle in a specially prescribed way and they would carry out the system of sacrifice prescribed in the book of Leviticus. The High Priest would have special access into the Holy of Holies once a year – on the Day of Atonement – where he would offer a special sacrifice and sprinkle blood over the top of the Ark of the Covenant.

A Word about Jesus

Throughout the history of Israel, the people and the priests were unable to maintain the system that God had established. The people were led astray to worship other gods, and the priest bent to the will of the people. They multiplied temples to many gods and established a broader priesthood to better their odds of pleasing these gods. Because of the sin of Israel, God removed His presence from the people in the temple, and judgment fell upon them with the overtaking of Israel and destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was sent into the world to redeem the sins of God's people and to dwell with them in a deeper and permanent way.

Jesus' Priestly Ministry:

1. Man with leprosy: Matthew 8:1-4
2. Roman centurion's servant: Matthew 8:5-13;
3. Peter's mother-in-law: Luke 8:27-39
4. Two men possessed with devils: Mark 5:1-5;
5. Man with palsy: Matthew 9:2-7
6. Woman with bleeding: Luke 8:43-48
7. Two blind men: Matthew 9:27-31
8. Dumb, devil-possessed man: Matthew 9:32-33
9. Man with a withered hand: Luke 6:6-11
10. Blind, dumb, possessed man: Matthew 12:22-23
11. Canaanite woman's daughter: Mark 7:24-30
12. Two blind men: Luke 18:35-43
13. Possessed man in synagogue: Luke 4:31-37
14. Blind man at Bethsaida: Mark 8:22-26
15. Crippled woman: Luke 13:10-17
16. Man with dropsy: Luke 14:1-4
17. Ten men with leprosy: Luke 17:11-19
18. The high priest's servant: Luke 22:50-51
19. Nobleman's son at Capernaum: John 4:46-54
20. Sick man at the pool of Bethesda: John 5:1-15
21. Man born blind John 9:1-41

What Jesus did that no biblical priest ever did before:

1) *Sat down, indicating that His work was finished once and for all*

Hebrews 1:3 After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

Hebrews 10:11-13 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

2) Claimed the authority to forgive sins

Luke 5:18-25 And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, 19 but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. 20 And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." 21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 22 When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the man who was paralyzed--"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." 25 And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.

3) Was both High Priest and sacrifice

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Hebrews 9:13-14 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

4) Spoke of Himself as both priest and temple

John 2:13-22 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

5) Pointed to himself as the fulfillment of the OT sacrificial system in order to gain access for everyone – not just the high priest

Hebrews 9:15-26 15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. 16 For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. 17 For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. 18 Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. 19 For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." 21 And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. 22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. 23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

A Word for Us

Holiness Matters

Do you love the holy? Do you pursue what is pure or would you rather the impure? Does holiness matter to you? Is holiness a reality to you or simply a myth created by men?

We Are Sinful

Do you know your sinfulness? Have you been crushed by the weight of your sin and unworthiness? Have you ever realized that even the best you have to offer is putrid and stained in the eyes of God? Do you think that you are pure or could manufacture your own purity?

God is Holy

Jesus Forgives Our Sins

Jesus Gives Us Immediate and Unlimited Access to God

Hebrews 4:14-16 Since then 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 is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

God sent Jesus into the world to be our Great High Priest and connect us to God.