

High Priest Qualifications

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Date: 13 February 2023

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[0 : 00] I appreciate you all being here tonight. I do have two handouts for you tonight.

! To examine the Scriptures in the book of Hebrews concerning Jesus as the perfect High Priest. And I'm going to read to you the first ten verses of Hebrews chapter 5. For every High Priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this, he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.

And no one takes this honor for himself but only when called by God just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a High Priest but was appointed by him who said to him, You are my Son, today I have begotten you.

[1 : 41] As he says also in another place, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverence.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

For 1600 years, the Jewish people were guided by an earthly High Priest.

The earthly High Priest served as the mediator between the people and God. The central purpose of the earthly High Priest and the other priests that worked under him was to offer animal sacrifices for the people.

1600 years, millions of animals. Millions. And once a year, this culminated with the Day of Atonement, which the Jews to this day called Yom Kippur, when the earthly High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies.

[3 : 22] Originally, that was located in the earthly tabernacle, later in the temple on the Temple Mount. And he entered in to make atonement for the people.

Now, I'm sure the earthly High Priest didn't have full knowledge. I know he didn't. But that was a picture of the Messiah, who would one day come and offer himself as that sacrifice.

But the Jewish people had no concept of that, and still don't, by and large, for the Jews of today. When Christianity came along, following the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, all that changed.

Some Jews began to leave their religion, and they embraced Christ as the true Messiah. And we have that today.

We have what we call Messianic Jews, Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah. In fact, we had them in our church years ago. This was very troubling to the Jews, who would ask how their sins could be dealt with.

[4 : 41] Talking to Christian people and Jews that left Judaism or Christianity, well, how can your sins be dealt with? Because you have no earthly High Priest.

You have no High Priest to intercede for you through the offering of sacrifices to God. It was very troubling. The absence of an earthly High Priest was very confusing to the devout Jew.

And because of it, they branded Christianity as inferior to Judaism or just another false religion.

And there was plenty of those to choose from. Still are. The Christian answer to the confused Jew was that they did, in fact, have a High Priest.

And more to that, they had the perfect High Priest. Each and every earthly High Priest who had ever served before was merely a picture or a type of the true High Priest to come.

[5 : 57] Now, how did the true and perfect High Priest differ from his earthly counterpart? This is not an exclusive list, but there's a few items on here.

The true High Priest was not confined to an earthly temple. He does not have to sacrifice every year on the Day of Atonement.

He does not have to sacrifice daily in the temple to cover the repeated sins of his people. The sacrifice of the true High Priest had the ability to cover all sin ever committed from the beginning of time to the end of time as we know it.

The High Priest that is central to the Christian faith is at this moment seated at the right hand of God and he continually intercedes for those who belong to him.

That's us. The true High Priest is the God-man and the true mediator between God and man.

[7 : 27] Now today, or this evening, we're going to enter into the very heart of the book of Hebrews and for the next five chapters we'll be examining Christ Jesus and His priesthood.

Now, the New Covenant was better than the Old Covenant. But I hasten to add, the Old Covenant was not wrong.

There wasn't anything wrong about the Old Covenant. It was just incomplete. It was incomplete. And it was incomplete until Christ came and He was able to accomplish what no earthly high priest could ever accomplish in 1600 years.

With Jesus as our high priest, we have direct access to the triune God.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Direct access. It was important for the Jews to enter into the Holy of Holies but that was done only once a year and it was only done through the earthly high priest on the Day of Atonement.

[9 : 10] Here's the unique thing about Christianity. We're walking around daily with the Holy of Holies because He's living inside of us.

That's where He resides through the Holy Spirit. The very Spirit of Christ. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, the temple and the Levitical priesthood also died.

They just didn't know it yet. But they would soon find out. By that I mean this, neither the temple nor the Levitical priesthood was necessary any longer.

Now that really came to completion in around 70 AD when the Roman emperor, the Roman general later emperor Titus Vespasian burned Jerusalem to the ground, destroyed the Temple Mount.

And it's interesting too because the Jews today want to reestablish the Levitical priesthood. All the genealogy records were burned up in 70 AD by the Romans.

[10 : 27] How do you know who's in the tribe of Levi? They're speculating. But neither the temple nor the Levitical priesthood was any longer needed.

The need for a human high priest or any Jewish priest was rendered or any priest in Christianity may I say was rendered obsolete.

our Roman Catholic friends haven't figured that out yet. That we don't need to go to them to make confession that he can then take to God so we can be forgiven.

The end of the priesthood was graphically portrayed during the crucifixion. the most graphic display of everything that ever happened as far as the end of the priesthood.

At his crucifixion the large curtain inside the temple was torn from top to bottom.

[11 : 45] Now that curtain is what separated the people from God. He was in there on the mercy seat and the high priest could go in there one time a year and if he messed up God would kill him and he killed more than a few.

Nadab and Abihu are a good example of Aaron's sons. But this curtain I read one time don't picture your shower curtain.

this thing was thick woven together and intricate and I read one time that if you could hook two locomotives up and somehow they could each latch onto that they couldn't tear it going opposite directions they couldn't tear it it was that strong.

Well that wasn't a problem for God when Jesus died on the cross it says that the curtain that separated the holy of holies from men was torn and it's very specific from top to bottom it started up there who does that indicate tore it God did God tore it and when it was torn it exposed the holy of holies can you imagine the high priest earthly high priest and those other priests when they saw that curtain I mean some of those guys are going to be thinking did we just kill the messiah they got to be thinking that and they had why did God tear that when Jesus died because through his death people could now come directly into the presence of God you didn't need a veil separating the

people from God direct access open it up and they can come directly without an earthly high priest standing in for them and remember he could only go in once a year the only requirement to enter into God's presence is that it must be done through Christ the Lord through the Son of God without him you're not going to get in now this truth is monumental we'll dwell reverently here for a few moments this was one perfect sacrifice the Lord Jesus accomplished what probably millions of sacrifices over 1600 years by a multitude of priests over many centuries could never accomplish but by that one sacrifice the curtain was torn and now people have direct access to the Father the way to God was opened permanently by possessing a true faith in Christ any person at any time can now enter into the very presence of God now we've already looked at this verse and I told you it's one of my very favorite but I'm going to read it to you again because it's talking about this very thing

[15 : 38] Hebrews 4 16 let us then with confidence or boldness draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need you know I've traveled all over the Middle East all over the Arab world and I've traveled with some Muslim guys that worked at Phillips good guys we had great talks interesting talks they were appalled that I would call refer to God as my father well that really bugged them that's too familiar in Islam but they have no direct access they don't they have no access they go through Muhammad but we have direct access we can enter in with confidence and receive mercy and grace in our time of need and like I've said before when do we not have a time of need

I haven't discovered that yet now although the need for an earthly high priest no longer exists we can still learn from them by looking at various books in the Old Testament and the book of Hebrews in the fifth chapter of the book of Hebrews which we've already read we're going to do it again we learn about the qualifications for a priest is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins he can deal gently with the ignorant and wavered since he himself is beset with weakness because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people and no one takes this honor for himself but only when called by God just as Aaron was contained in these first four verses of Hebrews chapter 5 we see at least three qualifications for the earthly high priest he was appointed by God he was sympathetic with those to whom he ministered and he offered sacrifices to God on their behalf the behalf of the people he ministered to again

Hebrews 5 one for every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins the best translation from the original language is that the earthly high priest was chosen by God from among men the very first thing we learn is the earthly high priest had to be a man there aren't going to be any women in that role and more importantly God did not choose an angel to be the high priest an angel were real important in the Jewish world we've looked at that in our study already but angels did not even fully understand men you can read about that in Hebrews and in Peter's writings but a man is subject to temptation just like all men a man also experiences suffering just like all men therefore a man chosen from among men would be able to minister to the needs of people in a merciful way he would understand what they're going through he would understand the needs of other men because he's been there now there is something quite exquisite going on in this passage in Hebrews the Christ is being honored as high priest it says in his incarnation the Lord took upon himself human flesh and became a man if he had not he could he could never have been the high priest but the high priest had to be a man so we see the identification of Jesus as the unique

God man and you know there's no one else in the universe that's ever filled that role and I sometimes get a little weak-kneed when I say this Willard but the father never was in that role nor was the Holy Spirit only Jesus was both divine and human perfectly human but only Jesus and when we think of life during the old covenant we come face to face with this reality God was essentially unapproachable for all practical purposes he was unapproachable when Adam and Eve willingly sinned God booted them out of the garden I don't think he used that word booted he drove them out of the garden and he no longer walked with them in the cool of the day God had little direct contact with Abraham and Moses when in covenant with them now he did have some contact but it was limited when the

Hebrew people were in the wilderness now having escaped Egypt it got to the point where Moses went up on the mountain and he said the people down there want a list of rules to live by some commandments the way you live God and they'll fulfill those and this is my translation God said you

know what you're talking about and Moses said everything that you give us we will fulfill perfectly and so God said okay I can do that he said get off this mountain he said take off your shoes you're on holy ground and get off this mountain this is a holy mountain and you go down there and you set up barricades and you tell the people to abstain married people from sexual relations for three days and you tell them to pin up their animals and not to approach the base of this mountain because I'll kill them if they do

[22 : 46] I'll slay those animals and then I'll visit you again in three days and the Bible goes on and says there was lightning and thunder and earthquakes and the people down in the valley trembled and why wouldn't you and then God gave him the Ten Commandments and when Moses took the Ten Commandments down to him they'd made a golden calf and he said this is our God now we thought God had killed you so I mean they didn't even wait to receive him before they started breaking him now when the tabernacle and later the temple was constructed God was behind a veil could only be approached as I've said by the earthly high priest once a year Yom Kippur when it was time for the incarnation God sent his son the

Lord Jesus Christ no longer did God distance himself from the people now that led to some difficulties there were times when God visited in the New Testament era the disciples the apostles! But he always did something to protect them on the Mount of Transfiguration He took Peter, James, and John and knocked them out they fainted!

So they wouldn't die! People say well wait a minute Jesus was God in human flesh yeah he was veiled in human flesh but you remember some instances where that shone through my favorite is when the Roman soldiers came into the Mount of Olives and Jesus said whom seek ye and they said Jesus of Nazareth and he answered with I am the most sacred name of God he said I am! and they all fainted! every one of! they were in the presence of a holy God but now God no longer distances himself from the people his very own son who was fully God dwelt among humans and experienced what they experienced yet without sin only in that way was he a sympathetic merciful and faithful high priest as God's chosen high priest the Lord was also able to both mediate between God and men and at the same time intercede for men offer intercession here's an interesting quote from John Calvin it was necessary for Christ to become a real man for as we are very far from God we stand in a manner before him in the person of our priest which could not be were he not one of us hence that the son of

[25 : 48] God was in a nature in nature in common with us has a nature in common with us does not diminish but commends it more to us for he is fitted to reconcile us to God because he is a man simply put God came down where we are in order to pick us up and bring us back to himself so we see the high priest he had to be a man but he could not be just any man he had to be appointed to that position by God he did not compete with other men for that position this was not an election such as when the catholic cardinals elect a new pope he was appointed by God just as God had called Aaron when he became the high priest and he was sympathetic with men he could deal gently with the ignorant and wayward since he himself is beset with weakness we learn early in our Christian walk that the

Lord is omniscient that means he knows everything we are less exposed to the concept that the Lord is also perfectly sympathetic that means he feels everything when you are needing sympathy of God Jesus feels that he experiences that with you a true high priest had to be sympathetic to the plight of men he needed to live among men and to feel what they felt the scriptures say that the high priest had to be able to deal gently with people that is a Greek word meaning to deal gently or to treat with mildness or moderation the high priest is called on in scripture to deal gently with men because men are ignorant and misguided there's something that I had missed in my Old Testament reading that I learned in preparing this lesson it was found in

Numbers 15 28 probably not a place we hang out a lot in book of numbers but in numbers 15 28 it says and the priest that's the earthly shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who makes a mistake when he sins and listen to this unintentionally I've never seen that in there to make atonement for him and he shall be forgiven that's a frightening passage in the Old Testament the earthly high priest made atonement only for those who sinned out of ignorance and went astray there was no provision in the Old Covenant for the unrepentant person who sins deliberately or defiantly to be forgiven and again we turn to the book of Numbers in verse 30 of chapter 15 but the person who does wrong defiantly whether he is a native or a stranger that one is blaspheming the Lord and that person shall be cut off from among his people wow and he offered sacrifices to God

on their behalf

Hebrews 5:3 because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins obviously that's the earthly high priest and he does as he does for the people the high priest offered sacrifices for sins but he could not change either the human tendency to sin or the human capacity to sin because of this the high priest had to offer atonement for the same sins year in and year out every year it was the same set of sins and that was the main work of the priest as they ministered daily in the tabernacle and temple and since the high priest also sinned he had to make sacrifices for himself and he had to do that first but this leads to a question what are the qualifications for the perfect high priest now we're getting to Jesus so also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest but was appointed by him who said you are my son today

I have begotten you he also says in another place you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek the author of the book of Hebrews now quotes from the Psalms to support his point concerning the great high priest this includes a quote from Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4 both of these Psalms were quite familiar to the Jewish readers even when the book of Hebrews was written and they said these are messianic Psalms they're talking about the coming Messiah and they are the Psalms and we can read them today that speak of the Messiah who was to come the Messiah would be vested by God with the authority and honor of the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek that is one of my favorite people in all the scriptures

[31:23] I really like that guy and we're going to be discussing Melchizedek in some detail in a few weeks in chapter 7 and I'm going to reserve more information on him at that time we will begin chapter 7 in Hebrews chapter 5 because there's a paragraph on Melchizedek and then we'll get in there well I want to finish up our lesson tonight with these two verses they are self-explanatory they don't take much commentary in the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverence although he was a son he learned obedience through what he suffered and being made perfect he became the source of eternal life to all who obey him now we need to be clear for eternity

Jesus had been and is the perfect God in his humanity he learned obedience through suffering because of his perfection as God and man the Lord then is our source of eternal salvation and we're going to continue next time by looking at Hebrews chapter