

“You Need this Priest!”— Hebrews 7:23-25

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “You Need This Priest!”, is Hebrews 7:23-25 → *The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but Jesus holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

When you hear the word “priest” what is the first thought which comes to your mind? Many may immediately think of the Roman Catholic tradition within which their “pastors” are called “priests” and are addressed as “father.” Others may think of the Jewish faith with it’s priesthood established by Yahweh after bringing His people out of Egypt in 1446 BC. It may even conjure up pictures in people’s minds of other religions with their priests which perform all kinds of rituals. Priests were certainly not unique to God’s people in the Old Testament since the pagan nations surrounding them also has religious systems with priests, rituals and sacrifices.

The writer to the Hebrews recognized the importance of the

priesthood for the Christian. In fact, the word “priest” or “priesthood” is mentioned some 35+ times throughout the book of Hebrews. In the Old Testament God established the priesthood as very important to their worship practices. They were men set apart by God to represent the people in their relationship to God by offering the various sacrifices for sin to God on their behalf. A “priest” is actually a mediator who represents the people before God and represents God to the people. There is still a feeling amongst many people when they’re in the presence of “clergy” that views his presence as set apart to bring God’s presence into their situation.

Why did the LORD establish such a priesthood? It really had to do with sin. God will not allow the unholy into His holiness so He established a means by which sinners could come into His presence and experience His blessings. The priests actually bore the iniquity of the people along with their own iniquity before God by means of a sacrifice to pay the penalty for their sins so that they could all be forgiven and stand righteous in the presence of Yahweh. The LORD gave the *priesthood as a gift* (cf. Numbers 18:7) so that people could be saved in God’s presence.

However, this priesthood, sacrifice and salvation extended further than going through simple rituals to be acceptable in God’s presence. Hebrews 8:5 says everything established under the old covenant—the

sanctuary, the sacrifices and the priesthood—were *a copy and shadow of the heavenly things* which God revealed under His new covenant in Christ. Thus, Christ's Person & Work brought the old covenant to fulfillment. Notice the contrasts given throughout Hebrews 7 →

- *The former priests were . . . prevented by death from continuing in office, but Jesus holds His priesthood **permanently, because He continues forever.*** (verses 7:23-24)
- *Those high priests had to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, but Jesus is a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need to continually offer up sacrifices since He did this once for all when He offered up Himself on the cross.* (cf. Hebrews 7:26-27)
- *The law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son Who has been made perfect forever.* (cf. Hebrews 7:28) This oath is recorded in Psalm 110:4 → *The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* Melchizedek was priest of God Most High. Abraham met him long before the priesthood under the law was established. Jesus is compared to Melchizedek rather than to Aaron because

there is no record of Melchizedek's origin or his death. (cf. Hebrews 7:15-22) His name also means "king of righteousness" and Jesus is our righteousness (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30).

- Jesus' High Priesthood is superior in that, after sacrificing **Himself** *once for all* sins, for all time, for all people, He has passed through the heavens once, thus preparing a place for all who trust in His atoning sacrifice for their sins. Hebrews 9:24 says *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.*

Some people might protest that they do not need a human priest to get to God. They can come to God without a human priest.

Technically this is not true in two ways:

- ① You do need this priest. You do need to confess your sins to Jesus, God's great High Priest, Who has made your forgiveness and entrance into God's presence possible forever. What He accomplished by sacrificing Himself on your behalf in His crucifixion and rising from the dead was for you. It is only as you trust in His Person & Work that you can be saved. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says *there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all.* You need this human priest to get to God.

② We continue to need the interceding work of Jesus daily because we are no different than those Israelites. We give into the temptation to grumble, complain, disobey the LORD and follow after false gods of our own making. Verse 25 of our text says: *Consequently*—because Jesus has accomplished our atonement as our great High Priest forever—*He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* You need the forgiveness of your sins on a daily basis. You too have the **gift** of God's priesthood in the man, Jesus Christ.

There is another aspect to this priesthood which also delivers the salvation which Jesus, our great High Priest, has accomplished *once for all* people. You. You see, the world also needs a human priest to get to God and you are it. 1 Peter 2:9 describes you as *a chosen race, a royal **priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* Christians, the Church of Jesus Christ, go out into their daily vocations of life and give witness to their Lord and Savior through words and actions. We are actually the only connection for the world to know the LORD and His wonderful plan for sinners in Christ. We bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ. People need humans in the priesthood of all

believers in order to come to God.

As we daily confess our sins to Jesus, looking to Him as our great High Priest, we can also act as priests to others by bringing them and their life struggles to Him in intercessory prayer. We can ask that He intercede into their lives through us or others priests—believers in Jesus Christ—whom He places in their paths daily. All of this we can do because we have been given His gift of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ.

This priestly action on the part of Christ's people is very important because without it people will not know the eternal benefits of God's love as displayed in our great High Priest, Jesus. Everyone needs this priest Who is still true God and true Man. As you confess your sins to Him, 1 John 1:9 tells you that *He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness*. As you confess your sins to each other you announce the forgiveness of our great High Priest, Jesus to one another. All this intercession is possible because Jesus *always lives to make intercession* before God for us. Amen.

On the night before Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice on the cross for our sins, He prayed to God the Father. It has been called His "High Priestly Prayer" because He prayed for Christians and non-Christians, saying in John 17:20-21 → *I do not ask for these*

only (i.e. His disciples—us Christians), but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. Amen.

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