

## Lesson 12: The Priesthood (2)

**Read: Hebrews 7:23-28, 9:11-14, 1 Peter 2:4-12**

The role of Aaron the high priest and that of all his descendents was only a shadow of the true high priest who was to come. Just as each component of the tabernacle pointed to Jesus Christ, the role of the high priest also was fulfilled in Christ. When Christ died on behalf all mankind, He became our high priest by being the only mediator between man and God.

### Discussion:

1. From the Hebrews passages, how is Christ our high priest different from the high priests descended from Aaron?

*First, Christ was holy, sinless and pure. He was not stained by any human sins and did not need to atone for His own sins first. He was wholly acceptable before God and was truly a perfect high priest who could intercede between man and God.*

*Second, He came into God's presence offering His own blood, not by the blood of animals. The blood of animals can make someone outwardly or ceremonially clean, but they cannot take away the sins, and sacrifices need to be repeated year after year. However, the blood of Christ is the perfect and powerful provision of God to forgive sins and cleanse the conscience of man.*

*Third, the atonement He made was not a temporary covering, but an eternal one. It did not only cover over the sins of that year, but all sins once and for all, past and future. When Christ rose from the dead, it meant that His sacrifice was fully acceptable to God and all the sins that He carried were paid for entirely. The sacrifice only needed to be made once. Therefore, it was no longer necessary for a priest to enter the Holy of Holies every year to offer sacrifices.*

*Fourth, unlike the Aaronic high priests, Jesus was victorious over death and lives forever. He has a permanent priesthood and forever intercedes for those whom He saves.*

2. According to Hebrews 7:23-25, does Jesus need a successor as high priest? What does this mean to us who trust in Him? What would you say to a Jewish person who thinks priests in the Aaronic order are still needed today?

*Because Jesus will never die, He does not need a successor. He will forever be our advocate and intercede for us through His shed blood and we can trust in Him always. Anyone who claims to be a priest in the Aaronic order today is an imposter, because the sacrifices and the Aaronic priesthood have been abolished. When the curtain in the temple that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was torn from top to bottom, God's redemptive plan was complete. God has*

*never appointed any other priesthood from among men. Christ is the only high priest today.*

3. Read Hebrews 4:14-15. What does this verse say about Jesus as our high priest and what does it say to us?

*Because Jesus came to earth as a man, He can sympathize with the human weaknesses and temptations that lead us to sin. He is now our gracious high priest who advocates for us and represents us before God. Therefore, we can approach the throne room of God boldly and call on Jesus' name for help.*

4. Recall God's covenant with Israel during the time of Moses in Exodus 19:5-6: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." From the 1 Peter passage, how are believers today called to be a kingdom of priests?

*Believers, like Israel, are chosen by God to bear His name to the rest of the world. We are His special people, set apart for doing His work. Because we have a relationship with God through Christ, we are priests — mediators between God and men — who declare Jesus Christ to the unbelieving world and bring others to a saving knowledge of Him. We should live our lives so that it gives glory to God and that others may come to worship God through Christ.*

5. Think about the priests' duties in the tabernacle. How can we serve God by applying the lessons we learned from each component of the tabernacle?

*With Christ as our high priest, we are to consecrate ourselves like the priests who served in the tabernacle. We are to prepare ourselves for ministry by washing ourselves with pure water from the laver (meditating on God's word and repenting of our sins), keeping the lampstand burning continually (bearing our testimony to the world), keeping the bread of the presence (fellowshipping with the Lord and believers), and offering up fragrant incense at the golden altar (offering up prayers and praise). (Note: This would be a good time to review each component of the tabernacle.)*

6. Recall the special clothing that the priests had to wear in the tabernacle to be in God's presence (Exodus 28). In light of Romans 13:14 and Galatians 3:26-27, how are believers to clothe themselves today?

*Just as the priests wore holy clothing that set them apart in God's sight and to reflect God's honor, dignity, glory and beauty, believers today are to be set apart from the world by "putting on Christ." We belong to Christ and are to look like Christ, not like the world. We are to emulate His righteousness, goodness, purity and humility, so that others will see Christ when they look at us. This brings glory and honor to God.*

*Another useful analogy: After the priests spent time in the tabernacle, their clothes would smell of the frankincense from the incense, the olive oil from the candlesticks, and the flour from the showbread. In the same way, the more time we spend in God's presence, the more we will "smell" like Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 2:14-16)*

**Optional further reading:** A good exercise and review at this point would be to read through the whole book of Hebrews.