

**INTRODUCTION:**

- Welcome to visitors...
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This morning, we will be studying two very short verses of the Bible that are of utmost importance.

- Please turn with me in your Bibles to **Hebrews 5:9-10**. The bulk of our time will be spent in the book of Hebrews...

In today's society, we all know what it is like to be in attendance at some sort of ceremony.

- We're familiar with wedding ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, and graduation ceremonies.
- We've probably also been to or watched a wide variety of product presentation ceremonies at work or in someone's home.
- Or perhaps the ceremonies that stand out most in your mind are the ceremonies that you see on TV such as the Oscars or some sort of music awards ceremony.
- The ceremonies, however, that are far more common than any of the other ceremonies combined, are the religious ceremonies that happen in places of worship around the world.

This morning, we are going to be thinking about a religious ceremony that took place in Old Testament times that is no longer practiced in the Lord's church today.

- As we study the ceremonies that the High Priests conducted in the Old Testament it is my desire that each and every person in this auditorium would gain a more complete understanding of the reason that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ died on the cross for us.
- I sincerely hope that you will consider this morning, the significance of the Old Testament ceremonies as they relate to Jesus and the sacrifice that He made.

The book of **Hebrews** was written to the Jewish Christians who were abandoning their faith

- They were conducting themselves inappropriately, they were neglecting the public worship, they had weak prayer lives, they were not holding to sound doctrines, they refused to teach others, and they were neglecting the scriptures.
- The first four chapters of the book of **Hebrews** speak extensively about the superiority of Christ.
- **Chapter 1** makes it clear that Jesus is far superior to the angels.
- In these 14 verses, there are ten or more quotes from Old Testament passages that make it clear that Jesus was far above them in His importance.
- **Chapter 2 & 3** continue on to explain how Christ was also superior to Moses, Joshua and the rest of Israel.
- **Chapter 4** speaks about how He was also superior to the first High Priest Aaron and all other High Priests.
- This brings us up to **Hebrews 5** that I would like us to evaluate today. Please read with me...

**Hebrews 5:**

***9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.***

As we evaluate this short passage, I think it is important for us to ask our selves a number of questions:

1. Who were the high priests and what did they do?
2. Why is Jesus called a high priest?
3. Why is Jesus a better high priest than any other?

I. Let us begin with the question... **Who were the high priests and what were their responsibilities?**

In order for us to answer this question, I'd like to read from **Leviticus 21** where God asked Moses to talk to his brother Aaron about the priesthood.

- I'll be reading from the NKJV of the Bible... **Leviticus 21:16-21**... *"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to Aaron, saying: 'No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. 'For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, 'a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, 'or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. 'No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.'"*
- The first thing we can learn about the priests is that they were to be descendants of Aaron.
- Second we can learn that they were to be without any defect, major or minor! Even scabs and minor open wounds would disqualify them from the role of a priest.
- Third we can learn that the high priest was to come near to God and to make offerings to Him.

Let us further examine, what were the responsibilities of the high priest? What kind of offerings did they make and why did they make them?

- The High Priest and other priests would conduct a sacrificial ceremony in the tent of meeting where the ark of the covenant was located.
- They would be responsible to wash their hands and feet.
- **Exodus 30:20** says, *"...when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die;"*
- They were also supposed to wear special clothing before entering the holy place in the presence of God.
- **Exodus 28** tells us about this special adornment that would set the High Priest apart from the others.
- This holy garment was very beautiful with Gold, diamonds and all sorts of other precious stones and even bells.
- **Verse 35** says, *"It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its tinkling shall be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the LORD, so that he will not die."*
- Obviously, God took this ceremony very seriously and wanted it to be conducted exactly as instructed!
- Death was the penalty for doing the ceremony different from the way God wanted it.

God gave very specific instructions on how the sacrifices were to be conducted.

- **Exodus 28, 29, & 30**, AND **Leviticus 8 & 9** are all dedicated to giving the specific details of the Priests' responsibilities.
- These chapters include almost 200 verses giving step-by-step details on how to sacrifice the young bull, the two rams, and other animals that were all to be without blemish.
- The High Priest would have to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar, to pour the blood at the base of the altar, and to burn other parts of the animal as a fragrant aroma to God.
- The entire process was planned out and it had to be done according to very specific instructions.
- For example, **Exodus 29:20** say, *"You shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the lobes of his sons' right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the rest of the blood around on the altar."*
- They were required to do some very specific things and they were to do them things for seven days. On the eighth day, the High Priest was to go past the veil that separates the tabernacle from the Holy of Holies.
- This area was very sacred and was only to be entered by the High Priest after much preparation.

The High Priest was acting as an intercessor on behalf of the people.

- The purpose of these sacrifices and ceremonies was for the atonement of the people's sins.
- What that means, is that the High Priest's actions were able to purify them of their sins.
- This system of High Priesthood continued till the time of the Jews when Jesus came into the world.

With these things in mind, we come to the second question that I would like us to ask ourselves...

## II. Why was Jesus called a high priest?

We can begin to see the answer to this question by simply reading our text once again...

- **Hebrews 5:9-10** says, *“And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.”*
- The priests were to be without defect and we know that Jesus lived a life that was perfectly free of sin.
- Like the priests who interceded for the people and made offerings for the atonement of their sins, so also Jesus has interceded for us and given us forgiveness and atonement for our sins.
- We also see that He was designated by God as high priest, in the same way the descendants of Aaron were.

For us to more fully understand why Jesus was called a priest, however, let us take a look at who Melchizedek was!

- In **Genesis 14:18-20** we find the first use of the word “*priest*” in the Bible. It says, *“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” He gave him a tenth of all.”*
- The first thing we can notice from this is that Melchizedek was both a priest and a King.
- This is one of the things that make Him unique... there is no other priest in the Bible that is also a king.
- **Hebrews 7:1-3** tells us a little more about him, *“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.”*

Now when we compare what we know about Melchizedek with what we know about our Lord Jesus Christ, we find a number of parallels.

- The writer of Hebrews is saying that Melchizedek was a king of righteousness and a king of peace.
- Jesus could also be described the same way...
- Another thing we learned about him is that he had no records of his genealogy and no apparent background as priest, *“having neither beginning of days nor end of life.”*
- Jesus, being at the right hand of God, is also a priest forever.
- This is confirmed by what David said in **Psalms 110:4** *“You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”*
- Neither Jesus, nor Melchizedek were from the tribe of Levi.

Now as we pull all this information together and pause to consider the importance of the High Priest in the Old Testament Mosaic age, we realize that the people all depended on that one individual to go to God on their behalf.

- We begin to see that the High Priest was in a position of great honor.
- It was a position of great responsibility and it was a position of great importance.

This brings us to the third question that we need to ask ourselves this morning...

## III. What makes Jesus a better High Priest than any other?

Hebrews 7 contains a very clear answer to this question...

### **Hebrews 7:**

**18** *For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness*

**19** *(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

**20** *Inasmuch as it was not without an oath*

21 *(for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER'");*  
 22 *so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*  
 23 *The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,*  
 24 *but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.*  
 25 *Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

We can see that Jesus was a better sacrifice because He fulfilled all of the prophecies and He completed God's plan of redemption for those that obey Him.

- We can see all of these passages that we have been reading from the Old Testament and they all point to the fact that a more perfect promise would be coming.
- **Hebrews 7:22** that we just read says, "*much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*"
- He completed the plan that God had in mind from the very beginning...
- The Levitical Priesthood and all the ceremonies of the Old Testament were no longer needed because Jesus completed the sacrifice for all eternity.

Do you remember what happened in the temple at the moment that Jesus died?

- When Jesus uttered the words "***It is finished***" the veil that divided all the people of Israel from the holy of holies in the temple tore from top to bottom.
- At that moment, all of mankind was able to have access to God with Jesus as our intercessor, mediator, and as our only High Priest through the rest of eternity.
- His sacrifice was not just for those currently living, but also for the dead...It was eternal
- His sacrifice was once and for all. No offering can top the one that Jesus made on that day!

Jesus was the perfect sacrifice!

- Instead of sacrificing an unblemished lamb, He took Himself, the perfect and unblemished Lamb of God, to the cross and gave His own blood there for the atonement of sins.
- Self sacrifice is far more significant than sacrificing one of your livestock!
- **Hebrews 9:11-12** says, "***But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.***"

## **SUMMARY:**

There are several things that we can do to apply the things that we have learned today...

1. First, we can acknowledge that the rituals and ceremonies of the Old Testament have become null and void and are not to be a part of our modern day worship services.
  - a. Burning of incense and the fancy robes that set the leaders apart from the membership.
  - b. The use of Holy water, the lighting of candles and a host of other things have all been added as traditions of men.
  - c. God gave us a pattern of how to worship and He takes our worship seriously.
  - d. When we gather together in His name, let us do so with a reverent heart prepared to follow His pattern of worship.
  - e. Some have chosen to hang on to the ceremonies and rituals from the Old Testament, but the book of Hebrews makes it perfectly clear that the old covenant was done away with and the New Testament is the better covenant.
2. There is a second thing that we can do to apply the things that we have learned today!
  - We can acknowledge that our sacrificial lamb was the Son of God.

- Jesus Christ, who was without blemish and never sinned, became our sacrificial lamb by giving His blood on the altar, the cross of Calvary.
  - In the same way that He gave Himself on the cross on behalf of others, we can also give ourselves to Him and we can be His servants.
  - We can deepen our commitments to Him, knowing and acknowledging our allegiance to Him.
3. Third, we can respond with obedience.
- We are the priests today. And when we come to worship at the tent of meeting, we need to cleanse ourselves and be prepared to conduct our worship exactly according to the pattern of the new covenant.
  - As the priests in the tent of meeting, we are to come to worship Him with our prayers, singing, scripture reading, sermons, Lord's Supper, and collections of gifts to God. This is a fragrant aroma to God.

### **CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

Before we close, I would like to read one more passage from **Hebrews 4**...

- **Hebrews 4:14-16** summarizes the response that was needed from the people. It says, *“Therefore, since 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 One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*
- They were to *“hold fast”* their confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and they were to *“draw near with confidence to the throne of Grace”* in order to receive mercy.
- This is the same response that God wants today!
- To all who obey Him, He is the source of eternal salvation.

During Christ's ministry on earth, He said we must do five things in order to receive salvation.

1. First, we must HEAR the gospel of Christ. (**Mark 16:15**)
2. Second, Jesus said in **John 8:24**, *“for unless you BELIEVE that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*
3. Third, we must also REPENT of our sins. In **Luke 13:3** Jesus said, *“but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”*
4. Forth, Jesus said you must CONFESS Him as Lord. In **Matthew 10:32** He said, *“everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.”*
5. The final step that Jesus makes clear is also necessary is to be united with Him in the watery grave of BAPTISM. **Mark 16:16** says, *“He who has believed AND has been baptized shall be saved;”*

If you have not taken these five steps, you have not followed the pattern that God has established.

- Your life is only a fragrant aroma to God if you have followed the pattern.
- Christ will intercede for us as our High Priest only if we obey Him, if we hold fast our confession and draw near to God on His throne of grace.
- If you would like to respond to the gospel today, please come forward as we stand and sing.