



20: Jesus Is a Perfect High Priest

If sinners like us are ever to come to God there has to be someone who's qualified to act as a go-between: we need the equivalent of a High Priest of Old Testament times. In chapter 5 the writer of the book of Hebrews set out to prove that Jesus is qualified for that role and that He's the only one who ever could be. He's already shown us that Jesus has been appointed by God to be our High Priest and he's shown us that Jesus is able to sympathise with us.

He ran into difficulties explaining that Jesus is not like the descendants of Aaron, and had to take time out to warn his readers that they would need to sharpen up — get their thinking caps on — but now, in chapter 7 he's come back to that point and he's shown us that Jesus is a priest like Melchizedek. He's told us what kind of priest Melchizedek was (verses 1 – 3), he's proven to us that Melchizedek's kind of priesthood was better than Aarons (verses 4 – 10) and we've seen that because Jesus is a Melchizedek kind of priest He's a better High Priest than Aaron and His High Priesthood supersedes Aaron's.

But why has God replaced the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron? That question is answered in verses 26 to 28

"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

Hebrews 7:26 – 8:1

It Was Fitting

To have a High Priest like Jesus befits us: In other words, Jesus is exactly suited to our needs and now the writer is going to tell us why that is so.

Jesus Is All That We Can't Be

Jesus is all that we can't be. Jesus is holy. The word that's used here isn't the usual word for holiness, which emphasises separateness. This word is more about moral excellence or piety, especially in reference to God. The idea is that Jesus stands with God as His equal in purity. Jesus is innocent, or without evil. He is undefiled; spotless, untainted by sin. He is separated from sinners, that is, He is in a totally different class to sinners.

- ◆ *In what ways do these qualities make Jesus a High Priest suited to our needs?*

Jesus Is In Heaven

We're also reminded that Jesus has become "higher than the heavens." A High Priest's duties require him to go from the presence of ordinary people who dwell beneath the heavens into the presence of God. Jesus has done that, not symbolically like Aaron who only went into a place that represented the presence of God; Jesus has done it for real. (This idea will be taken up again in chapter 8).

Jesus Has Done What Needs To Be Done

Jesus has done what needs to be done. Jesus doesn't need to offer up sacrifices for His own sin and He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day like the Old Testament priests did. Jesus has already made His sacrifice and He did it once for all. In other words His sacrifice was sufficient to cover all the sins that needed to be atoned for and it was sufficient to last for all time. It doesn't need repeating.¹

Jesus Is Perfectly Qualified

Jesus is perfectly qualified. The law appoints² men who are weak

- ◆ *In what sense do you think the priests appointed in Old Testament times were weak?*

But God, after the law was given, appointed the Son who has been made perfect forever. Remember, we have come across this idea before. it is not that Jesus was ever anything less than perfect; the idea is that in becoming a man He was made perfect for the job of being our High Priest.

Nothing Less Will Do

So in all these ways — and many more no doubt, — Jesus is exactly what we need in a High Priest, and nothing less will do. That's why the Old Testament priesthood had to be replaced by Jesus, the perfect go-between.

Chapter 8 verse 1 winds up this section about Jesus' qualification to be our High Priest. The writer tells us that this is his main point. Of all that's been said this is the thing you must get, "We have such a high priest." We have, in Jesus a High Priest perfectly suited to our needs and right now He is "seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

- ◆ *What are the practical implications of these verses? How do they apply to you?*

1. This is the first mention of a new idea in the book of Hebrews. it's an idea that will be taken up again later: the idea of Jesus offering Himself up.

2. Did you notice the present tense? It must have been that high priests were still being appointed when this was written so the book of Hebrews must have been written before 70AD).