

**TEXT: Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God ... Such a High Priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.**

Introduction: During this Epiphany season we have studied the person of Jesus Christ, that is, he is the God/Man. Next we looked at his characteristics, his attributes as God and Man. Last week we began looking at his office. He is the Christ, that is, the anointed one. In the OT prophets, priests and kings were anointed. Last Sunday we learned how Jesus is our anointed Prophet. This morning our text reminds us that Jesus is also our anointed High Priest.

### **Jesus Is Our Anointed High Priest**

As our High Priest, Jesus does the same kind of work that Old Testament Priests did. He intercedes before God for the people. In Hebrews 5:1 we learn that this is how the High Priest served God and the people. There it says, **“Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God...”** (For an example go to Exodus 15:25 where Moses cries out to the Lord to make the water at Marah drinkable.)

Jesus did that work. He is our representative before God, our intercessor. In the verse before our text the writer of the Hebrews says, **“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”** (Hebrews 7:25) John 17 is a wonderful example of how Jesus intercedes for us before his heavenly Father. (*John 17 is Jesus’ longest recorded prayer, sometimes described as Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer.*) Let’s hear some of this prayer which reveals how Jesus intercedes for us.

(Read John 17)

This kind of intercession never stops. We are never without a priestly representative as John reminds us in 1 John 2:1 when he says, **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin (we all do every day) we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ the righteous one.”**

Why is it a blessing for us that Jesus represents us before God the Father? Our text tells us. **“Such a High Priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”** Jesus is our defense lawyer in God’s court speaking in our behalf. He helps us who are in trouble with the law. In God’s court the defender must be, and is, sinless. Jesus is **“holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens,”** our text says. He is without sin. (Think of the Mafia and their lawyers. Often the Mafia’s lawyers are suspected as being in bed with the criminals. For that reason their defense of the criminals is also brought into question.) Jesus is one the Heavenly Father will listen to because he is the one in whom the Father is well pleased. He is **holy**, without sin, **blameless**, no fault or blame can be brought against him, **pure**, sinless in his motives, words and actions, **set apart from sinners**, in other words, he is not one of them, **exalted** by God himself because he has done what the Father willed.

We who sin daily and often, who do not deserve anything but God’s condemnation need such a representative whom God the Father will listen to. In Jesus we have one who can sympathize with us (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus’ defense will be totally based on his own heavenly Father’s loving promises. In his defense of us, he will remind his Father of his loving promises to his believing people and his faithful actions in which he carried out his plan of salvation. Jesus will lovingly remind his heavenly Father of his love of willing obedience to God’s plan. Even though we deserve eternal damnation for our sins, God will forgive us because of his promise. He is faithful to his promises. He will forgive us our sins because Jesus died for those sins. The holy Son of God gave his life as a ransom for our sins.

Jesus shows himself to be a High Priest in another way. High Priests made sacrifices for sins before God. Those Old Testament sacrifices were a picture of what Jesus would do. As our High Priest he made a sacrifice

to God for the sins of the world. Our text reminds us of this when it says, “**Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.**” Jesus our great High Priest made a sacrifice to God for the sins of the people. Paul tells us, “**Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant (pleasing to God) offering and sacrifice to God.**” That sacrifice was not a lamb. It was the Lamb of God Jesus! His death on the cross was that sacrifice. It took away the sin of the world as John teaches. “**He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.**” (1 John 2:2) So as the anointed High Priest Christ represented the whole world before God and sacrificed himself for the sins of all! (*We call this his **Vicarious Atonement** = the sacrifice of Jesus (our Substitute) in our place, accepted by the Father as payment for our sins.*)

Jesus our great High Priest only had to make that sacrifice one time. That’s all it took. He does not have to die over and over again as the Roman Catholics believe who teach that the sacrament of the altar is the unbloody, re-sacrificing of the body of Christ for forgiveness. No, Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross in 33 A.D. was good “**once for all.**” The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote, “**He (Christ) appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.**” In the sacrament God gives us personally the forgiveness his Son earned on the cross. He says to us, “*Your sins were also forgiven when my Son died on the cross.*” In the sacrament we receive that assurance of forgiveness. God blesses us with peace in the sacrament.

Next Sunday we will see the glory of our anointed King. Amen.



Jesus is our Great High Priest in heaven