

Jesus: Our Great High Priest Forever
(Week 15)
Hebrew 8:1-13
“What a Friend We have in Jesus”

Introduction

“For this is the kind of priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.”
Hebrews 7:26

In the **seventh chapter of Hebrews**, the preacher tells us the exact qualities that we should be looking for in a high priest. You see, the priests that served under the Old Covenant were mere men, and although many of them served with the best of intentions and a high degree of integrity, NONE of them could live up to God's standard of perfection. They, just like the rest of us, were sinners. This is why that they were required to make sacrifices for themselves, before they could offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. This is the reason that the Old Covenant did not measure up, its priests were flawed. In order to have a better covenant, one that would allow us to draw near to God and stand completely cleansed of sin in His holy presence, we needed a better priest. We needed a sinlessly perfect priest, who could offer Himself as a spotless sacrifice once and for all time. We needed someone who was a man like us and well acquainted with the struggles of mankind, and yet, someone who could live among men and remain unstained by sin. We needed someone who was not only earthly, but heavenly, in His nature, a God/Man who could be the perfect mediator between God and man. Now those my friends are some very specific and lofty credentials! Who could possibly qualify for such a position of power and perfection?

In the **eighth chapter of Hebrews** we are informed of the good news:

“Now the main point of what is being said is this: We HAVE this kind of High Priest. Who sat down at the right hand of Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that was set up by The LORD and not man.”

Hebrews 8:1-2

Did you Catch that? JESUS is exactly what we needed! He alone is eminently qualified to be our Great High Priest, Forever, the perfect mediator between God and man. This is why it is so very important for us as believers to tell anyone who will listen about the good news of Jesus Christ. Because, only He, out of everyone who ever lived upon this earth, is qualified to bring us to the very throne of God. All the religions of this world are counterfeit distractions offered up by Satan himself, in order to lead people astray from the only hope that has ever been offered to mankind for his salvation. WE HAVE a qualified High Priest, and He is the ONLY way to God. *The Old Testament* Covenant was given to Moses, and while it was good (as far as, it did what it was designed to do), it was but only a shadow of the true Covenant that would one day be offered in Christ. The Old Covenant was given to look forward to a better one. No one can find salvation through religious ceremony. Salvation can only be found through the precious blood of The Savior. His sacrifice on the cross has opened the way into the Holy of Holies! If you are looking for another way my friends, there is none, nor will another one ever be offered.

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:12

So let us look together at this wonderful Jesus, this High Priest who so loved the world, that He offered His own life as a sacrifice; this High Priest Who is forever seated at the right hand of God, as the mediator of The New and Better Covenant. Let us praise God for the true friend that we have in Jesus. Praise God for His Majesty, His Ministry, and His Mediation that reconciles sinful men to a Holy and Righteous God.

His Majesty

“We have this kind of High Priest, Who sat down at the right hand of Majesty in the heavens...”

Hebrews 8:1

In 1982, I was a member of The University of Tennessee Pride of The Southland Marching Band. I was in college as a music major and that band scholarship certainly helped to pay for the cost of my education. The reason that I mention all this is because 1982 was the year that The World's Fair came to

Knoxville, and the band was called upon to play for the opening day festivities. I remember playing two songs that day. First there was *"Rocky Top"*. If a bird flies over any part of Knoxville, then apparently the band is required to play Rocky Top. I got so sick of that song! But I digress.

The second song that we played that day was *"Hail to The Chief"*. The reason being was that Ronald Reagan, The President of The United States, was coming to deliver a speech to commemorate the opening of the fair. I was only nineteen years old at the time, but I can still remember how incredible that it felt to be standing there in front of the speakers platform (which was protected by bullet proof glass by the way) and listening to President Reagan's speech. The man just had a charisma about him, and when he spoke of the destiny and greatness of America, you could feel something stirring within your chest. It was an incredible experience in my young life to be standing just fifty or so feet away from such a legendary figure. It felt as if he were speaking just to me. That's when something else caught my attention.

Surrounding the stage that day were several really big guys dressed in dark suits wearing sunglasses and earphones. It was the president's secret service detail, and they were one scary looking bunch. Now as an American citizen, Reagan was **my** president. But let me assure you, that if I had gotten out of formation that day and tried to walk up to the podium to say a few words in private to **my** president... well, let's just say that it would have been a very bad day for me. So there stood President Reagan, delivering to us that inspiring speech about American exceptionalism, and all the while he was separated from us "Americans" by bullet proof glass and a bunch of heavily armed men!

Now don't get me wrong, I am all for the president being protected. Heaven knows there is a world full of crazy people out there, but the point that I am trying to make is that common folks like myself do not really have access to those with power. As a matter of fact, the older I get, the more convinced I become that politicians have no earthly idea how "we the people" actually get by. Though they refer to themselves as "public servants", most of them come from wealthy families, who have never had to struggle. They hire speech-writers to pen enticing words in hopes that they will motivate us into supporting them, but in reality, they have no idea who "we" are. I would love to have an opportunity to vote for someone who actually had to face the same struggles that us "common folk" have to endure just to survive. Unfortunately, very few "regular people" ever seem to rise to the top of the political spectrum as it were. So we are left with, in many cases, not a goodly lot to choose from when we go to the polls. Can I get a witness?

But Jesus, now **He** is a different story entirely. He left all of the splendor and majesty of Heaven to come and live among the poorest of people. He knew what it was like to work for a living. He knew what it was like to struggle and saw first hand the inequities of this life. He saw the terrible grip of sin upon mankind, and that, even though many tried in their own strength to overcome it, they were frail and desperately in need of a deliverer to rescue them from bondage. He saw all of this, then He willingly laid down His life as a ransom for many (**Mark 10:45**). Jesus is the genuine public servant. And when He finished His work upon the cross, He went back to heaven to sit at the right hand of God. Unlike all the other "public servants" we have to endure, Jesus never refuses to give full access to His faithful "supporters". He **always** has time to hear us. So, if you think that you will never have access to royalty my friends, then think again. As a believer in Christ, you have a personal relationship with the King of Kings in all of His glory. What an awesome friend we have in Jesus! *The Bible* says that when He returns for His people, that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is LORD. This means that all the kings and rulers of the earth will bow down before King Jesus! There is not a greater friend that you could ever have than Jesus. He is seated in power and majesty at the right hand of God The Father!

Not only does being seated at *"the right hand of God"* signify His power, but also something else that is just as wonderful. You see, the Jews had a court in ancient Israel known as the Sanhedrin. It was made up of seventy priests, with the high priest serving as the ruling judge. It was similar to our "Supreme Court" that we have here in The States in the context of being the final authority of the law of the land. When the Sanhedrin ruled on a matter in Israel, then that matter was settled according to their law. There were two scribes, who were seated on either side of the ruling priest. The scribe on the left was charged with transcribing all of the guilty verdicts, while the scribe on the right was the one who kept a record of all the acquittals. Now hold on for an important spiritual truth here! Jesus is sitting on the right hand of God the Father, The Supreme Judge of all the earth, and He is sitting there ready to give to you your own "acquittal". He is ready and able to forgive you for everything that you have ever done wrong, if you will just believe on his Name and ask for His forgiveness. Have you ever done that? There is nothing that is more important in this world. There is no sin worth losing your forgiveness over. Turn from your sins and receive your acquittal from King Jesus. He is seated at the right hand of God today, ready and able to forgive your sins. What a friend we have in Jesus!

His Ministry

“...a Minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that was set up by The LORD and not man. For every high Priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; therefore, it was necessary for this Priest also to have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He wouldn’t be a priest, since there are those offering the gifts prescribed by The Law. These serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was warned when he was about to complete the tabernacle. For God said, Be careful that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain. But Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree He is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been established on better promises.”

Hebrews 8:2-6

When Jesus offered Himself as a permanent sacrifice for sin, He sat down at the right hand of God The Father. This is because, as far as sacrifices are concerned, **“It is Finished” (John 19:30)**. The Tabernacle of Moses had no places for the officiating priest to sit, for their ministry was never completed. They were continuously offering sacrifices, as well as, performing the many daily rituals of their priestly ministry. Jesus, however, “sat down”, because He was the ultimate sacrifice. But this does not mean that He no longer has a ministry. He is now the Minister/Priest of God’s Holy Tabernacle in Heaven. You see, the tabernacle of Moses was specifically designed by The Holy Spirit as an earthly shadow to replicate what is a heavenly reality. There is, in fact, an awesome tabernacle of God in Heaven. It is the **true tabernacle (vs. 2)**. We will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter as to how the Tabernacle of Moses was designed to replicate the true tabernacle, but for now, we are looking at Jesus’ role as a Minister in that heavenly sanctuary.

There is more to the priestly ministry than sacrifices. Note that the writer of *Hebrews* mentions **“gifts and sacrifices” (vs. 3)**. Those “gifts” that he is referring to were known as the “bloodless sacrifices” that were brought to the Tabernacle. They were also known as “Peace Offerings” or “Grain Offerings”, which were offered to God voluntarily by the people. They were offered for a variety of reasons, such as to give thanks to God for His blessings, or to make a vow to God in some type of dedication of oneself. They had to be presented to God by the priests. No common Israelite could offer anything to God without going through the priests. A portion of these “bloodless” offerings were actually used to provide the priests with their food, and a portion would be placed upon the altar of The LORD. In cases of thanksgiving offerings, another portion would actually be eaten by the offerer, after it had been dedicated to the LORD.

One such offering was made by Hannah, the mother of Samuel (**1 Samuel Chapter 1**). She came before The LORD, along with Her husband and his other wife, to offer a thanksgiving offering for God’s blessings, but Hannah refused to eat her portion of the offering as was the custom for a communal thanksgiving offering. She cried out to The LORD to give her a son, and then she vowed before The LORD that if He would grant her request then the child would be brought to the temple as a gift to God. The LORD answered Hannah’s prayer, and when the child was weaned she presented him to Eli, the High Priest, as fulfillment of her vow. The child Samuel was given to God to use as He saw fit. As we know, he became a great prophet of The LORD (**1 and 2 Samuel**). Hannah gave up her **ONLY SON** as a gift to minister on God’s behalf to His people. Now that story reminds me of someone else... Who do you think that could be?

Why does all this matter? Because the High Priest was responsible not only for making sacrifices, but for accepting gifts on the Lord’s behalf as well. Jesus, Our Great High Priest Forever, is still performing this ministry for us today. You see, when you come before The LORD to offer **yourself** as a living sacrifice (**Romans 12:1**), you **MUST** go through Jesus, The Great High Priest. When you make your prayer requests, as well as, your prayers of praise and thanksgiving, or even give your tithes and offerings, they are to be offered in Jesus NAME. We must go through Jesus for everything that we offer unto God. Now do you understand why we pray “in Jesus Name”? It is because of His continual ministry as our Great High Priest! He is our only access to God The Father. He accepts our “gifts” on behalf of The Father and presents them before His throne. He sits at The Father’s right hand to minister on our behalf as Our Great High Priest. What a friend we have in Jesus!

His Mediation

“But Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree, He is The Mediator of a better covenant, which has been established on better promises.”

Hebrews 8:6

We have already discussed Christ's mediation in the previous chapter of *Hebrews*, so I will not belabor the point, suffice to say this: The definition of a mediator is someone who acts as a go-between in hopes of uniting two opposing parties. Our sins had brought us into opposition with God. The Old Covenant that God made with the nation of Israel simply stated:

"If you carefully obey My commands I am giving you today, to love the LORD your God and worship Him with all your heart and all your soul, I will provide rain for your land in the proper time, the autumn and spring rains, and you will harvest your grain, new wine, and oil. I will provide grass in your fields for your livestock. You will eat and be satisfied. Be careful that you are not enticed to turn aside to other gods. Then The LORD'S anger will burn against you. He will close the sky, and there will be no rain; the land will not yield its produce, and you will perish quickly from the good land The LORD is giving you."

The Old Covenant was pretty simple actually. It basically said, **"Obey My commands and live."** (*Proverbs 7:2*). But sadly, none are able to perfectly obey those commands. Therefore, we, by default, have chosen death over life. Jesus came to act as a go-between to take upon Himself the death that we deserved, in order to reconcile us to God. This is most definitely a better "deal" for us. Wouldn't you agree?

The writer of *Hebrews* goes on describe this "new and better covenant" with a quotation from *Jeremiah 31:31-34*. We also covered this passage last week that describes the New Covenant that God had promised to bring through Jesus. However, I would like to briefly discuss one aspect of this new and better covenant. God has NEVER made any type of covenant with us Gentiles. The Old Covenant **AND** The New Covenant were both offered to His chosen people Israel. Notice carefully that the promise of a New Covenant was given to **"Israel and the house of Judah" (vs. 8)**. This is because Abraham and his descendants are God's "covenant people". So how is it that we Gentiles can ever be saved? Remember the promise that God made to Abraham:

"...and through your offspring all nations will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." **Genesis 22:18**

You see, God has offered to bless the Gentile nations **through** the promises that He made to Abraham. Though we are not Jews, we have been offered, for a time, an opportunity to be included in God's covenant promise to Israel. This is why that it is so important to trust Christ, while we have been given this awesome opportunity! It will not last forever. Israel, as a nation, has rejected The New Covenant of salvation through Jesus Christ, but *The Bible* clearly states that after the full number of Gentiles have come to faith, then Israel will also embrace this New Covenant:

"Israel has experienced a hardening, in part, until the full number of Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved." **Romans 11:25-26**

It is as if God has offered us a "limited time offer" to share in the joys of salvation even though The New Covenant had been offered exclusively to Israel. Jesus, The Son of God, is still available for you this morning. If you have never accepted him by faith, then please do so today. He sits at the right hand of God The Father ready and willing to write your "acquittal" and forgive you for all your sins. He sits there in His **Majesty**, ready to **Minister** to you, as you offer up your prayers and petitions in His Name. He is there to act as your **Mediator** with God, offering you full access to the throne today. Are you weighed down with the burdens of your sin this morning? Jesus saves! And He doesn't just want to be your LORD, He wants to be your FRIEND:

"I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father." **John 15:15**

Is He your friend today? The New Covenant is far better than the Old, because through the New Covenant, we now are called the "friends of God"! We have not been given a mere religion consisting of rules to follow, but rather, we have been given a personal relationship with The Living Christ, Who reigns in Heaven, now and forever more. If you have Him today, then you have everything! What a friend we have in Jesus.

And let **All** of the friends of God say... TRUTH!!!