

Teacher Class Plan

Hebrews: Lesson #67: Our High Priest For Wednesday, Jan. 14th

Read Heb. 4:14 – 5:10; 6:20 – 8:5 (a simplified explanation of the text is supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: Heb. 4:14 “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”

We are still studying Hebrews, the letter written to the Jewish Christians. Let’s review some things that this letter is about. *[Use the large poster that describes some of the major themes of Hebrews.]* In this lesson we are going to learn how Jesus is our High Priest.

What is a High Priest?

- *You will have a small poster that shows a cutaway that will help you explain what a high priest did. Some religious bookstores have a small model of the tabernacle that students can build in class, if you are interested. A sheet is also provided for a class activity of identifying the various parts of the tabernacle. Our next lesson will emphasize the tabernacle some more.*
- In the Old Testament the High Priest was the most important of all of God’s priests. He was the only one who could go into the inner most part of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. He did this once a year, on the great Day of Atonement. Wearing his special priestly garments, he entered the temple before all the people, and then, he entered the holy of holies alone, made a sacrifice for all the people sprinkling the blood of the sin offering on the mercy seat which was on top of the Ark of the Covenant.

God Appointed Jesus to Be Our High Priest

- Jesus did not just decide He was High Priest. God chose Him to be that for us.
- Psalm 110 foretells about the greatness of Jesus. David said of Jesus, “The LORD has sworn and will not relent, “You are a priest forever...”

Why Jesus is a Great High Priest

- Did you see that we’ve added another “better” thing to our list on our poster? *Point out the “Better Things in Hebrews” poster.* Hebrews explains that Jesus is better than all those who ever served as a High Priest.
- Jesus is God’s Son. He understands all that God expects of us. He kept God’s Laws perfectly.
- But Jesus also lived as a human being. He knows what it is to face temptation. When Jesus was facing death on the cross, He cried out to God with tears praying just as we do now. He felt the sorrow of having to die. He saw what it means to yield to the will of God even when it is hard to obey.

- Old Testament priests were supposed to be holy, but sometimes they were very sinful. The High Priest in Jesus' time actually took part in having Jesus crucified. Even the good ones still sinned. But Jesus was perfect. He never sinned.
- Old Testament priests died but Jesus lives forever. Jesus will always be around to be our High Priest. Our **memory verse**, Heb. 4:14 says, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." *Hold up the large memory verse card and work on it with the class. Keep encouraging them to work on it at home.*

What Jesus Does as Our High Priest

- When Jesus left the earth, He went into heaven which is God's real tabernacle. We will talk about this more as we study Hebrews.
- He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. When we obey Jesus, His sacrifice can cleanse us from our sins.
- Because Jesus, the Son of God, also lived as a man, He understands our weakness and has sympathy for what we go through.
- Because Jesus is our High Priest at God's right hand, we, as Christians, can know that He will ask God to forgive us because we are His. Jesus will give us mercy and grace if we come to God's throne in prayer asking for forgiveness.

Jesus is a High Priest Like Melchizedek

- *A poster is provided to illustrate the following points.*
- Melchizedek was a person in the Old Testament that Abraham met. He was a priest of God and the King of Salem. His story is meant to show us something about Jesus.
- Melchizedek was not a priest like other priests under the Law of Moses. He lived before Moses' time. The Law of Moses said all priests had to come from the tribe of Levi. But Melchizedek was born long before Levi was.
- In Ps. 110 King David predicted about Jesus, "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."
- Jesus was a priest like Melchizedek because he was not from the tribe of Levi. He came from the tribe of Judah. Jesus is a priest in heaven and could not be a priest on earth.
- Jesus was also like Melchizedek in being both a King and a Priest. Melchizedek was both a priest and the King of Salem. In Heaven Jesus is both our King and our Priest.

Bible Quiz: Please review your quiz questions with the class. Remind them that they are expected to have answered their question sheet before they come to class. If you have time you can review the last quiz questions, too.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Our High Priest, Jesus, Offers Mercy

4:14 Since Jesus the Son of God is our great high priest who has traveled through the heavens, we should always cling tightly to our confession of who He is.

15 Our High Priest is not one that is unsympathetic toward us since He has suffered the same things we go through. He understands what its like to face weaknesses, having been tempted in all the same ways we are; but through it all He did not sin.

16 So let's come before the throne of grace speaking freely so that we can receive mercy and find grace that will answer our cry for help at just the right time.

The Work of a High Priest

5:1 Now all the high priests that were selected from men were appointed in behalf of people so that they could offer gifts and sacrifices for sin to God.

2 A fellow human being was chosen for this work so that he would have some amount of feeling for those who didn't understand or for those who had wandered from God's Law since he also has experienced such weaknesses.

3 He has the responsibility to offer sacrifices for sins, not only for the people, but also for himself.

4 Now no one just decides to appoint himself to become high priest. That's an honor that comes when one was called by God, just like Aaron was.

5 So in the same way, Christ didn't glorify Himself by making Himself high priest. Instead, He was made High Priest by the One who said, "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You."

6 And in another passage of Scripture, He said, "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

Jesus' Suffering Helped Him to Be a Perfect High Priest

7 Now Jesus, when He was in the days of His flesh, offered up fervent requests, pleading with strong cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death. And His prayers were heard because of the wise and respectful way He offered His prayers.

8 You see, even though Jesus was God's Son, He still learned obedience from the things He suffered.

9 His sufferings having brought Jesus to completion, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

10 Having been called by God as a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

A High Priest After the Order of Melchizekek

6:20 Jesus is our true High Priest and will be so forever. But His priesthood was not like those from the tribe of Levi. He is a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

7:1 Now this Melchizedek was both King of Salem and a priest of the Most High God. He was the one who met Abraham after the kings had been killed when Lot was rescued. Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

2 Abraham gave him a tenth part of everything that was taken in battle. In regard to his name, Melchizedek interpreted means King of Righteousness, and his title, King of Salem, meant King of peace.

3 Priesthood under the Law of Moses required that a person be descended from the tribe of Levi. But there is no family record of Melchizedek's father or mother. We don't know anything about when his days began or the end of his life. His story is like a model that shows us some things about Jesus, the Son of God. He was always a priest.

4 But think about this: Melchizedek must have been really important if the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of all the spoils.

5 Now it was the Law of Moses that commanded the people to give a tenth to those who were given the office of a priest from the sons of Levi. Yet these priests were just their brethren who descended from Abraham.

6 But Abraham himself voluntarily gave the tenth to Melchizedek even though Melchizedek had no family genealogical records. And Melchizedek blessed Abraham who the promises of God came through.

7 Now no one will argue this point: It's the less important person who is blessed by the more important person.

8 And under the Law of Moses the tenth is given to men who will ultimately die and we never know anything about them. But the Scripture's witness to the importance of Melchizedek lives on.

9 Since it was Levi's great-grandfather Abraham that gave the tenth to Melchizedek, you might even say that through Abraham the Levites (who are always receiving the tenth) gave a tenth to Melchizedek.

10 I say it that way because when Abraham met Melchizedek, Levi's future birth was still within Abraham.

Jesus Was Not a Priest Under the Law of Moses

11 We know that the Levitical priesthood is connected with the Law of Moses. Now if the Levitical priesthood accomplished all that God intended, then why would God inspire David to write that another priest would rise up who was according to the order of Melchizedek? Why wouldn't God have said this future priest would be after the order of the Levites?

12 I'll tell you why: Because the priesthood was going to be changed, it indicates that the Law was also going to be changed.

13 The same One of whom David prophesied, "The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool" is also told, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." So we know that God through David is speaking about Jesus. But Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi. He was from another tribe and no one from His tribe ever served as a priest at the altar.

14 Now it's obviously known to all that Jesus came up from the tribe of Judah. But the Law of Moses never said anything about priests coming from the tribe of Judah.

15 And this all gets even clearer when the Scripture said a different kind of priest was coming whose office was according to the order of Melchizedek.

16 Jesus didn't become our High Priest because He physically descended from someone like the Law required. He became our High Priest because His life was so powerful that it could not be destroyed.

17 The Scripture itself witnesses of Him, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

18 God would set aside the former commandment of a Levitical priesthood because it did not have the strength God needed it to and would not serve His purposes.

19 Really, the Law of Moses made nothing complete and finished. Instead the Lord has introduced us to a better hope by which we can come near to God.

20-21 God never swore that the Levitical priesthood would last forever. But He did swear an oath about Jesus' priesthood – "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever..."

22 So much that God has said makes Jesus the guarantee that this covenant will be better and serve His purposes.

Jesus is a High Priest Forever

23 It's a fact that under the Old Covenant there had to be many priests because sooner or later they died and new priests were needed.

24 But Jesus' priesthood was said to continue "forever", so His priesthood is permanent – it will not go away.

25 That means He can save those who come to God through Him. He will be able to save them until all is finished because He will always be alive to plead with God in their behalf.

26 Now that's the kind of High Priest we really need – One who is holy, free from bad behavior, not stained by sin, separate from sinners, and who has become higher than the heavens.

27 As our High Priest, Jesus does not have to offer up sacrifices every day. Priests had to do that daily, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. Jesus does not have to offer a sacrifice for His own sins because He has none. He does not have to offer a daily sacrifice for our sins because that was done once for all times when He offered Himself on the cross.

28 Now the Law of Moses gave regulations to appoint men (weak men) to be high priests. But after that Law, God's Word promised with a vow that His Son' priesthood would be accomplished forever.

The Work of a High Priest Shows Us What Jesus Does

8:1 Now if we can sum up all that has been said: We have the kind of High Priest who sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

2 He is doing His Work in the Sacred place, the true Tabernacle of God, the one the Lord put together, not the earthly one that men made.

3 We know that the job of the High Priest was to offer gifts and sacrifices, so it was essential that our High Priest also have something to offer in that true Tabernacle.

4 Now if Jesus were down here on earth, we know that He couldn't be a priest at all, since priests make their offerings according to the Law of Moses. As we've said before, His priesthood is not according to the Law.

5 What these earthly priests are doing really only serve to show us a likeness that points to something else. At the most it is nothing more than a shadow of what exists in heaven. [This verse will be finished in our next study.]