



uncommon
THE HOLY ONE OF GOD IS COMING

LESSONS:

1. Was Jesus just Common? (12/7)
2. He would be Compassionate and Holy (12/14)
3. His Birth would Announce His Kingdom (12/21)
4. His Childhood Among the Religious (12/28)
5. His Life Growing Up Among the Gentiles (1/4)
6. The Challenges of the Jewish Religion (1/11)
7. The Challenges of Gentile Religions (1/18)
8. The Creator Among the Created (1/25)
9. The Lord Against the Deceiver (2/1)
- 10. The Priest Among the Worshippers (2/15)**
11. The King Among the Citizens (2/22)
12. The Hope of the Nations (3/1)

Lesson 10 | **The High Priest Among His Worshippers** (2/15)

Hebrews 2:17-3:6; 5:7; 7:23-28; 9:11-14; 10:10-14.

Objective | If it was “**at the right time**, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 6:6) and “**when the fulness of time came**, [that] God sent His Son.” (4:4), there is something helpful for us to understand the culture and the climate of the times in which Jesus lived. Of course, the most significant was the religious climate in which Jesus was born. By Jesus’ time the presence and the programmatic set up the rotation of priests made a vivid and clear picture to the people of men who fulfilled such a position – yet was fraught with their own shortcomings.

Yet, Jesus Christ is our “great high priest.” *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The Old Testament hinted about the priestly office of Messiah through types and shadows. It begins with Aaron, Israel’s first high priest, and the Levites. God instructed Aaron, for example, that he had to cleanse Israel of their sins through the protocols of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Aaron, and Aaron alone, had to sacrifice a bull to cleanse ceremonially himself (16:11) and then take some of the blood, enter the holy of holies, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat (16:14). God instructed him to take two scapegoats and sacrifice one of them and sprinkle its blood on the altar (16:18) and take the second goat, lay his hands on it, confess Israel’s sins over it, and then send it out of the camp into the wilderness (16:21). In this act the goat was to “bear all their iniquities” and carry them away (16:22). As the Old Testament progressively unfolded God’s plan of redemption, the prophets revealed that the Messiah was the ultimate sacrifice. No longer would Israel look to the blood of bulls and goats but to the blood of the Messiah, who would be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4-5) for “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (53:6). The Messiah would be both sacrifice and priest: *“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption”* (Hebrews 9:11-12).

The idea that Jesus is our High Priest is the major theme of Hebrews (Hebrews 2:17-3:6). *“Therefore, he had to be **like his brothers and sisters in every way**, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. **He was faithful to the one who appointed him**, just as Moses was in all God’s household. For Jesus is considered **worthy of more glory than Moses**, just as the builder has more honor than the house. Now every house is built by someone, but the one who built everything is God. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s household, as a testimony to what would be said in the future. But **Christ was faithful as a Son over his household**. And we are that household if we hold on to our confidence and the hope in which we boast.”*

At the same time, the writer is developing the truth of the superiority of Jesus’ priesthood over the Aaronic priesthood – to which we will simply affirm here. Our point is to apply the uniqueness of Him as priest – more than the greater claim that He was superior to Aaron. Under Moses, the 1) Priests give sacrifice to God and represent the other peoples (5:1); 2) Priests must be cleansed in a special ritual way (5:3); And 3) Priests are chosen for the office by God (5:4). And in the Mosaic Law, a Jewish priest must be from the tribe of Levi – and a descendant of Aaron. The author of Hebrews intends to show that Jesus is in fact the only ordained priest that God has for believers. And in so doing, he shows **the unique priesthood** to which Jesus belongs – and in which He is the great high priest for all.

The author must prove, using only Old Testament scripture, that Jesus is our only priest, not only during his life, but for all time. Anyone intending to approach God must do so through Him alone, thus rendering the Old Testament ritual cultus obsolete and ultimately blasphemous.

MELCHIZEDEK: A PRIEST OUT OF NOWHERE (c.f. Genesis 14:17-20).

1. **He predates Aaron.**
 - a. The obscure Old Testament figure Melchizedek is a priest and king of Salem. Yet the Aaronic priesthood (and kings) were not yet established. This incident occurred in roughly 2000 BC, but the Levitical priesthood was set up later.
 - b. Obviously, this man must have been a priest in some order *other than* the Levitical order.
2. **He blesses Abraham.**
 - a. This unusual man meets the great patriarch Abraham one day as he returns with the booty won from a battle. The very brief, but very strange transaction occurs, where Melchizedek *blesses* Abraham.
 - b. According to ancient practice, Melchizedek had greater stature. Fathers always bless sons.
3. **He is honored by Abraham.**
 - a. In addition, notice that Abraham gives a tithe of his booty to Melchizedek. This also indicates that *Abraham recognized Melchizedek as his priest*. Both the blessing and the tithe point to the same thing--*the great stature of this man*.
 - b. He stands as a priest at a time there were no priests and holds a stature greater than the patriarch Abraham.
4. **He is King.**
 - a. The name Melchizedek comes from one Semitic root which means "king," and another, which means "righteousness." His name literally means King of Righteousness (Hebrews 7:2). Also, He was the King of Salem, a word from which comes "Shalom" or peace. Therefore, he is also the "King of Peace" (7:2).
 - b. When you think about it, this short incident proves that there is such a thing as a priesthood which is wholly outside of the Jewish people. After all, Abraham was the only living Jew at the time this story occurred and Melchizedek was a priest without the Law.
 - c. *If only the author of Hebrews could somehow find a passage linking the Messiah to this sort of priesthood, he would win his case.* And he does – **Psalm 110**. Note in verse one that King David says "The Lord says to my Lord..." The first Lord is *Yahweh*. The second is *Adonai*, one of three common names of God in the Old Testament. David, himself, was an absolute monarch. Who would he refer to as his *Adonia*? The "Messiah."
 - d. Now read verse 4 "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.'"
5. **He is unique.**
 - a. Another strange thing is that as great as this man was, we are given no explanation as to why. Usually, a genealogy is given to show that a great one is from some special family (see Matthew 1:1-18). This was more important to ancient and medieval culture than it is today. It would be especially important in the Bible where God so often deals with families and nations. But in this case, genealogy is given (Hebrews 7:3).
 - b. There was none like him. "For this Melchizedek... Without father, mother, or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever" (7:3).
6. **He is priest "forever."**
 - a. Could it be that Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness and Peace was in fact Jesus Christ Himself? That's what some interpreters think, based on Hebrews 7:3 and 8; Further, some believe that Christ, Himself, appeared in Genesis 18:16-33..
 - b. Other interpreters see Melchizedek as a historical man who was a type of Christ, just as David was. The comment in Heb. 7 that "without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God

he remains a priest forever," would refer to Psalms 110 accordingly. It should be noted that Melchizedek was king of *an actual Jebusite city*--Salem. The lesson is the same whether Melchizedek was Christ himself, or a type of Christ, but the evidence is most persuasive that he was a type of Christ.

- c. And so, this priesthood of Christ is eternal: "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:7).

"But because he remains forever, he holds his priesthood permanently. Therefore, **he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, since he always lives to intercede for them.** For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do—first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all time when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the promise of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, who has been perfected forever" (Hebrews 7:24-28).

"But Christ has appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), he entered the most holy place once for all time, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God? (9:11-14).

Through Christ's priestly office, all believers who are united to Him share in the work of His ministry – namely the sharing *of the message that "He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves... for we plead on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. Working together with Him, we also appeal to you, **Don't receive the grace of God in vain**"* (2Corinthians 5:11-6:2). And to this task we are commissioned to "worship" with Him: "*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that **you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**"* (1Peter 2:9). Peter's statement rests the church's identity as this *royal priesthood* in the fact that they are *in union* with Christ. They have come to the living stone rejected by men but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and as such, they have become living stones "to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (2:4-5).

Lastly, it is significant to me that while in the gospels, it is implicit Jesus worshipped with others in synagogues (Luke 6:16-30) and in the Passover where they sang hymns (Matthew 26:17-30), He is worshipped afterwards by Christians. His place among His worshippers is the priest who has empowered them unique to proclaim the excellencies about Him – the unique Priest and High Priest of all.

Next Lesson: 10. The King Among His Citizens (2/22).

Read ahead: Luke 17:20-21; Matthew 12:22-32; Acts 2:22-36; 8:12; 20:25; 28:30-31; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:9-14; 1Thessalonians 2:12

Compassionate Creator: Becoming Human For Me by Bruce Morton; Chapter 10
Sold on Amazon and 21st Century Christian or other Christian Bookstores.