

Series: **1=3 - The truth about God and His nature – week 5**

CDOBC – beginning on 4/30/17

Today's Title: **“Jesus-Priest”**

May 28, 2017 - Selected Passages

OBJECTIVE: To help people know Jesus is our great High Priest, and we are called to serve as members of the holy priesthood of believers.

If you were to travel back in time, you might be surprised at how well respected a priest was in the daily life of a town or in a large city in the neighborhood where his church ministered.

Go back 50 or 100 years, and you would find the pastor or priest was a vital member of the community - respected and relied upon for his input into the issues the community dealt with.

But in today's world, for most people the thought of a priest brings forth ideas of antiquity, religion and ritual, isolation, unusual or foreign, and things disconnected from daily life. For some, the word 'priest' brings to mind horrific scandal. This is not limited to the 'unchurched' or the 'unbelievers'...but many within the Church have these thoughts of the formal, institutional Church and those who lead it.

This morning, I want us to see what the Bible says about the role of priest - and how Jesus as our ultimate High Priest has

surpassed the role of priest we see in the O.T. - and even the role of priest as it's practiced in some churches today.

We are in week #5 or 9 weeks in our series “**1=3**, *the truth about God and His nature*”.

Our application will help us draw out the believer's role as a member of the 'Holy Priesthood', and what that entails for our own life.

Opening Prayer

The O.T. role of priest

The role of the priest in the O.T. was a mirror image of the role of prophet. Last Sunday I told you the role of a prophet was to represent and reveal God to the people.

The prophet stood on behalf of God, and brought the message of God to the people.

The priest is the mirror image of the prophet - for the priest stood on behalf of the people, bringing prayers and sacrifices to God on behalf of the people - seeking God's direction, forgiveness and mercy.

Leviticus 16:32

“And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments.”

This was the priest's job - to make atonement on behalf of the people to the Holy God.

Due to God's holiness and the serious nature and offense of sin to God's nature, the priesthood carried

with it many rules and regulations which the priests needed to follow '*religiously*'.

The primary requirement for the priesthood was ancestry...only descendants of Levi qualified for the priesthood.

Like prophets, they were often *anointed* for their work as a priest, and not only were the descendants of Levi *appointed* by God to serve as the priests in Israel, but they would be appointed to serve at certain times, and certain places such as local synagogues and some would have the great honor to serve in the Temple at Jerusalem.

We see in the book of **Nehemiah** and **Ezra** that their job included reading and teaching the Word of God to the people and leading public worship during the various religious feasts and celebrations such as Passover, the Festival of Booths, and Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). The most important religious festival was on the Day of Atonement where the High Priest would offer a sacrifice for his own sins, and then he could enter the most sacred part of the Temple - the Holy of Holies - and offer the annual sacrifice atoning for the sins of the people.

Throughout Israel's history, the priest served a vital role for the spiritual health of the people - a title/role of equal importance to the role of prophet. Both prophet

and priest were dependent on the other's work in order to function at full capacity.

But there were:

Problems inherent in the O.T. sacrificial system.

These were problems which God designed into the sacrificial system. These problems weren't a mistake by God - they weren't some sort of oversight on His part, but an intentional design flaw which had a very significant intent. I want to share 2 of the problems with the sacrificial system of the O.T.

Animal sacrifices could never pay our sin debt.

Hebrews 10:4

"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

The sacrifices the priests offered on behalf of the people were limited in their power, scope and effectiveness.

The primary design flaw was the weakness and insufficiency of the system - it's inability to pay the price for all sin - it's inability to satisfy the wrath and justice of God in a complete and eternal way. The O.T Law - the sacrificial system - the work of the priests in the O.T. were never intended to be the end in itself. Proof of this is they had to be repeated every year.

Hebrews 10:11

“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

The Levitical priests were sinners needing sacrifices for their own sin.

The moral and ethical imperfections of the Levitical priests caused many problems throughout the centuries. Corruption, embezzlement, sexual deviancy were some of the problems which hampered the sacrificial system of the O.T. and contributed to the unhealthy state of Israel’s spiritual life.

Hebrews 5:1-3

“For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He (the O.T. priest) can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

3 Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.”

Hebrews 7:28a

“For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests...”

So, there were 2 major problems / 2 intentional design flaws in the O.T. sacrificial system:

- The quality and value of the sacrifices
- The holiness and purity of the priests

But before the foundation of the world, God had designed the fix...the solution to the sacrificial system.

The solution to the O.T. system: Jesus Christ

The O.T. sacrificial system was a foreshadow of a better system - a preview of the perfections we see in Jesus. The O.T. priesthood was a temporary fix until the permanent solution arrived.

God designed the O.T. Law to demonstrate our inability to keep His perfect Law - hence our need for something more - our need for a greater Law - a greater Priest - a greater sacrifice for our sins! The O.T. Law and the sacrificial system of the O.T. was designed to point us to Christ.

Galatians 3:24-26

“So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”

Jesus is a merciful High Priest

Jesus was not a descendant of Levi, He was a descendant of Judah, in the line of David.

However, His '*path to the priesthood*' was through His character - and through an earlier priest and king named Melchizedek who we see in **Genesis 14**.

Melchizedek was a priest not due to family lineage. He lived generations before Levi (one of Jacob's sons) was born. **Hebrews 7:21** tells us he was appointed by God to be a priest, and His name (Melchizedek) means '*king of righteousness*' and he was king of Salem, which means '*king of peace*'.

Melchizedek is a type of Christ - a preview in the O.T. of Christ.

Psalm 110:4b (Messianic Psalm)

"You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 5:5-6 (Christ appointed as High Priest by God)

So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You";

6 as He says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

So, Jesus' priesthood is not due to His ancestry, but due to His likeness to Melchizedek, and His character as one who is righteous and one who offers peace (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:14), and He was appointed by God to have the title and function as High Priest. But since Jesus took on human flesh - since He experienced the pull of sin through His humanity, He can empathize with us in our struggles and He is merciful toward us.

Hebrews 2:17-18 (see also 4:14-16)

"Therefore He (*Jesus*) had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and

faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

18 For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

He is merciful and compassionate when we go to Him for help.

Jesus *spoke* and *explained* God’s Word

Another way Jesus filled the role of priest was in His ministry of teaching and preaching God’s Word. As I mentioned last Sunday, Jesus spoke with authority which was never seen before, and He spoke what the Father commanded Him to speak (John 12:49). This teaching and explaining God’s Word was an important function of the priesthood - and it’s still an important function needed for the followers of God today.

Jesus was *sinless*, thus perfectly *qualified* to offer sacrifice for sins.

Because of their sin and fallen nature, the O.T. priests were inferior to Jesus not only in their sin, but in the quality and lasting nature of their work on behalf of the people.

Hebrews 7:23

“The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office...”

Hebrews 9:7

“...the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.”

But Jesus was sinless - perfect in every way - and this makes His priesthood superior in every way to the O.T. priests.

Hebrews 9:13

“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.”

9:15

“...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

A human priest with a sin nature, no matter how good they were, could never accomplish what Christ could accomplish as our perfect, High Priest, who made 1 sacrifice, never to be repeated, for it is far superior to all other sacrifices, and it covers all sin, for all eternity.

Jesus *intercedes* for *believers* right now

The priestly work of Jesus is not finished...it's ongoing each and every day. As our great High Priest, He is interceding for us, in the heavenly realm, before the Father.

1 Timothy 2:5

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...”

Hebrews 10:19-23

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,
20 by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh,
21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

Since Jesus is interceding on your behalf, you can be confident that your prayers are heard.

You can be confident that your salvation is secure - because it's not only secured by the finished work of Christ on the cross, it's also secured by the ongoing priestly work of His intercession for you before the Father.

Apply it...

The priesthood of the believer

If you have put your faith in Christ, you have been cleansed from your sins by His sacrifice.

You have been sanctified by His blood and righteousness.

You have been anointed by His Spirit and given a new life - a new future - and a new family.

Your human lineage cannot disqualify you from the priestly role all believers are called to - for you have a new family - a forever family as a member of God's household. Now, you have the best lineage!

Believers are a *holy priesthood*

1 Peter 2:5

"...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

You are holy because of your position in Jesus.

We may become more righteous in our daily life, but God sees us through the righteousness of Jesus - a perfect righteousness.

This qualifies us to be part of the 'holy priesthood' which is called to live out and share the Gospel.

1 Peter 2:9

"But 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."

As a member of the holy and royal priesthood, you have been given a job - a job description:

"that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Believers offer their *life* as a *sacrifice*.

Romans 12:1

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

Attending church is important...after faith, it's the first step to growing in your faith - *Regular worship with God's people*. But corporate worship is the beginning step of the Christian life. We're called to offer our life - everything we are...everything we have - to the service of God.

This is worship...spiritual worship.

Believers, as members of the holy priesthood, should exemplify good works.

Matthew 5:16

“...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Hebrews 13:15-16

“Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”

Our life must reflect the goodness, kindness and holiness of Christ.

As a member of the holy priesthood, we are called to a higher standard - not to receive praise from men, but so men and women will give praise to God and be drawn to Him.

Believers are called to minister in their priestly role.

Not only are you called to perform good works which give praise and glory to God, but you are called to serve in the various ways God has gifted and equipped you to serve.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (Paul says Pastors and teachers)

“equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

As a Christian, you have been gifted by God to minister to others in the church.

You have a spiritual gift - which has been given to you - by God - to make the church stronger and more effective in the mission of the church.

Where do you stand today...

Have you made the decision to put your faith in Jesus - in His sacrifice for your sins? There is no other sacrifice which can pay the price for your sins - completely - eternally.

Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

(John 14:6b)

Christian...have you embraced your role as a member of the “holy priesthood of believers” - and do you live with the purpose and intent God has for your life?

Close in prayer