



First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS IS BETTER • JESUS, OUR PERFECT INTERCESSOR • HEBREWS 7:23-28 • 6/18/2023

MAIN POINT

Jesus has secured salvation for all those who believe and place their faith in Him while continuing intercession on our behalf with the Father.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What's the best handmade gift you ever received? Why?

How does a handmade gift compare with one purchased in a store?

Handmade gifts represent something of the giver. These gifts are unique. Purchased gifts are mass-produced and can be obtained in many ways. They are not made for any specific person but are applicable to many. Salvation is the greatest, most personal "handmade" gift of all time. Recall the visual of Jesus with His hands outstretched on the cross. Salvation comes through God's divine love and the sacrifice of His divine Son. It is a gift only God can provide.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 7:23-24.

23 "The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever."
(ESV)

How does Jesus compare with Levitical priests? Why is this significant?

How would you describe the limits faced by a Jewish priest? How does each limit point to the need for a better priest?

Levitical priests interceded with God on behalf of people. They were human, so they died and were replaced by another human priest. Sometimes the successor priests were not qualified. Unlike the Levitical priests, Jesus' priesthood is eternal. Even death did not interrupt Jesus' priesthood. He continues to live forever after His resurrection.

In what areas of today's culture do you see a lack of permanence?

How does culture's impermanence shape our understanding of Jesus' permanent priesthood?

We are conditioned for planned obsolescence. What is new today is soon outdated. Products come with expiration dates. Jesus, however, is eternal and permanent. His love for us and His intercession on our behalf do not expire.

Why do you think that God has done so much to have a relationship with sinful people?

What does it mean to you that in Christ you can draw near to God at any time and any place?

In practical terms, what are some ways that a believer can come into God's presence?

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 7:25.

25 "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (ESV)

How difficult is it for you to depend on someone else?

How does this passage speak to those qualifications that we find in Jesus?

Qualifications and a proven track record of reliability are essential. You depend on someone who not only has the necessary skill set, but who can be counted on when needed. Jesus is qualified to save people because of His relationship with God the Father.

In addition to being able to save, Jesus is reliable. Since He is eternal, He continues to have the ability to save those who express faith in Him.

When have you counted on something to work and had it fail? When have you been let down by someone you were counting on?

How can God use that experience to remind you of what you find in Jesus?

Products, no matter how reliable, occasionally fail. A new car might not start or a new computer might be infected with a virus. Likewise, at some point, people will not follow through in a relationship. They will let us down because they are human. Our track record with products and relationships differs from our relationship with Jesus. He will not let us down.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 7:26-28.

26 "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever." (ESV)

How does a person's character influence his or her actions?

How does verse 26 describe Jesus?

Character describes the personal traits and qualities that influence your actions. It is who you are more than what you do. Bob Ley once stated, "Character is what you do when no one is watching." Salvation is based on Jesus' character—Who He is.

If you were to describe Jesus' character based on this passage, what points would you include? What points are most meaningful to you?

Jesus is "*holy, innocent, unstained*" (v. 26). These words apply to Jesus' personal traits. Jesus is "*separated from sinners*" and "*exalted above the heavens*" (v. 26). These phrases describe how He is set apart from humans.

According to this passage, what makes Jesus the only perfect High Priest?

How does this help you have confidence in Him?

How does knowing that Jesus is interceding for you right now encourage you to endure in your faith, love, and worship of Him?

Because Christ was sinless, He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself. This contrasts with earthly priests, who offered animal sacrifices for themselves as well as the people. Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is uniquely qualified as High Priest because He lived on earth yet remained sinless. He did not first become perfect and then become High Priest. He was perfect from the beginning.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does your life evidence the fact that Jesus is the only One able to save us?

What temptations are you going to face this week that might cause you to rely on something else other than Jesus?

How can we be reassured in our difficulties that Jesus is also praying for us to the Father?

PRAYER

As you pray, thank God that Jesus, even now, is interceding for you. Pray that your group would hold to the truth both in their beliefs and actions that shows Jesus is the only one who can save.

COMMENTARY

| HEBREWS 7:23-28

7:23-24. The permanence of Jesus' high priesthood appears again (v. 17), this time emphasizing the contrast between the Levitical priests and Jesus. Aaron's line of priests had a multitude of members because death prevented them from continuing in office. For the Aaronic priests the office continued, but the person changed. The law of heredity guaranteed that some descendant of Aaron would fill the office. The successor, however, might lack the qualifications to intercede effectively with God for the people. A change in office might introduce an unqualified replacement. Not so with Jesus. He continued to fill the same office. In his holy hands, the office of High Priest was permanently secure.

Jesus holds his priesthood without change. Although Jesus has died, his priesthood has continued to function. Jesus' death was not his cessation of being. His resurrection allowed him to live forever. His permanence stands in contrast with the transience of other priests. With Jesus, nothing has changed. He still holds his office of priesthood. For eternity he knows and helps his people.

7:25. Jesus has a permanent high priesthood. As High Priest, he prays always for his people. He pleads the cause of his people. The result of this priestly prayer is the salvation of his people. Because Jesus lives forever, he is able to save forever.

The word completely may mean that Jesus can save with totality or that he can save permanently. Either possibility supplies good meaning, but most commentators feel that here the emphasis is that Christ is able to save people entirely. Anyone who comes to God for salvation must come through Jesus, for salvation comes only through Christ.

7:26. This verse summarizes the qualities of an ideal high priest clearly seen in Jesus. Only those who come to God through Jesus can experience these qualities.

First, three personal traits describe the ideal high priest. The first refers to personal holiness. Jesus was a perfect accomplishment of all God required. No one could find in Jesus any deficiency or failure. The second word blameless describes Christ as innocent or without guilt. Jesus had no craftiness or malice. The third word pure refers to Jesus as having no moral contamination. These three words describe Jesus as having holiness by nature and also as remaining pure in all his contacts with sinful human beings.

Second, in relation to human beings, Jesus was set apart from sinners. Jesus was sinless, and this fact set him apart from sinful human beings. Jesus' service in the office of high priest also set him apart from other human beings. The holy High Priest can perfectly serve the needs of a sinful person to come to the holy God for salvation.

Third, despite Jesus' likeness to human beings, he nevertheless stands above them, for he was exalted above the heavens. Many New Testament passages, such as Philippians 2:9, underscore the exalted nature of Jesus. His exalted standing should cause us to appreciate more deeply the glory of his ministry.

A high priest like this fits our condition. He has experienced the complete force of temptation, and he has yielded to none of it. He has the perfect fitness to represent us before God and to secure our acceptance with God.

7:27. Jesus' superiority also appeared in that he did not need daily sacrifices for himself. The Aaronic high priests offered sacrifices first for themselves and then for the people. Since he was sinless, Christ did not need to offer any sacrifice for himself. He needed only to offer a single sacrifice once for all (Heb. 10:10). He offered himself for sinful human beings, and he needed to offer no repetition.

It may have been shocking at this point to introduce the idea that Jesus offered himself. No high priest offered himself. He offered a substitute animal sacrifice. The total unselfishness and commitment of Jesus appeared in his offering up of himself. Jesus had said that he came to offer his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). All who have come to Jesus for salvation have found him to be a powerful and sufficient Savior.

7:28. This verse summarizes the previous two verses concerning the appointment of the Levitical priests and the Melchizedek order. The Levitical order was appointed by the Law. The order of Melchizedek came by an oath. The difference between the two orders appeared in the character of the priest.

The Levitical order contained men who are weak. Priests did not come from any super race. They came from among ordinary people with all the weaknesses of human beings. The order of Melchizedek had as priest the Son, who has been made perfect forever. With a perfect High Priest like Jesus, Christians may approach God with confidence. Jesus' character guarantees our access.

The idea is not that Jesus first became perfect and then became High Priest. Jesus' nature was perfect from the beginning. He came to earth as a perfect High Priest. His earthly life was an exhibition of the moral perfection he always possessed. It is true that his suffering developed in him an ability to understand our needs and to become an even more effective Savior (Heb. 2:10). His eternal perfection allowed him to meet the needs of sinful, wandering human beings.

Thomas D. Lea, Hebrews, James, vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 136–138.