

"Our Great High Priest"

Part 3

Hebrews 4:14-8:5

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study of the book of Hebrews we again come to Hebrews 5. Last week as we stepped into this chapter we were looking at the qualifications for the high priest under the Old Covenant. These qualifications are presented by the writer in Hebrews 5:1-4. Now the writer presents these verses and then in Hebrews 5:5-10 He will hold Jesus Christ up to these qualifications to show that He meets every one of these qualifications.

Now before we get back into our study of the qualifications I need to remind you about why the writer records this section which we are looking at. We need to remember that this is the largest section within the book of Hebrews. This section started in 4:14 and will take us the entire way through 8:5. So, because it is the largest section of the letter that tells us that it is very important. Its importance can be seen in the priesthood of the Old Testament.

Under the Old Covenant the Jews knew the importance of the high priest. He was the man who was chosen by God and he was the man who represented the people to God. He was the man who was able to go into the presence of God and there he could offer sacrifices for the sins of the people whom he represented. Without the high priest there was no one to intercede for the people because the ordinary person could not come into the presence of God. Therefore the high priest was vitally important to the Jews and their worship of God.

Now as the writer has entered into this letter which we are studying he is on a mission to help these people to see that the New Covenant was superior to the Old Covenant. Remember they were contemplating returning back to Judaism because of the persecution they were facing. Then we must also keep in mind that there would be unbelieving Jews who would also hear the contents of this letter. So the question among all of the Jewish skeptics, saved or unsaved, would have been, "If this New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant how does it function without a High Priest?"

This section before us is the answer to that question. There is a High Priest and He is far superior to all the high priests of the Old Covenant. His name is Jesus Christ and He has done what all the priests of the Old Testament could never do. He had provided a way for man to enter into the presence of God.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

¹⁵ *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

¹⁶ *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

Under the New Covenant we are able to come "confidently" into the presence of God at anytime we are in need. When Jesus died the veil which separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies was torn from the top to the bottom showing that God has made a way for man to enter into His presence.

Now the next question that would arise with the Hebrew believers was, "Does Jesus meet the qualifications of to be high priest?" This brings us to where we are tonight.

I. **The Qualifications of the High Priest.**

Part 2

1. He was appointed by God.

Notice Hebrews 5:1a, 4

Last week we looked at how no man could just chose on his own to become a high priest. He had to be chosen and appointed by God otherwise he did not qualify. In Exodus 21 we see an example of this.

Exodus 21:1

And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

2. He had to be able to feel compassion for those he sacrificed for.

Notice Hebrews 5:2

The word "compassion" in this verse has a very interesting meaning which we looked at last week. It means, *"to treat with mildness, or moderation, to bear gently with". The idea is that of not being unduly disturbed by the faults and ignorance of others;*

The high priest had to be a man who could identify with those whom he represented to God. When they came to him he had to be able to sympathize with them in their sins and weaknesses. But he was not to be critical NOR was he to be apathetic. He had to be able to "feel" their sorrow and their pain and at the same time he could not sink into despair with them NOR could he just brush it off like it was nothing. He had to be a man who listened and felt what they felt and at the same time be an anchor for them so as to actually pull them up out of the despair and help them to get back on their "spiritual feet" again.

Let us now look at the people whom he was to do this for.

Notice Hebrews 5:2

There are really 2 words here that are used to identify those whom the high priest represented.

They were:

1. **The ignorant.**
2. **Them that were out of the way.**

These 2 descriptions are going to lead us into the Old Testament and I want to take the time to show you something about the sacrificial system under the Old Covenant that you will see as very interesting and very alarming.

Let us start by looking at the 2 descriptions a little closer. The high priest in the Old Testament would offer sacrifices for the ignorant and for those who were out of the way.

"Ignorant" - This refers to people who committed sins out of ignorance. Let me show you how Vines defines the word:

1. *to be ignorant, not to know*
2. *not to understand, unknown*
3. *to err or sin through mistake, to be wrong*

This would refer to people who "accidentally" fell into sin or "unknowingly" committed sin.

"Them that are out of the way" - Let me show you how Vines defines this phrase.

1. *to cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way*

2. *to go astray, wander, roam about*

This would refer to people who were somehow led astray. It would refer to people who had wandered away from God maybe by some means of enticement.

Now here is where it becomes very interesting. There was no sacrifice available for those who sinned willfully. In other words those who sinned in defiance of God's Law were without any remedy.

Let me show you what the Old Testament says.

Numbers 15:22-29

²² And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the LORD hath spoken unto Moses,

²³ Even all that the LORD hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the LORD commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations;

*²⁴ Then it shall be, if ought be committed by **ignorance** without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto the LORD, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering.*

*²⁵ And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their **ignorance**:*

*²⁶ And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; seeing all the people were in **ignorance**.*

*²⁷ And if any soul sin through **ignorance**, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering.*

*²⁸ And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that **sinneth ignorantly**, when he sinneth by **ignorance** before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.*

*²⁹ Ye shall have one law for him that **sinneth through ignorance**, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.*

In these verses we see that the sins committed in ignorance were to be atoned for with the sacrifice. Now watch the contrast.

Numbers 15:30-31

³⁰ *But the soul that doeth ought **presumptuously**, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.*

³¹ *Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.*

You see there was no remedy for the person who deliberately defied the Law of God.

The word "presumptuously" here in Numbers 15:30 refers to the "sin of a high hand". Moses goes on to give us an example of this sin.

Numbers 15:32-36

³² *And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.*

³³ *And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.*

³⁴ *And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.*

³⁵ *And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.*

³⁶ *And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.*

Let me show you another place where we can see a picture of the word in action.

Exodus 14:8

⁸ *And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out **with an high hand**.*

Here we are told that Israel went out "with an high hand". That means they deliberately denied the will of Pharaoh and went against his commands.

That is the very same meaning of "**presumptuous**" sins. Back to the thought in Exodus again: when someone committed "presumptuous" sins there was no sacrifice or in other words there was no provision made for them. That is why David prayed the way he did in Psalm 19.

Psalm 19:13

¹³ *Keep back thy servant also from **presumptuous sins**; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

The writer of Hebrews brings this to the attention of the Hebrews also.

Hebrews 10:26

²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

You may not have realized this but this even applies to today. That is SHOCKING to many people. Some would say, "I don't believe that!" Well let me remind you that Hebrews 10:26 is for the church. It is New Testament teaching. The writer even includes himself in the application.

Now let me explain to you what the "*presumptuous sins*" were and are. They were sins that were committed in absolute defiance of the Law and the will of God. But it went beyond that and we know this because we all lived that way before we were saved. Presumptuous sins were committed by people who refused to repent. Now I want you to get this, any sin that is repented of is not considered to be a presumptuous sin.

So if someone lives in defiance of the will and the Commandments of God and never repents there is absolutely no hope for that individual. Let me show you what else the writer of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 10.

Hebrews 10:26-29

²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

²⁷ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

²⁸ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

²⁹ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

The writer is addressing the Hebrews here who are thinking about turning back to Judaism and he tells them if they walk away from the Truth of the New Covenant and deny Christ and His grace then there is no remedy. There would only be a fiery judgment. Then he points back to the Old Testament and uses those who committed presumptuous sins as an example.

Conclusion:

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This confirms something that I have been preaching from the pulpit. There must be REPENTANCE in an individual's life or there cannot be forgiveness. You see sins in the life of the unbeliever are without remedy if there is no repentance. If a person is not saved and they deliberately defy the will and the Word of God they are considered to be PRESUMPTUOUS sins.

Next week we will get through the qualifications of the high priest.