

"Our Great High Priest"

Part 4

Hebrews 4:14-8:5

Introduction: Tonight in our study of Hebrews we have come back to chapter 5 again. In 4:14-16 the writer has introduced Jesus as the Great High Priest.

Notice Hebrews 4:14-16

Here we see that the writer presents Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest. But He does not stop with just the title of Great High Priest. The writer goes on to say that Jesus is a High Priest who can identify with those who are tempted and those who battle with weakness. He also tells them in 4:16 that Jesus has provided a way for the common man to enter into the presence of God where he or she can obtain mercy and grace in the time of need.

Now we must remember that this letter is written to Hebrew believers who knew the Old Testament and the Old Covenant very well. They knew the ministry of the High Priest under the Old Covenant and they knew that without a High Priest there was no hope. He was the man who represented man to God. He was the man who went into the presence of God once a year to offer the sacrifice for the sins of the people.

These Hebrew believers would have paid very close attention to what the writer recorded about Jesus as the High Priest because they knew the importance of the ministry of the High Priest.

But Hebrews 4:14-16 would have raised some questions in the mind of the Hebrews.

1. Did Jesus qualify to be the High Priest?
2. How could He be the High Priest when He was of the tribe of Judah and not of the tribe of Levi?
3. How could Jesus, as the Son of God, identify with people who were sinners?
4. How could Jesus do what no High Priest of the Old Covenant could ever do and that was make a way for the common man to enter into the presence of God?

These questions are the reason why we have the section that is before us. The writer is determined in this section to show his readers several points:

1. Jesus is better than all of the High Priests of the Old Testament.
2. The New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant.

Now the writer starts out by pointing to the requirements of the High Priest under the Old Covenant. Then he will show his readers exactly how Jesus meets every one of the requirements.

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

Part 3

1. **He was appointed by God.**

Notice Hebrews 5:1a, 4

2. **He had to be able to feel compassion for those he offered sacrifices for.**

Notice Hebrews 5:2

3. **He had to offer sacrifices for sinful man.**

Notice Hebrews 5:1

We see here that the High Priest offered GIFTS and SACRIFICES for the sins of the people. This tells me that the High Priest of the Old Testament had to be a man that cared for the people whom he represented to God. To be a High Priest was not an easy service.

Hebrews 10:1-4, 11

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

² *For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

³ *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.*

⁴ *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

¹¹ *And every priest **standeth daily** ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:*

The service of the High Priest was repeated over and over again. The reason was that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. Therefore sacrifices had to be made

day after day. In Hebrews 10:11 the writer tells us that the High Priest "STOOD DAILY". This service of the High Priest was a labor of love for the people whom he sacrificed for. It was tiring and it was difficult. Therefore the High Priest was a man who had to care about the people whom he represented.

Then besides the sacrifices for the people he himself had to be cleansed.

Notice Hebrews 5:3

This man could not come carelessly to perform his service for his heart had to be right with God before he could sacrifice for the people.

It needs to also be noted that the High Priest not only offered sacrifices but also gifts.

Notice Hebrews 5:1

We see here that he offered GIFTS and sacrifices. The gifts would have been thank offerings which were offered by the Jews and the priest was the man who was to offer them up.

Now let us pull this together and gather more information on the High Priest before we move on to see how Jesus fulfilled these requirements. The High Priest was a man who was chosen by God from the family of Aaron. He was a man who was compassionate with the people but at the same time he had to be solid enough to take the people by the hand and lead them out of the pit of despair do to the sin they had fallen into. He was not only compassionate but he was also caring. His office and service were a labor of love. He stood daily to oversee the offering of sacrifices for the sins of the people. Day after day and over and over again he performed his service. And when he came to perform his service he himself had to be right with God.

Now let me also say that the High Priest did not offer all of the sacrifices. The high priest held the leadership position under the Aaronic Priesthood and one of his roles was overseeing the responsibilities of all the subordinate priests. Though the high priest could participate in ordinary priestly ministries, only certain functions were given to him. Only the high priest could wear the Urim and the Thummin (which were engraved dice-like stones used to determine truth or lies). For this reason, the Hebrew people would go to the high priest in order to know the will of God. The most important duty of the high priest was to conduct the service on the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month of every year. Only he was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place behind the veil to stand before God. Having made a sacrifice for himself and for the people, he then brought

the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, God's "throne". He did this to make atonement for himself and the people for all their sins committed during the year just ended. But there was something else that comes to my mind about the High Priest that I believe you will find to be interesting.

In the Old Testament there were certain cities that were known as Cities of Refuge. There were 6 of these cities.

Joshua 20:1-2, 7-8

The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,

² *Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:*

⁷ *And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.*

⁸ *And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.*

These were the 6 cities appointed as cities of refuge. I have underlined certain words that show these cities were elevated so that they could be seen from a distance. No doubt these cities would have been visible at night also. But what were the cities for?

Under the Mosaic Law anyone who committed murder was to be put to death.

Exodus 21:12, 14-15

¹² *He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*

¹⁴ *But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.*

¹⁵ *And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.*

But anyone who accidentally killed someone could flee to a city of refuge.

Exodus 21:13

¹³ *And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.*

But that raises another question, "From whom was the person fleeing from?"

If you and I would have lived in the days of the Old Testament and someone would have killed one of our family members someone in the family would have been appointed to be

the "Avenger of Blood". The responsibility of the Avenger of Blood was to put to death the one who killed our family member.

Numbers 35:15-19

¹⁵ *These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.*

¹⁶ *And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.*

¹⁷ *And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.*

¹⁸ *Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.*

¹⁹ **The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him.**

So if you lived back then and you killed someone you would take off for the closest city of refuge. It would be there that you would be protected from the Avenger of Blood. But in the city of refuge you would be brought before the people and they would determine if you were guilty or innocent.

Joshua 20:1-6a

The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,

² *Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:*

³ *That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.*

⁴ *And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.*

⁵ *And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.*

⁶ *And he shall dwell in that city, **until he stand before the congregation for judgment,***

If you were found to be not guilty of deliberately taking the person's life then you would be free to live in the city and there the Avenger of Blood could not get to you. But you had to stay within the city. If you ventured out of the city and the Avenger of Blood met you he could take your life.

Numbers 35:26-28a

²⁶ *But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled;*

²⁷ *And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood:*

²⁸ **Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge...**

Application:

Let me show you the words of Elmer Towns on the Cities of Refuge:

"The cities of refuge are types of Christ, in whom sinners find a refuge from the destroyer of our souls. Just as the guilty person sought refuge in the cities set up for that purpose, in the same way we flee to Christ for refuge from sin. We run to Christ to escape the danger we are in from the curse and condemnation of the law, from of the wrath of God, and from an eternity in hell. Only Christ provides refuge from these things, and it is to Him alone that we must run. Just as the cities were open to all who fled to them for safety, it is Christ who provides safety to all who come to Him for refuge from sin and its punishment."

Now remember that I showed you that the cities were set on hills and as I said they were most likely lighted in the night for all to see? This is a picture of how we are to hold Christ up high for all the world to see. We are to let our light shine brightly so that those who seek a place of refuge will see Christ in us and they will come to Him for the security that He provides.

Now there is one more thought here that connects with the High Priest. If you were the one who fled from the Avenger of Blood you had to remain in the city of refuge or you could be killed. **But this does not mean you had to stay there forever.**

There was one thing that would ever set you free from the Avenger of Blood.

Joshua 20:6

⁶ *And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.*

If while you were in the city of refuge the High Priest that was appointed by God died then you were free to go and the Avenger of Blood had no authority over you.

Application:

What a beautiful picture of the security we have because of the death of our Great High Priest!!!

Conclusion:

Romans 8:31-34

³¹ *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

³² *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

³³ *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

³⁴ *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*