

In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews

Jesus, The Faithful Priest

Lesson #6 for February 5, 2022

Scriptures: Hebrews 5:1-10; 7:1-3,11-16,22,26.

1. A key verse for us to consider in this study of Hebrews is from Isaiah.

Isaiah 59:2: It is because of your sins that he doesn't hear you. It is your sins that separate you from God when you try to worship him.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Isaiah 59:2). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[†]

The gulf that existed between God and us was caused by sin. The problem was compounded because sin also implied the corruption of our nature. **God is holy, and sin cannot exist in His presence;** so, **our own corrupted nature separated us from God,** just as two magnets in the wrong orientation repel each other. In addition, our corrupted nature made it impossible for human beings to obey God's law. Sin also involves misunderstanding. Human beings lost sight of the love and mercy of God and came to see Him as wrathful and demanding.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath afternoon, January 29.[†]

2. In this lesson we are going to try to **evaluate the ways in which Jesus was like an earthly high priest as well as the ways in which He was different from an earthly high priest.** What did the high priest do in ancient days? What implications does that have for us when we no longer offer animal sacrifices? What is the reason for saying that Jesus came **“in the order of Melchizedek”**? Who was Melchizedek?
3. Paul himself recognized that what he was going to try to explain was difficult. He accused his audience of being very immature in their understanding of the gospel so that they still had to drink milk and were not ready to eat solid food. **They needed to have practice in distinguishing between good and evil.** (Hebrews 5:11-6:3) And what about us? **How can we move forward as Paul suggested to mature teachings?** Paul began by making it clear that those ancient Old Testament priests did not accomplish what needed to be accomplished. Even the laws of Moses had proven inadequate because they could not make anything perfect. By contrast, Jesus is perfect; so, He can provide a perfect Sacrifice. Furthermore, He will live forever. He does not need to have someone come and take His place because He is not dead! He is alive.
4. But, what is Jesus's actual role in heaven right now? (See Zechariah 3:1-5; Daniel 7:9-10; John 3:17-21; 5:22; 12:47-48.) That is the real question with which we need to deal. **The traditional Christian model suggests** that God the Father holds up a very high standard and that He is not happy with those who fail that standard. Therefore, Jesus Christ has to plead with Him to get Him to accept us before we can be admitted to heaven. Is that a true and correct picture of God the Father?
5. Why do we need Someone to plead with God for us? Is that a daily necessity? Or, is that primarily needed when our cases come up for final judgment? **God is forgiveness personified. Does the Father need Someone to plead with Him to forgive us?**
6. What is the difference between being a regular priest and being a high priest? The high priest went into the most holy place once a year. One very important point that

distinguished a high priest from an ordinary priest was that **the high priest needed to be chosen and set apart by God**. As we saw clearly in Hebrews 1, Jesus Christ was set apart by God when He said: “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” (Hebrews 5:5, *GNB**) In the days of the Maccabees (160 B.C.), the line of priests from Levi lost their positions; and another individual paid money to the Greek rulers to buy the position of high priest.

7. Is Jesus pleading for us right now? What do we know about Jesus Christ and His prayers to His Father? There is clear evidence that every night Jesus would pray to His Father and plan the details of the following day. Sometimes, those prayers would last all night! (Luke 6:12)

8. But, when was it that Jesus experienced what we read about in Hebrews 5:7?

Hebrews 5:7: In his life on earth Jesus made his prayers and requests with loud cries and tears to God, who could save him from death.—*Good News Bible.**

9. Is that talking about His experience in Gethsemane? If so, was it correct to say that God saved Him from death? **We believe that Jesus died the second death, the death that is a result of sin and separation from God, the only Source of life.** (Romans 6:23; Genesis 2:17) But, because Jesus was fully God, Satan could not keep Him in the grave; Jesus rose in His own power and came forth from the grave and returned to heaven.

10. What is it that Christ, as High Priest, does for us on a daily, and even hourly, and minute by minute basis?

- Physically, God keeps us alive and facilitates every chemical action and reaction that takes place in our bodies. (Acts 17:25,28)
- Spiritually, God is constantly trying to woo us and convince us to follow Him so we will not destroy ourselves. He forgives our sins and helps us to stop committing them. God is the only One who can transform our lives by changing our thinking and behavior. We cannot do this on our own.

11. Hebrews 5:5-6 suggest that Jesus understands us because He also has suffered.

12. Does that imply that Jesus understands us better than the Father does? That would be a denial of God’s omniscience. **Jesus came to teach us about God, not to find out something about us that He did not know before! He needed to become human so that we could better understand Him, not so that He could better understand us! A lot of people would disagree with this viewpoint.**

13. Let us look at several passages that might help us to understand the work Jesus is doing now in the heavenly sanctuary.

14. We are living in the great antitypical day of atonement following 1844. (Daniel 8:14; Daniel 9:24-27) That means that in front of the onlooking universe, God is judging all mankind, starting from Adam and Eve and working His way to our day and us.

15. While that is going on, the Holy Spirit and Christ are daily protecting us from the advances of Satan and working to help us become more like Them. (Romans 8:26-35)

16. As we have noted already, Jesus has told us that we do **not** need anyone to plead on our behalf to the Father. **Jesus Himself said that He will not plead with the Father for us.**

John 16:25-27: ²⁵ [Jesus said:] “I have used figures of speech to tell you these things. But the time will come when I will not use figures of speech, but will

He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God.”—*Good News Bible*.*†† [Does that nullify all the work of priests in the Old Testament? What about priests today?]*†

17. These words are **so out of line with what many Christians believe** that they seem impossible; but, these are the words of Jesus at the last supper on the day before He died. These words of Jesus need to be incorporated into our paradigm or way of thinking.
18. In Romans 8, Paul agreed with this idea when he said that all three Members of the Godhead are on our side.

The Holy Spirit: Romans 8:26-27: ²⁶ In the same way the Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And God, who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is; because the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of his people and in accordance with his will.—*Good News Bible*.*

God the Father: Romans 8:31-33: ³¹In view of all this, what can we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²Certainly not God, who did not even keep back his own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things? ³³Who will accuse God’s chosen people? God himself declares them not guilty!—*Good News Bible*.*

God the Son, Jesus Christ: Romans 8:34: ³⁴Who, then, will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right-hand side of God, pleading [along] with him for us!—*Good News Bible*.*†

19. So, if all three Members of the Godhead are on our side, who is against us?

Revelation 12:10: Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, “Now God’s salvation has come! Now God has shown his power as King! Now his Messiah has shown his authority! **For the one who stood before our God and accused our brothers and sisters day and night has been thrown out of heaven.**”—*Good News Bible*.*†

20. Satan is the one who is trying to accuse and destroy us!

21. And what is the setting of the judgment in which Satan is trying to accuse us? In what setting does Jesus serve as our Advocate and High Priest?

Zechariah 3:1-5: ¹ In another vision the LORD showed me the High Priest Joshua [who represented all the children of Israel at that time] standing before the angel of the LORD. And **there beside Joshua stood Satan, ready to bring an accusation against him.** ²The angel of the LORD said to Satan, “**May the LORD condemn you, Satan! May the LORD, who loves Jerusalem, condemn you. This man is like a stick snatched from the fire.**”

³Joshua was standing there, wearing filthy clothes. ⁴The angel said to his heavenly attendants, “Take away the filthy clothes this man is wearing.”

Then he said to Joshua, "I have taken away your sin and will give you new clothes to wear."

⁵He commanded the attendants to put a clean turban on Joshua's head. They did so, and then they put the new clothes on him while the angel of the LORD stood there.—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

22. So, when Jesus is our Advocate and High Priest, who is watching and serving as a "jury" in the heavenly court?

Daniel 7:9-10: ⁹While I was looking, thrones were put in place. One who had been living for ever [*sic*] sat down on one of the thrones. His clothes were white as snow, and his hair was like pure wool. His throne, mounted on fiery wheels, was blazing with fire, ¹⁰and a stream of fire was pouring out from it. There were many thousands of people there to serve him, and millions of people stood before him. **The court began its session, and the books were opened.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

23. So, what have we learned from these biblical passages? All three Members of the Godhead are on our side; Satan is the one who is accusing us. The entire angelic host and the rest of the onlooking universe are watching to see who will be their future neighbors and friends.

24. Human priests were chosen from the tribe of Levi. Jesus, of course, was not a Levite. He chose to come and become a human being based on God's plan for His life.

25. Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered." (Hebrews 5:8, *ESV*^{*})

Obedience was new to Jesus, not because He was disobedient, but because He was God. As Sovereign over the universe, Jesus did not obey anyone; instead, everyone obeyed Him.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Sunday, January 30.

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. **But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.** [That is God's wrath!]

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. **The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so**

bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 753.1-2.†

26. The death of Jesus on the cross demonstrated to the universe what God meant in the Garden of Eden when He said that sin leads to death. **This was a very important demonstration for the benefit of the entire universe**; it was not just for us on this earth.
27. And how is that supposed to impact us? Peter said that we are to become “a royal priesthood,” or “the King’s priests.” (1 Peter 2:9) What does that imply?
28. So, what do we know about Melchizedek?

Genesis 14:18-20:¹⁸And **Melchizedek, who was king of Salem and also a priest of the Most High God**, brought bread and wine to Abram, ¹⁹blessed him, and said, “May the Most High God, who made heaven and earth, bless Abram! ²⁰May the Most High God, who gave you victory over your enemies, be praised!” And Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the loot he had recovered.—*Good News Bible*.*†

29. **Melchizedek was both a king and a priest.** Jesus was also both; that places Him in the order of Melchizedek. But, Melchizedek was sinful while Jesus was not. And what else do we know about Melchizedek? Very little! We do not know anything about his parents or his descendants; nor do we know anything about his birth or even his death.

It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world.—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*,* Book 1, 409.3. (1890).

30. In Hebrews 7:11,18-19, Paul began to describe the differences between ordinary priests and Jesus Christ as our High Priest. In Hebrews 7 and in Hebrews 10:1-3,10-14, he pointed out that **those animal sacrifices in the Old Testament could never take away sin. They were only a symbol pointing forward to the future death of Jesus.** And the **most important thing those animal sacrifices taught was that sin leads to death.** So, how did the sacrifice of Christ “cleanse sinners of their sin”?

Hebrews 10:1-4,10-14: ¹ **The Jewish Law** is not a full and faithful model of the real things; **it is only a faint outline of the good things to come.** The same sacrifices are offered for ever, [*sic*] year after year. How can the Law, then, by means of these sacrifices make perfect the people who come to God? ²**If the people worshipping God had really been purified from their sins, they would not feel guilty of sin any more, and all sacrifices would stop.** ³As it is, however, **the sacrifices serve year after year to remind people of their sins.** ⁴**For the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins....**

¹⁰**Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do, we are all purified from sin by the offering that he made of his own body once and for all.** [If we follow the example of Jesus, we can experience healing/salvation.]

¹¹Every Jewish priest performs his services every day and offers the same sacrifices many times; but **these sacrifices can never take away sins.**

¹²**Christ, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is**

effective for ever, [*sic*] and then he sat down at the right-hand side of God.
¹³There he now waits until God puts his enemies as a footstool under his feet. ¹⁴**With one sacrifice, then, he has made perfect for ever** [*sic*] **those who are purified from sin.**—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

31. So, **how does the sacrifice of Christ make people “perfect”—mature?**
32. The death of Christ, otherwise known as **the second death**, which was a direct result of sin teaches us some very important lessons. The life and death of Jesus, give us a choice: (1) We can choose to follow His example as far as possible, allowing Him to work in our lives and we will live forever; or (2) We can choose our selfish ways and die the death He died, separated from God eternally because we do not have divinity to raise ourselves.
33. Think of all the animal sacrifices offered in the Old Testament. David himself, on one occasion, sacrificed thousands of animals. Animal sacrifices pointed forward, and they pointed back. They teach us that sin leads to death, even the death of an innocent victim. So, what is the main difference between all those animal sacrifices and the sacrifice of Jesus?
34. The life and death of Jesus demonstrated to the universe the falsehood of Satan’s accusations and questions about God. **Animal sacrifices served to remind people that sin leads to death; but, they also pointed forward to the death of Jesus. The death which Jesus died was the second death which results from sin.** (Romans 6:23; Genesis 2:17) No animal sacrifice could fulfill those requirements.
35. So, Jesus is offered as a better Sacrifice; and He will live forever to teach His followers the implications of that life and death. We do not need to continue offering useless sacrifices.
36. In Hebrews 8:10-12 which is quoted from Jeremiah 31:31-34, Paul tells us how that will impact us.

Hebrews 8:10-12 [quoting from Jeremiah 31:31-34]: ¹⁰ “Now, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel in the days to come, says the Lord:

**I will put my laws in their minds
and write them on their hearts.** [Who is doing that?]
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

¹¹None of them will have to teach their fellow-citizens
or say to their fellow-citizens,
‘Know the Lord.’

For they will all know me,
from the least to the greatest.

¹²I will forgive their sins
and will no longer remember their wrongs.”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡ [God
chooses not to think about our sins.]‡

37. When God appointed His Son, Jesus, to be our High Priest, He did it with a vow which cannot be taken back. Thus, **Jesus has become a surety or guarantee for the salvation of all who by faith follow Him and become more like Him.**
38. Let us look now at the five characteristics of Jesus mentioned specifically in Hebrews 7:26.

Hebrews 7:26: Jesus, then, is the High Priest that meets our needs. **He is holy; he has no fault or sin in him; he has been set apart from sinners and raised above the heavens.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

39. Jesus was holy and Hebrews 2:18 says that now He “can help those who are tempted, because he himself was tempted and suffered.” (*GNB**)
40. Does that mean that God the Father or God the Holy Spirit cannot help us? Or, at least cannot help us as much because They were never tempted? That would be dividing the Godhead without having a basis to do so!
41. Hebrews 4:15 suggests that because He is our Priest, He can feel sympathy for our weaknesses. Does that mean that only Jesus Christ can really sympathize with us in our weaknesses? The Father cannot? And the Holy Spirit cannot? (See Romans 8:26-35.)
42. Jesus was undefiled. He remained pure without fault throughout His entire life on this earth. That made Him the perfect Sacrifice.
43. If Jesus had sinned in any way, He would not have been able to fully and completely represent God before the onlooking universe and before us. Satan’s claim—that it is impossible for any human being to live on this earth without sinning—would have been proven true. Would that mean that God would have to surrender to Satan in the great controversy?
44. Jesus was “separated from sinners.” This was true because of the kind of life He lived; but, it was especially true when He ascended to heaven. Thus, Jesus was exalted above the heavens.
45. Although He was fully human, He was not a sinful human.
46. However, because He was fully human, He can be our perfect Example. Notice these words from the Bible study guide for Thursday: “Then, should the promise of His holiness being credited to us by faith help assure us of salvation?” What does that mean?

It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken.... **This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word.** “Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.” God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the “Son of man” who shares the throne of the universe. It is the “Son of man” whose name shall be called, “Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. **In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 25.3-26.0.^{†§}

47. Let us be very clear. **Zechariah 3:1-5 makes it clear that Jesus speaks on our behalf in heaven because we are constantly being accused by Satan. We are not being accused by the Father or the Holy Spirit.** And Jesus turns to Satan and says: “May

the LORD condemn you, Satan!" (Zechariah 3:3, *GNB**) As a result of this entire plan of salvation, Christ has united Himself more closely to the human race than ever before.

Hebrews 5:1-4: ¹Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³and because of this **he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.** ⁴And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.—*New Revised Standard Version*.*†

In all, 12 qualities of a high priest are listed in Hebrews 5:1–4. First, the job description: every high priest is (1) “chosen from among mortals,” (2) selected “on their behalf,” (3) is “in charge of things pertaining to God,” and (4) is appointed “to offer gifts and sacrifices” (5) “for sins.” Next come the personal dispositions: (6) “He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward” and (7) is “subject to weakness.” Furthermore, (8) “he must offer sacrifice for his own sins,” (9) “as well as for those of the people.” Finally, the issue of vocation: (10) “one does not presume to take this honor,” (11) “but takes it only when called by God,” (12) “just as Aaron was” called.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 80-81.

48. Our Bible study guide picks out four of these characteristics as being especially important, describing Christ’s qualifications for His job.
- 1) The high priest was chosen from among his own people. No one else could take his place without God specifically approving. Consider (a) Numbers 16:15-40: The story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and (b) 2 Chronicles 26:16-21: The time when King Uzziah tried to offer sacrifices in the place of the priest.
 - 2) The high priest, as Hebrews describes him, is a person who is able to restrain his own emotions when dealing with those who are ignorant and go astray. The high priest carried on the ordinary activities of a regular priest 364 days of the year. But, he alone went into the most holy place on the Day of Atonement, (Leviticus 16:1-25) and he carried the Urim and the Thummim on that holy breastplate.
 - 3) Every merely human high priest, no matter how good he was, was, nevertheless, himself subject to weakness and needed to offer sacrifices for his own sins.
 - 4) As we have already mentioned, the high priest needed to be appointed by God Himself.
49. So, then Paul went on to describe in Hebrews 2 that Jesus, having been made lower than the angels for a period of time, managed to destroy Satan’s power over death. Satan had claimed that anyone who sinned and then died, belonged permanently to him. He also claimed that sin does not lead to death and that human beings and angels naturally will live forever. All of these claims were proven false by the life and death of Jesus.
50. So, it is in our own spiritual journey day by day. Are there times when we need to be held accountable by a third party besides God for our progress or regress?
51. Is there any such thing as a static Christian? Or, is that a contradiction in terms?
52. What have we learned from this lesson concerning the contradictory views about the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary right now? Isn’t it better to look first at heaven.

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