

What is a Messiah and Why do We Need One?

Jesus: A Better Priest than Aaron

Advent Series 2022

Texts:

Mark 1:1–8 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, ³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ ” ⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, **“After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**

Mark 2:1–12 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ **And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”** ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ **“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? ¹⁰ **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—** ¹¹ **“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”** ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, **“We never saw anything like this!”**

Hebrews 4:14–5:10 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. ¹ 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 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. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ 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.” ⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ **And**

being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 10:19–24 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.**²⁴ And **let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,**²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Introduction:

According to several major consumer surveys, Christmas shopping is one of the most stressful events of the year for most men. So much so that the vast majority of Christmas gifts are purchased by women and almost all of the gifts that are wrapped and placed under the tree are wrapped by women.

Almost 50% of the men surveyed say Christmas shopping makes them feel anxious, inadequate, confused, frustrated, and eventually aggravated. More than a quarter of the men surveyed do not begin shopping for those on their lists until the week before Christmas and shop right up through Christmas Eve – as opposed to women who, a full 95% have their shopping done before the week of Christmas and most of them by the end of November.

Perhaps this explains why almost 25% of people who receive gifts at Christmas do not receive the gift they wanted or needed.

Two thousand years ago God sent a gift to the world and wrapped it in swaddling clothes – that gift was a Messiah.

Initially, people were excited to receive this gift – after all, they had been waiting a long time for God to send them His appointed, anointed champion to deliver them from their enemies and fix everything that was broken around them!

For thirty-years, this gift grew in stature and knowledge and was filled with wisdom (Luke 2:40) and found favor in the sight of God and before men (Luke 2:52). And then, one day Jesus appeared on the banks of the Jordan river to be baptized by His cousin, John the Baptist – and John announced that God’s Messiah had arrived to deliver His people, defeat His enemies, and restore the Kingdom of Israel to its former glory!

But just six months into his ministry, nothing had changed – Israel was still under Rome, Herod was still on the throne oppressing the people, and John the Baptist was languishing in prison.

Even though Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, He did not appear to be very Messiah-like. He was not fulfilling the nation’s anticipation for restoration, He was not satisfying their longings for deliverance from the pain and sorrow of living under the yoke of Rome, and He was not meeting their expectations of what Messiah would be like and what He would do for His people.

Even John had grown discouraged and disillusioned as he languished in Herod’s prison awaiting execution – and He sent two friends to ask Jesus this question: “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” (Lk 7:19)

Jesus’ answer to John reveals an astonishing reality – God had sent them His Messiah and he was busy accomplishing exactly what God sent Him to do. The issue was not with the Messiah but with them! Their expectations were too low, their longings too shallow, and their anticipations too narrow. The Messiah had come to do more than they had ever imagined! He had come to reverse an ancient curse, redeem an ancient people, and remove an ancient enemy! In short, He had come to save the world from their sins and restore creation to its former glory!

And in order to accomplish this marvelous mission, Messiah would need to be distinctly different and greater than any other deliverer God had ever sent to the nation of Israel.

1. Jesus would be an ***exponentially greater prophet than Moses***.
 - This is the focus of Luke’s Gospel – Jesus is God’s great Prophet.
 - He brought the truth about God from God wrapped in the mercy of grace and not the harsh demand of the Law
 - He could enliven their dead hearts, open their deaf ears, and open their blind eyes so they could see, understand, and receive the life-giving, gracious words God was sending them through Him.
 - This is why God spoke from Heaven to affirm His Son and to exhort us to “Listen to Him!”
 - And what we need to hear and embrace most from Jesus is His invitation to enter into a better and greater rest than Moses could offer through the Old Covenant!
2. He would be an ***exponentially greater king than David***.
 - This is the focus of Matthew’s Gospel – Jesus is God’s great King.
 - It is also the focus of John’s Gospel – Jesus is God’s great Son!
3. ***And He would be an exponentially greater priest than Aaron!***
 - This is the focus of Mark’s gospel – Jesus is God’s great Priest through whom He will reconcile the world to Himself!
 - And the ***way He would be appointed to His priestly office and the means by which He would reconcile the world to God*** are the focus of Mark’s message.
 - He starts by introducing Jesus as the Christ and then drives us relentlessly to His great atoning work on the Cross! 3x Jesus predicts his death (8:31-33; 9:9-13; 9:30-32).

I. Who and What were the Priests in the Old Testament?

Hebrews 5:1–4 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 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. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

- They were chosen by God from among their brethren – exclusively from the tribe of Levi (5:1; 7:11-14)).

- They were appointed by God for their lifetime (5:1,4; 7:23-24).
- They consecrated to God for His exclusive service (8:3-5)
- They were examples from God of what the nations were among the nations – a kingdom of priests! (8:5)
- They shared in the sins and weakness of those they served and thus were also obligated to offer a sacrifice for their own sins as well as for those of the people (5:2-3).
- They had five duties:
 - A. ***To offer sacrifices for the atonement of the sins of the people***
 - They did this repeatedly throughout the year, but there was one great moment each year when the entire nation stood before the High Priest who made an atonement first for his own sins and then for the sins of the entire nation – and this day became known as the Day of Atonement.
 - B. ***To sanctify the people before God by cleansing them of the impurity and defilement caused by sin.***
 - C. ***To intercede before God for the people.***
 - D. ***To instruct the people in the Wisdom of God*** in the Torah.
 - E. ***To bestow blessing from God upon the people of God.***

Their function was to sanctify and equip a whole company of priests who would: 1) worship joyfully; 2) live wisely and authentically; 3) display God's glory accurately; and 4) Witness credibly and effectively ***so that the surrounding nations would come to know, love, worship, and serve the true God of Heaven and Earth.***

II. What were the Limitations of Aaron's Priesthood?

Hebrews 7:27–28 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.

A. These priests were themselves marred by sin (7.27b)

He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people

B. These priests were touched by human weakness (7.28a)

For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests

C. These priests were limited by death (7:23)

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

D. These priests were only able to offer sacrifices that brought temporary atonements that had to be repeated and renewed (7.27a).

He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people

Note: According to Josephus, each year at Passover alone some 250,000 sheep were ritually slaughtered to make atonement for each family. Over 1500 years, about 375 million sheep were killed at Passover – that equates to almost a billion liters of blood just from Passover lambs alone! And none of this could wash away Man’s sins – what was needed was a different kind of Lamb entirely – a Lamb from God!

E. These priests were only shadows of reality (8:5)

⁵ *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”*

- By the time Jesus arrived on the scene over 80 generations of priests and high priests had come and gone. The gracious priestly office God established was hardly recognizable because the priesthood had become corrupted by the greed and defiled by the sinfulness of the priests.
- As a result, instead of sanctifying God’s people – they were defiling them. Instead of instructing them in wisdom, they were leading them further into the bondage of darkness and sin. Instead of interceding for God’s people, they were using and abusing them for their own personal gain. Instead of blessing God’s people, they were leading them right into the damnation of God’s righteous judgment!
- What was needed was a different kind of priest altogether – a better priest than anything Aaron and Levi could offer.

And that is precisely what God sent Jesus to be and do! He came to be a better Priest than Aaron!

⇒ Came from a better order – the order of Melchizedek

Hebrews 7:11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

⇒ With a better covenant – one that would bring people into the very presence of God and make them perfect.

Hebrews 7:18–22 For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.²⁰ And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath,²¹ but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

⇒ To offer a better sacrifice that would do more than cover sin, it would actually bear away the sins of the world!

Hebrews 10:1–4 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:11–14 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

⇒ In a better sanctuary – the one in Heaven

Hebrews 8:1–2 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,² a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

⇒ To make a full and permanent atonement for His people!

Hebrews 9:11–12 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this

creation)¹² 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.

III. What Kind of a Priest is Jesus? (Heb 7:24-28)

*but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.*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.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.

The kind of Priest who can save fully and eternally – to the uttermost – anyone who will draw near to Him!

A. Because He occupies His priestly office permanently

he holds his priesthood permanently, (v. 24)

B. Because He was raised to immortality He can make intercession for His people.

since he always lives to make intercession for them (v. 25)

C. Because He made a permanent atonement for the sins of all of His people when he offered up His life in their place.

since he did this once for all when he offered up himself (v. 27)

D. Because He was and continues to be fully acceptable and completely pleasing to God – perfected holiness.

For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. (v. 27)

- He is ***holy*** – completely dedicated to God
- He is ***innocent*** – completely guiltless before the Law
- He ***unstained*** – completely undefiled by sin
- His perfect obedience made Him ***perfectly suited*** to be a High Priest ***consecrated to God*** and exalted in the Heavenly sanctuary
- He is ***immortal*** and can serve as our High Priest ***eternally!***

E. Because His incarnation and testing/temptation perfected His obedience and made His compassion and mercy credible and accessible to struggling saints!

Hebrews 2:17–18 Therefore he 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.

IV. How and When Did Jesus Become Our High Priest?

A. How Jesus Became Our High Priest

1. By means of His incarnation (Heb 2:6-7; 2:17)

Hebrews 2:6–7 It has been testified somewhere, “What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?” ⁷ **You made him for a little while lower than the angels;** you have crowned him with glory and honor,

Hebrews 2:17 Therefore **he 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.**

2. By means of His active Obedience (5:8-9)

Hebrews 5:8–9 Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered.** ⁹ **And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,**

3. By means of His crucifixion (Heb: 2:9-10; 2:14-15)

Hebrews 2:9–10 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, **so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.** ¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Hebrews 2:14–15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, **that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,** ¹⁵ **and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**

B. When Jesus Became Our High Priest

1. At His Resurrection – Verification and Validation (7:15-16)

Hebrews 7:15–16 This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶ **who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.**

2. At His Ascension – Exaltation and Appointment (4:14; 8:1-2)

Hebrews 4:14 *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

Hebrews 8:1–2 *Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,² a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.*

This is why Jesus merits our careful consideration (3:1-2 – consider Jesus), deserves our deep respect (3:3-4 – count him worthy of greater honor than even Moses), and should receive our steadfast loyalty (3:5-6 – hold fast your confession and your confidence).

V. Why Did Jesus Become Our High Priest?

A. **To bring us near to God by removing our sins by satisfying the demands of the Law and paying the penalty for breaking the Law (9:26b-28)**

Hebrews 9:26 *for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

- so that we are made righteous before God
- and are able to display His righteousness in our lives.

B. **To cleanse our conscience for ongoing joy-filled fellowship with God (10:19-22)**

Hebrews 10:19–22 *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.*

- by giving us assurance of faith (and not works)
- by granting us confidence to access His presence

C. **To sanctify us for acceptable worship of God (10:10, 14, 22)**

Hebrews 10:10 *And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Hebrews 10:14 *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

Hebrews 10:22 *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.*

D. To instruct us in the truth of God (5:11-6:11)

- so that we are conformed to the will of God
- and can walk in the ways of God by the Wisdom of God.

E. To identify with us in our struggle with emotional, physical, and spiritual weakness and provide merciful comfort and grace-energized strength that flows from His Throne of Grace (4:15-16).

Hebrews 4:15–16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

F. To strengthen and equip us for effective priestly service to God (Romans 15:15-16).

Romans 15:15–16 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles **in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**

Conclusion: So, how are we to respond to this? (Heb 10:19-24)

Three amazing invitations/exhortations from Jesus our High Priest that we must do individually and corporately:

Hebrews 10:19–21 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,

1. Let us draw Near to God Confidently (10:22)

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.

- Jesus has done everything necessary to make you acceptable to God and to grant you access to the presence of God – so there is no reason for you to hesitate or refuse to draw near to God in worship.

2. Let us Hold Fast to our Confession Steadfastly (10:23)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

- Because our Faithful God has made promises to us like those He made to Abraham and the patriarchs; like them, we must continue to believe and obey God and we must remain loyal to God in the face of pressure.

3. Let us encourage one another to genuine love and beneficial service to God and others. (10:24; 3:12-13)

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

- Give focused attention as to how we can love and serve corporately.

One final observation merits our attention as we consider and marvel at the wonderful High Priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus toward us.

In the old testament, Aaron was instructed by God to give His people a blessings – that blessing is recorded in Numbers 6:22-27:

²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, ²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. ²⁷ “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

The writer of Hebrews repeats that blessing on the new kingdom of priests made holy by Jesus (Heb 13:20-21)

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.