

**HEBREWS 24
(Hebrews 8:1-5)**

**WE HAVE SUCH A HIGH PRIEST
By Ron Harvey
(March 18, 2012)**

INTRODUCTION

We have been studying the book of Hebrews and we have come now to Hebrews chapter 8. I was very encouraged when I quizzed you last week about your knowledge of the material that we have covered so far. Most of you knew what the theme of the book is – that Christianity is better than Judaism. Most of you knew that the occasion of the book was that certain Jews had been toying with the idea of Christ and had perhaps joined the church, but were being tempted to return to that old religion – the religion defined by that Old Covenant with Moses.

Most of you remembered that in the first seven chapters of Hebrews Christ is proven to be superior to all the personages who appeared in Old Testament.

1. Christ is better than the Prophets.

The Old Testament prophets were God's spokesmen to the people in the Old Testament. And the thing that characterized the revelation that was given to these prophets was that God spoke to them "at sundry times and in diverse manners." (1:1) God spoke in bits and pieces. There was never a complete revelation of God in the Old Testament. You might say that God taught the A, B, C's of religion through his prophets.

Example: Now when you teach a child, you don't start out by handing him a book on Einstein's theory of relativity, do you? You start out by teaching him the letters of the alphabet. This is A. This is B. This is C.

And the story of God and his great redemptive plan could not be learned in an instant. God first taught us the alphabet. Then he taught us how to put letters together to form words. Then he gave us our first reader and it went something like this: See God. See God save. God saves his

people. Isn't God good to his people?

And on and on God spoke in bits and pieces in the Old Testament. And God would raise up a prophet here and there and would speak to the prophet and the prophet would teach the people God's words.

But in these last days, God has spoken to us through his Son. (1:2) When we had learned all our A,B,C's and when the prophets had given us all the bits and pieces, then God finally spoke his revelation in full. He sent His Son. And Jesus Christ was the full embodiment of God's truth. This was the whole encyclopedia of divine knowledge. And there he was for all to see. And John said we heard him, we saw him, we handled him with our hands. This was so much better than revelation in piecemeal. This was the real thing. This was the fullness of God in one person. So Christ was far superior to the Old Testament prophets. But also,

2. Christ is far superior to the angels.

Now some might have supposed that because Christ became a man, that he was therefore inferior to angels. The Jews thought of angels as being superior beings. When angels appeared to men it was natural for those men to quake in fear.

But the writer of Hebrews says not so. God has decreed that it is man that shall occupy the preeminent position over angels. Jesus occupied a humble position for a time, but when he was raised from the grave Jesus Christ passed into the heavens and sat down at the right hand of God and a man became the heir of all things. And all things are in subjection under his feet. Now Hebrews says, "all things are not in subjection to angels." (2:5) But they are in subjection to Jesus Christ. And they will be in subjection to other human beings – that is, all those who Christ shall redeem.

We also learned that,

3. Christ is better than Moses.

Now the Jews held Moses in highest esteem. No one was greater than Moses to them. It was through the Mosaic Covenant that they had

their relationship to God. But Hebrews says Jesus Christ is superior to Moses.

Now Moses led an earthly people out of bondage in Egypt. But Christ led a spiritual people out of spiritual bondage. Moses led an earthly people through an earthly wilderness with all kinds of earthly dangers. But Christ leads a spiritual people through a spiritual wilderness with all kinds of spiritual dangers.

Now the weakness of Moses can be seen in that Moses sinned against God and was not allowed to lead the people into the promised land. But Christ is the Captain of our Salvation and he leads us all the way to our promised rest.

Now it was Joshua who took over for Moses and led the people into the land of Canaan. But the writer of Hebrews tells us that,

4. Christ is better than Joshua.

Joshua led an earthly people into an earthly land (Canaan) which is called an earthly rest. But Jesus leads a spiritual people into a heavenly land which is a heavenly rest.

And on and on we go:

5. Christ is better than Aaron.

Aaron was the preeminent religious figure in Israel. He was the first High Priest. And all other High Priests in Israel were physical descendants of Aaron. Aaron supervised all of the religious work in Israel. And once every year, Aaron went into the Holy of Holies and he sprinkled blood on the mercy seat and he made atonement for the sins of the people.

But Aaron was an imperfect priest because he was sinful himself. He was nothing but a man. And when he went in to make atonement for the people, he had first to offer a sacrifice for himself and then God allowed him to make an offering for the people.

And Aaron was an earthly priest. He was a priest after the order of Levy. He was a priest under the Mosaic Covenant. The only thing that

qualified a man to be a priest in Israel was that he must be a descendant of Levy.

But Jesus did not come to be an earthly priest. He was a better priest than that. Jesus was a priest after the order of Mechisedec. And when Jesus offered a sacrifice for the people, Jesus did not have to offer a sacrifice for himself because he was a spotless priest. And Jesus didn't offer the blood of a goat for a sacrifice, but he offered his own blood. This was a much better sacrifice.

And Jesus Christ didn't go behind a curtain in a cubicle in the tabernacle to make atonement, but Jesus Christ marched into heaven itself, that place where God really resides, and Christ made atonement once for all for his people.

Jesus Christ is a much greater priest than Aaron or any of the other priests of Israel.

And now we come to our text for this morning.

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum. (8:1)

Now you will find that the writer of Hebrews will summarize what he has taught us in the first seven chapters. You know, a good teacher will do that on occasion. He will teach you something. And then, just when you are about to forget, he will summarize it for you so that it becomes more firmly etched in your mind. And he says,

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum.

And you will notice the sum of the whole matter.

We have such a high priest . . .

Now I want you to take notice of the word *such*. We have "such" a high priest.

Example: Now many times when we use the word **such**, we use it to exaggerate the intensity of a matter. "I had such a good time at your party." What you mean is that you not only had a good time, but

you had an exceedingly good time. Or, “I have such a headache.” This is not just your common, everyday headache, this is an intense headache.

But this is not the way it is used here. Here it means, “of this kind.”

We have such a high priest. Or, we have this kind of a high priest. What kind of high priest do we have? We have one like this. And then he tells us what kind we have.

Now I can tell you the kind that we don't have and that is found in chapter 7:28.

Now the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity.

Those were Levitical priests. They were sinners themselves. The only kind of priestly ministries they could perform were ceremonial ministries. They couldn't really atone for sins. Their sacrifices were not really effective. All they could do was perform religious rituals. They lit the lamps and burned incense and kept showbread on the table and they performed the animal sacrifices and kept the ceremonies. And they were earthly ministers.

But it says we have a priest of another kind.

We don't need those old ceremonial priests any longer. They were just going through rituals to teach us about the real priest that was to come.

Now let me say this. Not only do we not need a Levitical Priest any longer, but we don't need any other priests. At least the Levitical Priesthood was authorized for a time until Christ came. Any other priesthood was never authorized at all. The Catholic Priesthood was established after Jesus Christ went to heaven as our great high priest. And, the Catholic Priesthood is a way of saying, “We need more than Jesus. The priesthood of Jesus is insufficient in and of itself. Jesus is not our great High Priest exclusively. We need a continuation of human priests.”

But the writer of Hebrews says, “We have a high priest of a different kind.”

What kind of priest is he?

1. He is the kind of priest who is sinless himself. (7:26, 27)

Now all the other priests in Israel were sinners themselves. They couldn't properly mediate between and holy God and sinful men because they themselves were sinful.

But we have the kind of priest who can mediate. Look at verse 7:26. We have a holy high priest. Because he is holy he can come boldly into the presence of God and represent sinners.

We have the kind of high priest who does not need to offer a sacrifice for himself. (v.27)

Now the thing that characterized other priests in Israel was their infirmity. They were sinners themselves and they grew old and died.

But we have a different kind of High Priest. We have a high priest who is undefiled and separate from sinners.

But our high priest is a different kind in another way.

2. He is the kind who *is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.* (8:1)

You see the Levitical Priests didn't enter heaven to minister. They entered a little cubical which was 15x15x15 feet. They pulled back a curtain and went into a little room.

But Jesus drew back the curtains of the universe and entered the heavens. This is the kind of priest we have.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God . . .

Hebrews 4:14

Jesus is a different kind of high priest because he enters into that place where God really is. So, the place of his ministry is so much better.

But I also want you to see that Jesus has sat down there in the heavens.

We have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. (8:1)

Look at Hebrews 1:3.

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

Now when he sat down, this indicates that he is there to stay. He will not have to offer sacrifices for sin year after year like the Levitical Priests. But Jesus sacrificed himself once for all time and then he passed into the heavens and he took a seat there. And he ministers in the presence of the Father continually and permanently.

So, we have the kind of a high priest who has passed into the heavens and who has sat down there.

But it also says, he is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Now when it says that Jesus Christ is set on God's right hand this is symbolic of Christ sitting down at the place of authority.

Example: Now when you say that someone is your right hand man, you mean that he is the one you depend on. You entrust him to carry out your will. Whatever it is that you want done, your right hand man will do it for you.

And all authority has been given unto Jesus Christ. He is heir of all things. All judgment has been given unto him in this world and the world to come. And it says he sits on the right hand of God.

Now it is incorrect to think of God the Father sitting on a throne and Jesus sitting on another throne at his right hand. This would suggest that there are two thrones – two seats of authority – two rulers competing for a kingdom. But the fact is that all authority is given unto Christ. It is Christ that sits on the throne with the Father.

So you see that Jesus is the kind of priest who is sinless himself. He is the kind of priest who has gone into the heavens. He is the kind of priest who sits on the right hand of God. And,

3. He is the kind of priest who ministers in the true tabernacle.

Now where do earthly priests minister? Levitical Priests ministered in an earthly tabernacle. It was a portable tent. And that was their sanctuary where they ministered.

But it says Jesus Christ is a minister of the sanctuary. And what is that sanctuary where Christ ministers.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Hebrews 9:24

So heaven is the true sanctuary where Christ ministers.

Now I want you to note here that our text tells us that Jesus Christ is in the heavens, that he has sat down there with all authority and he ministers. (8:2)

Jesus performed a great work when he came to this earth as a man and he suffered as no other man ever suffered. And we often think of the work of redemption as taking place while Jesus was on the earth. We think of him living a perfect life on our behalf. We think of him stretching out his arms and dying for us. And truly that was a great work.

And perhaps that we think his work stopped there. We think that he was exalted and that he sat down at the right hand of God in great glory and with exceeding joy and that he lives in the eternal enjoyment of his own blessedness. And all that is true. And yet, in light of all that, he has not forgotten his people.

Example: Remember when the prisoner in the dungeon was released and he forgot about Joseph in prison when he could have remembered Joseph to the King and Joseph would have been released.

Jesus, in his great satisfaction in heaven, could have forgotten about us in our suffering. But it says that he ministers in the true sanctuary. Christ

has not ceased his work for us at all. He worked on earth and He still works. It says he is a minister of the sanctuary.

Did you know that Jesus works as hard for you now as he ever did. He is a great high priest in the true sanctuary of God.

4. He is the kind of priest who is not on earth. (v.4)
5. He is the kind of priest who is not according to the Mosaic Law. (v.4)
6. He is the kind of priest who is not typical, but antitypical. (v.5)

Those earthly priests were mere types. They were examples and shadows of the real thing. But Jesus Christ was the true priest. He was the one to whom those types pointed. He was than kind of a priest.

Now I want to go back to the first verse of our text and look just a little more closely.

We have such a high priest . . .

And I want to consider the word we. Now sometimes when we use the word we, we mean to use the word inclusively - that is, we including everyone. "We are human beings." The "we" there includes all of us. "We are created by God." That is an inclusive we because it refers to all of us.

But sometimes the word "we" is used exclusively – that is, not everyone, but we who belong to an exclusive group. And that is the way it is used here.

When it says we have such a high priest, this does not include everyone in the world. If it did, then Christ would be the High Priest of every person. And he would be offering his sacrifice for every person. And he would be in heaven mediating for everyone. And when any man sinned, Jesus Christ would be his advocate and would plead his case and he would offer his own blood as a propitiation for every man. And every man would be forgiven and every man would have a rightful claim to the joys and blessing of heaven.

But the simple fact of the Scriptures is that Jesus Christ is not the High Priest for every man without exception. He is the great High Priest for those who are exclusively his. He is the great High Priest for those whom the Father first loved in election. He is the great High Priest on behalf of those for whom he died. He is the great High Priest for all those whom he loves. And he ever ministers for them in heaven.

And when it says “we” have such a high priest, it means those of us who have believed wholeheartedly in the saving work of Christ. “We” means those of us who are in Him. “We” means those of us who have been changed by the regenerating power of God into a new creature. “We” means those of us who ache and sorrow daily because of sin. “We” means those of us who love Christ or rather, who are loved by Him. “We” means those who have been called out of darkness and into his marvelous light. “We” means those of us who love the law of God. “We” means those of us who walk according to the Holy Spirit of God. “We” means those of us who look forward to and hasten to his coming.

Yes, it is we who have such a high priest.

Think about the picture of the Levitical Priesthood. They never offered sacrifices for the Phillistines or for the pagan nations. But they made atonement for Israel and Israel only. And this illustrates the exclusive nature of the priesthood of Christ.

So it says, “We have such a high priest.” It is not the wicked who have a high priest – but it says we have such a high priest.

Those who are unbelievers have no great high priest. Those who are not in Christ have no priest in heaven ministering for them. Those who have not been born again – they have no high priest. Those who still love their sins have no priest. Those who despise Christ and have no care for him have no priest. Those who are still in darkness have no priest. Those who hate the law of God have no priest. Those who tremble at the wrath to come have no priest.

But, we have such a high priest.

Now I want you to look at another word. It says,

We have such a high priest.

The question is, what does it mean that we have Him? Sometimes we say we have something and it means that we own it. How much money do you have? I have \$100.00 dollars. That means I own \$100.00 dollars. And I can do with it as I please.

But when it says we have a high priest, it doesn't mean we own Him. We don't command him to do this or that. We don't dictate to Him as though we own Him in that way.

When it says that we have such a high priest it means that he stands in that office on our behalf. His work is counting for us. He is a great high priest and he is a great high priest for us.

He is not everyone's priest. But he is our priest.

Example: There are people in remote places who die every day simply because They don't have a doctor. There are no doctors anywhere around and so a simple illness can lead to death.

And so it is with sin. Sin is a deadly disease that will surely kill us. And unless we have a priest, we will die in our sins.

And our text says, "We have such a priest." We are not like those who are without a priest. We are not like those who rely on an earthly priest. We have such a priest who is passed into the heavens and he ministers for us.

And there is only one priest who will do, and that is the true priest. This is why Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me."

And those of us who are His have Him. We are connected to him by a relationship. We are his people and He is our priest.

Let me ask you, do you understand that you need a priest? We need a priest because God is holy and we are sinners. We have all offended God and the Bible says his wrath is stored up against sinners. We must have a priest to offer an acceptable sacrifice and to mediate on our behalf

with an angry God.

And we have such a high priest. His name is Jesus. He has already offered an acceptable sacrifice – not the blood of goats, but his own blood. And God will accept it on our behalf. Jesus sits at the right hand of God and he ministers daily in the sanctuary.

Would you have him as your priest? You must believe in him. Furthermore, you must forsake all others. You must realize there is no other priest. There is no other Savior. It is Jesus or nothing at all. He is the only qualified priest.