

“JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO...” SERIES

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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.

Introduction

Historically, there were 83 high priests, starting with Aaron (Exodus 29:7; 30:23; Leviticus 8:12) and ending in 70 AD with Phannias. It was God’s design that the office of high priest was to be held for life and was hereditary in the family of Aaron (Numbers 3:10).¹

How does a priest become the High Priest?

There is not a minimum age given for the position, but they would have to meet the criteria for an ordinary priest, which was 30 years old (Numbers 4:1-3).

The high priest could marry only an Israelite virgin, or occasionally the widow of another high priest.

What are the duties of the High Priest?

- The primary function of the high priest was to serve as a mediator between the people and God.
- The high priest was the head priest at the Tabernacle and later the Temple.
- It was the high priest’s responsibility to see that the covenant was enforced
- He directed the priests and their duties of the temple and the law of Moses.
- The high priest had a tremendous responsibility to direct the hearts of the people toward God and the fulfillment of the covenant.
- He routinely participated in the handling of sacrifices and offerings
- He ceremonially blessed the people, standing in the place of God.

¹ Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton’s Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

- Only the high priest was permitted to enter the holy of holies, and he only did that once a year, on the great Day of Atonement. Upon entering the Holy place, he would change out of his high priest garments and then he would change into the normal priests garments. He then entered the holy of holies alone, he sprinkled the blood of the sin offering on the mercy seat, and offering up incense for the nation, the priests and himself. He would then change out of the bloodied garments and put on the robes of the high priest. The people would wait until he exited the Temple to ensure that God had accepted the offering.
- The high priest was the chief administrative officer of all priests.
- Occasionally he would assist the incumbent Judge or king with "inquiring of God" concerning an appropriate course of civil or military action.
- The high priest also served an expiatory purpose. A man guilty of involuntary manslaughter was required to remain in a city of refuge until the high priest had died. The death of the high priest expiated the original death that the guilty man had caused.

Now that we have the background of the high priest, let us look at the writers description of Jesus as the “great high priest.”

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.

When Christ died on the cross, the sacrificial system died along with Him. He was the ultimate sacrifice of and for God.

Therefore, if Jesus is the high priest for you and I, then He must fulfill the role of the High Priest:

- Jesus, as the high priest, now serves as the mediator between the people and God.

Romans 8:34 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.

- The high priest was the head priest at the Tabernacle and later the Temple. – **Christ is now seated in the heavenly Temple.**
- It was the high priest’s responsibility to see that the covenant was enforced. – **Jesus fulfilled the Law for mankind. He offered Himself as the fulfillment of the covenant.**
- He directed the priests and their duties of the temple and the law of Moses – **As we have seen, the believers are now priests, therefore, Jesus directs our duties and responsibilities through the Holy Spirit.**
- The high priest had a tremendous responsibility to direct the hearts of the people toward God and the fulfillment of the covenant - **Jesus role while on earth was to direct the hearts of the people to a relationship with God the Father.**
- He routinely participated in the handling of sacrifices and offerings - **Fulfilled**
- He ceremonially blessed the people, standing in the place of God – **On a daily basis, Jesus stands in front of God, in the place of believers.**
- Only the high priest was permitted to enter the holy of holies, and he only did that once a year, on the great Day of Atonement - **The work of Christ’s atonement allows believers to direct access, through the veil of the flesh of Christ, to enter into the presence of God.**

- The high priest was the chief administrative officer of all priests - **Christ is the administrator of the children of God.**
 - Christ served an expiatory purpose – **All mankind is born in sin. Therefore we are guilty before God. But believers will enter the city of refuge, the new heaven and the new earth and their sins will no longer be remembered.**
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Conclusion

May I present to you; Jesus, Our High Priest.

Bob Crowder