

FAITH STATION.

A MINISTRY OF
VANTAGE
POINT

daily devotions from king's cross



january • HIGH PRIEST >>



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FAITH STATION

Welcome to the first Faith Station of 2010. This month we'll be focusing on the eternal ministry of Jesus our priest – and we'll discover all of what that means for us as believers today.

Jesus' work as priest is foreshadowed for us in the Old Testament and demonstrated for us in the New Testament and is his heavenly ministry today. We are called as children of God to respond. How? By walking under the power of his priestly ministry and by ministering in his shadow, so to speak, as priests in the world today.

High Priest was prepared by **John D'achada** who is on leadership at **Vantage Point Church** and heads up the training side of King's Cross. "We seldom consider the priestly ministry of Jesus," he says, "although it is the one ministry that he is still performing today on our behalf. My prayer is that this study will deepen your appreciation for our God and Saviour."

"A HIGH PRIEST IN THINGS PERTAINING TO GOD" HEBREWS 2: 17

>> READING: Exodus 28: 1, Leviticus 8

When you stop by Faith Station this month, you're going to be filling up on what God's Word has to tell us about the High Priestly ministry of Jesus – and for that reason, most of our reading will be in the book of Hebrews, the New Testament epistle that focuses on that subject.

Perhaps you are already familiar with the concept of the High Priest in Scripture but if you are not, you certainly will be by the time we've engaged in our Faith Station devotions because, as our study unfolds, I will fill you in on the Old Testament context of Jesus' High Priestly role.

Essentially, a High Priest is not something we are familiar with in our normal, day to day lives, but the Israelites of old were very familiar with this person. Soon after they left Egypt and set off for the promised land, God instructed the building of the Tabernacle and with it, instituted the Aaronic priesthood. Even in Jesus' day, there was a High Priest in Israel.

The High Priest had the fearsome task of going in to the very presence of God in order to represent the people and especially to take the blood that had paid for their sins. Sound familiar?

>> PRAYER

Jesus, I pray that you will open my understanding about your role as High Priest.

1

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"HE HAD TO BE MADE LIKE HIS BRETHREN" HEBREWS 2: 17

>> READING: Matthew 13: 53-58

We know much about Jesus as Saviour, much about him as Healer and Deliverer but how much do we know about his High Priestly ministry? And do we have any idea what it means for us as believers today?

As our reading for today implies, his High Priestly ministry began with a profound act of love and humility – the act of becoming a man. **Hebrews 2: 17** tell us that Jesus was made like his brothers so that he could fully identify with those that he would be ministering on behalf of. He was made like mankind "in every way" – yes, even in the way of being willing to die. After all, there is nothing more human than dying – and conversely, nothing more Divine than being eternal and impervious to death.

Imagine choosing to leave a position and place of eternal power in order to be sent as a man with the purpose of becoming qualified as our great High Priest!? This act of supreme love, tragically, is the very thing that false teachers have used throughout history to try and discount the priestly ministry of Jesus. Their argument goes like this: if he was the eternal God that left heaven how could he minister to my needs as a "mere man"? They think he could much better see to our needs as the all-powerful God; but Scripture does not teach this.

It is very disconcerting to see how humble the Lord of the Universe is – humble enough to become a man in order to serve us. Where is place for our human pride?

>> PRAYER

Jesus I thank you for being willing to become a man in order to serve as my High Priest. Today I submit myself to your High Priestly ministry and ask that you would make me into someone who brings the Father glory.

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"PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING"
HEBREWS 2: 10

>> READING: Isaiah 53

The humiliation did not stop at becoming a man. "In bringing many sons to glory," **Hebrews 2:10** says, "it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering."

The Bible teaches us that humanity was only one of the requirements God had for His High Priest. The second condition was that His High Priest should be able to identify with those he ministered on behalf of in every way. Jesus willingly embraced this condition too.

The result was a life of suffering. Jesus was a man "familiar with sorrow" as Isaiah the prophet foresaw. Having accepted God's will that he should be perfected through suffering, Jesus saw it through to the very end. His obedience culminated in a gruesome death, so that in all things he would be made like man.

I don't know about you, but I am drawn to worship when I consider the true love and mercy of my High Priest.

>> PRAYER

Lord thank you that you were willing to become acquainted with sorrow for my sake. Your love is so pure and so true that I can scarce take it in; but help me to.

"A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST"
HEBREWS 2:17

>> READING: Hebrews 2: 17, 18; Exodus 29:1-35; Leviticus 4:3-12.

Yesterday we touched on the **mercy** of our High Priest and his willingness to suffer for our sakes.

But now we must meditate on the **faithfulness** of our High Priest. He was faithful in his service to God and never once failed to satisfy all the requirements that every High Priest was expected to fulfil (but never fully did.) Even Aaron, the first High Priest, failed in his service of mediating the covenant between God and the people. Because of this fallibility, all the High Priests had to first offer a sacrifice for their own sin before they could begin to sacrifice an animal for the sins of the people. But not so our High Priest, Jesus. He was tempted in every way, yet he was without sin. (**Hebrews 4:15**) His final test and moment of greatest anguish came in the garden of Gethsemane, when he had to wrestle that most natural and human of instincts - self preservation. Our High Priest chose to be faithful to the will of his Father even under such duress.

This unmovable faithfulness is what qualifies him most to be our High Priest, to stand in the presence of God to minister on our behalf. There is no danger of this priest dying in the presence of a holy God as he ministers before the altar; he has met all the requirements of God and been shown to be completely merciful and faithful in all the house of God.

>> PRAYER

Thank you Jesus for your faithfulness in the face of extreme temptation and anguish. Your faithfulness has brought about my redemption and you have brought glory to God in all your obedience. Father, teach me by the Spirit to be faithful and so-doing, bring glory to your name as Jesus has.

**"A FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST IN SERVICE TO GOD"
HEBREWS 2:17**

>> READING: Hebrews 2:14-15

As our High Priest, Jesus served all mankind. In case we missed it, he even said as much in **Matthew 20: 25-28** – I did not come to be served but to serve. His service to the people of earth is what we usually focus on.

Today, however, I want us to note his service to God, as our text shows us. His service to God is the greatest act of service that the universe has ever known and because of it, everything that is seen or not seen, is still existing and being "held together". (**Colossians 1:15-17**). In what way has Jesus, the High Priest, served God? In turning away God's holy wrath and, by his death, reconnecting us to God. His act of service has made it possible for the true and righteous judge to once again have communion with mankind. In the N.I.V translation the words "that he might make atonement" are used to describe this ministry.

This service could not have been carried out by any other man, because no truly faithful man could be found. But Jesus was not only able to cover our sins with his blood, he was also able to receive in his body the punishment for our sins so that the penalty of condemnation, that is, death, could be removed. The blood of a sacrificed animal could cover the sins of the people in the Old Testament but could not forever remove the guilt attached to those sins. But our High Priest has done so through the sacrifice of his own body. By sending his son, the Father has provided the perfect sacrifice and High Priest.

>> PRAYER

Jesus how can I thank you enough that you did not shrink back in faithful service to your Father. Thank you for taking the penalty of my sin upon yourself so that I do not have to face eternal death.

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**"FIX YOUR THOUGHTS ON JESUS, THE APOSTLE AND
HIGH PRIEST.." HEBREWS 3:1-6**

>> READING: Exodus 3:10; Deuteronomy 18:14-18

Moses was the greatest prophet that ever lived and he was sent by God to Pharaoh to prophecy the release of the people of God. When God sent him, He gave him power that could not be resisted, even by the leader of one of the most powerful nations on the earth at that time. Moses, with the word of the Lord in his mouth, forced the release of God's people from captivity and then, with the rod of God in his hand, destroyed the whole Egyptian army in the Red Sea. As God's prophet he led more than a million people into a trackless wilderness and demonstrated that God was faithful to keep all His promises.

Could there be anyone greater than Moses? Yes, Jesus. Jesus is greater than Moses not only because he is more faithful than Moses but also because of his relationship to God. He is more than the faithful apostle and prophet that Moses prophesied about, he is also the faithful son over God's house. As God's son he is equal to God and, in fact, God himself. Even though there are many who are called sons of God in the Bible (even we are called sons and daughters of God) Jesus is the only begotten Son who came into the world through being conceived by the Holy Spirit. In this sense he is uniquely the Son of God.

No person enjoys the position within the Trinity that this Son does. That is why he alone could act on His Father's behalf because he alone knew what it meant to be holy as God the Father is holy. This priest is the great mediator because he can act on God's behalf because he is God, and he can act on man's behalf because he is man.

>> PRAYER

Jesus I confess with my mouth that you are the one who was sent by the Father and that you alone are the only one who can represent the Father because only you are holy and righteous as God.

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"A HIGH PRIEST WHOM WE CONFESS" HEBREWS 3:1

>> READING: Matthew 12: 33-37

Before we look in greater detail at the comparison between Jesus and Moses, the writer of Hebrews tells us that we must, as holy people with a heavenward calling, fix our thoughts on Jesus, the Apostle and the High Priest of our confession.

What does it mean that Jesus is called the Apostle and High Priest of our confession in **Hebrews 3: 1**? Simply this. As Apostle, Jesus was sent by God ('apostle' means 'one who is sent' in Greek) to minister God's purposes to mankind. As High Priest, Jesus ministers before God on behalf of man. It is because of Jesus' two-fold ministry, towards God and man, that we can be called holy and have a share in the heavenly calling.

What is our role in this holy walk and calling heavenward? It is to fix our thoughts on Jesus and hold on to our confession of faith. The Hebrew believers this letter is addressed to, were urged throughout the book to do this and warned of the grave consequences of abandoning their confession. We too are being urged not to abandon our confession of Jesus, the sent one, the heavenly mediator.

May I be so bold as to add my urgings to those of the writer to the Hebrews? Do not become distracted by the many clamouring voices in the world today that can so easily cause your thoughts to slip away from Jesus and rest on far less worthy, and ultimately impotent, things? Instead, every day, conscientiously, intentionally, declare with your mouth that "Jesus was sent by God as Apostle and has saved us through his High Priestly ministry. As a result, we are called holy today and have a heavenly calling to look forward to."

>> PRAYER

Lord help me to keep my focus on you in the midst of all the false gods of the world that promise life but are unable to provide. In my speech and thoughts I hold you in honour and praise.

"THE BUILDER OF A HOUSE HAS GREATER HONOUR.." HEBREWS 3:3

>> READING: Exodus 12:1-50, Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-26,
Luke 22:14-20, Hebrews 3: 1-6

As shown in our reading from Exodus, Moses did three great things to build a people for God. So great were these actions that they became major themes in the rest of the Bible story and points of comparison with the High Priest, Jesus, in the book of Hebrews. Over the next few days we will look at these three things and see how Jesus has surpassed Moses in all of them as the great High Priest over the house of God.

We'll begin with Moses' proclamation of a covenant based on blood-shedding. As he prepared the Israelites to leave Egypt, Moses passed on to the people what he received from God, that they should kill a lamb and put the blood above the door post. He told them that in doing this they would be saved from the judgement of God. Note that the people were saved from the judgement of God by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. It is God's righteous anger that must be satisfied by the sacrifice of an innocent and unblemished lamb. Moses urged the people to obey God's word and those who believed and acted accordingly were indeed saved from death by the blood.

The connection with Jesus is clear. Jesus, the High Priest over the house of God not only proclaimed the new covenant, he wrote it in his own blood. The words that he spoke as our High Priest on the night before he was crucified, and the action that he took the next day when his body was crucified and his blood poured out, demonstrate vividly his perfect commitment to his High Priestly calling.

>> PRAYER

Jesus thank you that are the one who is building a house for God as the faithful son and high priest. Help me to find my place in your house.

"WE ARE HIS HOUSE..."
HEBREWS 3: 6

>> READING: Exodus 35:4-40:38, Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 2:19-22, Hebrews 3: 1-6

Yesterday we examined the first of the three things that Moses did that are significant themes in the Bible story. In our devotion for today, we will examine the second; and discover that here too, Jesus' High Priestly ministry is superior.

After the people escaped by the blood, God instructed Moses to build the Tabernacle, a Tent of Meeting, in the Wilderness. This tent became the place where God could presence Himself amongst His people, as was His intention from the beginning, even in the Garden of Eden. The instructions God gave Moses were meticulously carried out by him, as the builder of the house of God.

Jesus, the faithful Son and High Priest over the house of God, is building a house not made with human hands. He is building a spiritual house where God can dwell amongst His people and demonstrate His love and power. After the resurrection, Jesus sent God the Holy Spirit to dwell in the house of God, the people of God. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost laid the foundation for this spiritual house and the working of the Spirit today in the Church is a confirmation that our High Priest, Jesus, and his ministry, is of a far more enduring nature than Moses'.

The Tabernacle was a temporary structure, the house of God built by Jesus will stand forever. God has always said that He will not dwell permanently in a house built by human ability. Instead, as the writer to the Hebrews declares, 'we are His house if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast'.

>> PRAYER

Jesus thank for sending the Holy Spirit to live in and among us. I submit to your ministry Holy Spirit and give myself to you, as you seek to glorify Jesus through my life.

"CHRIST IS FAITHFUL AS A SON.."
HEBREWS 3:1-6.

>> READING: Deuteronomy 9:1-10:5, 1 Corinthians 9:19-21, 2 Corinthians 3:3, Hebrews 3: 1-6

Today's readings bring us to the third comparison between Moses and Jesus in which we examine the giving of the Law.

Our readings show us the greatness of Moses as the one who received the Law on Sinai and who acted as mediator when the people broke the Law almost immediately after having received it. Moses' prayer of intercession, and willingness to be cursed for the peoples' sake, is a picture of Jesus' ministry – the innocent for the guilty. In his greatness Moses brought the tablets of stone, on which the Law was written and which revealed the character of God, to the people a second time.

Jesus, our High Priest, also brings the Law of God to us but instead of writing it on tablets of stone, he writes it on our hearts. God's intention was always that the Law be written on our hearts, the very seat of our desire, and not merely be an external restraint. Remember, the Law was never intended to save Israel; they were saved through the blood of the lamb. In the same way, we are not saved by the Law but by the blood of Jesus, the lamb of God. However the Law written on our hearts by the Spirit instructs us, restrains us and testifies, through us, about the righteous character of God. A people living under the Law of Christ experience an inward urging of the Spirit towards righteousness.

Just as the Law given on Mt Sinai defined the Israelites as God's special nation, so the Law written on your heart and mediated through Christ, defines you as a member of God's special people. I urge you to co-operate with Christ's building program by embracing the Law of the Spirit written on your heart.

>> PRAYER

Lord thank you for writing the Law on my heart. I praise you that this Covenant brings a desire for righteousness in my life.

**"IT REMAINS THAT SOME WILL ENTER THAT REST"
HEBREWS 4: 6**

>> READING: Hebrews 3 and 4

The young man who stood next to Caleb and gave a positive report about the, as yet unseen, Promised Land was the same young man who never left the Tent of Meeting in the wilderness and the same seasoned warrior whom God appointed as Moses' successor.

Joshua was without doubt the most exceptional man in the whole of Israel. A God-favoured, God-elected man. And yet the writer to the Hebrews is quick to point out that, despite Joshua's qualities, he was not able to actually lead the people of God into true rest. There remains, the writer to the Hebrews says, a Sabbath rest for those who believe – and that rest is found in Jesus Christ.

The rest that is ours in Jesus Christ is manifold. It is found in the peace between God and man made possible by his substitutionary sacrifice; it is found in the restoration of Paradise lost; it is found in the provision of heaven that is ours as children of God. And in many, many others ways too.

>> PRAYER

Lord, I believe that you succeed where Joshua could not. Please help me to believe in you my whole life long.

**"A GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO HAS GONE THROUGH
THE HEAVENS" HEBREWS 4:14**

>> READING: Hebrews 1:1-2; 2: 2-4; 3: 4-6; 4: 8-10.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will open our hearts to see the greatness of our High Priest as we look at this next section on the ministry of the High Priest. As the writer of Hebrews has already shown, Jesus is God's final word on how man can be saved; his message is greater than the message of angels; he is both God and man; he is greater than Moses, and greater than Joshua in that he is the only one who can provide true rest.

Now the writer of Hebrews tells us that our High Priest is so much greater than the earthly high priests in another way; they passed through material curtains to minister before an earthly copy of the heavenly things but Jesus has gone through the heavens to minister before the actual throne of God. No man has ever been able to approach in this way, by his own blood, and appear before the glorious holiness of God and minister in such a way as to satisfy and bring delight to God; yet our High Priest has done this extraordinary thing.

We struggle to comprehend that Jesus would do this for us; in the same way that we struggle to understand that God would create and provide everything that we see, just for mankind. Yet from all this we should understand that this is the glory of God. Only God can create and only God can provide salvation for man. And this is His glory.

Will you do as the writer of Hebrews tells us to do a number of times in this book in relation to the revelation to our High Priest? Will you hold firmly and steadfastly to a verbal declaration that it is only through Jesus that we can have absolute confidence before God.

>> PRAYER

I praise you and honour you Father that it is your glory alone to provide for mankind, and that in passing through the heavens you have provided salvation for me, Jesus.

"THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST.." HEBREWS 4:14.

>> READING: Romans 10: 9

Our High Priest is great in his person and work, yet useless to you unless you have him as your High Priest. So, do you? Your walk with Christ is enjoyed in the community of the people of God and we should experience that reality on a daily basis. But until you come to Christ personally and own him as **your** High Priest, much of his work is inaccessible to you.

This is not the only place in Hebrews where the importance of a correct response to the High Priest is stressed. In **Hebrews 3:6,14** it states, "We are his house **if** we hold on..." and "we have come to share in Christ **if** we hold firmly till the end..."

The effectiveness of the High Priestly ministry of Jesus in our lives depends very much on these 'if's'.

Do you understand that in his ministry he has "gone through the heavens"; that he is the one who is perfectly qualified to minister to God and man because he is uniquely able to mediate between God and man? Jesus acted as a representative of all men and with the giving of his sinless life, also paid the righteous anger of God in full. You must know that his work as High Priest was done for you, and that there is nothing that you can do to add or take away from that work. God the father did not make this covenant to save us with you or me, he made the covenant with Jesus, our High Priest. You and I are recipients of the work that Jesus did, beneficiaries.

Take care to embrace the person and the work of Jesus as yours; to have and own all that has been done for you. Know this day that you have a great High Priest who has acted in heaven on your behalf or else you will spend the rest of your life never enjoying the presence of God, or giving glory to Jesus for what he has done for you.

>> PRAYER

Lord I have you as my High Priest, thank you for what you did in the heavens for the Father and for me.

"HE TOO SHARED IN THEIR HUMANITY" HEBREWS 2: 14

>> READING: Hebrews 2:10 - 18

Our High Priest who is in heaven is able to fully sympathize with us, no matter our past, present or future. He knows from personal experience exactly what we are going through and what we feel. Because he lived on earth as a man he understands us perfectly and is willing to have patience with all our weaknesses and help us in every situation. It is for this reason that we can have boldness to draw near to the throne of God, even when we feel weak, unable and unsure.

We have a High Priest who can sympathize with us because he was tempted in every way. What is the worst temptation that we face that we know Jesus also faced? Is it the temptation to murder, steal, commit adultery? Although I'm sure that Jesus faced all of the common temptations that we do, by far the most insidious sin is losing our passion to serve God. The temptation of not going all the way for God and mixing all kinds of activities into our lives so that we can live undisturbed and safe lives with strong, logical limits is by far the worst temptation that any child of God can face. And it is precisely this temptation that Jesus faced in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross when people called out "if you are the Son of God come down off the tree and save yourself."

The temptation to save ourselves and avoid the death of the cross is still with us. But take heart, Jesus is able to sympathise with our weaknesses and understand what we are going through without becoming discouraged himself. He is able to lift us out of the deepest darkest place of discouragement and disappointment so that we can stand up, dust ourselves off and once again confess him as the great High Priest of our faith.

>> PRAYER

Lord deliver me I pray from the temptation to save myself and avoid going all the way for you.

"YOU HAVE COME...TO JESUS"
HEBREWS 12: 24

>> READING: Exodus 3:5, Exodus 19:12-22, Hebrews 12:18-24

As we look at the above Scriptures we see the desire that God's people have to draw near to Him and at the same time, the danger in doing this. In yesterday's devotion we found a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses; today we discover a High Priest who can bring us near to God.

We shouldn't be surprised; this is essentially the work of a High Priest. The Holy Spirit's work is to reveal the person and work of Jesus to us so that we can draw near to God in perfect confidence and boldness. In this sense, we could say that our nearness to God is determined by our revelation knowledge and understanding of the person and work of Jesus in his High Priestly ministry. Do we truly understand that our access to God is not determined by the wellbeing that we feel in our hearts because we have or have not sinned yesterday or today; but is based on much firmer ground than that?

We have a favourable introduction to the holy presence of God because of our High Priest so therefore, let us draw near (New American Standard Version) to the throne of grace – the throne of grace is the throne where we receive God's favour. For at this throne we receive two things we urgently need - mercy and grace. All this help is because of our great and glorious High Priest who has opened the way to the throne of forgiveness and immersed us in the enabling power of the Spirit.

>> PRAYER

Lord right now I draw near to your throne with confidence to receive mercy and find grace to help me in this time of need.

"LET US APPROACH WITH CONFIDENCE"
HEBREWS 4:16

>> READING: Psalm 47:8, Psalm 97:2, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 10:23

What is this mercy and grace spoken of in yesterday's study? The mercy is the sympathy, compassion and deep awareness of forgiveness that we receive when our sense of sin and guilt begins to discourage and perhaps even overwhelm us. The grace spoken of is the enablement to walk with God that we receive from the Spirit of grace at the precise time that we need it.

The mercy, grace and help we receive is all because we approach God's throne of grace with confidence and boldness. The writer of Hebrews uses the language of boldness on two other occasions to show us that boldness should be the demeanour or attitude that we have when we approach the greatest and most terrifying throne in the Universe. It is the place where God sits in all of His holiness and fearful power; and from where He will judge every person in truth either to condemnation or eternal life. Where does this confidence come from? It is not generated by our good works; this faith is generated by what God has said about the sacrifice of Jesus. Your approach to this throne is an indication not of your own personal confidence; but of your confidence in the work of Jesus your High Priest and the assurance that God has fully accepted the sacrificial death of Jesus.

Will you receive the word that God has said about the work of your High Priest or will you buckle under the lies of the enemy who tells us that the payment that Jesus made was not enough and that we can not really trust in the work of Christ or the acceptance of that work by the Father? Our faith must be built on what God has said in his written word and on the witness of the Holy Spirit who confirms this testimony. This is the solid ground that our confidence is built on. I would go so far as to say that, without this confidence, we cannot live the Christian life.

>> PRAYER

Thank you for holy boldness purchased by Jesus; I pray that you will cause further grow in my life with you

"EVERY HIGH PRIEST IS SELECTED FROM AMONG MEN" HEBREWS 5:1

>> READING: Leviticus 9:7; 15-24

Every High Priest was selected from among men to do the work that only a man can do. This job could not be done by angels or any other created being, this is one of the reasons Jesus was made lower than the angels (**Hebrews 2:7**). The angels do not know the weaknesses that men and women experience therefore they cannot represent mankind in matters related to God, nor were they given the same responsibility that mankind was given at the Creation. This work can also not be done by God; which is why the **Hebrews 2:7** scripture, in quoting **Psalms 8:5**, is telling us that Jesus was made lower than God, like man; so that he could perform this role of High Priest on behalf of man.

The High Priest was appointed to represent man in matters related to God; which we see clearly in the Old Testament reading for today. His work was to offer gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the people. We do not see that Jesus actually worked as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem while he was on earth; but **Hebrews 5: 7** tells us that he offered up prayers and petition with loud cries to be saved; and he was heard. His prayers and petition with loud cries were the sacrifices and gifts that Jesus offered up for himself; as every High Priest used to offer for himself. But unlike every other High Priest, Jesus is still offering these prayers and petitions for us, his people.

There are many places in the New Testament, not just the ones listed above, that tell us that Jesus is still praying for us and acting as a priest in the very presence of God. What is Jesus praying for you right now? A weakness perhaps or a struggle that you think nobody knows about? Yes, you can be sure, your High Priest is busy interceding for you.

>> PRAYER

Lord thank you that you are praying for me as I resist sin, the devil; and the world. I pray that you would reveal your heavenly ministry that you are still performing today.

"NO-ONE TAKES THIS HONOUR UPON HIMSELF" HEBREWS 5: 4

>> READING: Numbers 12:1-16

No-one can take the honour of being a High Priest upon himself; he must be called by God to stand as a mediator between God and man.

As our Old Testament reading shows us, even when Miriam questioned Moses' position as the God-appointed mediator between Israel and God, the results were catastrophic. Her arrogance was rewarded with a bout of leprosy; not because she questioned Moses but because she questioned God's authority. In the same way, it was God Himself who gave Christ the glory of being made High Priest; it is God who honours mankind by making Jesus our priest; it is God who will not abandon us to a life of sin and death and it is God who will not forget who He has made and who He loves.

It was when Jesus became 'the Son' that God became his Father and appointed Jesus as High Priest. Before this time Jesus was the eternal God, co-equal with God the Father. But as God incarnate, Jesus lowered himself to human status so that, in his role as High Priest, he could be the perfect mediator. The incarnation into his Sonship was his access into the priesthood and the ministry that would glorify his Father and redeem mankind.

As the only begotten Son, Christ is the heir of all that God is and as such, he is the only one who can make available to us all that God is. Jesus delights to do this work and each time that we call out to him and look to him as our High Priest, he is honoured and the Father is glorified for sending him.

>> PRAYER

Thank you for your priesthood, through which I have become an eternal partaker of the Father.

**"YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER"
HEBREWS 5: 6**

>> READING: Numbers 17:1-13, Hebrews 5: 4-10

Following on yesterday's study, in which we saw that God alone could appoint priests, we move now to the priesthood of Aaron, mentioned by the writer to the Hebrews for a very special reason.

Our Old Testament reading informs us of the appointment, by God, of Aaron to the position of High Priest. It also tells us that the people questioned this appointment at a stage, but that God vindicated Aaron by causing his rod to blossom. In the minds of the Hebrew readers, therefore, Aaron would still have been held in high regard, not only as the first High Priest in Jewish history but the one who was doubly confirmed through this miracle. The writer to Hebrews builds upon their respect of Aaron by subtly pointing out that Christ's priesthood is even more illustrious.

He says that Christ was not appointed to the order of the Aaronic priesthood but in the order of the Melchizedek priesthood.

What is the main difference between the two? The Melchizedek priesthood is an appointment by God that lasts forever. It will not pass away as the priesthood of Aaron did, because of unfaithfulness. Our High Priest remains eternally in his position because he is ever faithful in ministering the Father's grace to man and representing man to the Father.

He is not only faithful to us by being understanding and sympathetic – he never compromises God's standards and is therefore faithful to the Father. This is why we can indeed 'approach the throne of grace with boldness'.

>> PRAYER

Jesus, thank you so much that I can depend on your eternal High Priestly ministry on my behalf. It is the everlasting ground beneath my feet.

**"HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE..."
HEBREWS 5: 8**

>> READING: Luke 22: 39-46

The writer of Hebrews gives us insight into the earthly life of Jesus, in his preparation as High Priest, as well as his eternal ministry, which is still being practised today, more than 2000 years later.

We know that he was made like his brothers (**Hebrews 2: 7**) and that during his days on earth, in his weakened flesh, he "offered prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death." What was Jesus praying and crying out in anguish for? That God would give him the strength to accept what the Father wanted him to do – die an excruciating death. We should not forget that suffering was as dreadful for Jesus as it is for us. What person would not rather seek to avoid suffering? Suffering entered this world as a result of sin – it is wholly unnatural and to avoid it is not sinful; unless God requires it of us for His great and holy purposes. Through his intense times of prayer, Jesus did receive the strength to do what was completely unnatural – to use his own body and blood as a sacrifice. He learned obedience and with that same obedience he continues to minister in the heavenly realms to the pleasure of the Father.

Our eternal salvation, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, our own ability to obey – all these are the fruits of Jesus' obedience. Let us reverently receive these eternal blessings. And while we do not want to cheapen his great sacrifice of obedience, let us humbly seek to emulate him and submit our lives to his will, even though it might require a denial of our own peace, comfort or even, lives.

>> PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for the example of your prayer life in which you show me how to cry out, day and night. Give me the strength to do the same so that I too may receive obedience and faithfulness as you did.

"IN THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK" HEBREWS 6: 20

>> READING: Psalm 110:4, Romans 14: 17, Hebrews 6: 20, Hebrews 7: 1-3

We must now look more closely at the priesthood through this order of Melchizedek to see something of the ministry of Jesus our High Priest. This "mysterious" man in the Old Testament, called Melchizedek, which, when read in the Hebrew language, means 'king of righteousness' (melech =king; tsedek = righteousness). We also see that he is called the king of Salem (Jerusalem), also meaning the 'king of peace'.

These two titles given to Melchizedek are an Old Testament type or picture of who Jesus is and what he came to do. Jesus came to establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace, a kingdom that cannot be overthrown and that cannot pass away.

Notice that the kingdom is first of all established in righteousness. As the King of this kingdom Jesus took upon himself our unrighteousness and gave us his righteousness; by so doing he translated us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. The result is that we can now enjoy peace with God. Righteousness is the only true foundation for peace, and the kingdom that provides peace for its subjects is the only kingdom worth being a part of. This peace is a steadfast and unmoveable peace that is established by the rule of the King of righteousness and the King of peace.

As subjects in this kingdom we can enjoy a peace with God that cannot be taken away from us by the trials and circumstances of life. Search your heart today to see if there is anything seeking to replace or steal your allegiance to your King; if there is, you will find you are shaken in your righteousness and peace.

>> PRAYER

Thank you Lord for your priestly ministry that has given me right standing before God and peace that rules even in the most difficult circumstances. I worship you as the king of righteousness and peace.

"WITHOUT GENEALOGY, WITHOUT BEGINNING OF DAYS" HEBREWS 7: 3

>> READING: Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7: 1-3

The story of Melchizedek in the Old Testament does not tell us where he came from or where he went to. This omission has a purpose. The complete silence in Scripture regarding his birth, death and genealogy is to show how completely different his priesthood is from Aaron's.

Usually, human descent and lineage was a qualifying factor for Israel's priests but seemingly not for this enigmatic priest, Melchizedek. This priest/king is a wonderful type of Jesus; as verse 3 says there is no record of his mother; father and there is no genealogy recording where he came from or where he went to; it was not through human lineage that he received his call to the priesthood. And just like Jesus there is no record of the end of his priesthood.

Jesus' priesthood is also not based on his human lineage. As we know he did not come from the line of Aaron which was the priestly family line but from the line of Judah which was the line of the kings. Nor does Jesus' priesthood have a beginning or an end. It is an eternal priesthood. The story of Melchizedek in Genesis; and the prophecy in Psalms about Jesus' priesthood, show us this. His is a priesthood that receives its power and strength from the fact that it is eternal; that it is not based in humanity's limited existence. His eternal life has provided a perfect priesthood that can never weaken or fade away; it is everlasting and forever effective in ministering to us. He can save completely and for eternity those who come to him because he is alive forever and always fulfils this office as priest. His unchangeable life and everlasting ministry is the basis for our security and confidence before God in a wicked and faithless world.

We must put our faith in this everlasting priesthood that comes from Jesus' eternal life. We must ask God to show us that Christ is our Melchizedek - a Priest forever and unchangeable and well able to provide us with a life of faithfulness and a future of hope.

>> PRAYER

Lord open the eyes and ears of my heart that I may understand the power of your everlasting life.

"JUST THINK HOW GREAT HE WAS..."
HEBREWS 7: 4

>> READING: Genesis 14:1-20; Numbers 1:44-54, Hebrews 7: 4

In yesterday's devotion we were introduced to the mystery and the glorious priesthood of Melchizedek which we saw is ultimately fulfilled in the priesthood of Jesus; and is one of the great revelations running throughout the Bible.

In our readings for today, we see how the writer of Hebrews uses this same revelation about the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek being a type and shadow of the eternal priesthood of Jesus, to show that Jesus is greater than Abraham.

Both Judaism and Islam claim Abraham as their most important patriarch who demonstrates a relationship with God unlike any other man. Both see Abraham as the catalyst who formed their respective nations. There could hardly be a man on earth credited with greater greatness. Yet Jesus is greater than Abraham.

Over the next few days we will unpack this exciting revelation and examine more closely the inspired logic of the writer of Hebrews.

>> PRAYER

Father, I am getting excited. There is so much more to learn about Jesus than I realise. Please keep teaching me and giving me revelation from Your Spirit.

"EVEN THE PATRIARCH ABRAHAM GAVE HIM A TENTH" HEBREWS 7: 4

>> READING: Psalm 110: 4, Hebrews 7: 4-10

Yesterday we began to look at the ministry of the patriarch Abraham and the relationship that existed between him and the mystery priest, Melchizedek.

Our reading for today supplies us with two reasons why Jesus (of whom Melchizedek is a type) is greater than Abraham. Today we will look at the first reason. Note that Abraham pays a tithe to Melchizedek; whom we have already seen is a type of Jesus. In **verse 9** the writer to the Hebrews takes it even further saying that the whole Levitical priesthood, in fact, tithed to Melchizedek because, he says, Levi was "in the body of Abraham his ancestor" when Abraham brought his tithe to this Christ figure Melchizedek. This makes Melchizedek (and thus, Jesus) greater than the whole Levitical priesthood.

As we understand that giving is a form of worship to God we realize that Abraham was worshiping God when he brought his tithe to this Old Testament revelation of Jesus. If the great Abraham could tithe to Jesus, should you and I do any less? We should also bring our tithe to Jesus as an act of worship to God, following the example of Abraham our forefather in the faith. Giving or refusing to give has a great way of revealing our hearts and I am always suspicious of those who claim that tithing was only part of the Old Testament dispensation.

>> PRAYER

Lord thank you that I have the privilege of bringing you my life and holding nothing back in my worship to you.

"WITHOUT DOUBT, THE LESSER PERSON IS BLESSED BY THE GREATER" HEBREWS 7: 6-9

>> READING: Genesis 12: 1-3

In yesterday's devotion we looked at the first reason why Jesus is greater than Abraham. We saw that Abraham gave a tithe of everything that he had to Melchizedek as an act of worship to God. This act, says the writer of Hebrews, shows that this priest is greater than Abraham because the lesser brings tithes to the greater.

The second reason the writer to the Hebrews gives for claiming that Melchizedek (and by inference, Jesus) is greater than Abraham is because he blesses Abraham. The writer of Hebrews says that the "lesser person is blessed by the greater".

Abraham had already been blessed of God in **Genesis 12:1-3**; but he accepts the blessing from the priest Melchizedek and subordinates himself and the whole priesthood (the Aaronic priesthood) that was to come from him, under Melchizedek's ministry.

Once again we see that Christ's priesthood was always destined to be superior to that of the Levites. Theirs was a temporary priesthood carried out by priests who had to first sacrifice for their own sins. Jesus' is eternal and performed by a sinless High Priest to whom worship and submission is due, as Abraham, the father of our faith, so clearly demonstrates for us.

>> PRAYER

Jesus, today I bow my knee before you once again and bring you my worship. You are worthy of it.

"LEVI PAID A TENTH THROUGH ABRAHAM" HEBREWS 7: 9

>> READING: Romans 12: 1

The story of the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek is so redolent with insights into our relationship with Christ, our High Priest, that I must claim another day in which to meditate upon it.

From it, for example, we can clearly see how fitting it is that we should receive his priestly blessing upon our lives. Indeed, Jesus is the only one who can bless us (call down God's favour and purpose upon our lives). It was only he who could bring us to the Father initially and only he who can keep us there. He ministers both in the temple in heaven to bless us and in our bodies on earth, which are also the temples of God, so that we are kept to the end.

In the same way, it is altogether fitting that he should receive tithes and offerings from us. But what are we saying when we bring them?

When we give to him we are acknowledging that he is God's chosen priest and therefore, acknowledging his right to our whole life. The more we give ourselves to him, without holding anything back, the more we will experience the blessing of his power and presence in our lives.

So let us draw near to receive blessing from our High Priest Christ Jesus; and let us not hold back our worship of giving all to him. It is his due.

>> PRAYER

Jesus I offer you all that I have and all that I am; and I ask that you will bless me because only you can.

"WHY WAS THERE STILL NEED FOR ANOTHER PRIEST?" HEBREWS 7: 11

>> READING: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Galatians 2:21, Hebrews 7: 11-19

The order of Aaron holds such a prominent position in the Biblical story, yet God passes over it to establish the order of Melchizedek. Why? Like so much of the Old Testament, Aaron's priesthood was only meant as a shadow of the eternal priesthood of Jesus that would be effective both on earth and in heaven. When we see a shadow of something then we must look to the real thing that is making the shadow.

All the ceremonial laws (what to eat; various sacrifices etc) practised by the Levitical priesthood could not "make anyone perfect" (**Hebrews 7: 19**) before God. These laws were never intended to do that; they were among other things, acts of faith to bring people into God's presence by covering over their sin through the blood of animals. When the people acted on God's word and brought their sacrifices to God faithfully, God would presence Himself amongst His people. This is what the Bible calls salvation; and it is what makes God's people perfect, whether in the Old or New Testaments.

So we see that there was indeed a necessity for "a change of the priesthood" which, in turn, brought about "a change of the Law" (**Hebrews 7: 12**) so that the "the former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless" (**Hebrews 7:16**). The eternal priesthood of Jesus now gives us hope that our sins have been permanently removed by the work of his blood "by which we draw near to God" (**Hebrews 7:19**). There is no other way of drawing near to God; there is no ritual or sacrifice that we can perform to remove our sins. The only thing that we can do is trust that Jesus our High Priest has effected the cleansing of all sins on earth at the cross; the same ministry that Aaron performed while obeying the sacrificial laws.

>> PRAYER

Jesus, it is strange for me to think that all my hope lies in your ministry. Help me to believe, accept and rest in that.

"A BETTER HOPE IS INTRODUCED" HEBREWS 7: 18

>> READING: Hebrews 7: 1-22

Today we are continuing our discussion on the change of priesthood – from the Aaronic (or Levitical) priesthood based on the shadows and types to the reality of Jesus' eternal priesthood (pre-figured by Melchizedek).

We saw yesterday how Jesus performed on earth the same ministry as Aaron when he died on the cross. He not only covered our sins but actually took them upon himself and carried them down into death.

But Jesus has also done something that Aaron could not do; he has entered into the very presence of God in heaven and there presented his blood in the true Tabernacle, of which the earthly Tabernacle was just a rude copy.

What was the effect of this High Priestly act? It absorbed all of God's wrath and removed the chasm of holy separation that prevented us from entering into God's presence. And this is key to understanding how our transformation takes place. Transformation into holiness cannot take place outside of God's presence. Only in His presence does transformation into God's perfection take place.

>> PRAYER

Open my understanding that I may comprehend both your earthly High Priestly ministry and your heavenly High Priestly ministry - both of which bring me into the presence of the Father.

"BECAUSE JESUS LIVES FOREVER, HE HAS A PERMANENT PRIESTHOOD" HEBREWS 7: 24

>> READING: Genesis 16:16-33; Exodus 32: 1-35; Leviticus 4: 3-12, Hebrews 7:20-28.

We stay on the subject of the change of priesthood today. Our readings for today present us with another important contrast between the two priesthoods – the one is temporal and the other, eternal.

The writer to the Hebrews again quotes from **Psalm 110: 4** when he says that Jesus' permanent priesthood was confirmed by God with an oath. If God has sworn an oath that his Son would be "a priest forever" this cannot change. In contrast to this unchangeable oath we notice that God was able to change and discard the priesthood of Aaron because that priesthood was temporary and not "forever" as the priesthood of Melchizedek is. We see then the secret source of the power of the Melchizedekian priesthood – it lies in the oath made by Father to Son.

The writer then tells us four benefits that flow to us by this oath:

1. Because of the oath Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. (**Hebrews 7: 22**)
2. Because of the oath we have a permanent priesthood ministering on our behalf. (**Hebrews 7: 24**)
3. Because of the oath God has given us an eternal intercessor who ministers on our behalf. (**Hebrews 7: 25**)
4. Because of the oath God has provided a priest who does not have to sacrifice for his own sins first before he can minister on behalf of us his people. He is free from sin; yet he knows what it is like to be tempted in every way that is common to man. The Law-appointed men were weak but the Oath-appointed Son, who was made perfect by resisting sin even in the face of the most extreme temptations, is able to mediate perfectly for us. (**Hebrews 7: 27**)

>> PRAYER

Lord thank you for the oath that you made which has changed my life. I ask you to clean me from all my sin and continue to perfect me.

"HE WENT THROUGH THE GREATER TABERNACLE" HEBREWS 9: 11

>> READING: Hebrews 9, 1 Corinthians 6: 19

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that there was an Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple which was purified and sanctified by the blood of animals (**Hebrews 9: 22**). And then he tells us that this earthly Tabernacle was merely a copy of a true, heavenly reality.

It is in this place, the actual Tabernacle in heaven, that Jesus' High Priestly ministry is completely unique. It is for this reason that Christ is alone the mediator of a New Covenant (**Hebrews 9: 15**). As our reading for today emphasizes "it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a manmade sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."

What is more, unlike the earthly priests who had to enter the copy Tabernacle or Temple year after year, with annual sacrifices that only covered sin, our High Priest Christ has entered the true Tabernacle once, to do away with sin forever. Christ did not have to enter many times since the Creation of the world but only once, now, at the end of the age, to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (**Hebrews 9: 26**).

So now we are the blessed recipients of two eternal ministries which we see taking place in two true tabernacles or temples, neither of which have been made with human hands. Christ, our High Priest, ministers in the true heavenly tabernacle (**Hebrews 9: 23-26**); the Holy Spirit ministers in our bodies and lives, using the same blood to cleanse our consciences from guilt (**Hebrews 9: 14**).

>> PRAYER

Lord, thank you that I can now serve you, the living God, because I am utterly and completely and forever cleansed of all sin and unrighteousness through the work of my High Priest in the heavenly temple and the work of the Spirit in this earthly temple, my body.

**"A GREAT (HIGH) PRIEST OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD"
HEBREWS 10: 19**

>> READING: 1 Peter 2: 4, 5

We have immersed ourselves in the study of our High Priest's earthly and heavenly ministry over the last month (a ministry that continues over the house of God) and have surely been inspired to respond.

Evaluate your response against the 5 'let us's' that the writer to the Hebrews penned in **Hebrews 10**.

1. Let us *draw near* to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience (**Hebrews 10: 22**).
2. Let us hold unwaveringly to the *hope* we profess for He who has promised is faithful (**Hebrews 10: 23**)
3. Let us consider how we may *spur one another on* to toward love and good deeds (**Hebrews 10: 24**)
4. Let us not give up *meeting together* (**Hebrews 10: 25**)
5. Let us *encourage one another* – and all the more as you see the Day approaching (**Hebrews 10: 25**)

When it comes to New Year's resolutions, you couldn't find finer. I invite you to join me in spending much more time with God in 2010, reminding yourself that God is faithful and that you have a great hope, in spurring your Christian friends on in acts of goodness, in resisting the temptation to watch TV or lie in instead of joining with other believers in corporate worship and in facing up to the sober realisation that this world is coming to an end and we need to encourage one another to stay faithful to Jesus.

>> PRAYER

My Lord, my High Priest. Keep me faithful. Keep me faithful.

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