

Jesus, Our High Priest

Bill Brinkworth

In Hebrews 8, Paul gives the Hebrew believers five more reasons Christ is the better High Priest:

1. Christ, our High Priest, is sitting. No Levitical priest ever sat because their work was never done. There were no chairs in the tabernacle or temple. Here, our Priest's one-time sacrifice is complete, and Jesus is seated (Hebrews 8:1). Jesus' earthly ministry is finished!
2. Christ, our High Priest, is at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 8:1). No Old Testament priest ever saw God, let alone sat next to Him, as does Jesus.
3. Christ is the minister of the "sanctuary and the true tabernacle" (Hebrews 8:2-4). All the Levitical priests ministered in a God-ordered but man-made tabernacle and later a man-made temple. The tabernacle was not perfect, although created as God relayed its design to Moses.
4. All the earlier levitical priests presented a "shadow," or picture, of heavenly things to come (Hebrews 8:5). Christ's ministry is not a picture of

anything to come. It is the real thing!

5. Christ's ministry is a "more excellent ministry" than any earthly priest ever had. The Old Testament priests represented all people. They mediated with God for all the people; however, few had a direct audience with the priest. We, as Christians, have an audience with the perfect High Priest, no matter who we are.

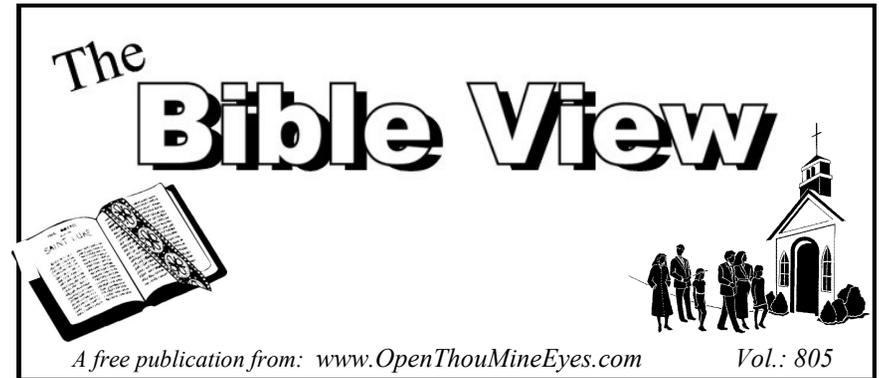
Christ's ministry is "more excellent" because it comes with a "better covenant," a better agreement between God and man. Although Paul sites the old covenant as faulted (Hebrews 8:7), it does not imply that God made a mistake with the old agreement. That agreement was good for that time and met its purpose — to show man could not make a worthy sacrifice himself. The sacrifice had to be made by His perfect Son, Jesus!

This explanation of the past priests and our current Priest can help today's believers understand more of what Jesus did for them and who He is. He is the most "excellent" priest (Hebrews 8:6), with a ministry many throughout past ages have awaited.

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Christ, Our "Middleman"

Bill Brinkworth

During Old Testament times, priests served as mediators between God and man, presenting their prayers and sacrifices to Him.



Before Moses, the priests' duties were often done by the head of a household, as did Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Moses' day, God appointed priests from the Levite lineage. These practices were intended only to continue until the perfect priest came, Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament priesthood was not perfect. Its limitations were:

- ◆ The priests were ordained ("appointed by") by men, although they were of an ancestry ordered by God (Hebrews 5:1). Not just any man could be a priest.

- ◆ They had to go to God with sacrifices and gifts (Hebrews 5:1, 3). The offerings were not a one-time gift. They had to be offered more than once. They were only temporary appeasements to a Holy God.
- ◆ The priests themselves were sinners. They also had to give an offering for themselves (Hebrews 5:2, 3).

Soon the priesthood stopped. The sacrifices halted. Intercessory prayers and gifts to God ceased, but man still desperately needed a mediator between him and God.

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Our Mediator

Bill Brinkworth

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

1 Timothy 2:5

What wonderful news it must have been to the Jews, who were familiar with Old Testament-worshiping when they learned

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Christ, Our Middleman

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God then sent mankind the perfect priest. Man did not appoint him. That priest only had to make one offering for ALL of mankind's sins. His sacrifice covered sins past, present, and future. This priest was not of Levi's lineage. He was very much like a priest of Abraham's time — Melchisedec.

Like Melchisedec, whose name means "king of righteousness," this God-appointed priest was the real King of righteousness. This priest was God's only begotten son — Jesus! Jesus' one-time sacrifice that never had to be re-offered was His own life.

Unfortunately, many have not allowed God's High priest to be the sacrifice for their sins. Too many have rejected Jesus and are still appointing priests. No matter what those sincere people offer to God, it will be refused by the Creator. They are doing it their way and are rejecting the sacrifice Jesus made for them on the cross.

The Old Testament priesthood was for another time, a time before God had sent the perfect Priest. Today we have the privilege of going to that

High Priest, which is not sitting in some temple or church but is sitting at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. We can accept His offering on the Cross to cover all our sins. After we have accepted Him as our Saviour, we can go to Him anytime with our prayers and needs. We no longer need an imperfect middle man. We have the perfect mediator — Christ Jesus.

Our Mediator

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they could go to God themselves in prayer. Before Jesus' death on the cross, they had priests go to God as middlemen for them. After the sacrificial death of Christ, they could enter the "Holiest of Holies," the closest place any man could be to God, by themselves through their prayers (I Timothy 2:1).

However, then and even today, many believe they cannot go to God themselves. Those folks still, if they realize it or not, are attempting to worship the way it was done in Old Testament times.

Some go to a "priest" in a confessional and tell him their sins. With his words and doing what he tells them to do, they

believe he can order their sins to be forgiven. They trust the "priest" to be their mediator between them and God.

Some pray to deceased biblical characters hoping that a "saint" can be the middleman between them and God to have their sins forgiven or requests granted.

Sincere as those people are, what they are doing is contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. I Timothy 2:5 tells us there is only one mediator between God and us, and that is Jesus Christ.

We no longer must present a perfect, unblemished animal sacrifice for the high priest to take its blood through the temple's curtain to the Holiest of Holies, as in the Old Testament. When Christ died, God ripped that veil in two from top to bottom. Now, any believer can go to God in prayer through Jesus Christ.

Telling a person, be it priest, parent, or any other person, one's sins will not remove the consequences of one's iniquity from God's memory. Those people may want to help, but they too are sinners in need of the only true Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Going to anyone else other than Christ to meet a need in one's life or receive help from God will not result in God answering one's prayers. The one qualified to go to the Father on our behalf is His Son, Jesus. He is the only mediator between God and man.

Christ Is Our Intercessor

F. C. Feus

"... And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation [atonement; reconciliation of God and man] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." I John 2:1-2

Christ is our intercessor (a negotiator between two parties) to the Father. He is there today advocating (pleading the cause of another; another's defender) our cause. Whether He presents His petitions in words or not, I cannot tell. Perhaps His presence there is quite enough.

Qischylus was condemned to death by the Athenians and about to be executed. His brother, Amyntas, had distinguished himself in his country's service, and just as his brother was condemned, he entered the court. He came in, and, without saying a word, he lifted his arm — a stump, for he had lost his hand in battle. He lifted it up in the sight of all but said not a word. When the judges saw this mark of suffering, they forgave the guilty brother for the sake of him who had imperiled his life on behalf of the country.

Perhaps Jesus Christ has only to present Himself before His Father's throne and show the marks of suffering to get acquittal and pardon for us transgressors.

"A mediator is considered in two ways, by nature or by office. Jesus is a mediator by nature, as partaking of both natures, divine and human. Our Saviour is a mediator by office, as transacting matters between God and man." — Waterland