THE HIGH PRIEST

**DATE: 11/20/2013 Wed.**

**TEXT: Hebrews 5:1-4**

**INTRODUCTION**

In our last study we saw Jesus as Our Great High Priest

Having introduced the subject of the High Priest in **Chp. 4**

… We now continue in the same thought in **Chp. 5**

Beginning here the writer Defines and Describes, the Role and Function of the High Priest

By doing so, the writer is laying the foundation to show us that Jesus is Better than Aaron and his successors

Since there is so much said about the High Priest in the book of Hebrews, especially the next 5 chapters …

I want to limit our study to these four verses

The office of the High Priest is a fascinating study, as we shall see

He served in a distinct role in the religious life of the nation of Israel

His every function was appointed and arranged by God

As a High Priest, he was in charge of the Tabernacle and Temple worship

The office was hereditary, from the Tribe of Levi

An office that was passed down from the first High Priest, Aaron, to his sons and descendants

It was an office that was held for life

The High Priest was known as ***“the priest,”*** ***“the anointed priest,” “the priest who is chief among his brethren,”*** ***“chief priest,”*** and ***“high priest”***

A special degree of holiness was required of the high priest

- This meant he had to avoid defilement by contact with the dead

- He could not leave the sanctuary precincts

- This identified the high priest as one totally dedicated to the Lord …

- As one always ritually pure and ready to serve the Lord

The consecration of the high priest was an elaborate seven-day ritual involving special baths, putting on special garments, and anointing with oil and with blood

As he served, he wore special garments as he carried out his function as a High Priest

The garments of the high priest included, (handout)

- A blue robe with an ornate hem decorated with gold bells and embroidered pomegranates,

- An Ephod (apron like) of fine linen with colorful embroidered work

- Shoulder straps held up the Ephod bearing stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes,

- He wore a breastplate with twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes,

- A linen turban with a gold plate inscribed *“Holy to Yahweh”*

There was also a profound spiritual significance for his vestments

He bore the weight of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart

The bells (says **Exodus 28:35**) were worn so that ***“his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not”***

And, of course, the gold-etched *“Holy to* *Yahweh”* was the summary of the high priest's great task

As High Priest, he not only held a unique office, but was given a unique privilege

He was the only person who was allowed in the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies

This, he would enter on the Day of Atonement, once a year

In **Hebrews 5:1-4** we learn several things about the High Priest

Let’s pray and look at these four verses and ***“The High Priest”***

Always keeping in mind that Our Great High Priest, Jesus

… Is Superior / Better

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First lets Notice -

**I. THE “DIVINE APPOINTMENT” OF THE HIGH PRIEST**

We read **v. 4 - *“And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron”***

- This was not an office that someone chose as a vocation

- There were no applications submitted to become a priest

- There was no school you could attend in order to earn a degree that would qualify you to serve as a high priest

It was an office held by those ***“called of God”***

It was an office of honor

The word ***“honour”*** speaks of that which is *of great value*

It speaks of the office of the high priest as being held in the highest regard and integrity

It was an office that no doubt, many desired, seeing it was such an honorable office,

But, only those ***“called of God”*** could serve in this office

Matter of fact when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram …

.. insisted on trying to democratize the priesthood … and claimed that any Israelite could be a priest …

The Lord caused the earth to swallow them up (**Num. 16)**

The writer is stating that ***“Aaron”*** and his sons, were called of God and set apart to serve in this role

We read in **Exodus 28:1** - ***“And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons”***

**Numbers 3:10 – *“And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death”***

Aaron and his descendants were Divinely Appointed to serve in the office of the High Priest

We read in **v. 1 -** ***“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:”***

First we see that the High Priest was -

**A. Chosen ‘From’ Man**

He was ***“taken from among men”***

Angels were not chosen to serve as high priest

No celestial being was given this honorable office

The high priest was taken from man

His office, in one sense, linked him to God,

But it also linked him to man;

Therefore he must be a partaker of man kind

He was **A** **Man, Chosen ‘From’ Men**

The reason he was Chosen ‘From’ Man was because he was -

**B. Chosen ‘For’ Man**

He was ***“ordained for men”***

He was not only a man, but he was God’s man

He was ***“ordained”*** by God

***“ordained”*** means *Designated* or *Appointed*

Again, this was an office in which only those called of God could serve

The High Priest was chosen **‘From’** man **‘For’** man

He was ***“ordained for men in things pertaining to God”***

- As a Man he would Represent Men before God

- As a High Priest he Represented God to man

You could call him the Mediator (Someone Between)

**THE “DIVINE APPOINTMENT” OF THE HIGH PRIEST**

Secondly, we see –

**II. THE “DISTINCT ASSIGNMENT” OF THE HIGH PRIEST**

The high priest was chosen by God and given a Distinct Assignment

His Distinct Assignment was ***“that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins”***

The primary role of the High Priest was the offering of the sacrifices to God

The word ***“gifts”*** means *presents* and speaks of the sacrifices that are brought to be offered...

Three times in Hebrews the writer uses the term ***“gifts and sacrifices”*** (**5:1, 8:3, 9:9**)

It’s a general term that speak of all the sacrifices that were offered

- As a ***“gift”*** it speaks of something that was brought willingly

- As a ***“sacrifice”*** it speaks of something that was offered at a cost

It says a lot about a person, who Willingly Sacrifices

As the High Priest, he was chosen of God, to offer the sacrifices that were offered Daily and Annually

As we look close we see -

**A. The ‘Purpose’ of the Offerings**

 In **vs. 1 & 3** we see that the sacrifices were offered ***“for sins”***

In **Leviticus 1-7** we are given a detailed description of Israel’s sacrificial system

There are 5 specific offerings that are mentioned –

- the Burnt-offering

- the Meat (grain) offering

- the Peace offering

- the Sin offering

- the Guilt offering

When the writer of Hebrews speaks of the ***“gifts and sacrifices”***

He is speaking of those that were intended to make atonement (payment) for sin

The very existence of priesthood and a system of sacrifices gives evidence that man is estranged from God

It was an act of grace on God's part that He instituted the whole Levitical system

Every sacrifice was a reminder of man’s sin and the need for the atonement of sin

The sacrificial system declared the Love and Grace of God

In that, He made a way whereby man could be redeemed from their sin

Of course, the sacrifices spoke of the One who would be the eternal sacrifice

**The ‘Purpose’ of the Offerings**

Then we see -

**B. The ‘Picture’ of the Offerings**

We are reminded in **Hebrews 8:5** that the priesthood and the sacrifices were in themselves a picture

We read - ***“Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount”***

Each offering pictured (pointed to) the Lord Jesus

The High Priest was a man for man

As man, he identified with men

As man he offered sacrifices for the sins of men

The Lord Jesus became man that He might offer Himself as the sacrifice for sin

Each lamb that gave its life as a sacrifice pointed to …

The Lamb of God; Who would take away the sins of the world

The blood of the sacrifices pointed to the blood Jesus would shed when He gave His life for man

The Purpose of the Offering was ***“for sins”*** …

But pictured the Lord Jesus who would offer Himself ***“for sins”***

**THE “DIVINE APPOINTMENT” OF THE HIGH PRIEST**

**THE “DISTINCT ASSIGNMENT” OF THE HIGH PRIEST**

Thirdly, notice -

**III. THE “DEFINING ATTITUDE” OF THE HIGH PRIEST**

The writer of Hebrews describes the attitude in which the High Priest was to offered the sacrifices

This Attitude Defined the Qualities and Characteristics of his Priesthood

First, we see -

**A. An Attitude that was ‘Shown Publicly’**

We read in **v. 2 -** ***“Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way”***

One of the reasons the high priest was chosen from man was so he could relate to man

The word ***“compassion”*** means *to deal gently*

It speaks of someone who cared about those he represented and dealt gently with them

The word was used classically to define a course of conduct that was the middle-of-the-road between anger and apathy

As Christians we have to deal graciously with people who sin, even those who don’t seem to care

The same was true for the priest

It would have been easy to get angry at certain people;

However, he had to show Love and Mercy

He had to be Compassionate

He had to bridle his feelings as one who was called to represent God

The writer speaks of two specific kinds of sinners in which the high priest would be confronted

- There were the ***“ignorant”***

These are those who did not know better

- There were also those ***“out of the way”***

This speaks of those who knew better and sin willfully

What a great lesson we see in how the high priest was to deal with others when they sinned

- He did not Condone sin, but he Cared for the sinner

- He did not seek to Destroy the sinner, but Deliver him

He Distained the sin, but Loved the sinner; he reached out and he reached up

I’ve known a few *“spiritual law enforcers”* in my day

If they saw something or knew something that was wrong …

It was their ministry to make it right, but in all the wrong ways

(The Bible has a way of dealing with offenses)

They were always ready to point out the faults of other

But, if you tried to point out their faults, watch out!

I am thankful that the Lord Jesus did not treat me the way some Church members treat others

He would have thrown me headfirst into hell without an ounce of mercy

Thank God He showed me Mercy and Compassion

**An Attitude that was ‘Shown Publicly’**

Furthermore we see -

**B. An Attitude that was ‘Sensed Personally’**

We read in **vs. 2b, 3** **–**

***“for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” “And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins”***

He also realized that He himself was a sinner, even though he was a priest,

He was no better than any person who came to him

Like all those he offered sacrifices for, he had to offer for himself a sacrifice

When we deal with others who sin, we must never forget that we ourselves are sinners!

We are no better than anyone else for we are as much a sinner as they

I think of Paul’s words in **Galatians 6:1 -** ***“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”***

Paul was speaking of someone who had fallen and how we should seek to restore them

We are to reach out to others considering ourselves

Our attitude ought to be, *if not for the grace of God, there go I*

The High Priest held an honorable position and with that position were certain divine privileges

It was a position that had been given to him by God

The role of representing man to God and God to man

Yet, he was to never forget that he himself was but a man and a sinner like all he represented

It would do us all good to remember the same

**CONCLUSION**

Let me close with a few verses

**Rev. 1:6 –** ***“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”***

**Rev. 5:10 – *“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”***

We may not carry out the Responsibilities of the OT High Priest

But we still have a responsibility to …

- Represent Man to God – intercessory prayer

- Represent God to Man – Proclaim Salvation

- Offer ourselves has a sacrifice – **Rm. 12:1 – *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”***

**THE “DIVINE APPOINTMENT”**

**THE “DISTINCT ASSIGNMENT”**

**THE “DEFINING ATTITUDE”**