

# THE INTERCEDING PRIEST

**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Jesus fulfills the office of priest, interceding on behalf of people and by becoming the sacrifice necessary to purify them of their sin.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Hebrews 4–10

**+** **SETTING:**

A priest is one who stands in the gap between God and man, bringing man's sins to the forgiving God and God's forgiveness to needy man. In Jesus, we find the perfect Priest. We have seen how His priesthood came to pass. He was anointed at Bethany by Mary. He initiated a new covenant with God's people through the Lord's Supper. He was betrayed and given over to become the sacrifice for sins. In Jesus, we have not merely a priest but the ultimate Priest. He is the fulfillment and completion of the office.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**Hebrews 7:1-28**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Hebrews 7:23-25**

## NOTES



## KEY DOCTRINE #53:

### CHRIST AS PRIEST

As our great High Priest, Jesus accomplishes the work of reconciling us to God. He is the One whose perfect righteousness is presented to the Father for our justification. He is the One who intercedes for us before the Father (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24) and prays for us to remain faithful (Luke 22:31-32; John 17).

Hebrews is the New Testament book on priesthood. It presents Jesus as a certain kind of priest. He's better than the tabernacle-dwelling levitical priests. He's more worthy than the high priest of Israel. He's more qualified than the most perfect of Israel's mediators. Because of the kind of priest Jesus is and the appointment from God as both Priest and Son, He alone is able to save in a fully effective and eternal manner.

We need a high priest like this. The levitical priests could not accomplish the deepest desire of God for His people. They could not bring His people close enough to His heart because they themselves lacked the very holiness that was required to usher God's people into God's throne room. We needed a high priest who was radiantly holy and completely innocent, one that could bring us with Him into the innermost place of heaven to be with the Father in His holiness. Jesus is that perfect Priest—Jesus alone.

**How does knowing Jesus saves completely and intercedes for us comfort you?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

Hebrews 7:26–8:13

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Hebrews 7:26-28

## NOTES

Under the old covenant, worshipers would draw near to God through imperfect sacrifices. Under the new covenant, Jesus invites us to draw near to God through His perfect sacrifice. The law was insufficient to save sinners. It was only a shadow, not the substance. This was an important point for the book of Hebrews' original audience, who were being tempted to retreat into a life under the law. Perfection could not be attained by the law (7:11). It took a perfect sacrifice from the perfect Priest to make sinful people perfect.

Our sins create in us a desire for forgiveness. We don't want to live under the consequences of our sin anymore. We need someone to save us from the mess that we have made of our lives. God provided the Day of Atonement as an annual event to forgive the sins of the people, including unintentional sins. It was cleansing, but not an eternal cleansing. It was more a reminder of sins than a remover of sins. That it was repeated annually was proof that it was insufficient. If we are to have our conscience purified, we need more than the blood of goats and bulls. We need human blood to atone for human sin. In Jesus, we have it because He is our great High Priest.

**How does knowing Jesus serves as our High Priest today change the way you worship Him?**

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Unlike previous priests, Christ as priest endures forever. His priesthood never ends and his priesthood saves, so as a result, his ministry of intercession for those who draw near to God through him never ends."<sup>1</sup>

—R. Albert Mohler Jr.

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Romans 8:31-39**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Romans 8:34**

## NOTES

The logic of the gospel is found in Romans 8:34: Jesus died on the cross and was raised to life, and He intercedes for us at the right hand of God. Without His death, our death would still hang over our heads. When we die, the wrath of God over our sins would remain forever if not for Jesus's sacrifice. But because Jesus died for us, God's wrath is satisfied.

Jesus was raised for us. Without the resurrection, we are without hope in the world. When Jesus rose from the grave, it was the exclamation point on the sentence of life now granted to God's people. We not only are freed from the condemnation of death but are given the abundant life found in the risen Christ.

Jesus is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Right now, believer, Jesus is praying on your behalf. Right now, Jesus is in the presence of God bearing the scars of His perfect sacrifice that atoned for your sins, taking away the judgment of death and wrath that you have earned with your sin. Right now, you are as secure as Christ is. So accept His gift of life and rejoice!

Unbeliever, the logic of the gospel for you is this: You deserve death and wrath for your sin. But Christ has died for sinners to save them and give them eternal life with Him. What is left but to accept it and rejoice? Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).

**How does the logic of the gospel lift your heart to worship today?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

**2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**2 Corinthians 5:21**

## NOTES

Jesus was the only perfect man to ever live. He never once sinned. He never had a sinful thought. He never performed a sinful action. He always obeyed God perfectly. He did that because He is God and He is holy and blameless.

The only perfect man surely deserved better than to die condemned as a criminal on a Roman cross. Yet Jesus gave Himself up and endured the shame of crucifixion. On the cross, Jesus did more than simply die as any other man would. On the cross, God placed our sin on Jesus. He died under the weight of it, drinking the cup of God's wrath. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, God made the sinless Jesus, who did not know sin, to be sin on our behalf so that when we trust in Him, we become His righteousness.

On the cross, Jesus took our sin and bore the penalty for it. He didn't lash out at us. He accepted it as if it were His punishment. Then in a remarkable act of grace, He gave something back to us sinners. He gave us the righteousness of God. Now, because of the cross of Christ, it is not only as if you never sinned but also as if you always obeyed.

**How does knowing Jesus gave us His righteousness change the way you live before God today?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

**Hebrews 9:1–10:39**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Hebrews 9:13-14**

## NOTES

Each and every sin committed against the all-holy God is worthy of eternal punishment. In the Old Testament, when a sinner recognized his or her sin, a sacrifice was brought to the priest, and the priest slaughtered the animal and sprinkled its blood on the altar to make propitiation, or atonement, for the sins of the people. That act was a constant practice. It was something the priest had to do continually on behalf of the people to set them right with God.

Have you ever wondered why we don't do that today? Our sins are just as real as the ones that plagued the saints of the Old Testament, yet there is no priest who slaughters animals on our behalf. That is because Jesus has completed that priestly work in Himself. Jesus was a perfect man who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice. The Priest became the sacrifice, and God accepted it. Now, because of that priestly work, we have no need to make continual sacrifices to God. When Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished," He meant it.

**How does the finished work of Christ encourage you to live for God?**

# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"He always lives to intercede for them expresses all that the Lord Christ, as the high priest of the church, does for us now with God, and upon which the certainty of our salvation depends."<sup>2</sup>

—John Owen (1616–1683)

**POINT 1: Jesus is the permanent Priest**  
(Hebrews 7:23-25).

Where every levitical priest failed, Jesus succeeded. He is now our eternal, permanent Priest.

**?** From Day 2: **How does knowing Jesus serves as our High Priest today change the way you worship Him?**

### KEY DOCTRINE #53: CHRIST AS PRIEST

As our great High Priest, Jesus accomplishes the work of reconciling us to God. He is the One whose perfect righteousness is presented to the Father for our justification. He is the One who intercedes for us before the Father (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24) and prays for us to remain faithful (Luke 22:31-32; John 17).

**?** **How does knowing Jesus saves completely and eternally change the way you interact with God?**

**POINT 2: Jesus is the perfect Priest**  
(Hebrews 7:26-28).

Being holy and blameless, Jesus is our perfect Priest, the fulfillment of all the priesthood was intended to be.

**?** **Knowing Jesus is the only perfect Priest, how does that help us explain to others that Jesus is the only way to salvation?**

The law was a good thing, but it appointed weak men to the priesthood. But God's oath, His promise, appointed a Son to be a perfect sacrifice to make unholy people holy in the sight of God.

**?** **Why would you rather live under God's oath and promise than the law?**

**POINT 3: Jesus is the purifying Priest**  
(Hebrews 9:11-14).

In the Old Testament, the levitical priests offered temporary sacrifices, but Jesus offers eternal redemption through His blood.

**?** **Knowing God desires a relationship with us and has planned everything, even the death of His Son, to save us, how should believers respond?**

If the blood of animals can sanctify, infinitely more does Jesus's blood sanctify, cleanse, and purify us that we may serve Him.

**?** **In what ways can you serve God more, knowing Jesus purifies our conscience so we can serve Him?**

## MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus interceded on our behalf before the Father, we seek to intercede on the behalf of others, pleading to God for their salvation as we tell them how they might be forgiven of their sins through Christ.

- **HEAD:** What benefits of Jesus's priesthood are most precious to you?
- **HEART:** Reflect quietly on what sins you would like to confess to God right now.
- **HANDS:** Who has God put on your heart to intercede in prayer for today?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all, and frees us From the accursed load: I bring my guilt to Jesus, To wash my crimson stains White in His blood most precious, Till not a stain remains."<sup>3</sup>

—Horatius Bonar (1808–1889)