

Christ, Our Priest



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 110:1–5; Genesis 14:18–20; Hebrews 7:1–3; Romans 8:31–34; 1 Timothy 2:4–6; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 2:17, 18; Hebrews 3:6; Hebrews 10:1–14.

MEMORY VERSE: “Here is the point of what we are saying. We have a high priest like that. He sat down at the right hand of the throne of the King, the Majesty in heaven. He serves in the sacred tent. The Lord set up the true holy tent. A mere man did not set it up” (Hebrews 8:1, 2, NIV).

CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND WENT TO THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY.¹ Then He entered into a new part of the plan of salvation (Hebrews 2:17). Now that the requirement of His sacrifice was fulfilled (completed), He was set up as priest, and He began His priestly ministry (work). He now uses His perfect sacrifice for those who are covered, by faith, by His blood. Jesus' priestly ministry comes in two parts. They are symbolized (shown) by the earthly sanctuary:² the daily ministry and the yearly ministry during the Day of Atonement.³

This week we will study the work of Jesus during His daily ministry. We will learn about some of these useful benefits of His work for us. We can receive great comfort from knowing that Jesus is now standing in the presence of God. He is making use of His sacrifice for our benefit. The sanctuary message offers hope and encouragement to even the weakest of His followers.

1. heavenly sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

2. earthly sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

3. Day of Atonement—an event that took place once a year when the earthly sanctuary (home of God on earth) was cleansed by the high priest. Day of Atonement services symbolized (stood for) cleansing from sin and a renewed relationship with God.

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 17**OUR HIGH PRIEST (Hebrews 7:1–3)**

The New Testament book that speaks the most about Christ as Priest is Hebrews. The Old Testament basis for Hebrews is two verses from Psalm 110. The first, verse 1, shows that Christ is honored above all because He sat down at the right hand of God. This is a theme used often in Hebrews. It points to Jesus' position as God and Messiah (Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 12:2). Psalm 110:4 is used to show that Christ's priesthood is symbolized by Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6).

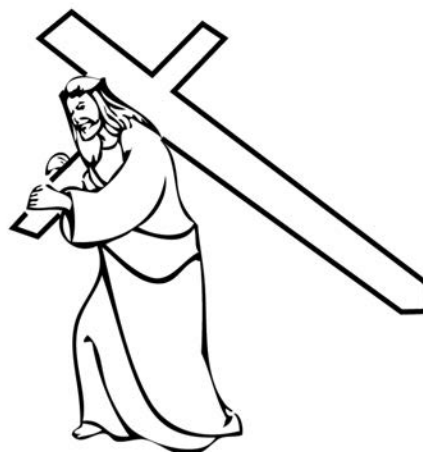
In what ways does Christ fulfill (complete) the promise of a priesthood in the order of Melchizedek? Compare Genesis 14:18–20; Psalm 110:4; and Hebrews 7:1–3.

The Bible does not give much information about Melchizedek. Yet, the Bible does show how much Melchizedek and Jesus are the same. Melchizedek is the king of the city Salem. (Salem means "peace"; so, he is the "King of peace.") It also says that Melchizedek's name means "King of Righteousness [holiness]." This name speaks of his character (who he is). It says he is not well-known in history because his family line is not given. In other words, his birth and death are not recorded. It seems as if Melchizedek has no beginning and no end. And he is a "priest of the Most

High God" (Hebrews 7:1, NKJV). Lastly, Melchizedek's priesthood is higher than the Levitical priesthood. This is because, through Abraham, Levi gave tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:4–10). For all these reasons, Melchizedek is a symbol of Christ.

But Christ is a more powerful High Priest than Melchizedek ever was. Aaron was the first high priest in Israel. Hebrews 5:1–4 gives a description of the Aaronic high priestly office: (1) the high priest was appointed by God, (2) he was a representative of humans, (3) he served as a go-between for God and humans, (4) he was merciful, and (5) he offered sacrifices for the people and for himself.

The book of Hebrews pictures Christ as the new High Priest. He fulfills all the requirements of the Aaronite priesthood and goes even higher than Aaron. Jesus had no sin, was fully obedient, and did not need to bring an offering for Himself. Instead, Jesus Himself was the offering, the most perfect offering possible.



Jesus had no sin and did not need to bring an offering for Himself.

Therefore, Jesus fulfilled both the Aaronite and the Melchizedek high priesthood in a better way than either of those priests, or priesthods, ever did or could. Both were only symbols of Christ.

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 18

ADVOCATE⁴ AND INTERCESSOR⁵ (Romans 8:31–34)

Read Romans 8:31–34. What great hope and promise are offered us here?

The background of verses 31–34 is a courtroom scene. In this scene we should picture ourselves as being on trial. Questions are asked: Who is against us? Who will bring a charge against us? Who can judge and punish us? Such a situation could easily make us afraid. After all, we know that we as humans are not perfect and are sinners.

But we do not need to fear. The promise that nothing and no one can separate us from God's love is based on several important points. God is for us (verse 31). God gave His Son to us (verse 32). God freely gives us all things (verse 32). God forgives us and makes us righteous (holy) (verse 33). And Jesus Christ is on our side. He is the answer to any fear of punishment. This is because He died, was raised, and is now

continuously working for us in the heavenly sanctuary at the right hand of God (verse 34).

If Christ died willingly for us, we should have faith in His love. The sure promise shown in Romans 8:31–39 is really telling us about the kind of God we believe in. We need to understand that our God loves us so much that nothing can stop His purposes for us (verses 35–39). Then God's courtroom becomes a place of joy and celebration.

This truth becomes even clearer in 1 John 2:1, 2. The Greek word *parakletos* means a legal assistant or advocate. This is someone who is on your side as an intercessor. Jesus is our Advocate. He defends us because without Him we would have no hope.

Our Advocate is "righteous [holy]." This gives us the hope that the Father will hear Christ's arguments as our Lawyer. This is because Christ can do nothing that His righteous Father will not accept. After all, Christ works for those who have sinned. He presents Himself as the Sinless One who stands in our place.

How can you better experience the marvelous truth that nothing will separate you from God's love? How can you use this knowledge as the reason to live as God would have you live instead of how you are living now?

4. advocate—lawyer or supporter. Jesus is our Advocate.

5. intercessor—a person who works between two groups. Jesus is the Intercessor who works between God and humans.

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 19**MEDIATOR⁶ (1 Timothy 2:4–6)**

How does 1 Timothy 2:4–6 help us to understand just what Christ is doing for us in heaven?

Christ is called the one Mediator between God and man. There is no one else. This is because no one else is necessary. Through Christ's position as Mediator, salvation and "knowledge of the truth" are available (1 Timothy 2:4). The important question for us all is: will we make use of what Christ has offered to each of us? Our social standing, race, character (how good we are), or past actions will not matter.

Mediator is a word from the old-time Greek business and legal world. It means someone who works between two parties (persons or groups) in order to remove a disagreement or to reach a common goal before starting a contract or covenant.⁷

In Hebrews, Christ as Mediator is connected to the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:24). He has brought humans back to God. Sin had destroyed the close connection between humans and God. And it would have caused humans to be destroyed. But Christ came and restored (made new) the connection. So, He alone is the connection between God and humans. Through this connection, we can enjoy a full covenant relationship with the Lord.

Paul speaks of the "man Christ Jesus." By this Paul means Jesus' special ability to be both human and God at once (1 Timothy 2:5). By being both God and human, Jesus is able to connect heaven and earth with ties that can never be broken.

"Jesus Christ came that He might connect limited man with the eternal God. He also came to connect earth that has been separated from heaven because of sin and law-breaking." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks*, volume 1, page 253.

Think: there is a human being in heaven right now, working as High Priest for your good. What should this tell you about how important you are in the eyes of God? How should this truth influence how you live and how you treat others?



Jesus is the link (connection) between God and humans.

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 20**THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST
(Hebrews 2:17, 18)**

What do Hebrews 2:17, 18; Hebrews 3:6; Hebrews 4:14, 15; Hebrews 7:24–28; and Hebrews 8:1–3

6. mediator—a person who works to make peace or to solve problems between two people or groups. Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God the Father and us humans.

7. covenant—a promise or agreement between God and His people. If the people obeyed God, God would bless them.

show about Christ's ministry (work) as High Priest?

Jesus is the "great High Priest" (Hebrews 4:14, NKJV). He is higher than all high priests and rulers of earth. The Bible lists several reasons why Jesus is our great High Priest. He is:

- *merciful and faithful* (Hebrews 2:17). As Mediator, He gives His gifts to us. That makes Him "merciful." And He is loyal to His Father and to us. That makes Him "faithful."

- *with us*. Jesus can sympathize (understand and show mercy) with us (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 5:2, 7). He has lived as a human; so, we can trust that He is a merciful and perfect Helper. But He is not in the same situation as we are. This is because He is "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

- *over us*. Jesus as High Priest is equal to believers, as Moses was. He is over us, like a son in control of the house of his father (Hebrews 3:6). Christ also has full authority over the saints.

- *as we are*. Being a human did not give Jesus any special rights. He was tempted just as we are (Hebrews 4:15). The temptations in the Judean desert show that He was tempted physically, mentally, and spiritually. This is because He was a human (Matthew 4:1–11).

- *for us*. Christ appears in the heavenly sanctuary in the presence of God "for us" (Hebrews 9:24). He is working as High Priest for us (Hebrews 7:25). Thank God that we have a Representative to appear in

the judgment in our place.

Jesus is in heaven "for us." What does that mean? How can you receive hope, comfort, and safety from this wonderful truth?



Jesus is over us like a son in control of his father's house.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 21

THE ONE SACRIFICE (Hebrews 10:1–14)

An important purpose of the earthly sanctuary service was to symbolize the death and high-priestly ministry of Jesus. Sin is something too terrible to be solved by the death of animals. Instead, all of that spilled blood pointed to the only answer to sin. And that was the death of Jesus Himself. The sin problem is so serious that it took the death of the One who was equal to God (Philippians 2:6) to solve it. This surely shows just how bad sin really is.

Read Hebrews 10:1–14. How do

these verses show the difference between the work of the earthly sanctuary service and the death and high-priestly ministry of Jesus?

Many important truths come out of these verses. One of the most important is that the deaths of all those animals was not enough to deal with the sin problem. “It isn’t [is not] possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4, NIV). They just point to the answer. They were not the answer themselves. The answer was Jesus, His death, and then His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary for our sake.

Notice another important point in these verses: Jesus’ one death was enough to answer the sin problem. The animal sacrifices had to be made again and again, day after day, year after year. But Jesus’ one sacrifice was enough to cover the sins of all people. (After all, just look at who was sacrificed!) God powerfully showed this important truth when the inner veil of the earthly sanctuary was torn after the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:51).

Look around at the world. Look at the damage that sin has caused—the pain, the loss, the fear, the hopelessness. How can we learn, day by day, moment by moment, to hold on to Jesus as the only answer to the sin problem in our own lives?



God showed that Jesus’ death was enough to deal with sin.

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “The Atonement, Part II—High-Priestly Application [Practical Use] of Atoning [Cleansing] Sacrifice,” pages 476–488, in Appendix C of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7A.

“Step away from Satan’s voice and from acting his will. Stand by the side of Jesus, adopting His excellent character [who He is]. He is the One who is sensitive to our needs. He is the One who can make the cause of suffering ones His own. The man who has been forgiven much will love much. Jesus is a loving Friend of humans and a merciful and faithful High Priest. He, the heavenly King of glory, can look upon limited man who can fall to the temptations of Satan. He understands because He has felt the power of Satan’s clever tricks.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christian Education*, page 160.

“The conscience can be freed from guilt. Through faith in His blood, all people may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with things that are impossible. We may claim righteous living. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to worry about what Christ and God think of us. Instead, we are to be concerned about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pages 32, 33.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Read Hebrews 2:17. Why was it necessary for Jesus to become human and to suffer before He could become our High Priest?
- ❷ Think about the final Ellen G. White statement listed above. Look especially at the line: “We are not to worry about what Christ and God think of us. Instead, we are to be concerned about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.” How does this help us to understand what she means about being “made perfect in Christ Jesus”?
- ❸ Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is the Ransom (price paid) for our salvation. He controls the results and benefits of His sacrifice and blood. With Him on our side, we have nothing to fear. How can we profit from these wonderful truths from the book of Hebrews and use them for ourselves, especially when we are greatly tempted?
- ❹ The book of Hebrews is very clear that Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice was all that was needed for dealing with sin. What should that tell us about any religion that teaches the need for this practice to be done again and again for the forgiveness of sins?