

The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: Doctrine

*** Topic: God the Son: His Present Ministry * Heb. 7:18-8:6 * 4/26/26 ***

MAIN POINT

Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven. But Jesus' role in our relationship didn't stop there. Today He lives to intercede for us and is serving as our High Priest in service to God.

INTRODUCTION

Some Grocery stores have started using facial recognition technology to combat shoplifting*, but some customers and lawmakers are raising privacy concerns about the practice. What do you think about the balance between a store's need to crackdown on shoplifting and our right to privacy?

ShopRite stores post signs on their doors notifying customers that facial recognition technology is in use. Customers want to know where their facial data is being stored and with whom it might be shared. Some lawmakers want more protections for consumers, such as requiring consent from customers or mandating that signs be posted.

Much of this concern would be removed if the possessor of this personal information could be totally trusted not to misuse the information they collect. In today's lesson we will be comparing the role of the high priests carried out by flawed sinful human beings in the Old Testament compared to Jesus Christ, who has become our perfect High Priest, in service to God.

** Information from "ShopRite, Wegmans scan customer faces as lawmakers consider privacy protections" (wfsb.com)*

Jesus' role in restoring our relationship to God didn't stop at His death on the cross for our sins. In today's lesson, we will be looking at the present ministry of Jesus Christ now that He has ascended into heaven.

UNDERSTANDING

Note to study leader: Consider writing these descriptions of Jesus on the white board as people read them.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What roles do these verses tell us about Jesus now that He has ascended back into heaven?

- **Philippians 2:9:** God has exalted Jesus to the highest place.
- **Colossians 3:1:** God the Son is now seated at the right hand of God the Father.
- **Romans 8:34:** God the Son now lives to intercede to God on our behalf.
- **Hebrews 7:25:** God the Son now lives to intercede to God on our behalf.
- **1 Timothy 2:5:** Jesus is now the one (and only) mediator that we need between us and God.
- **Hebrews 2:17:** Jesus now serves as our merciful and faithful High Priest, in service to God.

How would you summarize these roles Jesus now carries out?

God has restored Jesus to His position at the right hand of God. And Jesus now prays for us. This role of praying for us is also carried out by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26), when we don't even know what we should be praying for. So, when we pray, we don't need to be overly concerned with the exact wording of our prayers. We just need to pour out our hearts to God, knowing that God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are praying for us with the exact prayers we need.

Jesus is also the only mediator we need between us and God. A mediator is a third party who facilitates communication between two other parties. We can take comfort in knowing we don't need a pastor or a saint or an angel as a go-between between us and God. We can go directly to God through Jesus Christ. This is why we pray in Jesus' name.

Jesus is also our High Priest. The remainder of this lesson will be examining this truth more closely.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What was the role of the priests in Old Testament Israel as described in these verses?

- **Leviticus 1:5:** Offering sacrifices.
- **Leviticus 16: 14-16:** The high priest would enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for themselves, as well as the sins of the people.
- **Numbers 6:22-27:** Pronouncing blessings on the people.
- **Leviticus 16:6-8:** Declare people as either clean or unclean.

How would you summarize these roles of the priests in Israel?

A difference between the priests and the prophets in Israel has been described like this. The prophets came to the people on behalf of God, while the priests came to God on behalf of the people.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 4:14-16

What is significant about Jesus being the “great high priest” rather than just a “high priest”?

Jesus “passed through the heavens” (v. 14), a fact that emphasizes His transcendence. Though He is God, Jesus chose to become our great high priest by sacrificing Himself for our sins. Since Jesus is coequal and coeternal with God, He demonstrates the depth of God's mercy in determining to identify with us and serve us as our great high priest.

In what ways is Jesus a better priest than the high priests of the past? How does the fact that Jesus' sacrifice was made once and for all, while the other priests' sacrifices had to be made yearly, make Him a better priest?

Why did Jesus have to be fully human in order to fulfill his role as our “great high priest”?

With verses 14-15 in mind, why can we now “approach the throne of grace with boldness” (v. 16)? What does it practically look like to approach God in boldness?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 7:22-28

How does Jesus compare with Levitical priests? Why is this significant?

How would you describe the limits faced by a Jewish priest? How does each limit point to the need for a better priest?

According to this passage, what makes Jesus the only perfect Priest? How does this help you have confidence in Him?

Because Christ was sinless, He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself. This contrasts with earthly priests, who offered animal sacrifices for themselves as well as the people. Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is uniquely qualified as High Priest because He lived on earth yet remained sinless. He did not first become perfect and then become High Priest. He was perfect from the beginning.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 9:11-15

How did Christ eliminate the need for the ritual of sacrifice? Why is this significant to believers?

Earthly high priests had to make animal sacrifices to God regularly on behalf of sins, but Jesus' sacrificial death is a once-for-all sacrifice—"by His own blood."

Rituals, part of the old covenant, were only symbolic acts foreshadowing the redemptive work of Jesus.

To what does "good things" (v. 11) refer?

Christ secured blessings for believers by His sacrificial death. Jesus continues to bless His followers by His presence in their lives on a daily, ongoing basis.

How does Jesus' sacrifice compare to the old system? Why is it superior?

How does the fact Jesus is the Perfect Mediator impact our understanding of your need for Christ?

A mediator is someone who goes between one person and another, often to settle disputes or differences. Mediators in the old covenant were sinful humans. They mediated between sinful humans and the Almighty God. Under the new covenant, Christ now serves as our perfect mediator.

It's popular today to believe all religions lead back to God. But the reality is, we as sinful people on our own efforts or merit cannot enter the presence of our Holy God the righteous judge. We are very blessed that our Holy God made even one way for sinful people to regain access to Him, and this at extremely high cost to Him, the death of His only Son, whom He loves. How can we escape if we ignore so great a salvation (Heb. 2:3-4)?

How does verse 15 offer hope? Which parts encourage you most?

We can approach God directly through Christ. His death eliminated the need for a human go-between. Christ's death eliminated the need for ritual sacrifices to remove our sins. Christ's sacrificial death offers "the promise of the eternal inheritance," or life eternal.

APPLICATION

Is there any wrong understanding you have about Jesus as our high priest that keeps you from approaching God's throne of grace with boldness?

What religious rituals do you feel tempted to depend on to keep you right with God? Where do you need to fully accept the fact that Christ's sacrifice is the only means to get right with God?

Is there any area of life in which I need a clear conscience? Do I need to forgive myself, based on the fact Christ has paid for that sin and I am already forgiven by God? Is there someone else I need to seek forgiveness from?

PRAYER

Close in prayer by thanking God for the perfect mediator in Jesus Christ. Thank God that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding before God the Father for me. Thank Him for His promised help in our time of need. Ask Him to strengthen us as we live for Him this week. Pray that you and your group would seek to take hold of the kind of intimacy God desires with us that has been made available through Jesus. Ask Him to help us prioritize our time, resources and thinking around our relationship with Him made available to us through our mediator and High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note to study leader: Since this lesson is comprised of many individual passages from scripture rather than one larger chunk of scripture, the usual Commentary section is not included in this lesson.