**Christ Is the Perfect High Priest (Hebrews 1-10)**

The letter was addressed primarily to Jewish converts who were familiar with the OT and who were being tempted to revert to Judaism.

The theme of Hebrews is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as mediator of God’s grace.

Israel’s sin had continually interrupted God’s fellowship with His chosen and covenant people, the Israelites. Therefore, He graciously and sovereignly established a system of sacrifice that symbolically represented the inner repentance of sinners and his divine forgiveness. When the Jews received the Law of Moses at Sinai, the Lord gave commands regarding a formal priesthood for Israel and determined the responsibility of the priests.

The priests of Israel:

* a group of qualified men from within the tribe of the Levites who had responsibility over worship service in the tabernacle and, later, the temple of God
* as mediators between man and God.
* bore the responsibility of offering the animal sacrifices on behalf of the people.
* only the priests who were permitted to enter the Holy Place in the tabernacle and, later, the temple of God
* All priests were to be Levites, but not all Levites were priests.
* The priests among the Levites were given the immeasurable privilege of doing service in the tabernacle. They also served as judges (Deuteronomy 17:8–13) and teachers of God’s law (Deuteronomy 33:10).
* The Levites who were not priests were given various duties in the caretaking of the tabernacle and its furnishings (Numbers 3:21–26).

The high priest:

* Among the Levitical priests was the high priest.
* only one high priest at a time
* The high priest was the supreme religious leader of the Israelites.
* The first high priest was Aaron, the brother of Moses.
* The office of the high priest was hereditary, so Aaron’s sons and their descendants were to serve as the future high priests of Israel
* Only the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and temple, and that only once per year on the Day of Atonement.

Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16):

* the tenth day of the seventh month of every year
* The most important duty of the high priest was to conduct the service on the Day of Atonement
* First the high priest made a sacrifice for himself and for the people
* he then brought the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, God’s “throne”, the symbol of God’s very presence
* He did this to make atonement for himself and the people for all their sins committed during the year just ended.

However, the need for sacrifices never ended because the people and priests continued to sin.

The need of all mankind is for a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice that would once and for all remove sin. God’s provision for that perfect priest and perfect sacrifice in Christ is the central message of Hebrews.

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| The high priest of Israel | The High Priest Jesus Christ |
| Chosen from among men | Chosen from among men. Jesus Christ is 100% man and 100% God |
| Appointed by man | Appointed by God the Father. “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; as God says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 7:17) |
| Imperfect, sinful | Perfect, sinless |
| Need to make a sacrifice for himself | No need to make sacrifice for Himself as He is without sin. |
| Serve in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and temple, symbol of God’s presence | Serve before the presence of the Holy God |
| Bring the blood of the sacrificed animal | Bring His own blood |
| Perform yearly sacrifice for atonement of his own sins and the people’s sins | Offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins of His people |
| Temporary | Forever. Hebrews 7:24 – but He holds his priesthood permanently, because He continues forever.  He always lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him. |

Jesus is the high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

* We belong to God, Jesus bought us back (redemption) with His sacrifice (atonement).
* He covers our sins and take away our sins (expiation) so we can return to God.
* The result of Christ’s work of expiation is propitiation - God’s anger is turned away, we are restored into fellowship with Him.

The Levitical priesthood was not permanent. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross put an end to the old covenant and the Levitical priesthood, as evidenced by the tearing of the temple veil. By entering God’s presence on our behalf by means of the perfect, holy sacrifice of His own blood, Christ has secured an eternal redemption, because His sacrifice is accepted by God. Hebrews 10:12: But when Christ has offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

The Levitical priesthood was part of the old covenant system of sacrifices. It has been fulfilled in Jesus, and we are now under the new covenant. We no longer need continual animal sacrifices. Hebrews 10:18 – Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is no longer any offering for sin.

As Apostle Paul has written, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). There is no other mediator except Jesus Christ, there is no forgiveness of sin except through Jesus Christ. We cannot rely on any other person, we cannot rely on religious rituals, we cannot rely on any other means, only and only on Jesus Christ as it is written in John 14:6 “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Believers in Christ have the perfect high priest through whose ministry everything is new and better than under the covenant of law. Through His death, resurrection, and ascension, every follower of Christ has access to God’s presence with confidence

* by the new life Christ has given us (Hebrews 10:20)
* with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22)
* with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22)

What if we go sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth?

* Expect the judgment from God and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries (Hebrews 10:27)
* Hebrews 10:31 – It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God

This doesn’t mean that if we sin after accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour we will not be forgiven. If we confess our sin and truly repent, Jesus will forgive our sins (1 John 1:9). However, we will receive the consequences of our sins and we will be accountable before God for all what we have done. Romans 14:12 – So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Hebrews 4:13 – And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Our response (Hebrews 10:24-25):

* Although Jesus is the Son of God, he learned obedience through what he suffered. What about us?
* Not neglecting to meet together
* Stir up one another to love and do good works.
* Encouraging one another
* Hold our original confidence firm to the end
* Persevere in the spiritual battles, resist temptations, otherwise we may meet with judgement as did the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:7-11). They were unable to enter the promised land because of unbelief.

Hebrews 3:7-11

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

For group discussion:

* How do you not neglecting to meet together?
* How can you encourage others and be encouraged?
* How can you show love to others?
* From whom can you seek help when you have doubts in your faith, when you are facing spiritual battles?