

Our High Priest – why we can pray

A priest is a representative between God and man. It is the only way to God.

Beginning with Creation, mankind has interacted with God the Spirit in Heaven. A separation exists that goes beyond distance - a condition because of sin. It is the chasm between the timeless and spiritual realm of the God and the physical Creation. The only hope we have of crossing this separation is through God making it possible. He has chosen to use men as priests for this.

There have always been men who were priests of God. After the Fall, a few of those illustrated in the Bible include Adam, Enoch, and Noah. After the Flood were Abraham, Melchisedec, Jethro, and Moses. And after the Law were Aaron, his sons and descendants, Samuel, and Annas and Caiaphas.

God increasingly showed this truth in Moses and the Law

In these people we see God's example of what is required of those who would interact with Him. With the Law being handed down through Moses, and with it His directions to him for the Tabernacle, God began laying out the foundation for our understanding of the priesthood. God was very specific in instructing Moses to carefully follow His design and commands, because the Tabernacle and the Law were facsimiles, or representations, of how God governs. The overall theme is that God has expectations, which he knows we won't meet, and that He alone mercifully provides the way in making up for our shortfall.

Many facets of God's provision are shown through the Tabernacle and its priests— the physical parts of the Tabernacle and the special areas inside of it, the court, the curtain, the alters, the candlestick and Ark of the Covenant, the High Priest, his garments and his duties, the sacrifices and Atonement, and most of all, the Holy of Holies. The High Priest was responsible for utilizing all of these things while representing God and His special people of Israel to each other.

The High Priest's duties centered around service through sacrifices to maintain daily forgiveness for Israel's sins, as well as for offerings to God in worship. The daily morning and evening sacrifices, along with the burning of incense as a part of prayer, were essential to Israel's relationship with God. And finally, the yearly Day of Atonement was the High Priest's most significant responsibility.

In short, the priest was responsible for continually carrying every single issue of his people concerning God, upon himself. It was a demanding and relentless responsibility. Nonetheless, he was commanded by the Law to do this, and all of God's people relied upon him with their very lives.

Jesus was sent to assume the perfect High Priesthood

God stated that He wants His people to grow in useful fellowship with Him. While the Law and the Tabernacle are exactly what God intended them to be, He also knew that they would never be able to achieve what He is ultimately working towards. In the end, He knew His goal was ultimately a superior priest who would utilize the genuine Holy of Holies in Heaven. This priest would be tireless and without any personal sin hindering him, he would have a fully sufficient

sacrifice to satisfy God in both atonement and worship, and he would never surrender his office through death. And finally, he would be of a totally different lineage than that of Aaron and the Levites, because this priest would offer a better covenant.

Jesus' Incarnation and work up through His return to the Father was all in making Him this superior High Priest. With His establishment at the Father's right hand in the Holiest place of all, the old order of the Levitical priesthood was put aside. The covenant through Moses, responsible for establishing that facsimile, is now put aside by a new covenant through Jesus. Every means the old order possessed to carry out their duties has been removed. <<<Today there are no legitimate earthly Levitical priests>>>, no Tabernacle, <<<no sacrifices>>>, nor any atonement that God recognizes as superior from mankind. However, the need of a priest still remains, and the Priesthood continues today through Jesus the Christ.

Every Christian's interaction with God is only through God's perfect High Priest

Anyone who would have interaction and forgiveness from God will still find it through a priest. Because Jesus is the only priest recognized by God, it is quite true when He said 'no one may see the Father, but by Me'. Our service to God in prayer requires our access to God, our being seen without sin, and our faithful priest Who is in constant intercession on our behalf. Our adoption through Jesus paved the way for us to serve God, but we still must be mindful of His continuing requirements from us. Our failure to follow His commands will hinder our ability to serve Him well. Because He tells us to serve Him, and because He has paved the way – except for taking responsibility for our own personal obedience – we must consider what would hinder our work, and strive to do our best for His sake.