

# Priesthood - Part 1

by Ron Bailey

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*The sermon explores the significance of priesthood, emphasizing Jesus as the ultimate high priest and our role as mediators to God.*

**Duration:** 52:05

**Scripture:** Genesis 32:13-15, Psalm 22:1, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 7:1-3, Hebrews 7:25

**Topics:** "Priesthood"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal anecdote about going to Madame Tussauds with his large family and waiting in a queue. He then transitions to discussing the story of Jacob from the Bible, who had been away from his family for many years and was now returning. The speaker emphasizes the frustration of not being able to fully communicate truth and love to others, just as God experienced in the Old Testament. However, the speaker highlights that Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation and final word to humanity.

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## Transcript

I'm thinking that over this weekend I want to talk about priesthood. Really about our priesthood in many ways. But we could have no priesthood unless he had his priesthood.

If you know the Old Testament pattern of priesthood, you know that both the high priest and all the other priests were all consecrated on one day. Did you know that? Originally there were just five priests in Israel's priesthood. There was Aaron and his four sons.

And they were all consecrated at their priesthood on one day. And the main priest, the chief priest, was known as the anointed priest because he was the one who was literally anointed with oil. The others were sprinkled with his anointing.

Some of you ought to be ahead of me by now. They actually shared his anointing. They didn't have their own individual anointing.

They shared his anointing. And they became part of this amazing pattern that God had planned. But there couldn't have been a priest without the high priest.

Everything that those priests did in Old Testament times, they had to do in the presence of the high priest. They did it conscious that his gaze was upon them and that they were functioning not as self-standing

units, not doing their own thing, not pleasing themselves, not deciding that they'd go in this direction or that direction, but people who were looking to the priest, the high priest, to direct them. I don't know whether you often think about being priests.

I know in some countries you have to begin by expecting to be a priest. Because they would have grown up with the idea that a priest is something to do with a religious system. One of the things that itself is in this case, I was a bishop.

A priest has to be made a priest by God. A denomination cannot make a man a priest. A bishop cannot make a priest.

A pope cannot make a priest. Only God can make priests. In fact, only the high priest can make priests.

The fascinating theme that comes, you ought to have turned there, were Hebrews. Send them in to Hebrews and we'll just have a little look at what the writer to Hebrews tells us. There aren't many hymns, you know, written about the Lord's priesthood.

If you were to look at the old Red Book, you might find that most, maybe half a dozen, and one or two more coming through there. But it's not a theme which is taken up and emphasized in the way it should be. Because it's one of the central truths of our salvation.

And I want to show you, if I can, just what the Lord Jesus Christ has become. The only reason that you can be continually saved is because he is continually a high priest. See, it's the only way it can happen.

It's not just a one-off thing. It's because of a process. It's because he is continuing to act as a high priest.

Because he is continuing to be the mediator between God and man. Because the contacts are still good, that's why the life can still flow. Okay, but amen.

Feel free to interrupt me with praise God or anything else. Questions, if you don't understand what I'm saying. Turn with me, please, then to Hebrews, chapter 2. The problem with beginning a theme like this is that you never know quite where to start.

And in the first chapter of Hebrews, we have some amazing statements of who Jesus Christ is. It's almost as though it begins from the highest heights, the greatest, the fullest revelation almost that we have in the Scripture of who he is. And then comes down to this point at which he identifies himself completely with the human race.

So, having told you we'll start in chapter 2, we'll start in chapter 1. This is what it says about Jesus. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, literally in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world. And then it describes Jesus like this.

Who, being the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. This is one of those little passages of Scripture where you have a tremendous sweep. You begin with God in all his glory.

He is the brightness of his glory. He is the express image of the Father's person. Well, as it says here in the first verse, in times past, God spoke in different ways.

His revelation through the Old Testament saints and prophets was partial. It was perfect. Everything that was said was true, but it could never be complete.

Never. Not in that particular dispensation. God kept on revealing truth to them.

There was a progressive revelation, but there came a time when God was able to do what he always wanted to do, which was speak his mind in the Son. I go from time to time to different countries, and I'm not very good at picking up languages like some are. I usually just remember one or two phrases.

Sometimes you're talking to people and you're trying to communicate truth to them, and you are so frustrated because you want to say things, and you don't have the language even to put it into English for the interpreter to get it through. There are times when you're desperate to say what you've always wanted to say, and yet you can't quite find the means of expressing it. Also in the Old Testament, God was like that.

He reached out his arms to a disobedient, contradictory people, all the time wanting to reveal his love to them, all the time wanting to say everything that was on his heart, but his revelation of himself could only ever be partial. Until that day when he was able to say, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. If you remember, a little time later, he repeated those words for the benefit of Peter and James and John, and said, this is my beloved Son, hear him.

Jesus Christ is God's last word. He has nothing else to say. He has said everything that he wants to say.

He has revealed himself in all his fullness in this person that we've come to love. And now, this is why it says here, he has in these last days spoken unto us in his Son. And it speaks of him, the one who was the brightness of his glory, the express image, the exact.

This picture of express, it's almost like a picture of an impression being pressed into something. God revealed himself in Christ. All the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelt in him.

Somehow, wonderfully, we shall never know how, I guess, but in some way, although Berkeley says he was contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man, there was something about Christ in which there was undiminished deity. All the fullness of God was in him bodily. Everything that God wanted to say was here expressed now in flesh and blood.

And it tells us then of what he did, how by himself he purged our sins and then sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. And it's this wonderful sweep that begins in the glory with this one who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, who comes down into our world, identifies himself with the human race, being made sin for us, he who knew no sin, carrying away the sin of the world. And then God, through the resurrection, through the ascension, lifting him up to this coronation, this ascension, this accession where he comes to the throne to reign in the way that he deserves to reign.

It really is a wonderful, wonderful picture in this sweep of him. And then in this next part of the chapter, he begins to explain how the sun is greater than angels and all the angels of God are to worship him. And then he comes into chapter 2 and he begins to talk about the human race.

And in verse 6 he asks this question that comes originally from Psalm 8 and he says, What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? What is man? You made him a little lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honour, and had set him over the works of thy

hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet, for in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

For it became him. Those words always arrest my attention. It became him.

When you say something, it's an old-fashioned way of saying something, you say it becomes someone. It fits them. It's the way it ought to be.

It was entirely appropriate. It was in perfect keeping with what he had come to do and come to be. It says here, It became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

There was something about his coming into flesh and something away about the pattern that God had planned for him, which was absolutely perfectly suited. It had to be. All this that's taking place, all this becoming flesh, all this suffering, all this being identified with the human race, is all part of a process in which the father is fitting the son for something, equipping him for something.

You know how we talk about a fitted suit or a fitted dress or something like that, and that means that it wasn't just taken off the peg, it was hand-tailored. It has been perfectly designed for this purpose, for this individual. Or you talk about wardrobes in your house and they're fitted wardrobes.

It means that they have been prepared specifically for that slot in that gap in between that wall and that chimney rest. They're not random things. They're not off the peg.

These are precision-prepared things when you say it's fitted. Jesus was being fitted for something. He was being perfectly prepared.

Every stage of his life was heading towards a particular culmination, something that God had in his heart. And he speaks here about his identity with the human race. He says, for example, here in verse 11, he says, He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one source.

This is the wonder that Jesus Christ is from our source and he's from God's source. He has his origin in God and he has his origin in the human race. He really is God become man.

The Word became flesh. Not pretending to be human, not just behaving as human, but becoming genuinely human. Why? Why was all this necessary? What was he being fitted for? Well, it comes through here and it says this, for as much then, verse 14, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

For truly he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things, in every particular, in every part of his life, with nothing left out, in all things it was necessary, it behoved him, it was obligatory. He had to be perfectly qualified for something.

All this perfect life that we think of, all those years in the carpenter's shop, hidden in the secret of his father's hands, being prepared, this perfect life, so much of it that we know nothing at all about, every single part of it obligatory. God is working something into him. God is preparing him.

What is God preparing him for? Well, this is why I've taken this long run up. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made alike unto his brethren. He had to become absolutely like you and me.

Absolutely. The incarnation is the first step in God's identification with the human race. He becomes human, he becomes fully human, but there's a part of his experience at that point that he hasn't experienced for himself.

He hasn't experienced sorrow, and suffering, and pain. There comes a point upon the cross, I've already quoted it in this verse, from Paul in Corinthians where he says he became sin for us. He who knew no sin.

Now he's identified completely with the human race. He's made exactly like you and me. Exactly like you and me.

Without personal sin of his own, without any transgression, without any guilt, but having become what we have become. Separated from God. Why, Mark? Yet it tells us that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.

That's why he did it. The goal of all this was so that he could become a priest. Now if I had said to you, at the beginning of all this, why did Jesus die upon the cross? Why did he go through all this? I guess you would have said, well, to take away our sins, to take us to heaven, to make sure we don't go to hell.

All these things would have been true. But this is one of the amazing things about Hebrews, that the letter to Hebrews says, the reason he did all this was so that he could be qualified as a high priest. If he had not gone through all these identification processes, if all these steps had not been taken, he could not have been qualified as a high priest.

And if he had not been qualified as a high priest, there could be no salvation, because salvation has to be mediated to us. It has to come through a channel to us. A priest, you see, really, is a middle man.

He is a mediator. He is a channel. He is someone who links God with that which is not God.

In this, in his incarnation, he is perfectly this. He is the God-man, in perfect harmony with God and man, able to be the living link. It goes on here, it says, that he might be a merciful and faithful priest in things pertaining to God.

One of the things I want to talk about this weekend, if we go the way in which I think we may go, is to talk about our priesthood. What, you know that kind of evangelicals or Protestants at least, usually say that they believe in what's known as the priesthood of all believers. I always tweak these little definitions.

I believe in the potential priesthood of all the regenerate, which isn't exactly the same as the priesthood of all believers. Because to be qualified to be a priest doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to act as one. Maybe you know that there are one or two, more than one or two people in the Old Testament.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel were both priests. Both qualified to be priests, but they never functioned as priests, as far as we know. So, I don't believe in the automatic priesthood of all believers.

I believe in the potential priesthood of all the regenerate. For priesthood is a very glorious privilege. It really is.

It's part of the way that God intended man to be right from the very beginning, that in man there would be a revelation of God. This is why God said, of this creature more than any other, we will make him in our likeness, in our image. In man, God was going to reveal himself to others, I believe.

God would reveal himself through man, to angels, the animal creation, all kinds of things. There was going to be a unique revelation of what God was like through this channel, this person in between. That's why it's such a tragedy that the Scripture has to say we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

For the glory of man was that he should be a bearer of the glory of God. That was his glory. What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou didst is to him.

Amazed him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor. Adam was glory crowned. Our human race was glory crowned in a different way, but in a similar way.

In the way that Jesus was the brightness of his glory, so the human being was to be, in a measure, the brightness of God's glory. He was to be the living revelation of what God was like. That's why it's such a tragedy.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It's not just that we have rebelled against God. We have forfeited our whole destiny.

The whole purpose for our being was lost in Adam's sin. That's the dark tragedy of it all that we only begin to see dimly as we come more into the New Testament. So, he says here, it's in things pertaining to God in verse 17.

See, one of the things I want to say about our priesthood, but I want to say first of all about his priesthood. Let me put it like this. Can you see which way this priest is facing? According to this little phrase, can you see which way this priest is facing? It says here that he might be a faithful, a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.

The point I want to make is this, that a true priest is a priest to God. His first direction, he faces Godwards. Way, way back in the Old Testament we meet the first person to be called a priest.

He's a mysterious character called Melchizedek. And the Scripture just simply says, literally it says, that he was a priest to God. Our Aves says he was a priest of the Most High God, but literally, he was a priest to God.

I suppose if you're anything like me, you'd like to know a lot more about Melchizedek. Just this little glimpse, the curtain just lifts for a moment, and we see this amazing character, this man who knows God, who has a revelation of God that even Abraham doesn't have. This man who is able to bless Abraham because he's greater than Abraham.

This man whose priesthood is greater than the priesthood of Abraham's descendants. This one who is a priest to God. This is the question I want to come on to this weekend, and I want to ask myself as much as I ask anyone else.

Are we really being priests to God? What is the focus of our lives? Are we available for Him? Are we really abandoned to Him? Are we His people? I can remember a lady many, many years ago, giving a testimony. She was a very busy lady, a lady that God used in all kinds of wonderful ways. She was praying

one day, and she just, in her prayer, said, Well, here I am, Lord, your handmaiden.

And he said, No, you're not. And she was shocked. And she said, What do you mean? He said, You're everyone's except my handmaiden.

He said, You're the handmaiden to the church, you're the handmaiden to the women's fellowship, you're the handmaiden to your neighbours, you're the handmaiden to everybody, except me. You're not my handmaiden. It's easy for that to happen.

It's easy for that to happen, for us to become so occupied that we're, we think we're approaching this priest, but actually we're facing him in the wrong direction. You cannot start off facing the world. You have to start off facing God.

Our priesthood has to be God's. And it tells us something very wonderful about the Lord Jesus' sacrifice there. If you've got eyes to see it, it says, In things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Here's a question for you. Who was the sacrifice for on the cross? Who was it for? It was for God. It was for God.

We become so human-centred, so self-centred, that we forget this little truth that comes up way back again in the Old Testament. At the time of the Passover, when God instructed His people to daub the lintels on the doorposts of the houses that they were eating their Passover meal in, and God said this to Moses, He said, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. The blood wasn't for Israel.

The blood wasn't to defend them against the marauding spirit of death that was passing over the land. The blood was for God. When I see the blood, I will pass over you.

I don't know whether people do it quite so much now, but there were times when Christians were constantly applying the blood to things, and they were covering this truck on its way to Eastern Europe with the blood, and I've been in all this, and they were covering something else with the blood, and covering this journey in the blood, and this picture in the blood. We know what that is, and I'm not kind of just being a know-all and pointing the finger. I'm just saying that it obscured a much more important truth, that the blood was for God.

It always was for him. It isn't you who have to be satisfied that the sacrifice of Christ is all sufficient. It's God who has to be satisfied.

It isn't you who has to accept this, although that's the language we use. It's God who has to accept this. This thing has to be perfectly acceptable to God, and if it is, then everything else can flow from it.

But if it isn't, the whole process stops right there. In things pertaining to God, it says here, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Propitiation, I can remember almost the first time I heard the word propitiation as a young Christian, and I loved the sound of it.

I've got no idea what it meant, but it just sounded such a lovely word. I hope you know what it means. There's a wonderful story, a picture of propitiation.

Maybe we'll just pause on this for a moment. If you go back with me to the book of Genesis, and you see this story that happened with Jacob, and it's in Genesis chapter 33 or 32. You know

this story well.

This is the story of wrestling Jacob, and this angel that met him and wrestled with him, and I'm sure folks have taken you through this chapter many a time. There's wonderful, wonderful truth in this chapter. The way that God comes and lays hold on this man, gets a grip on a man who has twisted and turned and ducked and weaved and deluded him for such a long time, and God gets a hold on him at last, and brings him to a place of absolute dependency.

But it's in the middle of another story, and the story's all about Jacob coming home. He'd left home, if you remember the story, because of the anger of his older twin, Esau, who wanted to murder him, and he'd been gone, I don't know how long, fourteen, maybe twenty years he'd been gone. And now God has spoken to him that it's time for him to come back, and Jacob has begun the journey back, but as he gets nearer and nearer to home, he no doubt remembers the ferocity of Esau's anger, and he's afraid.

So, he begins to do something that will appease him. There's an interesting word. There's a generation, some of us here, who know that appease isn't a kind of a word that people use with a great deal of enthusiasm, because of a certain Mr. Chamberlain and a policy of appeasement.

But if you listen to the word appease, you'll hear right in the centre of it another word, peace. Appeasement. It just simply means making peace.

And this is the way that Jacob was going to do it. Well, first of all, he sends a he sends a nice, gracious message to Esau. A message in which he wants to reassure Esau that he isn't going to fight him for the birthright, he isn't going to fight him for the family jewels or anything like that, but that Jacob is coming home not as the greater brother, but as the lesser one.

And this is how it works out in verse 3 of chapter 32. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau, his brother, to the land of Seir, the country of Edom, and he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak to my lord Esau. Thy servant David Jacob saith thus.

Can you see how gracious he is? You can kind of see this oriental man bowing low as he sends this message. Thy servant Jacob. I'm not claiming anything, not making any boasts.

I've sojourned with labour until now and stayed there until now. I have oxen, asses, flocks, men's servants, women's servants. In other words, I'm no threat to you.

Your herds and your crops and everything you've got are quite safe. I don't want any of them. I'm coming home with my own private income.

That's okay. And I have sensed to tell my lord that I might find grace in thy sight. This idea of sight.

Let's pause there for just a moment. Eye contact is very important in the UK. In some countries it isn't so important.

In fact, in some countries it's frowned upon. Younger people are not allowed to make eye contact with their elders, but in our country it's very important. And there are all kinds of ideas that have become part of our language that we hardly think where they came from.

So if we agree with someone, we'll say, oh, we get on well, we really see eye to eye with one another. And it's this picture of being able to look someone in the eye and not having to look away. Not being

embarrassed, because you know that everything is right in the relationship.

You don't need to look away in shame or with a sense of failure, because you know everything is right. Or we may use it in another way. Someone says, well, he said he was going to do this, but he wouldn't look me in the eye when he said it.

Which is saying, it's telling the truth in the opposite direction. If people don't make eye contact with us, we know there's something wrong. We know there's something in the relationship that isn't working the way it ought to be.

And here you've got the same kind of language here. You can study this yourself. It's amazing how often the Bible uses this idea of in God's sight, in his presence.

Whatever it says in God's presence, in the Old Testament, that remains before his face. It's this picture of two people able to look one another in the eye. Now, Jacob had run away, skulking tail between his legs, and now he's coming back.

He wants to be able to look his brother in the eye and know that everything's okay. So, he's sending this word of assurance, first of all. But you know how this works out, don't you? Here it is in verse 6. The messengers returned to Jacob saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he comes to meet thee and four hundred men with him.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. Because he concludes that Esau feels exactly the way he did twenty years ago. That his anger is not abated.

That his wrath is not turned away. That he is just exactly the same as he was. And that if he catches Jacob, he will carry out his threat, which was to kill him.

That's what Jacob fears here. Well, he prays. And because he was this kind of man, he not only prays, he makes some contingency plans as well.

And his own contingency plan is that he will send a very substantial gift to Esau. He'll send it in portions. And what I call it is kind of breaking it down.

It's a gift on kind of higher purchase principle. You pay just a little bit of it at a time. The idea is that when Esau sees this, it will slowly weaken Esau's animosity.

That slowly he'll come to the place where he'll say, yeah, it's alright. It's okay, it's okay, it's okay. Interesting, you know, that we have a... I don't know whether it's an instinct, whether it's part of God's original revelation, that it's still within us.

But there's something in the human race that has a feeling that when something has gone wrong in a relationship, if you can only find the right price, you can put it right. You know, I've said before, it starts off with a little boy who does something wrong and then goes out into the garden and picks the daffodils and brings them back to his mum. He's got some kind of instinct that if he can just find the right price, he can turn away this anger.

And then, of course, as he grows up and he forgets the wedding anniversary and he brings a big box of chocolate, he's working on exactly the same principle. Exactly the same principle. If I can only find the right price, if I can only find the right thing, then I can deal with this, I can put away this thing which has

caused the offence, this thing which has caused the breakdown in our relationship.

I can effect, let me use this word, I can effect reconciliation if I can only find the right price. That is an instinct that goes right to our race. It's the instinct behind all healing sacrifice.

All slaughter of chickens and goats and everything else, it's there always. If I can only find the right price, I can appease this angry God. He'll leave me alone, he won't trouble me, he'll bring me luck, he'll... It's the principle behind it all.

If I can only find the right price, I can effect reconciliation. And it comes through very clearly here in Jacob's thinking. Listen to it.

We'll read from verse 13. And he lodged there that same night and took of that which came to his hand a present where he saw his brother. Look how big a present this is.

Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty wrens, thirty milk camels with their coops, forty kine, ten bolts, twenty shearses and ten folks. And he delivered them into the hands of his servants, every drove by themselves, and said unto his servants, Pass over before me and put a space betwixt drove and drove. This is the gift on the installment plan that he's preparing here.

And he commanded the foremost, saying, When he saw my brother meeteth thee and asketh thee, say, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these things before thee? Then thou shalt say, They are thy servant Jacob. I can still see this big oriental bow. You know, I am not a threat to you.

I am bowing down to you. You are my master and your servant. It's a present sent unto my lord Esau.

It's a bribe actually, but he calls it a present. It is a present sent unto my lord Esau, and behold also he is behind us. So commanded he the second and the third and all that followed the drove, saying on this manner, Shall ye speak to Esau when ye find him, and say moreover, Behold thy servant Jacob is behind us.

For he said, and now you're going to get a little insight into Jacob's psychology. This is the way that Jacob is thinking. He said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me.

Can you see this? I will buy peace with this price that I am going to pay. And then he goes on to say, and afterward I will see his face. There you are.

That's what he wanted. He wanted to be accepted in Esau's sight. He wanted to see his face.

He wanted to be able to look Esau in the eye and know that everything with the relationship was now right again. And this is his attempt here to do it all. Well if you know this story, you know that in the end it wasn't necessary simply because Esau had already forgotten all these things that would never be very important to Esau anyway apparently.

He despised them. They weren't important to him. And then you've got this other thing that works out here where Esau says, you have it, and Jacob says, no you have it.

It always amuses me because I know that the old Jacob would have put his money back in his pocket and gone home and said thank you very much. But something had happened to this man in the meantime where God had got a grip of him and had changed the way he looked. And now he says, you have it.

Have it as a friend. Have it as a gift. I don't need it.

I've got everything I need. That's another story. The point I wanted to make here is that this is this is a really perfect Bible picture of what propitiation means.

Because propitiation is the price paid to remove the offence so that there can be reconciliation. That's what happened. Propitiation is the price paid to remove the offence so that there can be reconciliation.

And when Paul wrote to the Romans, he said, turn with me please to Romans chapter 3. I've got a feeling we've touched on these things before. These are such basic truths to what God has done for us that it doesn't hurt to come back to them again and again. Let's pick up at verse 23.

Romans 3 verse 23 is the verse I kept on quoting. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation. There it is again.

We sometimes say that Jesus paid the price for our sin upon the cross. In fact, if you want to be really accurate, Jesus didn't pay the price. Jesus was the price.

The Father paid the price. It was God who set forth His Son as a propitiation. Because this instinct that if only the right price can be found, the offense can be removed and God's anger turned away and reconciliation effected, that is a true instinct.

But what's wrong with the rest of humanity is that unless you really understand the enormity of sin, the enormity of our rebellion, the enormity of the offense that we have committed in going against God, you'll never understand the value that has to be paid to put away the sin. And we haven't got it. We haven't got it.

We gather together all our resources. We do not have sufficient to pay a price to put away the offense, to effect reconciliation. So, God did it.

God did it. I am, from time to time, I get into conversations with people and we talk about responsibility. Who is responsible for the way I am? Who is responsible for the state I'm in? Is Adam responsible? Is Satan responsible? Is my father or my grandfather responsible? Or my mother? Who is responsible for all this? And whenever we have those conversations, there's always a kind of a thing that at the back of my mind I can hear God saying, I'll be responsible.

I'll take the responsibility. I will pay the price. Everything that this has cost, I will pay this price.

And that's what we have in the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He is a high priest to God. It's God providing a sacrifice which will enable God, you know this is Bible language I'm using, that will enable God to be just and the justifier of those that believe on Jesus, that will allow God to be gracious and at the same time act in utter consistency with His holiness.

We love the little chorus, the little hymn that says, Oh love that will not let me go, but there's a love that will not let us off either. God cannot compromise with us. God's love is a holy love.

It's a holy love. And things must be done righteously and seem to be done righteously. And this enormous gap that has opened up so that we can no longer look God in the face, this has to be dealt with.

And the reason that Jesus became man is so that He could become priest. Because one of the things that a priest did was to carry through a regular act of propitiation. It was a sacrifice.

It was just a symbol in their days. It was something that made it possible for God to continue to live in the midst of an unholy people. It was something which, it was like a pointer, pointing forward to this future event.

Which made it possible for God to deal with these people, to have links with them, to bless them, to guide them. Have I ever told you, well I'll tell you whether I've told you or not anyway. When our family were little, and there was a lot of them, we had seven children, and when we went to places it really was quite a jaunt.

If you were paying, of course, it meant that you were usually in a big queue. And I can remember on one occasion going to Madame Tussauds and being in one of these queues where they had a turnstile, which let a person in when they paid their money. And in front of me we had four of our children and behind us we had three of them.

And the amazing thing was that the person on the turnstile let the first four children in. And they didn't pay a penny because they saw me coming with the money in my hand. And the reason that God was able to be gracious over generations was because He was coming with the money in His hand.

The price was going to be paid in the heart of God. It was already done from the foundation of the world, it was done. Which made it possible for God to be gracious righteously.

For God to justify the ungodly and yet remain holy and godly Himself. And this is why Jesus became a man. He became a man so that He could become at one moment both the high priest and the price that was paid.

Both, what does one of the hymns say? Both priest and victim. Both priest and sacrifice. To make reconciliation, propitiation is the real word, for the sins of the people.

And then it says this in verse 18, I'm going to stop with this. For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. That's an old fashioned word now, succor.

The Greek word behind it is actually two words. One word which means to run and the other one which means to cry. So really to succor someone is to run to the sound of their cry.

It's a wonderful picture of Jesus. He has taken our place, He has stepped into our shoes, stepped into our humanity, become one of us, in order that He would be able to function as a high priest and run to the sound of our cry. I can remember being in a house, this was in another country at this time, and there were one or two children playing, and there were one or two children playing in another room.

And from time to time you'd hear voices arise in the other room and squabbles were taking place at one point. And then at a certain point there was a squeal that went off in this other room and the mother dropped everything she was doing and ran. Because mothers can tell whether they mean it, you see.

They know whether this is a genuine cry for help. And she dropped everything. And it's almost this picture that we have in Jesus someone who runs to the sound of our cry, someone who knows exactly our condition, someone who was perfectly fitted for it, perfectly tailored to understand us.

And this is why he had to become a man. How else would he understand us? How else would he know how we feel? How else would he know these things? Well, I know he would know intellectually, but there are different ways of knowing. And it's this knowing that comes from experience which is the most authentic way of all.

He cried and the Lord heard him. That's one of the things it tells us here. He cried and the Lord heard him.

Let's go back just a little longer too and look at this phrase here in chapter 2 and in verse 12. I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. It's a picture of Jesus and his family.

In another way, it's a picture of something like Aaron and his family because you know that the priests were actually Aaron's flesh and blood. They had Aaron's life in them. Only people who have the priest, the high priest's life in them can really function as priests.

That's the pattern of it here. The amazing thing is that this little quotation about his brethren and him singing praise in the midst of the church comes from one of the darkest parts of the Bible. It comes from Psalm 22.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? That was the place where the propitiation was paid. That was the place where the identification was completed so that he could begin his ministry as a great high priest. Let me show you one last verse.

This is chapter 7. We'll probably come back to some of these verses again. Chapter 7 of Hebrews. Still speaking about Jesus as a high priest.

Calling him a priest like Melchizedek. And in verse 25 he says this. He is able also to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him.

Seeing he liveth to make intercession for them. This is why I was saying that it's only because Jesus is our priest that he can be our saviour. What he did upon the cross was a supreme act the pouring out of all his life in his blood.

But God's love for us has never diminished. It's not as though that was the high point in everything that's been downhill since that point. He's always loved us like that.

God commends his love to us. And while we're yet sinners, Christ died for us. But this is the way he mediates his salvation to us.

He mediates it because we come to God through him. Just as in ancient times people knew they could only approach God through a priest, so we can only approach God through a priest. We can't come on our own strength, on our own achievements.

We can't come because we're more holy than we were last week. We can't come on any basis other than the fact that we have a high priest. And through what he has done, and through the fact that he continually intercedes for us, we can come to him.

And we can know that he will run to the sound of our cry. Let's pray.

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