Lesson 3: The Priesthood

Central Point: Jesus is our Great High Priest and Mediator

So far we have learned that when God gave the law, He also established a Tabernacle, a sacrifice system and a priesthood. The Tabernacle was a physical representation showing the people how to approach God. Tabernacle worship centered around the offerings; each offering uniquely revealed something about the nature of the final sacrifice when God would give Himself on man's behalf. Finally we will discuss the importance of the Levitical priesthood.

- In Exodus 28:1; 29:9, God chose Aaron and his sons to serve Him as priests
- Under the Old Covenant only Aaron and his direct descendants could serve as priests
- Aaron was the first High Priest. At his death, he would be succeeded by his oldest son
- Aaron's sons were to begin their priestly responsibilities at the age of 30- Numbers 4:3
    - Interesting, Jesus began His earthly ministry at the age of 30- Luke 3:23
- **Please Read: Exodus 29:19-46**
- **Question:** "Why were blood sacrifices offered on behalf of Aaron and his sons?"
- These men were sinners like the rest of the people of Israel- Hebrews 5:1-10
- Since they were to represent the people before God, their sins had to be covered

Heb. 7:27-28, "Unlike the other high priests, Jesus does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

The Central figure in the Old Covenant system was the High Priest- Exodus 28. He was the most important person in the entire nation because he represented the nation before God. His priestly clothing was magnificent and rich in meaning - he wore 7 different pieces of clothing. In the Bible, the number 7 represents perfection. So symbolically, the High Priest was perfectly clothed for his position. His garments consisted of fine linen beautifully interwoven with blue, gold, scarlet and purple. Embroidered on the bottom of the robe were golden bells alternating with pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet. Gold represents deity. The purple and scarlet refer to royalty and blood sacrifice. These colors pointed ahead to the time when God, Himself would come from heaven to establish a kingdom with His own blood. As the High Priest walked back and forth inside the Tabernacle, the people outside could not see him. But they could hear the bells jingling. And as long as they heard the bells jingling, they knew the High Priest was alive and representing them before God.

The Day of Atonement

The High Priest had many duties and responsibilities, but his most important duty was to minister on the Day of Atonement- Leviticus 16; 23:26-32. The Day of Atonement occurred during the Gentile months September-October- also known as the day of forgiveness.

- The Jews call it "Yom Kipper" and is the most solemn of all days
- The day for making atonement or covering the sins of the entire nation of Israel
- It's the 1 day of the year when the High Priest goes behind the veil into the Holy Holies
- There he would offer the blood upon the Mercy Seat- upon the lid to the Ark of Cov
- The earthly tabernacle, sacrifices and priesthood were temporary- fulfilled in Jesus
- **Please Read: Hebrews 10:1-4, 11-14**
- **Question:** "Why is it necessary for Jesus to be our Great High Priest?"
- **Please Read: Hebrews 9:11-15**
- Jesus had obtained our eternal redemption for us by His own blood
    - Having entered the heavenly Holy of Holies on our behalf by His own blood

Jesus our High Priest of the New Covenant

God used the Old Covenant Levitical priesthood as a type and shadow of the New and better Covenant we have in Jesus' blood. No more will a man represent another person, now we can all know God personally and approach His throne of grace- Hebrews 4:6; 8:11.

1 Timothy 2:5-6,
For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.

- **Mark 15:38**, when Jesus said "It is finished" the veil separating us from God was split
- **Question:** "What are some wonderful benefits we have in Jesus being our High Priest?"
- For starters, Jesus is God and is perfect and obviously lives forever to represent us
- **Please Read: Hebrews 7:23-25**
- As the Son of Man, Jesus was tempted as we were; never sinned- knows what we need
- **Please Read: Hebrews 2:14-18**
- As high priest and born of God, Jesus has appointed us to serve as royal priests
- **Please Read: 1 Peter 2:4-10**
- We have the priestly duty of bringing people to God through the Gospel- Ro. 15:14-16

1 John 2:1-2 NKJV
My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate (speaks in our defense) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.