

Prophet, Priest & King - Adult SS - Lesson 2: Priest (On Earth)

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Handouts at the back, pens as well. I'm a bit more alive today.

I might still cough, so please excuse me, but I'm here. I'm well. Let me pray and we'll just dive straight in. Lord God, we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, the Prophet, Priest and King who has come to save us, who intercedes for us in heaven right now and whose cross, that glorious cross, is our salvation. And we ask that we would gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of his work today, of his death, of the cross.

And would we not only know it in our minds, but would we love it in our hearts? And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So this is a series all about the work of Christ. As we've seen over the past few weeks, we've seen that God saves us through offices. So through prophets, priests and kings. So God doesn't just generally save. He doesn't just zap this thing called salvation down to us. No, he saves by providing three types of men, three offices, which are given to solve our three problems of sin. Prophets cure ignorance, priests cure guilt, and kings free the enslaved. And over this series, we're seeing how each of these offices Christ fulfills, and that's how he saves us. And so when Christ came to save us, he came to fulfill these three offices. That's how he saves. So as we learn these offices, we then better appreciate how

Christ saves us. And that's the intention of this whole series. And today we've come to the office of priest. And there's a lot to get through. So let's first just define what a priest is and does. And this is the first point today. A priest brings us to God. So Hebrews 5 gives us the classic definition of a priest. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

So just a few things to note here. We'll unpack this as we go. But just a few things to note here. First, do you see a priest is a man, a human being. They're chosen among men. And that's important because a priest is appointed to act on behalf of men. A priest represents the people. And representing how, did you see, in relation to God. So they don't represent the people on behalf, like toward other nations or towards animals or nature or whatever it might be. No, that they represent the people in relation to God. A priest represents God's people up to God. So we can't come to God on our own.

[3 : 33] We can't come individually or kind of in any old way. But instead, a priest represents us to God, brings us to God. And what does he do for us in order to bring us to God? Do you see at the end of verse one, he offers gifts and sacrifices. Sacrifices are inseparably tied to the priesthood and coming to God. Priests and sacrifices go together. But if you want to just simplify all that, just think, a priest brings us to God, okay? And this is in distinction to prophets who bring God to us. So think of it like this, and think back to all we've learned about prophets. A prophet is a mediator who brings God down to us, and the arrow goes down, right? So we need to hear from God, and so a prophet does that. A prophet represents God to the people. But a priest represents the people up to God. So we come to God through a priest. And we need both of these for salvation, don't we? So we need to know God for eternal life, and we need to hear from him, prophets. But also, we need to be with God for eternal life. Knowing him means being with him. And to understand why we need a priest to do this, to be able to come to God at all, we need to understand that the effects of sin are very vast.

So first, just think, as we think of prophets, we've seen that sin has done something in us. Hasn't it? So it's changed us. Do you remember why we need a prophet? Well, because sin has done something in us, we've become ignorant, haven't we? Our minds have become darkened.

And in ourselves, we've become corrupt. So sin has done something in us. I would just kind of like you put this, that over us and in us were not that artistic.

So just think, all that sin is in the people, with the people. And so God sends prophets to save us from these effects of sin.

But sin has also done a lot more than that. Sin has done something to God's attitude toward us.

[6 : 36] How God relates to us has changed. So just look at some of these verses to see God's disposition toward us as sinners.

So Ephesians 2. We are children of wrath. In our sin, God's attitude towards us is wrathful.

And what else?

Sin has faced God's wrath and fury, Romans 2. We are God's enemies. There's enmity now. What else?

And how does God feel about his enemies? Well, he says they need to die. That's why the promise to Adam is, if you sin, you shall surely die.

[7 : 40] And the wages of sin is death. And that means both physical death and eternal death in hell. So something has changed in our relationship with God.

Ever since the fall, God's attitude and relationship toward humanity has changed. He's now wrathful and furious. Now, that isn't to say that God has changed in himself.

As if, kind of, he was a nice God before, but now with sinners, now he's turned into an angry God.

No, no, we're not saying that. Think back to our doctrine of God classes.

God doesn't change in himself. That's why I've written these words, not in God, but kind of in the relationship between God and man. That this is a change in relation.

That this change is a reaction towards sin. Our sin now provokes God's holiness and the justice of God, which results in a change of relationship.

[8 : 52] Wrath. And so now, there is this huge and terrifying demand hanging over humanity, and it's needing to be met.

It's separating us from God, and it's this demand needing to be met. And it's weighing down on humanity. So it's going to be like this. Okay, we can just sum it up with wrath and death.

Okay? So, that there is now, in our relationship with God, that there is now this huge demand both separating us, weighing down on us.

And it's a demand that needs to be met. It's a penalty. A demand needing to be met if we're to relate to God at all. And so, we can't approach God as we are.

God is too holy, too righteous, too just for us to just approach him as we are in our sin. Because as soon as we approach him, all that we would encounter is his wrath and death.

[10 : 08] These demands separate us from God, bar us from coming to him. And so, if we want to approach God and be reconciled to him and to know him and to have a good relationship with him and to have life with him, what needs to happen?

These demands need to be met. They need to be satisfied, paid for, dealt with. But how can that happen?

Well, we need someone holy enough to come into his presence. And we need that same person to deal with the demand that stops us approaching him.

That is the only way we can come to God. In a word, we need someone to achieve propitiation for us. This is a strange but important word.

I want to teach you new words here. And I want us to learn this. Propitiation means to appease God's anger. To end and satisfy the demands of God's justice and anger.

[11 : 24] So, when someone propitiates God, they settle his anger. Okay? Is everyone on board with that? And so, we need someone to achieve propitiation.

Okay? So, propitiation is the state in God. With God's anger settled. And the verb to propitiate, someone propitiates toward God. And when that happens, this relationship is restored.

We can come to God when that happens. And when someone does that, this is called atonement. Atonement. And this is another word I want us to learn.

Atonement. There's a handy way to remember this. Atonement means being at one with God.

Right? At-one-ment. Atonement. It means dealing with guilt.

The guilt of sin. And propitiating God's anger. Restoring the relationship. And so, when you have propitiation, that means that disappears.

[12 : 31] And when you have atonement, it means it kind of refers to the whole relationship. The whole thing is restored. And so, we need someone to step in between us and God.

A mediator. To propitiate God's wrath and achieve atonement. And this is where a priest comes in. A priest does exactly that.

God provides priests as mediators to propitiate the wrath of God. And provide atonement. And provide atonement for our sins.

And how do they do that? Remember the definition from Hebrews 5. They achieve this through sacrifice. So, if we are to come to God at all.

We need a priest and a sacrifice to be able to come to God. One and two. Right? That's the only way to come to God.

[13 : 44] So, God says, you can't approach me in any old way. Your sin is too severe. My justice is too perfect. Instead, you must come through an appointed office.

A priest. And through an appointed means. Sacrifice. And through him, only then can these demands be met.

And only then can you approach God. And so, sacrifices are key to any priestly work.

And key to propitiation and atonement. And coming back to God. They're key to salvation. And so, with this in mind. I want us to now just look at the Old Testament.

And at how sacrifices and priests worked. And then we'll kind of piece it all together. And I want us to use all of this to shape our understanding of the cross.

[14 : 45] So, we'll do a quick Old Testament priests and sacrifices overview. So, this is the second point today. And there are two things I want us to see about the Old Testament. The first sub-point is this.

Animal sacrifices were substitutes and propitiation. Now, there are various types of sacrifices in the Old Testament. And that we used at different times for different occasions.

But I kind of want us to just simplify things for now. And just show that the typical sacrifice for sin. And the process went like this. So, if I was an Israelite sinner.

I would bring an animal to the tabernacle or the temple. I'd bring it to the outer court. So, not inside the holy place or the holy of holies. I'd bring it to the outer court.

And the outer court was a bit like a butcher's house. A slaughterhouse. So, I'd bring my, let's say, goat or bull. I'd bring it along. I would take it to the outer court. I would lay my hand on it.

[15 : 46] And then I would kill it. And then the priest would come along. And take the dead animal. And he would take it over slightly in the courtyard towards the building, the tabernacle of the temple.

And just before you get to the entrance, there's this big metal grate, a big barbecue, basically. And you would put the sacrifice on that. Burn it. And depending on what type of sacrifice, there'll be different parts of the animal that would be burned.

But ultimately, the priest would take it and burn it. Okay? That's kind of the sacrificial system in a nutshell. So, look at Leviticus 1.

These are some of the commands of what happened. Now, key thing I want us to see here is the laying on of hands.

When the sinner placed his hand on the animal, this was a sign of his sin and guilt transferring to the animal.

[17 : 16] It was showing my sin is now passing from me onto something else, onto this lamb or goat or bull. And so, in Leviticus 16, this is all about the Day of Atonement, when the high priest would atone for all the sins.

Just look what he would do. This makes the picture a little bit clearer. And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions, all their sins.

As he touched the goat and confessed all the sins of Israel, it was showing that all the sins of Israel are now going onto this goat.

Whatever happens to this goat from now on, this is happening instead of the people. The animal became a substitute for the sinner.

And what would happen to it? It would be killed. It would die instead of the sinner. The sacrifice of this animal is this real vivid picture of what needs to be done to us.

[18 : 40] My sin goes to that goat and so that goat must die. The whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament, it reveals this demand of death and the need for propitiation.

It's saying the only way you can approach God is if your sin goes onto something else and that something else needs to die because those are the demands separating you from God. And so the only way for us to approach God is for that wrath to land on something or someone else. Because look what this then achieves.

Leviticus 1 again. It shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Do you remember atonement at one with God?

These sacrifices propitiated the wrath of God and achieved atonement for the sinner. So, think of it like this.

[19 : 46] As the Israelites placed his or her hand on the animal, what happens? It's like all the sin...

Let me write sin here. It's like all the sin and guilt of that people...

It's going... It's not on them anymore. It's going...

Onto the sacrifice, onto the animal. And so what then happens to the animal in death?

Well, all the demands of God upon sin... It's not going on to the people anymore. It's going on... To the animal.

[20 : 45] To the sacrifice. It's being diverted. So the sin on us is being diverted to another. And the wrath, the demands of God are being diverted to another as well.

And so, what is this whole thing? So, this... You can think of this little section here. This is propitiation. This is the demands, the wrath being satisfied.

And this whole thing, with this restored relationship, this whole thing is atonement. So you can kind of think that's propitiation. But this whole thing is atonement.

Right? And so, as the offerer laid hands on the animal, all the sin and guilt is going to be transferred to the animal.

And in its death, the wrath of God, all these demands are being met and falling onto the animal instead. And then, the worshipper would then be made right with God.

[21 : 55] You see, atoned for. And so, the animal sacrifices were substitutes, right? In place of the people. And they were propitiation.

Because the death goes onto the animal. But a second thing about the Old Testament. Priests carried the people with them. I think this is on the other side of your sheet. So, whenever the priests sacrificed and laid hands and went into God's presence in the tabernacle or did anything, it's important to understand they never did this kind of in solitude or just for themselves.

Priests carried all the people of God with them in whatever they did. So, have a look at this picture of a priest that I got there for you.

I want you to notice what they're wearing. Just have a look. What catches your eye? So, in Exodus 28, we read, it's kind of a whole laws about the garments for the priests.

And we read that the priest had to wear two stones on their shoulders. You can kind of see them a little bit. Just on their shoulders there. Two stones on his shoulders.

[23 : 18] And on those stones were written all the 12 tribes of Israel. Simeon, Gad, Reuben. And not only that, look on their chest.

They had a breastplate. And if you can count, how many stones were on that breastplate? Twelve. Each of those stones also had a name of the tribe of Israel written on them.

And so, you could say that the people's names, all the people of God, were written on the heart of the priest. And he would carry God's people on his shoulders.

And so, this was an amazing picture showing that whatever the priest did, he did it on behalf of the people. United to the people.

Sacrificing and coming to God for them. On behalf of them. And so, when Aaron entered into God's presence in the temple, He was not just one bloke going in alone.

[24 : 26] But actually, all of Israel were coming in with him into God's presence. And so, God set all this up, all this system up, these priests and these sacrifices, all so that his people could come to him and approach him.

Okay? This is the only way you can do it. But there's something insufficient about all this Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices.

And I want you to look through Hebrews to find out what they are. So, in the little breakout box there, break out into groups and just answer two questions. Shouldn't take long. We'll give you a couple of minutes. Look up these passages and find out what is the problem with the Old Testament sacrificial system.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[26 : 39] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. My name that that Ryan who has the Ryan who has the okay let's bring it together so what is the problem with the old testament sacrificial system uh hebrew said what was the problem with the the priesthood remember there are two elements the priests and the sacrifices uh moses what what was wrong with the the priesthood they would die right so so we need a priest to come to god but but that priest would die and so you would need to replace that priest and that priest would die then replace that priest and so in this system if we need a priest to come to god this these priests really aren't doing it but because they're kind of a temporary measure to get us there but then they would die and we need to replace and so it he can only bring us to god as long as he lives so it's a bit like um have you ever seen watson gromit in the wrong trousers amazing film you know in the final kind of big uh train chase scene do you remember that um uh gromit's riding this little uh toy train and he's coming to the end of the track and what he does is uh he picks up a box of spare track and he's kind of laying it as he goes you're in that it's amazing um and so he he's uh you kind of think think of the old testament sacrificial system like that like we're trying to get to god and so we put a priest down a bit of track and then we come to the end of that and we've got to lay another and so we're just constantly having to lay a new track new track but we're never really getting to god but we need a permanent eternal priest who can lead us all the way to god and who will never die and how about hebrews 10 what was the problem with the old testament sacrifices um malvina um they were never sufficient um yeah right yeah yeah there's a lot going on there but but it's quite it's quite striking isn't it it is impossible for the blood of bulls to take away sin to to to achieve forgiveness and that's in part because animals can't pay for human sins but remember the demands of death for us for humans and so think of all the the millions of liters of blood that was poured out by israel over the centuries even all that blood being shed every day throughout the centuries that that's just like throwing a thimble of water onto a fire so it's not actually solving the issue otherwise this is the point the writer the hebrews makes otherwise if a bull was good enough then one bull will do but but the constant sacrifices every day every week every year throughout the centuries these constant sacrifices were a constant reminder that this isn't really achieving propitiation or atonement it's not really doing it and so what do we need we need a priest who can live forever

and we need one sacrifice that is good enough to atone for sin forever and so with this priesthood and this problem in the background that this shapes everything about why jesus had to become man what jesus's death achieved and what jesus was doing for us on the cross and i want us to see these three things as we look at jesus the great high priest i want us to see how jesus fulfills all this so look at the first point jesus became man to be a human sacrifice so look what hebrews says about why jesus had to become human why christmas hebrews 2 therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of god to make propitiation for the sins of the people the son of god had to become human because only human sacrifices will do to save us only a human sacrifice will make propitiation for our sins so jesus he was born with a purpose he was born in a human body to be a sacrifice and because he's sinless and because he's the son of god and his life is infinitely valuable infinitely more valuable than than any animal or bull or goat that means his life can match this huge and terrifying demand that hangs over us and that is why it says in hebrews 9 but as it is he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself millions of liters of animal blood could never do this but the cross definitely once and for all atoned for the sins of the people but also think about this if jesus was the sacrifice who offered that sacrifice priests priests offer sacrifices don't they right so if jesus is the sacrifice who offered it where's the priest in this transaction jesus is the priest he offered himself but what does jesus say in john 10 i lay down my life for the sheep who laid it down who offered it jesus did jesus is both the priest and the sacrifice and so when christ comes in the fullness of time we have this pattern of priest and sacrifice needing to be fulfilled and how is it fulfilled it's fulfilled one man who will live forever the christ and it's on his cross on that first good friday as the skies were darkened something priestly was happening the true priest was offering the sacrifice of himself on the altar of the cross and his blood was shed to propitiate god's wrath and atone for the sins of the people this is why jesus is

called the lamb of god

this is why his death occurs on the passover that's no coincidence god is showing us that this is the sacrifice and the priest to end all sacrifices but a second thing all this shows us what the cross achieved so if we understand what jesus was on the cross he was a sacrifice we can understand what he achieved on the cross jesus was satisfying the demands of god's justice all the force of god's holiness on evil all the wrath that needs to be poured out on sin it was all falling on jesus to propitiate god's anger which means jesus didn't only die a physical death which he most certainly did but he also died a spiritual death he felt the wrath of god in his soul he experienced what it is truly like for god to unleash his anger on a sinner and that's why in gethsemane do you remember what happened in gethsemane that's why he was so terrified about what was about to happen that's why he sweat drops of blood he knows he's about to drink the cup of god's wrath all these demands and so look what the bible has to say about what that achieved what did the cross achieve 1 john 2 he is the propitiation for our sins in this is love not that we have loved god but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins christ jesus whom god put forward as a propitiation by his blood finally propitiation has been achieved christ has ended the anger of god for his people for you and so there isn't a single demand hanging over your head anymore richard dawkins once said this in an interview he said this if god wanted to forgive our sins why not just forgive them without having himself tortured and executed in payment well can we see why he's so wrong to think that what needs to be done if there is to be any atonement or forgiveness what does it take the demand of god's justice and anger and wrath that needs to be satisfied god is too holy for this just a slide and he's too just to just ignore these demands this wrath it has to go somewhere but the question is where is it going to go who's it going to go on and on the cross jesus was our priest propitiating god's wrath so that we can now come into his presence the wrath isn't on us anymore it has all in the past been laid on christ which brings me to the final thing to see here we'll wrap up in a minute jesus was representing us on the cross so just like aaron had the people written on his heart as he went to the altar so jesus had our names written on his heart as he went to the cross this is why we can and we do say jesus died for us he was representing us on that cross look at the language of the bible god shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners christ died for us for us for the love of christ controls us because we have concluded this that one has died for all therefore all have died he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so let me ask you did you die on the cross in one sense no praise god i didn't die on the cross because i could never do that only jesus could have done that he was the substitute in place of me jesus was replacing me on that cross but in another in another sense did you die on the cross yes because he was representing you he had your name in his heart carrying you on his shoulders and your sin in his body and so you were united to him on that cross this is why paul says we have been united with him in a death like his and so what is happening on the cross can be described in three words again i want to teach you new words here what happened on the cross was penal substitutionary atonement so you might have heard these words before it just means that on the cross jesus was the propitiation for our sins he took the penalty that demands the penalty of god's wrath penal he did it in our place representing us substitutionary and that death what did it achieve atonement and so there's a lot that we can say about the cross but this is the heart of it this is just the utter beauty of it and it's really shaped and appreciated but when we understand that this isn't random jesus worked it didn't come out of nowhere it's not a mathematical transaction either no he is a priest who offers the sacrifice of himself to achieve the propitiation of god's wrath and what does he achieve for us we now have atonement i'll end there and i'll open up to questions you