

## **His Name Shall Be Called Wonderful (12)** **Great High Priest**

The subject of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ is taken up in the epistle to the Hebrews. This grand epistle presents the superiority, supremacy and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was written to a people who were familiar with the religious system that God had given to His people Israel, in which there was a priesthood and sacrifices. In this Epistle we learn that the tabernacle system with its sacrifices was but a shadow of what God would introduce in relation to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are a number of divine names and titles of the Lord Jesus brought before us in the epistle to the Hebrews, but the one that most expresses the central theme of the epistle, is the title, *“Great High Priest”* (Heb. 4:14). The use of the word, *“great”*, in this divine title, emphasizes His unparalleled status, and superiority over all other priests. There were many *“high priests”*, under the Levitical system, but none were called, *“great high priest”*. This title is reserved for the Lord Jesus alone.

It is interesting that the writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God refers to Him, as *“Jesus, the Son of God”*. The name, *“Jesus”*, tell us of His humanity. The phrase, *“Son of God”*, tells us of His deity and reminds us of the fact that He came in wondrous incarnation. The son of God took upon Himself human likeness.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us of the fact that the Lord Jesus did not take upon Himself the nature of angels, but he took upon Himself the seed of Abraham. The sacred writer gives us the reason, *“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”* (Heb. 2:16-17).

When we think of the priesthood of the Old Testament, we know that Aaron was chosen to be the high priest and not Moses. This is because the high priest must be one who could sympathise with the people of God (Heb. 5:2). Moses, who was brought up in Pharaoh’s palace, knew nothing of suffering at the hands of the Egyptian task masters. Aaron shared in the burdens of his brethren and could sympathise with them.

Concerning our Lord Jesus, the Hebrew writer says, *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15).

We also learn that one particular function of the high priest, was to offer sacrifices, *“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins”* (Heb. 5:1). Concerning our Lord Jesus, the Hebrew writer says, *“For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer”* (Heb. 8:3).

Under the Old Testament priesthood, the high priest went once a year into the holiest of all, to make atonement for himself and for the people, *“But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people”* (Heb. 9:7).

Because the Lord Jesus was absolutely without sin, we read concerning Him, *“who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself”* (Heb. 7:27).

The high priests of the Old Testament offered the blood of animals in sacrifice to God, as a means of making atonement for sin. We read of the sin atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, *“neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”* (Heb. 9:12).

Paul wrote in the book of Ephesians and in the book of Colossians concerning the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were repeated every year, because it was not possible that the blood of animals should take away sins (Heb. 10:1-4). The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was sufficient to take away sins forever and to satisfy completely and forever the claims of a holy God.

The apostle John wrote, *“And he is the propitiation (God is satisfied) for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 2:2). Coming again to the book of the Hebrews we read concerning the once for all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, *“but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”* (Heb. 10:12).

The priesthood of the Old Testament was passed on to successive generations. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews explains, *“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death”* (Heb. 7:23). However, concerning the Lord Jesus the writer says, *“But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable (not passed on to another) priesthood”* (Heb. 7:24).

Long before the priesthood was established under Aaron, the Word of God introduces us to another priest. When Abram returned from battle, he was met by Melchizedek, a priest of the most high God, who presented him with bread and wine and blessed him (Gen. 14:18-20). In the book of Hebrews, we are told that there is no record of the birth of Melchisedec, or of his death, or even of his parents. His name means, *“King of righteousness”*, and *“King of peace”* (Heb. 7:1-3). He is thus, a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Lord Jesus has no beginning and will know no end, but continues forever, in the power of an endless life, He is called *“a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”* (Heb. 7:15-17).

The titles *“King of righteousness”* and *“King of peace”*, can without question, be attributed to the Lord Jesus. In chapter 1 of the book of Hebrews the writer quoted from the book of Psalms concerning the Lord Jesus, *“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom”* (Heb. 1:8).

In the prophecy of Isaiah, one of the divine titles given to the Lord Jesus is, *“Prince of peace”*. Isaiah wrote, *“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever”* (Isa. 9:6-7). Following His high priestly work upon the cross, when His soul was made an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10; Eph. 5:2), He was exalted to the throne of the majesty on high (Heb. 1:3, 8:1).

The prophet Zechariah wrote of a coming day when the Lord Jesus shall reign supreme as King and Priest, *“Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both”* (Zech. 6:12-13).

The Lord Jesus, alone, combines the offices of king and priest in all their divine fulness in His own glorious and majestic person.

*From the realms on high descending,  
Jesus Christ the Son of God;  
Deity and manhood blending,  
Witnessed in the path He trod.*

*Came to make Himself an offering,  
Jesus Christ our Great High Priest;  
Finished now, His toil and suffering,  
Royal glory is increased.*

*Through His ransom, reconciling,  
Sinners are brought nigh to God;  
All the sin of man defiling,  
Purified by precious blood.*

*Not one aspect was diminished,  
Of the Father's sovereign will;  
Cried triumphant, "it is finished"  
Raised on high, the throne to fill.*

*Through eternal years remaining,  
Unsurpassed, unique, alone;  
Christ in majesty is reigning,  
King and Priest upon His throne.*

**Bernie Payne**