

The Great High Priest

Key Verse: *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”*
—Hebrews 4:14

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 4:14-5:10

GOD RESTRICTED ISRAEL’S priesthood to the tribe of Levi, specifically Aaron’s family. All Jewish priests were taken from his family lineage, and set apart to represent the people before God, offering for them “both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” (Heb. 5:1) In this arrangement, the priests were able to sympathize with the people, because they were subject to the same weaknesses, and also had need of forgiveness for their own sins. None of these imperfect, blemished, sinful priests was allowed to take “this honour unto himself,” but only those who were “called of God, as was Aaron.”—vs. 4

Our Key Verse tells us that we, too, have a high priest, one who has “passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” However, Jesus’ lineage was from the tribe of Judah, not from the tribe of Levi. (Matt. 1:2; Luke 3:33; Heb. 7:14) How then could Jesus become a high priest? The answer is given in these words of Scripture: “Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest.” Instead, God honored him, saying, “Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 5:5,6; 7:17; Ps. 2:7; 110:4) Melchisedec was both a king and a priest at the same time, but he was not a sacrificing priest. (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1-3) Christ is now a glorified spirit being, declared

by God to be a high priest, according to the kingly “order of Melchisedec,” not after the sacrificial order of Aaron, who was never glorified as a king.—Heb. 5:10

By faith we recognize Jesus as our great High Priest in heaven, knowing that he is not a “high priest who is incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every respect like ourselves, yet without sinning.” (Heb. 4:15, *James Moffatt* translation) The sufferings which came upon the perfect man Jesus, were not because he was a sinner, but rather because he was a Son. It was our Heavenly Father’s will to test and prove the loyalty of “his only begotten son,” even unto the “death of the cross,” and although he was a “Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”—John 3:16; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8

At the present time, consecrated followers of Christ are considered prospective members of this new, “royal priesthood.” (I Pet. 2:9) As such, we must not expect to escape trials and difficulties similar to those Jesus endured. Only by being rightly trained by such experiences are we able to develop the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” of Christian character. (Heb. 12:11) When, at times, we may be overtaken by a fault, “let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in the hour of need.”—Heb. 4:16, *Moffatt*

Christ is no longer a man, having been “put to death in the flesh,” and resurrected as a spirit being. (I Pet. 3:18) He is now a kingly priest, having power and great glory. (Rev. 14:14) Soon, when all the prospective members of the “royal priesthood” have proven faithful unto death, and are resurrected to his own glorious likeness, the Christ, head and body members, will become King and Priest in glory to the world of mankind. They will reign to bless and uplift all the willing and obedient of mankind, who, under the enlightenment then available to them, will “learn righteousness” and draw nigh unto God.—Rev. 20:4,6; Isa. 26:9 ■