



Pilgrim Home Baptist Church

NT 260 2022 • ONLY JESUS SAVES • HEBREWS 7:23-28 • 8/7/2022

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the only One able to save us.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What's the best handmade gift you ever received? Why?

How does a handmade gift compare with one purchased in a store?

Handmade gifts represent something of the giver. These gifts are unique. Purchased gifts are mass-produced and can be obtained in many ways. They are not made for any specific person but are applicable to many. Salvation is the greatest, most personal “handmade” gift of all time. Recall the visual of Jesus with His hands outstretched on the cross. Salvation comes through God’s divine love and the sacrifice of His divine Son. It is a gift only God can provide.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 7:23-24.

How does Jesus compare with Levitical priests? Why is this significant?

How would you describe the limits faced by a Jewish priest? How does each limit point to the need for a better priest?

Levitical priests interceded with God on behalf of people. They were human, so they died and were replaced by another human priest. Sometimes the successor priests were not qualified.

Unlike the Levitical priests, Jesus' priesthood is eternal. Even death did not interrupt Jesus' priesthood. He continues to live forever after His resurrection.

In what areas of today's culture do you see a lack of permanence?

How does culture's impermanence shape our understanding of Jesus' permanent priesthood?

We are conditioned for planned obsolescence. What is new today is soon outdated. Products come with expiration dates. Jesus, however, is eternal and permanent. His love for us and His intercession on our behalf do not expire.

Why do you think that God has done so much to have a relationship with sinful people? Can you explain some of the things He has done to make this happen, and why?

What does it mean to you that in Christ you can draw near to God at any time and any place? In practical terms, what are some ways that a believer can come into God's presence?

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 7:25.

When you depend on someone to help you, what qualities do you want that person to have?

How does this passage speak to those qualifications that we find in Jesus?

Qualifications and a proven track record of reliability are essential. You depend on someone who not only has the necessary skill set, but who can be counted on when needed. Jesus is qualified to save people because of His relationship with God the Father. In addition to being able to save, Jesus is reliable. Since He is eternal, He continues to have the ability to save those who express faith in Him.

When have you counted on something to work and had it fail? When have you been let down by someone you were counting on?

How can God use that experience to remind you of what you find in Jesus?

Products, no matter how reliable, occasionally fail. A new car might not start or a new computer might be infected with a virus. Likewise, at some point, people will not follow through in a relationship. They will let us down because they are human. Our track record with products and relationships differs from our relationship with Jesus. He will not let us down.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 7:26-28.

How does a person's character influence his or her actions?

Character describes the personal traits and qualities that influence your actions. It is who you are more than what you do. Recall the quotation, attributed to Bob Ley (<http://playlikethat.com>), "Character is what you do when no one is watching." Salvation is based on Jesus' character—Who He is.

If you were to describe Jesus' character based on this passage, what points would you include? What points are most meaningful to you?

Jesus is "holy, innocent, undefiled" (v. 26). These words apply to Jesus' personal traits. Jesus is "separated from sinners" and "exalted above the heavens" (v. 26). These phrases describe how He is set apart from humans.

According to this passage, what makes Jesus the only perfect Priest? How does this help you have confidence in Him?

How does knowing that Jesus is interceding for you right now encourage you to endure in your faith, love, and worship of Him?

Because Christ was sinless, He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself. This contrasts with earthly priests, who offered animal sacrifices for themselves as well as the people. Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is uniquely qualified as High Priest because He lived on earth yet remained sinless. He did not first become perfect and then become High Priest. He was perfect from the beginning.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does your life evidence the fact that Jesus is the only One able to save us?

What temptations are you going to face this week that might cause you to rely on something else other than Jesus?

How are you going to remind yourself that He is the only true Savior?

PRAYER

As you pray, thank God that Jesus, even now, is interceding for you. Pray that your group would hold to the truth both in their beliefs and actions that shows Jesus is the only one who can save.

COMMENTARY

| HEBREWS 7:23-28

7:23. Throughout Israel's history, there were "many priests" from the Levitical line who served God. That priesthood began when the Lord God instructed Moses at Mount Sinai to set apart Aaron (Moses' brother) and his four sons to serve as priests (see Ex. 28:1). Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi (see Ex. 2:1-2,10; 4:14; 6:16-20). By the time the Israelites were ready to leave Mount Sinai for the promised land, the number of Levites between ages 30 to 50 who were qualified to serve in and transport the tabernacle numbered 8,580 (see Num. 4:46-49).

Another numbering of Israelite priests in Old Testament times can be found in the Book of Ezra. Thousands of priests, Levites, and other temple servants were among the more than 40,000 Jews returning from exile to the promised land (see Ezra 2:1-67). New Testament scholars estimate that around 18,000 priests were available to serve at the temple in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' birth (see Luke 1:8-9 and commentaries on those verses).

Some believers who come to this text may wonder why God ever gave priests to His people. Simply put, the reason is because God is holy and people are sinful. God established the Levitical priesthood for the Israelites as an act of mercy. Likewise, God demonstrated divine mercy when He allowed the Israelites to build a tabernacle (and later a temple) to worship Him. And when He allowed the Israelite high priest to enter the holy of holies once a year to make a sin offering on behalf of all the people.

If God in mercy had not made these provisions for sinful people in Old Testament times, they would never have been able to know Him or learn His ways. If any of the people—priests included—ever tried to encounter God's presence improperly, His awesome holiness would overwhelm and destroy them (see Lev. 10:1-3). Thus God's merciful gift of the Levitical priesthood provided a go-between for sinful people to approach, petition, and learn from the Holy God of Israel.

The Levitical priesthood, while a demonstration of God's mercy, was nevertheless comprised of priests who, like the people they represented, were sinners. Moreover, their lives and their service were limited in scope. Sooner or later, every Israelite priest was removed from the priesthood by his death. As helpful as the priests' ministry was under the old covenant, the priests simply could not provide what the people most needed.

All of us as sinners desperately need forgiveness and cleansing—a new start and a new heart. The priesthood and sacrifices in Old Testament times could never provide this. Instead, they simply foreshadowed and prepared the way for the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, and His once-for-all atoning sacrifice. Without a Great High Priest, we could never hope to draw near to God and find everlasting grace, mercy, and help. Yet now, in the new covenant, believers are summoned to do so confidently and without fear (see Heb. 4:14-16). We can do so because of the One who is always there to intercede for us, the Son of God and our eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ.

7:24. Jesus' priestly ministry is superior to the Levitical priesthood in that Jesus has a permanent priesthood. He will remain in this ministry forever, because He in fact lives forever and ever. He is our Eternal High Priest.

While there were many priests under the old covenant, there is only one Great High Priest. All of the priests under the old covenant eventually died. One after another, year after year, more and more priests ministered imperfectly, yet in obedience to the Lord. They offered the daily sacrifices, replenished the holy bread, and sacrificed countless animals as a way to show that sin brings death. The ministry of the Old Testament priests never ended. Their never-ending ministry showed there was a need for something greater, something final, that would provide full and final atonement for the sins of God's people.

Because Jesus is eternal, His priesthood and ministry are eternal. Therefore, there never needs to be another one! The many Levitical priests all died, while Christ lives forever. He continues forever, and holds His priesthood permanently, which is exactly what God promised on oath in Psalm 110:4 (see Heb. 7:20-21).

7:25. Jesus saves. Believers know and love this truth. We have trusted in Him for our salvation. But do you understand that salvation cannot be revoked? That it cannot be lost? This truth is helpful to emphasize at this point, given the warning that the writer of Hebrews gave in 6:4-6. Some believers live with a certain fear that they might not be able sustain their salvation. And the truth is, they can't! But salvation's permanence isn't up to us as believers. It's up to God. Jesus' permanent priesthood therefore guarantees that genuine believers will never lose their salvation.

Verse 25 is the writer's conclusion (therefore) based on verses 23-24. Since Christ is forever our High Priest, the writer concludes that He is always able to save those who come to God through him. He's forever able to save us. He is able to save us completely. He is able to save us to the uttermost. That is His guarantee as believers' Great High Priest.

Furthermore, when the Scripture says that Christ is “able to save,” it means that He does save! There is no possibility that He would be unable to do so. The reason no genuine child of God can be lost rests squarely on the certainty that Jesus is always interceding for us. He is in the presence of God right now, advocating for and speaking to the Father about every single believer who has ever lived (see Rom. 8:34-39).

God is even more committed to our endurance and assurance than we often are, to the extent that He has given His Son to be our Atoning Sacrifice and Great High Priest. This is such a cause for worship and thankfulness! The Lord deserves our worship and allegiance for the pardon of all of our transgressions. Jesus paid it all. He has given us forgiveness of sin and peace that endures forever.

The God who calls us into salvation is the God who keeps us saved (see Phil. 1:6). The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we as believers are indeed God’s children (see Rom 8:16). There is such peace in knowing that our High Priest will never cease to minister for us and advocate on our behalf. Therefore, one of the most comforting implications of Jesus’ eternal priesthood is that we are forever secure in Christ.

7:26-27. First, Jesus is holy—He never sinned and is without fault, though He bore the curse for our sins (see Gal. 3:10-14). Since He is holy, He has permanent access in the heavenly sanctuary of God. Second, He is innocent. That is, He is innocent of the sins that He bore, and in that regard is separate from sinners. Nevertheless, He continually intercedes for believers. Third, He is undefiled. There is no moral blemish in Him that would disqualify Him from this ongoing ministry of intercession. He is perfect.

Because He is sinless, Jesus never has to offer a sin sacrifice for Himself. By contrast, the Levitical high priest was required to do so (see Lev. 16:1-6). Jesus offered an atonement sacrifice for sinners. He did this once and for all—one sacrifice for all time—when He willingly went to the cross (see Heb 12:2).

7:28. Chapter 7 concludes with a final contrast between the old and new priesthoods. The contrast in verse 28 is between how the law appoints priests (only from the tribe of Levi) and the word of God’s oath, which appointed Christ (see Ps. 110:4). In Christ, the new priesthood eliminated the need for the old priesthood, since Jesus’ priesthood fulfills the old. Nothing can be added to His sacrifice. Nothing needs to be added.