



Our Need for Representation-Part 1

Understanding the Priesthood, Then & Now

Pastor Mike Fabarez

My three-year-old daughter is learning to swim. She's taking some swim lessons. The doctors say it's great exercise for her with her disability, and I'm all for it, but I struggle a little bit with toddlers in pools, you know. I have a hard time when she goes down to the public pool with her swim instructor, and there her head is bobbing right at the waterline. That just tenses me up. Then when she proceeds with a little infant baptism, submersion, I mean, just your heart just stops. You hate watching it.

I struggle with it even when she's in the bathtub at home. I kind of tense up. I let her bathe in about this much water. And I'm not confessing any hydrophobia here. I mean, I love the water. I love to swim. I just like to breathe also. And I know that us as parents, we seem to have an innate respect for water because, you know, obviously, the breathing and water don't mix very well.

With that in mind, I must admit, with great risk of sounding like a remedial nerd, that I went snorkeling for the first time last summer. And I'd never been. I mean, I had a snorkel as a kid, but I never actually went snorkeling. Well, I went snorkeling last summer, and it was kind of a weird psychosis that takes place when you put your head under the water with this little plastic thing in your mouth. And your brain tells your lungs, breathe. And your lungs say, no, you know, I'm not here. And your brain says, no, it's okay. And your lungs say, well, okay, it'll be really short and choppy, though, you know. And sure enough, you go. And then as your lungs start to breathe, your legs start to freak out and say, well, this isn't right. And it takes a while to get used to that.

And I remember getting comfortable and got comfortable with that thing in your mouth. It's like, wow, okay, you can breathe under here. Of course, until you reach down to grab that seashell that you see. And your snorkel gets filled with water, then your lungs realize that. Your lungs say to your brain at that point, told you so. This wasn't right.

Now, I've never been scuba diving, and I don't want to go, so don't ask me. But I can only imagine that the psychosis and just the getting used to going way under the water, I bet that would be amazing. Some of you scuba dive, right? Wow, it's just something wrong about that.

Now, in Hebrews chapter 5, we learn a lot about snorkels and scuba gear. Not exactly, but sort of. The fifth chapter of Hebrews, which we finally arrived at, is a text that instructs us about a workable, albeit artificial, mechanism that God has put in place in the Old Testament specifically that allowed people to descend into an environment that would otherwise kill them. That may sound a little strong to some of you when you find out what that environment is, but those of us with a mature, healthy, and biblical respect for a holy God, it will make perfect sense.

As you scan your eyes through the fifth chapter of Hebrews, you'll see that the snorkel is the Old Testament priesthood. The foreign environment is fellowship with God, any kind of real fellowship with God. And I think when you study and look through the Old Testament and understand something of the Old Testament priesthood, this is an important realization, particularly if you grew up with a fuzzy concept of who these guys were who wore these weird breastplates and carried these scrolls around, or maybe if you grew up thinking that the priests were the guys in the black robes down the street with the backward collars, you know, well, none of that is helpful to understand the biblical concept of why the priesthood existed and how it functioned in the Old



Testament and why God utilized it temporarily as an artificial mechanism to relate to an almighty and holy God.

So today what I'd like to do is to spend a little time as a platform in Hebrews chapter 5 to explore a little bit of what was already understood in the minds of those who initially got this letter, something of the Old Testament priesthood, why it existed, why it was important, and how it applies to us today. The priesthood is neither irrelevant then or neither is it inverted collars and black robes now.

So if you've got your Bible already open to Hebrews chapter 5, let's read the first six verses, which we will skim through quickly today and camp on the extrapolation of the six verse next week and the following verses. But let's read it all, then we'll get a sense of what this is all about.

Hebrews 5:1–6

Hebrews chapter 5, verse 1 says, Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them, that is men, in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He, that is this high priest that is chosen from among men, is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people.

Verse 4, no one takes this honor upon himself. He must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, quoting Psalm 2, you are my son, today I become your father. And he says in another place, you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, a quotation of Psalm 110. Melchizedek we'll expand on and understand in its context next week.

Let's understand something of the Old Testament priesthood.

1. Reconsider the Old Testament priesthood

Reconsider the Old Testament priesthood. I don't know what you think about it. I don't know what you know about it. I don't know what you've learned about it, but let's go back to the ninth chapter prior to God ever establishing a priesthood in Israel. Let's go back to the book of Exodus chapter 19. God had not yet set up the priesthood for Israel, but what you'll find is the need for it in Exodus chapter 19.

I trust that you know that the events that are spoken of in the book of Exodus took place around the 15th century BC, and it was just prior to God inscripturating the first five books of the Old Testament. God was coming on the scene with revelation about himself. He was inspiring the prophet to write it down on paper, and it was the beginning of his self-disclosure in writing. And so, as he disclosed more about himself to his chosen people, there was a need for a priesthood. Let's take a look at it.

Exodus chapter 19, beginning in verse number 17, just to give you a picture of the need for the priesthood. Exodus 19, verse 17. Moses then led the people out of the camp, underline these four words, to meet with God. There's the foreign environment. Moses is going to lead the people out of

the camp to meet with God. They'd already exited from Egypt in the 12th chapter. Now they're out here in the wilderness, and now they're going to meet God.

They stood at the foot of the mountain. Verse 18, Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because, here's a critical phrase, Yahweh descended on it. Here's a manifestation of God, and it's a manifestation in fire, which, by the way, is how the writer of Hebrews describes it. God is this consuming fire. Or in the words of 1 Timothy 6, Paul says that God dwells in unapproachable light, this brilliance of God, this manifestation, or glory of God, if you will. Here it was coming. God was coming close, so to speak, to his people. And Moses is leading these people out to meet with God.

Now, a lot of smoke on this mountain. It billowed up like a big furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. And the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder because earlier they'd been told they couldn't approach it until the trumpet sounded. Then Moses spoke, and the voice of God answered him.

Verse 20. Yahweh descended to the top of Mount Sinai, which is an interesting statement, and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up and Yahweh said to him, go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see Yahweh and many of them perish. See that picture? Don't let anybody come close to me because if they come close to me, they'll die.

So Moses, you go tell them that. Obviously, this puts Moses in an interesting place. He is here now standing between God at the top of the mountain, and he's been called up to meet with God. Now he's being sent back down to tell the people, whoa, don't come any closer. You stay down there, because God is up here.

That puts Moses in an intermediate role here. He is a mediator now between God, a holy God, and man. Man can have a relationship with that God, but those people have to relate through the mediator. See, if you go and just jump in the depths of God, you'll drown. But you know what? I'll be the snorkel, Moses says. And listen, if you work through me, we'll be okay. You won't die. God then, verse 20, or chapter 20, look across the page. He gives the Ten Commandments, this big, clear, inscripturated word from God. I mean, it's clear. It's in his own writing.

Now, drop down to verse 18 in Exodus 20. When the people saw the thunder and lightning, and they heard the trumpet and saw the smoke in the mountain, they trembled with fear. No kidding. Wow, God, he's not... I mean, you don't want to have dinner and a movie with God. This is scary.

They stayed at a distance. Very smart. And they said to Moses, Speak to us yourself, and we'll listen. I mean, we're all fine with you, but don't have us speak to God, or don't have rather God speak to us, or we'll die. Now you're getting it.

And Moses said to the people, don't be afraid. God has come to test you so that the fear of God will be with you. You'll have this innate respect for God and will keep you from sinning. That's what holiness is all about. And the people remained at a distance while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

You tracking with that? You see Moses playing the role of mediator between God and men. If you want to relate to God, I'll talk to God. I'll talk to you for God because God's talked to me. And don't get any closer. Don't try to have fellowship with this God. Don't try to be intimate with this God without working through me. Because if you do, you'll die. And God made that clear through



this ominous picture and violent earthquake and all this smoke and fire. And the people said, we're fine with that. We don't want to try to breathe down here. Pop the scuba gear in our mouth, we'll be okay. Okay?

Now, nine chapters later, eight chapters later from chapter 20, in chapter 28, we have the initiation of Israeli priesthood. And guess what? Moses has already been serving in that role. And God says, you now are going to have your brother Aaron, he is going to be the patriarch of this group of people called priests, and they will serve me.

Now, before you turn there, you don't, as a matter of fact, we got way too many passages to turn to. Just trust me on the 20th chapter. It's where we have the initiation of the priesthood.

Look back across the page, if you would, at chapter 19 in Exodus. We stopped at verse number 21. Read verse number 22 with me. We don't even have any priests yet. And God says this. If you reread verse 21, go down and warn the people so they don't force their way through and see Yahweh and many of them perish. Verse 22, even the priests. Who? We don't even have priests, God. They're going to, eight chapters later, who approach Yahweh must consecrate themselves or Yahweh will break out against them.

See, here's the biblical picture. You can't handle God. You can't. And if you're gonna try, you're gonna be in big trouble. Here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna take a group of people that will be consecrated. You know what that means? Holy, and those holy people will go and approach God for you. And you can relate to God, but you gotta relate through these people and they will be called the priests. It is the beginning of the priesthood.

As a matter of fact, they're going to set up a tent. They're going to call it the tabernacle. That's what the tent means. And the nickname for the tabernacle, do you know what it was? The nickname for the tabernacle? It was called the tent of meeting. Meeting who? Each other. It's not a potluck hall. It's not a social hall. Meeting God.

You want to meet God, you got to go to the tent. And guess what? If you come to the tent, you can't come in. Who gets to come into the tent? Priest. Oh, and and they only get to come into part of it because there is a part of it and it's called the holy of holies. That part you can't even come in. As a matter of fact only one guy can come in. He'll be the high priest, the ultimate mediator. And he can come in and hang out anytime he wants right no Sunday school grads saying no okay

Side note just real quick aaron and moses were from one of the 12 tribes of Israel and the tribe was Levi. All Levites aren't priests, but all priests are Levites. Are all the Levites priests? No. But some people from another tribe can be priests, right? No. See, that creates a problem for Jesus because the kings came from a different tribe. The kings came from the tribe of Judah. See, problem is he's not from the tribe of Judah and yet he's going to be designated priest. That's where this whole Melchizedek thing comes in.

Now, here's what I'm thinking. Tent of fellowship, hostile environment. You can't go in. If you go in, you'll suffocate and die. I don't want to meet with God then. Okay, that's what I'm thinking. I don't care for a God like that. I want a cuddly God. I want a fuzzy God. I want a God I can come up and hug. Don't have that kind of God. I got a God that dwells in unapproachable light. I got a God who is a consuming fire. I got a God that if you go hang out with God, you die. Okay? So let's just all run from God.



Interesting. Here's a passage I wanted to turn to. 2 Samuel 6. Hebrews 5, verse 1 says, there are some people called to represent men before God and they become the liaison. Why is the nation of Israel and God's people always been drawn to fellowship with a God that is too holy to fellowship with? See, this is the thing. We need a mediator and we want a mediator.

We want a mediator because God has placed on our hearts as his people a desire for fellowship with the holy God, which is a bit of an oxymoron. Take a look at this. This is just an interesting snapshot in the life of David.

The Philistines had captured the Ark. The Ark of the Covenant, which is just two fancy words. Ark means box. Covenant means promise. It's the box of the promise, I often say. Is the box where we had the Ten Commandments, we had the jar of manna, we had the rod, Aaron's rod that budded, and those things were in it, and they represented God's covenant with the people, and on the top of it was this, you saw the movie, right? You know what it looks like. You got these pictures of angels, golden covered angels, and God's presence was in some visible manifestation present there on the top of the box.

What's the box doing in the Philistine camp? Well, the Israelites had taken the box as a big, gigantic, you know, rabbit's foot and marched it in a battle, hoping that if they had the magic foot with them in battle, they would win. And God said, it's not a magic, you know, it's not an amulet, it's not a rabbit's foot. So you lose. And the Philistines captured it, which is not where it belonged. It belonged in the tabernacle, the tent of meeting.

So guess what God did to the Philistines? Sunday school grads, what did he do? A lot of bad stuff. You don't want to read about it. Okay? Really bad stuff. So the Philistines want to get rid of it. Send the box back. We don't want the box of the promise. So they made some gold offerings to God and put them on a cart, sent some oxen, and off they went. And guess where God led them? Right back to Israel.

David then, take a look at this. This is 2 Samuel 6, is going to go and bring the ark back to where it belongs.

David again, verse 1, brought together out of Israel, chosen men, 30,000 in all. And he and all of his men set out from Baal of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which was called by the name, the name of Yahweh Almighty, who was enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark.

Verse 3, they set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it, because they sent it on a cart by the way back, remember the Philistines did, he built a new cart for it and brought it back from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, which it's not our neighborhood, but that helps them.

Uzzah and Ahio, I struggle with that because I think of Ohio. It's Ahio. Sons of Abinadab were guiding the cart with the ark of God on it. And Ahio was walking in front of it.

And David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all of their might before Yahweh with songs and harps and lyres and tambourines and cisterns and cymbals.



Verse six, when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out, it says, and took hold of the ark of God because the oxen stumbled. That's a good thing, right? Bad thing. Yahweh's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act.

I'm thinking, what are you doing? Not an irreverent act. You're trying to help the, you're trying to help the box along. You got to know a little bit about the commandments, by the way, and there's just a little sidebar. The commandment said that if you're going to carry the Ark of God, you carried it on poles. There was a very organized way that God had designed to do this. You don't put it on a cart. Uzzah should have been carrying it on poles between his shoulders and the other guy. Instead, they're putting it on a cart. They're getting lazy with the Ark of God.

He touches it. The irreverent act didn't start with reaching out to touch the Ark as it was slipping on the cart. It came with how they were just, well, let's just put it on a cart. Well, let's make it a new cart.

Therefore, God struck him down and he died there beside the Ark of God.

Now, you can imagine, we're having a party, we're singing songs, Bob's in the front with his guitar, we're all happy, right? Yay, we got the Ark back, it's coming back to where it belongs. And somebody reaches out to kind of stabilize it as the oxen stumbles and he's dead. I'm thinking, wow, big bummer on the party when someone dies, right?

So everybody's torqued now. And David's torqued. David was, look at this, verse 9, I'm sorry, verse 8. Then David was angry, as you would probably be, because Yahweh's wrath had broken out against Uzzah. And to this day, that place is called Perez Uzzah. Perez was struck out or lashed out against Uzzah.

David was afraid of Yahweh, I guess so, right? I don't even want to be near the ark now. And he said, how can the ark of Yahweh ever come to me? He was not willing to take the ark of the Lord to be with him in the city of David. That's Jerusalem. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom, the Giddite.

And the ark of Yahweh remained in the house of Obed-Edom, the Giddite, for three months. Okay, stop. The picture so far is we got this manifestation of fellowship with God, the presence of God. We're bringing it back where it belongs. Somebody reaches out, touches it, dies. Bummer. Wow. I don't want this box. I can't survive with the box. I don't want fellowship with God.

That was my question, right? Why? I'm thinking, let's just run from God. Okay? Here he says, you take it, Obed-Edom. You take it.

What happens? Next phrase. Yahweh blessed him and his entire household. Here, you hold the ark. Put it in your garage. And all of a sudden now, Obed-Edom's got the best life in the kingdom.

And David was told, Yahweh has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and everything he has because of the ark of God. So David said, darn it. Bring the bring the box back.

So David went down and brought up brought up the ark of god from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David with rejoicing.



Now you're gonna guess this is different. When those who were notice this interesting phrase underline it carrying the ark of Yahweh thank you God says they had taken when they had taken six steps he sacrificed the bull in a fat and calf. Wow. It ain't just a party now right we're being super careful and God accomplished his goal.

You want fellowship with a holy God you'd better be holy. You want a fellowship with me you'd better be careful. You ought to be reverent. You ought to listen carefully to what I say. When sinful man wants to have fellowship with a holy God, he finds out real fast, God will not put up with sin. We are in a hostile environment when we want fellowship with God. And so the priesthood was to give us some kind of access to this holy God.

Why don't we run from this holy God that breaks out against sin? Because ultimately, man, we want fellowship with God. We want it because there's no better place to be. We want it because as the psalmist says, taste and see that the Lord is good.

I'll tell you what, it's much like that one line in Chronicles of Narnia, which didn't make it to the movie, which should have. It was one of the best lines. When they asked about Aslan and they asked, is he safe? Remember that? Readers of the book? And they said, oh, no, he's not safe, but he's good. And that's the attraction. It's a tension. I don't want to hang out with God this week. But man, I want to hang out with God this week.

You see the tension? That's how people with a holy respect for God respond. And here is David learning that lesson. God's people want fellowship with God. But we know intuitively, we know by God's revelation, it's a foreign and hostile environment for sinners like us. That's why, by the way, Isaiah 6, here is a holy prophet who stands before a vision of a holy God, and all of a sudden now he's going, man, woe is me, man of unclean lips. Or how about this great passage in Luke 5, 8, when Peter runs up to Jesus, falls at his knees, and then says, go away from me, Lord. I'm a sinful man.

See the tension there? Man, what's wrong with you? I mean, you're psychotic. Yeah, because we want God, but man, we know we can't fellowship with God. If we don't start with that understanding of the priesthood, we start with an American understanding of the priesthood, that God's a big grandfather, pitching out quarters for all of his grandkids. Let's go hug grandpa. That's a scary thing, because it's not the real God. It's not the God of heaven.

We need a mediator. You wouldn't think, unless you're crazy, deranged, or ignorant, of going to court if someone has a case against you without representation. You need an expert there to stand in your stead. As a matter of fact, you see it all the time, whether it's in real life or on TV or from people that have been there. I don't want to represent myself. As a matter of fact, I don't want to say anything, because that guy's got the power and authority to toss me into jail for a long time. And he's concerned about whether I've done right.

And when the God of the universe sits on his tribunal, I want representation. And unless I'm foolish and think I can go and survive that kind of scrutiny, I want a lawyer. Reconsider the Old Testament priesthood. What it was, was the lawyers of Israel, if you will. And I know that's hard because they have such a bad reputation in our culture. But when you're in trouble, you call one, don't you? We need them.



And priesthood was that. Malachi 3 says, who can endure the day of God's coming? Oh, we want to be with God. Well, who can endure it? Who can stand before God when he appears?

Reconsider the priesthood. The priesthood was the mechanism to dive into the depths of God, but I can still breathe. Verse 2, Hebrews chapter 5. Every high priest is selected from among men, verse 1 says, and it is appointed to represent them, people, in matters related to God.

I don't want to walk into the holy room with the box in it. Let someone else do that, but can they go for me and say, please bless Mike Fabarez? That's what I want. I need a representative to plead my case and to offer gifts and sacrifice for sins.

Now, the old covenant picture, verses 2 and 3, is a picture of a high priest who's able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as the sins of the people.

Now, all of a sudden, I got a picture of a priest who goes there, and he doesn't represent God as a perfect person. Even Moses, who is the prototype of the priest, his brother becomes the leader of the priesthood clan. Even he is imperfect. And the scripture is very clear to point that out. As a matter of fact, he doesn't even get to enter the promised land because of his sin.

We've got every single mediator in scripture being faulty, and therefore, we start to recognize there's a problem. It's only one day the priest could enter. The priest did not live in the holy of holies. That's where I was going earlier. He doesn't hang out there.

You don't go, well, I want to talk to the high priest because I need some blessing. Well, let me go in and talk with God about it. That's not how it worked. He could only go in one day a week. Leviticus 16.

Here's where I want to go for just two minutes, please.

2. See its limitation

The priesthood would be great if I had guarantees about it. If I knew the tanks wouldn't run out, if I knew the snorkel would never get filled with water, the problem is it's faulty. It works, but it doesn't work quite right. Because the mechanism, it's also fraught with imperfection and sin.

High priest didn't hang out in the Holy of Holies. Leviticus chapter 16, at the top of your passage, what do the editors of your English translation read? What does it say? Day of Atonement. That's now called on the Jewish calendar what? Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur, it was called that then. It's just the Hebrew words for it. Day of Atonement.

One day a year, in the fall, they were supposed to go and have the high priest go in. And here was the first time it ever happened. Leviticus chapter 16, verse number 2. Yahweh says to Moses, tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the most holy place behind the curtain. In front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die.

Again, you want to hang out with a God like this? This is the God we have, a holy God, and we can't fellowship with him. It's a hostile environment for us. Because, here's why you'll die. I appear in the cloud. I live there. You can't live with me.

This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area. If he's going to come in, he comes in with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burn offering. He's to put on. Now, here's another thing he's got to do. Not only does he have offerings here, he puts on the sacred linen tunic with linen undergarments. Puts that next to his body. He is to tie the linen sash around him and he's to put on his special hat, his linen turban. These are the sacred special garments. So, and here's one more thing he must do, he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on.

This is really bizarre. Notice the pictures here, which, by the way, you'll see all throughout the Levitical law. You see special clothes for the priests, and you see lots of washings. Matter of fact, there was this thing called the bronze laver that was there in the entrance to the tent of meeting between the altar and the front part of the tabernacle, and you had to go and wash up there. Why? Because your hands were dirty? It had nothing to do with that. It was all symbolic.

I'm not wearing the right clothes. I'm not clothed in the right stuff. I got dirt on me. I got to get it off. Now I can come talk with God. Why? You couldn't touch the box. Didn't matter. These were symbols of two problems that we have. Is that you don't have the right stuff on. You don't have the right clothing on. You don't have the right, as the scripture always says, clothes are almost always in scripture connected with our behavior. Our behavior is wrong. We need to be clothed in righteousness. We're not. And we got dirt on us. We got to get it off. And washings and clothes was always a part of it. That always went with the sacrifices.

Verse 5. From the Israelite community, he is to take two male goats. Maybe you've heard this. One's for a sin offering and a ram for the burn offering. Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin. Now we know he's imperfect. To make atonement for himself and his household.

Then he is to take two goats and present them before Yahweh at the entrance to the den of meeting. He's to cast lots. That's like rolling some dice for the two goats. One lot for Yahweh, the other for the scapegoat. Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to Yahweh and to kill it, sacrifice it for a sin offering. The goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat, he shall present alive before Yahweh. And it is to be, underline this, used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.

This is a very profound symbol here. I go in and I say, I'm not dressed in the right clothes and I'm dirty. I need to be dressed in the right clothes and I need to be clean. I'm gonna represent all these people. Now I got a problem. I've done wrong. I need to pay for it. I'm going to have a goat here that is going to be killed for the behavior that I've done and I won't be killed for it. Matter of fact, the scripture goes on to say I'm going to lay my hand on its head and confess the sin of the nation and then I'm going to take the other goat and do the same thing, lay my hand on it and then, well, let's keep reading. It'll tell us what he does with it.

Verse 15. Slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do what he did with the bull's blood. Sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. In this way, he'll make atonement for the most holy place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites. Whatever their sins have been, he's to do the same in the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the most holy place until he comes, having made atonement for himself, his household, and the whole Israelite community.



Did we miss it? It comes down further in the text. He's then to take the goat. Here we go. Mike Fabarez paraphrase. Lay his hand on the goat and send the goat out. That was the scapegoat.

You've been called a scapegoat before? What does that mean? You took the blame, right? You didn't deserve it, but you took the blame. The picture of the scapegoat is great because the picture of the one goat dies as a payment for my sin, and then the other goat, we lay the sins and guilt on that goat, we send it to the edge of the community, and we let it run loose so we never see it again.

Do you see the pictures here? God is saying, listen, this is your problem. The reason you can't breathe here in my environment is you got sin in your life. We gotta fix the problem. And symbolically, ceremonially, illustratively, emblematically, esoterically, God shows these pictures. The problem is it's not real, it's not organic, it's not lasting.

Jot this in the margin, we don't have time to look at it, but Psalm 50. Asaph is writing this psalm and he says, listen, we know that it's not about bulls and goats and blood. God's not hungry for a meal. That's not why he's doing this. It's all an anticipation of the ultimate scapegoat, the ultimate slaughtering of a payment for sin that is somehow going to make me breathe in this hostile environment.

So we have an imperfect mechanism in the Old Testament. That imperfect mechanism, verses 4, 5, and 6 in Hebrews chapter 5, is now made perfect in Christ. Great transition.

No one in the Old Covenant could take the honor upon himself. He's got to be called by God. Just as Aaron was called by God, so Christ, now we turn the focus, he didn't take upon himself the glory of becoming high priest. God said to him, you are my son, today I become your father. Remember that? We've already quoted that in the first chapter of Hebrews. After we've said he's the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of God's nature. After quoting the psalm where the father says to the son, you, O God, your throne extends forever. We've already established that the son is God incarnate.

And now he says, you can take the place of the high priest who had to, in the old picture, the old symbol, the old emblem, had to sacrifice for his own sin, very imperfect. You now, the son, can take the place as the high priest, the perfect high priest. Which, by the way, is where the rest of the book of Hebrews goes.

Our job is to stand next to that high priest, stand behind that high priest, stand in concert with that high priest, trusting the high priest, holding to the high priest's garments and saying, I'm walking into this foreign environment with you.

3. Stand with the perfect high priest

That's the whole point of what he's setting us up for. A perfect high priest who is a priest, not temporarily, verse 6. He's a priest forever, not in the Levitical order, but in the order of Melchizedek.

Quickly turn to chapter 10. Let me remind you that the whole point of the priesthood in the Old Testament was to get us to cling to the high priest, Jesus Christ.



Verse 1, the law, Hebrews 10:1, is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year make perfect those who draw near to worship. Oh, they come to worship, but they can't get in. And if they did come in, they'd all die.

If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins because it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, exactly what Psalm 50 is referring to.

Keep reading. Verse 4. Because it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me. With burnt offerings and sin offerings, you weren't pleased.

The focus now is on the fact that the high priest, the real high priest, the perfect high priest, comes and he's not going to take an emblematic, symbolic, illustrative, anticipatory animal. He's going to say, here's my body. I'm going to represent the people before God and I will be the sacrifice. I will be the bull. I will be the lamb. I will be the goat. And I will come and be sacrificed.

And look at verse 10, Hebrews 10:10. And by his will to do God's will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties. Again and again, he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he was done. He sat down at the right hand of God. He's hanging out in the holy of holies, unlike Aaron, he doesn't get in there once a year.

Since at that time, he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool because by one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. As more and more people are called to hang on to the hem of the great high priest's garments, they are being made, what's the word? Perfect. You hang on to this. You grab on to this. Now, all of a sudden, this hostile environment becomes not only livable, it becomes inviting. It becomes a place where you dwell.

Jesus said, don't be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. I'm going to prepare a place for you. And do you know the immediate context of that whole statement that you learned as a Sunday school student was that he was going to the cross to now tear the temple curtain in half and by his body, he was going to allow you a way to come in to meet with God.

I'm going to prepare a place for you that where I am in the holy of holies, you can be also. I know we make that eschatological, but that's the context of that passage.

So, I will die. You trust me. And now, all of a sudden, here's the punchline. You get gills. You don't need a mouthpiece. You don't need scuba gear. You don't need tanks. You get to live in the presence of God and survive. That's what this high priesthood is all about.

And you and I now get to swim around in the presence of a consuming fire who we so desperately want to be with. He's our creator, and we know there's blessing at his right hand. Oh, we want that. God, bless my life. Let me have fellowship with my maker, and I now in reverence like the angels, covering their eyes and their feet, draw near to God with confidence.



Isn't that where our passage goes? Take a look at verse 19. Hebrews 10:19. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter, here it comes, the most holy place, that's the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, opened up for us through the curtain. Now we get to go right through the curtain. And the curtain that was broken and split open was his own body.

Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Now we stand in the presence of God without sin. If you peddle a grandfather in heaven who loves you, has a wonderful plan for your life, just come up and hug him and kiss him on the cheek and oh yeah, pray a prayer and say something about sins and forgiveness and whatever that is. But yeah, God wants you. We missed the point.

We are presenting to a lost and sinful world the fact that there is a holy God that if you spent two seconds in his presence, you'd be absolutely incinerated. But you want him and you need him. And here's the thing, that great consuming fire that we ought to be in awe and respect of is beckoned you to come through the broken body of Christ, walk through it and enter into his presence and in great reverence and with wonderful, awe-filled worship, stand in his presence and say there's no better place to be.

We only do that now relationally. Revelation chapter 21 says you will one day do it physically. You got one last problem, and that's your body. That's what your health club instructor's been saying, right? You got one last problem, and that's your body. And your body is riddled with sin. And God says one day I'm going to exchange that body, give you a new body.

And here's what Revelation 21 will say. A loud voice will come from the middle of this place, this new city, the new Jerusalem. And here's what it'll say. Now the dwelling of God is with men. That's what we're looking forward to. You've got it relationally now. You want to pray and enter into the presence of God, you can do it.

One day is going to change out your body and you're going to walk with real toenails through the gates of the new Jerusalem and you will live in the presence of what was before a consuming fire and now will be the light of the nations, the Bible says, by which we'll walk.

So that kind of makes me a priest. You got it. It's called the priesthood of believers. You don't wear a backwards collar, you don't wear a black robe, but you are a priest.

Martin Luther said it well. All Christians are priests, and accursed be the statement that a priest is something different from a Christian. For this is said, without the word of God, it is based merely on man's opinion. You and I are not only priests, we're in one sense junior high priests, because we get to walk into the Holy of Holies. You got gills. Be a good bumper sticker. We got gills.

Let's pray.

God, help us to understand the depth of the profundity of fellowshiping with a holy God, and like David, let us take six steps, stop, and give a sacrifice, in our case, of praise and thanksgiving, that we get to fellowship with the presence of God, that when we pray right now, when we sing a song



in just about 15, 20 seconds, we will be communing and speaking to the God of the universe. What an awesome privilege.

God, help us to respect that, to love it, to like David, be drawn to it and say, I'm not going to leave that for Obed-Edom. I want it. I want to live in God's presence. God, we thank you for the torn and broken body of Christ that was an acceptable sacrifice that cleansed us from our sin. Thank you, God, for the fellowship opened up through him. And thank you that we can now live in your presence.

We live in your presence relationally. And one day, God, we look forward to walking our new bodies into a place where we'll hear the voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is among men. Can't wait to live with you, God.

In Jesus' name, amen.