

# We Believe in Jesus

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## Study Guide

LESSON  
FOUR

## THE PRIEST



THIRD MILLENNIUM  

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## STUDY GUIDE

### CONTENTS

Outline.....	3
Notes.....	4
Review Questions .....	24
Application Questions.....	29

### How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (0:29)
- II. Old Testament Background (3:38)
  - A. Qualifications (5:16)
    - 1. Appointed by God (5:35)
    - 2. Loyal to God (7:00)
  - B. Function (9:56)
    - 1. Leadership (10:16)
    - 2. Ceremonies (14:20)
    - 3. Intercession (26:22)
  - C. Expectations (29:12)
    - 1. Historical Development (30:03)
      - a. Creation (30:37)
      - b. Fall (35:48)
      - c. Exodus (37:19)
      - d. Monarchy (39:24)
    - 2. Specific Prophecies (43:47)
- III. Fulfillment in Jesus (49:35)
  - A. Qualifications (50:52)
    - 1. Appointed by God (51:47)
    - 2. Loyal to God (56:06)
  - B. Functions (58:14)
    - 1. Leadership (58:35)
    - 2. Ceremonies (1:02:25)
    - 3. Intercession (1:12:08)
  - C. Expectations (1:16:11)
    - 1. Great High Priest (1:17:04)
    - 2. Priest as King (1:18:56)
    - 3. Kingdom of Priests (1:20:39)
- IV. Modern Application (1:25:49)
  - A. Sacrifice (1:27:02)
    - 1. Trust (1:27:17)
    - 2. Service (1:34:57)
    - 3. Worship (1:38:45)
  - B. Reconciliation (1:42:40)
    - 1. Peace (1:42:58)
    - 2. Unity (1:47:38)
    - 3. Mission (1:49:55)
  - C. Intercession (1:51:40)
    - 1. Appeal (1:52:01)
    - 2. Advocate (1:54:36)
- V. Conclusion (2:03:15)

## Notes

### I. Introduction

Priest: A person who mediates between God and his people so that God will receive them into his special holy presence to grant them his blessing.

### II. Old Testament Background

Even before the days of Moses, there were already priests who served God:

- Adam
- All humanity
- Melchizedek
- Job
- Jethro

God established an official priesthood with Aaron that replaced all other forms of priesthood.

**A. Qualifications****1. Appointed by God**

Only God could appoint a priest.

**2. Loyal to God**

Priests had to demonstrate special loyalty to God by:

- Worshiping and serving him alone.
- Carefully carrying out their duties.
- Ensuring that God's people were loyal to God.

**B. Function****1. Leadership:**

Old Testament priests provided leadership in various ways.

- **Worship:**

Preparing and leading God's people into his special holy presence.

- Guidance:

Applying God's Law in the form civil and ritual judgments.

Investigating, interpreting and judging matters related to health and holiness.

- Teaching:

Preparing and leading God's people in a way that would result in his blessing.

## **2. Ceremonies:**

Ceremonies were designed to prepare God's people to enter his special presence.

- Involved holy times, events and objects.
  
- Centered around holy locations.

The most well-known ceremonial feature of priestly service was the presentation of offerings.

- Expressions of thanksgiving.
- Experiences of fellowship.
- Atonement for sin.

Atoning offerings were an important part of priestly ministry even before Moses.

Worshippers offer sacrifices that receive God's punishment on their behalf ("substitutionary atonement").

Results of Atonement:

- Expiation: The removal of the guilt of sin.
  
- Propitiation: The satisfaction of God's justice and wrath against sin.

### **3. Intercession**

Definition: Mediation or petitioning for favor on another's behalf.

Old Testament priests often interceded by means of their leadership, guidance, and ceremonies.

Common forms of intercession:

- Petition for help
  
- Pronouncement of blessing

## **C. Expectations**

### **1. Historical Development**

The role of priests has sometimes shifted in response to the changing circumstances of God's people.



**a. Creation:** The time of God's covenant with Adam.

Adam and Eve served God in ways that resembled the service of the Aaronic priests.

The tabernacle and temple were intended to fulfill the same function as the Garden of Eden.

Humanity's priesthood in Eden consisted of:

- Ministering to God in his garden sanctuary.
- Taking care of God's holy things.
- Ensuring that the sanctuary was fit for God to inhabit.
- Expanding their work to the rest of the world.

God's command to fill and subdue the earth is often called the cultural mandate.

- b. Fall:** The first changes to the office of priest due to humanity's sin.

Adam and Eve had to begin presenting offerings of atonement for sin.

The Garden of Eden was no longer the location of priestly ministry.

- c. Exodus:** The days of Israel's exodus from their slavery in Egypt.

God narrowed his priestly call from all humanity to:

- The nation of Israel
- The tribe of Levi
- Aaron and his descendants

God dictated the creation of the tabernacle.

Changes in the priesthood were steps toward fulfilling God's original plan for humanity.

- d. Monarchy:** When the nation of Israel had settled the Promised Land and was living under the rule of a king.

The kings of Israel were closely involved with priestly service.

- David
  - Made plans for the temple.
  - Made sure priestly services were performed.
  - Organized priestly families.
  - Assigned tasks.
  - Offered sacrifices and pronounced blessings.
  
- Solomon
  - Presided over the building of the temple.
  - Supervised sacrifices.
  - Led people in prayer.
  - Pronounced blessings.

Solomon excluded Abiathar and his family from priestly service.

The monarchy ended with the Babylonian exile.

## 2. **Specific Prophecies**

Expectations for future priests:

- Great High Priest

A single high priest would serve forever.

Christ's permanent priesthood is implied in Hebrews 7.

- Priest as King

The offices of priest and king would ultimately be reunited in the person of the Messiah.

- Kingdom of Priests

In our restoration, redeemed humanity will once again serve as God's priests.

When the Messiah reigns, all God's people will serve as priests, and be united as a kingdom of priests ("the priesthood of all believers").

### **III. Fulfillment in Jesus**

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament expectations of the priestly office.

#### **A. Qualifications**

##### **1. Appointed by God**

God appointed Jesus as high priest.

Christ is a royal priest and rules as God's vassal king.

Jesus was both a Judahite king and the great high priest.

## **2. Loyal to God**

Jesus met the requirements of loyalty with absolute perfection.

- Always worshiped and served God and God only.
- Always obeyed the Father's commands.
- Followed the commission given to him by God.
- Spoke only what the Father gave him to say.
- Did only those things that he saw his Father doing.

## **B. Functions**

### **1. Leadership:**

- Worship

Jesus did many things to promote true and spiritual worship.

Jesus made it possible for his people to approach God in the heavenly temple.

- Guidance

Jesus offered priestly leadership in civil and ritual judgments.

- Teaching

Jesus' teaching often focused on repentance and fidelity.

## **2. Ceremonies**

Jesus' death on the cross was the greatest ceremonial aspect of his priestly ministry.

Jesus' sacrifice formed the meritorious basis for every sacrifice that had ever been offered.

Jesus was the final atonement.

Jesus' sacrifice ushered in the new age of the kingdom of God.

### **3. Intercession**

Intercession: Mediation or petitioning for favor on another's behalf.

One of the most explicit examples of Jesus' intercession is his High Priestly Prayer.

Jesus continued his intercessory work with his death on the cross.

Jesus continues to intercede for us.



## **C. Expectations**

### **1. Great High Priest**

The great high priest would be of the order of Melchizedek.

According to the author of Hebrews, all these prophecies came true in Jesus.

### **2. Priest as King**

The offices of priest and king would ultimately be reunited in the person of the Messiah.

When Jesus came as Messiah, he took on both the office of king and the office of high priest.

### **3. Kingdom of Priests**

Jesus turned God's people into a kingdom of priests.

Jesus appoints all his followers to serve as priests in his kingdom.

#### **IV. Modern Application**

*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, answer number 25, summarizes Christ's priestly work in terms of his ministry to believers.

##### **A. Sacrifice**

###### **1. Trust**

To receive forgiveness of sins, we have to trust Christ and Christ alone.

Followers of Christ must trust that our salvation is based on Jesus' sacrifice.

Confidence in Jesus is the firm belief that his sacrifice is sufficient to atone for our sin.

## 2. Service

Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf should inspire us to serve him faithfully

Ways we can serve Christ in light of his sacrifice:

- Be willing to suffer and even to die for Jesus' purposes.
- Be patient and compassionate with each other.
- Give up our freedoms for the sake of those who are weaker.
- Lay down our lives for the sake of other believers.

## 3. Worship

Jesus' sacrifice should motivate us to worship the Father and the Spirit.

Jesus' sacrifice serves as a model for worship.

- Jesus' death was an act of worship because it fulfilled the types of sacrifices that were foreshadowed in the Old Testament.

- Things we can do that God counts as sacrifice:
  - Not conform ourselves to the behavior of the world.
  - Live a life of love.
  - Give our money, resources, and time.

## **B. Reconciliation**

### **1. Peace**

When Jesus reconciles us to God, he makes peace between us and God.

The peace we have with God should:

- Move our hearts to praise God.
- Move our hands to act.
- Motivate us to know and understand more about God

**2. Unity**

Those who love God will also love the people God loves.

**3. Mission**

Jesus has appointed the church to further his ministry of reconciliation.

**C. Intercession****1. Appeal**

We can approach the Father with our needs because our great high priest is praying for us.

We can have confidence that God favors us, and is inclined to give us mercy and grace when we pray to him.

## 2. Advocate

We should follow Jesus' example by advocating for others in prayer.

Intercessory prayers of advocacy can apply to any aspect of life.

Examples:

- The success of Christian ministries
- Those in spiritual danger or sin
- Protection from temptation
- Health

When we advocate for others in the name of the Lord, the Lord is inclined to receive our advocacy favorably.

We should advocate on behalf of others for the matters of daily life.

## **V. Conclusion**





3. What expectations did the Old Testament create for future priestly ministries?

4. How did Jesus meet the qualifications for the office of priest?

5. How did Jesus fulfill the functions of a priest?

6. How did Jesus meet the Old Testament expectations for the office of priest?

7. What practical application can we draw from Jesus' sacrifice on the cross?

8. How should Jesus' priestly reconciliation impact our lives today?

9. Describe what Jesus' priestly intercession enables us to do and the obligation we have to others in light of his work.

## Application Questions

1. Why is it important for you to demonstrate loyalty to God, and how are you doing this in your present circumstances?
2. How can your own teaching prepare and lead Christians in a way that will result in God's blessing?
3. What ministries are you currently engaged in and how are they practically fulfilling the cultural mandate?
4. How does Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament priestly expectations change the way we read Old Testament prophecy?
5. Are ceremonies still important in the life of the church, and what part do ceremonies play in your own worship?
6. What comfort and encouragement do you draw from Jesus interceding on your behalf?
7. How do we remain confident and assured of our salvation during times when we may be tempted to doubt or lack confidence?
8. How are you serving Christ faithfully in your present ministry and current circumstances?
9. How should we respond to the trials and sufferings in our lives knowing that we are at peace with God?
10. How important and beneficial has praying on behalf of others been for you?
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?