

Jesus - our High Priest

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Introduction

Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and High Priest whom we confess.

Hebrews 4:14 we have a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God
Jesus is our High Priest! But what is a priest, and why are they necessary?

The human need

Human beings need two things: we need to hear from God and we need to go to God. We need a *word* from God and we need a *way* to God. We need to hear from God so that we know what He is like, what his purposes are for the world, and what He requires of us. And we need a way to God, because to be cut off from God in death would be darkness and misery and torment forever. So we have these two great needs: to hear from God and to go to God. We need revelation *from* Him and reconciliation *with* Him. The Scriptures teach us that no human can have direct dealings with God. We are not qualified to enter God's presence the way we are. This is because God is so different to us – He is so much more holy than we are. Specifically, He is morally righteous, and our sin constitutes a real barrier to free communion with God. We are unable to come into His presence. Therefore, if we want to have dealings with God, we must have a mediator - someone who goes between us and straightens out the problems that exist between God and ourselves. This is what a priest is.

Historical background

God met this need in the Old Testament period through the Levitical priesthood. Priests from the tribe of Levi mediated between God and his people via a complex, cumbersome system of sacrifices and rituals. Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy were all devoted to explain how this system was to function. The fundamental ideas that lay behind the entire priesthood were *reconciliation* and *mediation*. This was expressed by atoning sacrifices, and by intervening priests. In fact, even the Hebrew term for priest – *cohen* – has at its root meaning the idea "one who stands up for another, and mediates in their cause". It was for this purpose that God chose the tribe of Levi, and out of it again the family of Aaron, on whom He bestowed the priestly office. There is another important idea expressed by the priesthood. The object of reconciliation was *holiness*. Israel was to be 'a holy nation' – reconciled through the 'sprinkling of blood' – brought near to God, and kept in fellowship with Him, by that means.

The priests, as the representative offerers of that blood and mediators of the people, were to show forth the holiness of Israel. Through the High Priest and the priestly system God brought forth His truth. The priesthood was very precise, very exact – there were bodily requirements; there were specific defilements that would temporarily or wholly interrupt their functions; there was a specific mode of ordination; and even every single portion, material and colour of their distinctive garments – these were all intended to express symbolically this essential character of holiness. Here, there was a great difference between the nations and Israel; between Israel and the tribe of Levi; between the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron; and then finally between an ordinary priest and the great High Priest. At the time of the first Temple, the priests would receive their office through anointing. The sacred oil was poured over them, and also applied to their forehead and over the eyes. Their service each morning began with burning incense before the Lord, prior to make offerings for the people. Their ministry was firstly to God, before people, and they were especially consecrated for this task.

Garments of the Aaronic priesthood

In the midst of the instructions to Moses for the construction of the tabernacle, God outlines the garments that the priests were to wear, in Exodus 28. They wore four fresh linen items – breeches, a coat, a girdle and a bonnet. These were not just white garments, they were made of a pure and a shining white cotton. The girdle in particular was only donned during the actual performance of a priest's work, and was removed immediately following. In addition to these the High Priest had four golden vestments – so called, because gold appeared in them. These were his robe, fully woven, of a dark blue colour, descending to his knees, and adorned at the hem by alternating golden bells and blossoms of the pomegranate in blue, purple and scarlet. These were to be worn when the High Priest ministered in the most Holy Place, so that the sound of the bells would be heard when he entered the Holy Place, and when He came out again. He wore a breastplate that contained twelve stones, and was made of four colours – white, blue, purple and scarlet – and inwrought with threads of gold. He possessed a mitre, and he wore a golden frontlet, made of two braided chains of pure gold – that joined two onyx stones containing the names of the sons of Israel, six on each side, which he wore on his shoulders.

Exodus 28:2 explains that the priestly garments were to be for "glory and beauty". The whole characteristic and function of the priesthood centred in the person of the High Priest, and he himself wore a gold plate on his forehead, which bore the words, 'Holiness unto the Lord'. This is a parallel to I Chronicles 16:29 – "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness". True holiness is firstly Godward. It is not merely the drab abstinence from various lusts or habits,

but it is an *active* participation in righteousness. The absolute holiness of Jesus had a beauty, directed towards the Father when He declared "I must be about my Father's business", "I do those things which please Him", "I do nothing of myself".

Everything about these clothes had tremendous importance and significance. The stones that the High Priest wore symbolised his bearing their names on his shoulders as a memorial to the Lord. The clothes could only be made by skilled men to whom God had given special wisdom. The gold plate on the High Priest's forehead symbolised his bearing the guilt of the Israelites. The lesser priests wore entirely white and shining linen, which spoke fully of righteousness. In addition, throughout the colours of the High Priest, and the tabernacle itself, was a constant theme of gold, blue, purple and scarlet – these spoke of the coming Messiah – Jesus – and His deity, His heavenly origin, His royalty and mediatorship, and His sufferings.

So saturated with meaning were these clothes, that if either a priest or the High Priest officiated without wearing the full number of their garments, then their service was rendered invalid. This was also the case if anything, no matter how trifling, intervened between the body and the clothes of the priest.

Sacrifices

One cannot read the pages of the Old Testament without noticing the constant reference to sacrifice. Indeed, sacrifices were the centre of the Old Testament, even before the giving of the law. Sacrifices have a fundamental idea of substitution, which implies everything else – atonement, redemption, and forgiveness.

This idea of substitution is introduced, adopted and sanctioned by God and these sacrifices necessarily point to a mediatorial priesthood, through whom both the priests and the worshippers might be brought near to God, and kept in fellowship with Him. However, these priests themselves continually changed – their own persons and services needed purification, and their sacrifices required constant renewal, since, in the nature of it all such substitution could never be perfect.

All of this was entirely symbolic – it demonstrated man's need, God's mercy, and His covenant. The requirements for sacrifice were highly precise – the elements should be brought of such things, in such a manner and to such a place as God had prescribed. The choice and the appointment of the mode of approaching God were all entirely of Him. The item to be sacrificed had to belong to the offerer. Nothing else could represent them, or take their place before God. All sacrifices were to be free from blemishes. Offerings that were not blood offerings were not to be mixed with leaven or honey, because of their tendency to fermentation and corruption. Similarly, salt was to be added to the sacrifices to prevent corruption – Jesus referred to this salt in Mark 9:49, when He taught His disciples to have salt within themselves.

The offerer would lay hands on their sacrifice, slay, skin, dissect and wash it. In this laying on of hands a symbolic transference took place. The priest would catch the blood, sprinkle it, light the altar fire, lay wood, and bring up the pieces. This whole service was exceedingly solemn. A person who brought a sacrifice would first require purification. They then brought their sacrifice themselves – 'before the Lord'. They entered the Temple into its outer court. If the sacrifice was holy, he entered by the northern gate. If it were less holy, then by the southern gate. Next, the sacrifice was placed so as to face the west; the direction of the Most Holy Place, so that it might literally be brought before the Lord. This is what Paul refers to in Romans 12:1 when he adjures us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God.

All public sacrifices were slain by the priests themselves. The blood was to be caught in a silver vessel and was then sprinkled or flayed in a specified manner, and eventually the body of the sacrifice was burned – it was consumed by flames, which pointed to its destruction and symbolised the wrath of God and the punishment due to sin. Not only this, but the sacrifice was effectively surrendered, and as it began to smoke, one was assured of its acceptance by God.

The requirements for the Day of Atonement were even more exacting. This was the only day that the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place. He had to cleanse himself before donning his garments. He was to offer a bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself before doing anything further. Next he took a censer full of burning coals from the altar and two handfuls of finely grained incense, and brought these behind the curtain. The incense was put on a fire before the Lord. He took some of the bull's blood and sprinkled it seven times. He was to take two goats. One was sacrificed as a sin offering for the people, and then its blood was also sprinkled. He was to lay both hands on the head of the second goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites, and effectively transfer them onto the goat's head. Another person came and took the goat away into the desert. Here the goat was released, and symbolically carried away all the sins of the people to a solitary place. Both this man and the High Priest were to remove their garments and cleanse themselves with water. The fat of the sin offering was burnt, and their bodies were taken outside the city, and then burned also. The person who burned them was also to cleanse himself, before he could return. This was performed every year, to make atonement for the people, to clean them from all their sins. However, what was the real essence of a sacrifice? God Himself said, "It is better to obey than to sacrifice". To quote the Greek philosopher Socrates,

Socrates What is the object of sacrifice? Does it really have any effect? And in any case, what sort of deities are those which have to be haggled with, and whom we even try to cheat by substituting a cheap offering for a more expensive one, in the hope that they won't notice the difference?

Of course, Socrates lived in the pagan Greek world, but God Himself is as unsparing in His denunciation of such sacrificial attempts.

Psalm 50 I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills ... do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

The prophet Micah asked: Micah 6:6-7 With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

To which the only possible reply was, Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

King David added, Psalm 51 You do not delight in sacrifice ... you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were not merely outward observances – a righteousness by works which justified the offerer by the mere fact of his obedience – because it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. As attempts at quantitative bargaining, sacrifices were both worthless and pernicious. What God required was a life of habitually right conduct, affectionately devoted to the observance of His moral law, and the practice of a neighbourly spirit of goodwill towards one's fellow man – these are the only sacrifices God needs. The main message of the book of Leviticus is holiness. The word "holy" occurs almost 100 times, and the word "atonement" occurs at least 45 times. Leviticus emphasises how God is dealing with the problem of how sinful man can approach God and have continual access to Him. This can be achieved only on the basis of blood atonement, and the fruit of this must be a *true* cleansing – which is holiness. Nevertheless, the sacrificial system ultimately ended once and for all in 70 AD due to the Roman destruction of the Jewish Temple.

The Messiah would replace the Levitical priesthood

Let us turn from the Old Testament to the New. The book of Hebrews was written to address a particular problem experienced by its original readers. The problem the audience was having was how their faith in Jesus affected the validity of the Levitical priesthood, which was still active in their time. What were they to do with all of the Old Testament material that commanded them to approach God through the Levitical priestly system? These readers believed that Jesus was their Messiah, but since He wasn't a Levite He didn't qualify as a priest. So they evidently continued to approach God through the Levitical system.

However, the book of Hebrews explains to us that the law was only a shadow of the good things that were to come. They were not the realities themselves. Here, "shadow" is the Greek word "icon" – an image, a representation. The law was not God's ultimate purpose. It pointed to it. As Paul explains in Galatians, the law was a tutor, to bring us to Christ.

Now, the author of Hebrews makes a case in chapter 7 to prove that the Old Testament itself taught that the coming Messiah would replace the Levitical priesthood.

Psalm 110:1-4 The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The Lord will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth. The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

In this Psalm, David speaks of one superior to himself, who is a great king. David was speaking of the Messiah - God's chosen king - who is portrayed in exactly this way in many Old Testament passages (Psalm 2; II Samuel 7; ...).

However, the Messiah would be not only a King who exercises God's rule over people. Unlike the Old Testament system that separated kingship and priesthood into different offices, the Messiah would also be a priest who provides access to God. This big change is the reason why God is so insistent in verse 4 – the Messiah would be a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek – He would not be a Levitical priest. However, who was Melchizedek? For the answer to this question, let us turn to the other Old Testament passage referred to in Hebrews 7 . . .

Genesis 14:17-20 After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

What does this passage teach us about Melchizedek? And what bearing does this have on the Levitical priesthood? Let's go back to Hebrews 7, and the commentary given there.

Hebrews 7:1-10 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace". Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people – that is, their brothers – even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth from Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor. Verses 9 and 10 refer to what is known as the federal principle: what our ancestors do affect us. Since the tribe of Levi was "in" Abraham, the argument here is that the Levitical priesthood itself also acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek, with Abraham. Therefore, Melchizedek's priesthood is greater than the priesthood descending from Abraham, because the lesser is blessed by the greater. And because the Messiah has now come, Jesus' priesthood supersedes the Levitical priesthood.

As the author continues to say, perfection can not be attained through the Levitical priesthood – if it could, then why was there still a need for another priest to come – one in the order of Melchizedek? It's true that Jesus came from the line of Judah, and that Moses gave no instructions to that tribe about priests, but Jesus, the Messiah, has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. Turning back a few pages, Hebrews 5:1-7 Every High Priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He 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.

No one takes this honour 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, "You are my Son: today I have become your Father." And He says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

The ushering in of the new priesthood

When did this new priestly order begin? Let us return our thoughts to the priestly robe. This robe was the main outer garment because it completely covered the High Priest from his shoulders to his feet. In a sense this speaks to us of the Church. The robe reached from the shoulders to the feet – the shoulders are the beginning of the body of which Christ is head, the feet are the end of this body. The robe was composed entirely of blue, which speaks of the heavenly ministry of our High Priest.

The robe was made entirely of one piece – woven into shape with seams, and with a hole in the top that the head might slip through. Around this hole the robe was reinforced with a border or fringe to strengthen it, so that it would not tear. One of the important qualifications of the High Priests office, in Leviticus 21:10, was that he would not tear his garments. To the Jewish people, the tearing of garments was an outward show of apparent repentance or grief. However, God's priest was not to perform what, really, was a superficial act, because he was to provide mediation for the people and lead the path to God. The command God has given, in Joel 2:13, is to "rend your hearts, and not your garments".

The garments were holy garments, and were full of significance that it was an offence to God to tear them. This is exactly as when Moses was told to speak to the rock for water but became angry and struck it a second time. The rock spoke of Christ, who was struck for our sins, and out of whom living water flows in response to our prayer. However, Moses struck the rock and broke this symbol, and for this action, in Numbers 20:12, he was prohibited from entering the Promised Land.

At the time of Jesus' trial, Caiaphas the High Priest rent his garments in direct violation of Leviticus 21:10 and the command God had given. That very same day the Aaronic Priesthood was rent away from Israel, and the Melchizedek Priesthood was established.

Jesus the High Priest

After Jesus' death and resurrection His ministry as High Priest began, and the new covenant was fully established. As the book of Hebrews begins, Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

When John saw the risen Christ in Revelation 1:13, He was dressed in a robe reaching down to His feet and with a golden sash around His chest – the clear marks of the High Priest’s garments. Hebrews boldly declares that Jesus is our great High Priest, who has gone through the heavens, and so the author adjures us to hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Jesus’ priesthood is better

God never planned the Levitical priesthood to be permanent. If He had planned this, He would never have spoken of the Messiah as a priest in the order of Melchizedek. He sovereignly arranged the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek, and inspired David to say the Messiah would be a priest according to the order of Melchizedek so that his people would know that a change in priesthood was coming.

God has now set aside the whole Old Testament way of approaching Him. Hebrews 7, again, explains that a change in priesthood signals a change in the way we approach God. The value of this system was that it performed a foreshadowing function - but it was "weak and useless" in the sense that it did not have the ability to truly reconcile anyone to God. With the coming of the "real thing" in Jesus, this system should be cast aside. Through Jesus, God has provided a better way to relate to him. Why is this way better?

- *Because His priesthood is better.* The Levitical priests obviously kept dying and having to be replaced, and this interrupted proper representation before God. But Jesus will never die and therefore holds his priesthood permanently. This means that he is always available for our needs and as verse 25 explains, "Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him".

- *Jesus is sinless.* Verse 26 teaches we have a High Priest who is "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens." No other priest could ever say that. They were all corrupted by sin - but not Jesus. He was tempted but never yielded to the point of sin.

- *He could offer Himself as a sacrifice* - because He was sinless, He didn't have to offer sacrifices for Himself. The Levitical priests needed to offer sacrifices daily, first for their own sins, before they could mediate for the people. Jesus does not need to do this, because He did this once and for all when He offered up Himself. So he was radically different from the previous priests. They had sins of their own that had to be dealt with first, and certainly never could they actually be the sacrifice for the sins of others. However, Jesus changed all that - He needed no sacrifice for Himself, but became, instead, a sacrifice in Himself.

- *His sacrifice of Himself was "once for all."* Paul explains in II Timothy 1:9 that God's "grace . . . was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." We see this in Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself. Every work of God's grace in history before the sacrifice of Christ looked forward to the death of Christ for its foundation. And every work of God's grace since the sacrifice of Christ looks back to the death of Christ for its foundation. Christ is the centre of the history of grace. There is no grace without Him. Grace was planned from all eternity, but not without Jesus Christ at the centre and His death as the foundation. His death was once and for all.

Let’s summarise this - Jesus’ priesthood is superior. The Levitical priests offered animals, which could never take away human sin – it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. For this reason, the sacrifices were repeated year after year and the priests had to keep offering them. They were not able to perfect those who drew near to worship – if they could, then they would have stopped being offered! However, they could not and instead the sacrifices became an annual reminder of sins. Not only this, because the priests were sinful themselves, they had to make sacrifices for themselves, before mediating atonement for the people. The whole Levitical system was obviously flawed. But Jesus was the Son of God, and His sacrifice does deal with the issue of human sin. And since it was a perfect sacrifice, it covered all of our sins and never needs to be repeated. As we read in Hebrews 10:12, 14, "when this High Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God . . . because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy".

This is the message that God gave the prophets, who spoke of the coming new covenant, Jeremiah 31:33-34 This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.

The consequence of this is that where these have been forgiven there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Making Jesus your High Priest

If you come to God through Jesus Christ and make Him your High Priest, there are some fantastic benefits available to you.

- *Our sins are forgiven.* The whole system of the priesthood revealed our sin, and God’s holiness and wrath. However, God provided a way to be made right with Him. This was through the Levitical priesthood, but now is through His Son, who can save completely all those who come to Him.

- *You can relate to God, confident of His acceptance.* We never have to worry about whether or not God will accept us or reject us. Because Christ's death was big enough to pay for all of our sins, and because He will always apply that death to our sins, we never have to be afraid of God. This is the key to a dynamic relationship with God! We may boldly approach His throne room of grace.

- *You can relate to God personally.* We don't need any impersonal system of relating to God through human priests, sacrifices, or rituals. Through Christ, we can relate to God heart to heart, sharing our problems and joys, asking Him for the help we need, thanking Him for His work in our life. He indwells us through the Holy Spirit and His Word comes alive to us.

- *You can relate to God anywhere and any time.* We don't have to go to a special sanctuary at a special time on a special day to relate to God. Through Christ, we may enter God's presence in our bedroom, on a walk, on our way to work. There is absolutely no place or time that we don't have personal access to God! This enables our relationship with God to become the central relationship in our life rather than a peripheral religious issue.

Now let me draw out some implications of this for the life of worship. The High Priesthood of Jesus - the coming of the reality instead of the shadow - fulfils and brings to an end the physical centre of Old Testament worship, the tabernacle and the Temple. It fulfils and brings to an end the official priesthood. It fulfils and brings to an end the sacrificial offerings. It fulfils and brings to an end the dietary laws. It fulfils and brings to an end the priestly vestments. It fulfils and brings to an end the seasonal acts of atonement and reconciliation. What this means, in essence, is that the entire worship life of the Old Testament has been radically refocused onto Jesus Himself and has become a highly spiritual thing, as opposed to an external thing. The external is still important, but now the spiritual is so radically pervasive that virtually all of external life, not just Church life, is the expression of worship. Romans 12:1 - "Present your bodies as living sacrifices which is your reasonable service of worship". That's all the time and everywhere. Again, in I Corinthians 10:31 - "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" - all the time, everywhere.

In the New Testament, all the focus is on the reality of the glory of Christ, not the shadow and copy of religious objects and forms. In fact, after the Old Testament, it is stunning how indifferent the New Testament is to such things: there is no authorisation in the New Testament for worship buildings, or worship dress, or worship times, or worship music, or worship liturgy or worship size or thirty-five minute sermons, or choirs or instruments or candles. We are free to find a place and time and dress and size and music and elements and objects that help us orient radically toward the supremacy of God in Christ. Almost every worship tradition we have is culturally shaped rather than explicitly Biblically commanded, because the command we have is simply a radical connection of love and trust and obedience to Jesus Christ in all of life.

There's a reason for this radical spirituality of worship in the New Testament - it is a missionary document. The message of this book is to be carried to every people on earth and incarnated in every culture in the world.

This is why our High Priest came and ended the tabernacle, and sacrifices and feasts and vestments and dietary laws and circumcision and priesthood. The Old Testament was very much a come-and-see system. The New Testament is very much a go-and-tell system. And to make that possible, the Son of God has not abolished worship, but made it the kind of radically spiritual engagement with God in Christ that can and must happen in every culture on the earth. Worship is not trivialised in the New Testament, but intensified, deepened, and made the radical fuel and goal of all missions. You see, with the new covenant, the Church is called to be a holy priesthood itself, mediators between God and the nations and His ambassadors to the earth. In Revelation 19:8 the bride of Christ is dressed in pure and shining linen - this certainly means the righteousness of the saints, but also speaks of our priestly role, and the priestly garments that now apply to us. This is our mandate and our task, which we can perform with the leading and enabling of our great High Priest.

Conclusion

There was a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to University. He never put His feet inside a big city. He never even travelled three hundred kilometres from the place where He was born. He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying, and that was His coat. When He was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centrepiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. Out of all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, none have affected life on earth, as has that one solitary life.