

Jesus Is Our Great High Priest

Q. How is Christ a priest?

A. As a priest, Christ offered Himself up once as a sacrifice for us to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God, and He continually intercedes for us.

(Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A #25)

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.”

(Hebrews 4:14)

In Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A #23 we learned that Jesus Christ, as our savior has been ordained by God to hold three offices: the office of Prophet, Priest and King. And in holding each of these three offices, Jesus has certain tasks or duties that He faithfully carries out on behalf of His people. Yesterday we learned that as our Prophet, Jesus delivers us from our state of spiritual ignorance by revealing to us the will of God for our lives.

In today’s catechism question we learn that not only is Jesus serving us as our Prophet, but He is also working on our behalf as our great high Priest. In the Old Testament there were two main tasks that a priest was anointed by God to perform. The first of those tasks was to offer up animal sacrifices on behalf of the people to make atonement for their sins. Day after day, month after month, year after year, these animal sacrifices were performed on the altar of burnt offering in order to point the Israelites to the reality that they were desperately in need of a *perfect* sacrifice, a *sinless* substitute that could cover all of their sins once and for all. As we read in the book of Hebrews, “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*” (Hebrews 10:1-4). And that’s where Jesus accomplished His first task as our great high Priest. Jesus came to this earth, lived a sinless life and then willingly offered Himself up as our perfect, sinless substitute on the cross. The author of Hebrews, in describing Jesus’ work as our Priest declares, “*And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*” (Hebrews 10:11-14). When we stop and think of Jesus’ work as our Priest on the cross we cry out with the hymn writer Stuart Townsend, “*How deep the Father’s love for us, how vast beyond all*

measure that He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure...It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished His dying breath has brought me life I know that it is finished"

Jesus served as our great high Priest by offering Himself as our perfect sacrifice on the cross in order to pay for our sins. But our catechism tells us of yet another task that Jesus performs for us as our Priest, and that is that Jesus *"continually intercedes for us"*. In other words, if you are a believer in Christ, Jesus is continually praying for you. He is, as the writer of Hebrews says, *"also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25). Oh how comforting these words are to the believer! This verse tells us that on your best days and on your worst days, Jesus is always thinking about you. Jesus is always watching over you. Jesus is always praying for you! He is praying that we would be kept safe from the destructive power of sin (John 17:15). He is praying that we would make progress in our sanctification as we pursue living holy lives (John 17:17). And He is praying that all things would work together for our good and that one day we will be brought safely into the arms of our Heavenly Father (John 17:24; Romans 8:28).

Be encouraged today that if you are a believer, Jesus as your great high Priest has fully paid for all your sins on the cross and is continually praying for you. Jesus is interceding on your behalf. Jesus is on your side. And as the Apostle Paul writes, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31).

Dig Even Deeper into God's Word!

Isaiah 53

Hebrews 7:25

Hebrews 9:24