

# THE CHRIST OF OUR CHRISTMAS

## POINTS TO PONDER

1) What is the role of the clergy in today's society? Has it changed over the years?

## WORDS TO WRANGLE

1) How did the incarnation make God the Son a more effective high priest?

## CONCLUSIONS TO CONSIDER

1) How do Christians today serve as a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9)?

## VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS LESSON SERIES:

"For to us a child is born; to us a Son is given" (Isaiah 9:6 NIV).

The role of the priest in the Old Testament was to serve as the mediator between God and humans. Priests offered sacrifices on behalf of people. Once a year the high priest offered a sacrifice to God to pardon the sins of the people. But alas, even with all of the structure and symbolism, the people understood the sacrifice had to be made each year. They understood that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). They longed for the day when a sacrifice could be made once and for all.

The priest in Jesus' day also served as a mediator between the people and God. The priest would pray on their behalf, as well as teach and instruct the faithful.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, quite possibly the Apostle Paul, compared Jesus to Melchizedek. This man was a mysterious priest in the Old Testament who encounters Abraham and offers a blessing to the man of faith. Hebrews argues that Jesus is a better high priest than even Melchizedek because Jesus is both divine and human.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, **since we have a great high priest** who has ascended into heaven, **Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.** <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> **Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence,** so that **we may receive mercy and find grace** to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV).

The Hebrew argument is profound. Since our high priest, Jesus, ascended into heaven – the permanent residence of God, not just the tabernacle made with hands – then several things can easily happen. We can hold firmly to the faith we profess. The soundness of the doctrine of our faith firmly stands when compared to other doctrines. Our beliefs do not waver because of our uncertainty of their truth. We do not need to look for other answers.

Because of our high priest, we can also approach God's throne of grace with confidence. The throne of God is the center of His existence. Many assume approaching this throne room is a picture of prayer. The picture is much bigger than just prayer.

In the context, Hebrews is speaking about the duties of the earthly high priest and specifically the priest's role in offering sacrifices. Tying the throne to the grace of God helps our understanding.

With Jesus as our high priest, we do not need to hide from God's presence. We don't stand before Him exposed, instead we are clothed in Christ's righteousness. We approach the throne of grace with confidence. There is no need to cover away from it. We receive mercy and grace at the time of our greatest need.