

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—  
*Lesson 20—Christ as Priest, Q. 25*

- I. *The office of a priest. What is a priest?*
- a. He must be a man, taken from among men to represent them.
  - b. He must be appointed and authorized by God.
  - c. He must be holy, morally pure, and consecrated to God (Lv. 21:6, 8).
  - d. He must have the right to offer sacrifices to God and to make intercession on behalf of those represented by him (Hb. 5:1-6; Nu. 16:5; Lv. 16:3, 7, 12, 15).
- II. *Offering up of himself. Christ was a real and true Priest.*
- a. The Scripture expressly declares so (Ps. 100:4; Hb. 5:6; Zc. 6:13).
  - b. He was a man taken from among men to represent them (Hb. 2:16, 17; 4:15).
  - c. He was chosen by God (Hb. 5:5, 6; 1 Pt. 2:4).
  - d. He was perfectly holy (Lk. 1:35; Hb. 7:26).
  - e. He had an absolute right of immediate access to God, and influence with him (Jn. 17:26; Hb. 1:3)
  - f. He performed perfectly and absolutely all the functions of a priest (Ep. 5:2; Hb. 9:26; 1 Jn. 2:1)
- III. *A sacrifice to satisfy divine justice. He offered himself on the cross a sacrifice for sins to satisfy the justice of God.*
- a. Under the Law, the penalty for sin is death, which penalty the sacrificial victims paid in their lifeblood on behalf of those offering them.
  - b. The victims were offered on the occasion of sin by or on behalf of the sinner (Lv. 4:1-6, 13-16).
  - c. The victims must be perfect of their kind (Lv. 22:20-27; Ex. 22:30).
  - d. The sinner, or the priest representing the sinful people, laid hands (Scriptural signification of transfer) on the head of the victim, confessing sin (Lv. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4; 16:21; 2 Ch. 29:23).
  - e. The victim, though perfect, is after the laying on of hands called “sin” and “guilt” (Lv. 4:3; 5:6).
  - f. The victim was then slain in the sinner’s stead, “accepted for him to make atonement for him... for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lv. 4; 17:11).
  - i. This is what we call *penal substitutionary atonement*. Recall Q&As 20, 21.
  - g. The blood was then sprinkled either on the horns of the altar or on the mercy-seat within the veil (Lv. 4:5ff). Thus the sin *was covered*, the Old Testament word for **expiation** by blood or the satisfaction of justice, and hence God **propitiated** (Ro. 4:7).
  - h. The invariable effect of the sacrifice and of this application of the blood was forgiveness (Lv. 4:20-31; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; Hb. 2:17).
  - i. Thus, Christ was at once the Priest and Victim, and the justice of God was satisfied (Hb. 9:14, 28; Is. 53:4-6; Hb. 10: 4, 10; 1 Jn. 2:2; Ga. 3:13; 1 Pt. 1:18, 19; 2 Co. 5:21).
- IV. *And reconcile us to God.*
- a. With sin thus forgiven, its offense removed, and the penalty thereof satisfactorily paid, Christ makes peace between God and man, dispelling hostility and restoring our natural friendship in his priestly mediation. *This is what Paul called the ministry of reconciliation* (2 Co. 5:18).

- i. **Boston:** “There was need of reconciling us to God, because by sin we were set at enmity with God (Is. 59:2). God had a *legal* enmity against us, such as a just judge has against a malefactor, whose person he may love notwithstanding (Mt. 5:25). And we have naturally a *real* enmity against God, inconsistent with love to Him (Co. 1:21).”

V. *Making continual intercession for us. He ever lives to make intercession for us.*

- a. Christ is an ever-living, perpetual priest (Ro. 5:10; 8:34)
- b. Christ has personal experience of our trials and a fellow-feeling for our infirmities (Hb. 2:17, 18)
- c. Christ is a royal Priest, interceding for us on the throne (Zc. 6:13), sending his Holy Spirit, and ordering all events in all worlds for the good of his people (Ac. 2:33; Mt. 28:18; Hb. 10:12, 13).

**Reflections**

1. **The righteous demands of divine justice are inflexible.** Sin is not so much *merely* (1) a debt or (2) an injury but *principally* (3) a violation of God’s law. As regards sin, God is not *merely* (1) a creditor or (2) an injured party but *principally* (3) a just and righteous lawgiver and judge prohibiting sin under pain of death. Therefore, the honor of God does not permit Him to forgive sinners out of mere pity, cannot pardon sin at all *unless* a complete satisfaction is made for righteousness.
2. **We cannot see how horrible, how evil sin really is until we see the crucified Son of God.** *Nothing* could satisfy the dreadful penalty owed for it, *nothing* could cover the hideousness of that stain, *nothing* could cleanse us from the contaminating effects of it, *nothing* in all the universe **but** the *blood of the Son of God*.
3. **How wonderful then is the love of our Great High Priest!** What a great Redeemer we have in Christ! His love surpasses our highest imagination and purges our deepest sin.
4. **The doctrine of Christ’s priestly office affords the strongest assurance of God’s willingness to pardon our sins.** In grace, God does not demand of us the sacrifice we cannot make but provides himself for us a full satisfaction—even for the sacrifices we made to him in vain, thinking to pay our debt with lesser offerings which only served to heap further guilt upon us. Yet God gave us his Gospel, Jesus Christ, in whom there is a true satisfaction for divine justice, and pardon for man.
5. **Ministers are not priests.** Christ exhaustively discharged all the duties and purposes of the priestly office. The institution is therefore abolished. It is wicked presumption for anyone to gatekeep the way of sinners to Christ. We go to God through Christ but must come immediately to Christ (Mt. 11:28; Jn. 5:40; Rv. 3:20).
6. Yet **Scripture teaches that**, in some sense, **all believers are priests.** Being united to Christ in his death and resurrection, believers have immediate fellowship with him and *thus* immediate access through him to God, even into the holiest of holies (Hb. 10:19-22). In Christ, all that distinguishes the office of priest is ours. (Hb. 8:15; 1 Ti. 1:1, 2; 1 Pt. 2:5-9).
7. **Believers cannot truly fall away or fatally miscarry faith.** We are kept by the High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for his saints—his holy elect for whom he died. He will not suffer one of them to be lost that the Father has given him.
8. Therefore, **believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your High Priest.** Enter today through Christ into the holy of holies and behold the mercy seat sprinkled in the price of your salvation.