Jesus our High Priest and Provided Sacrifice

1. Introduction

a. As we saw last week, Jesus and the apostles clearly pointed to Jesus as *patterned, prophesied and present* in the Old Testament. The ministry "Walk thru the Bible" (www.walkthru.org) has produced a great study guide on "Jesus in the Old Testament" on which I will base much of the first part of this series. (See Appendix for a great outline)

b. Last time we took our first look at Jesus in Genesis and saw that He was present in the very first verses, as Creator, and considered the mystery of a Tri-une God who also took on human flesh. He is "God with us" and hence we can pray with the confidence and faith that Jesus has the authority and power to accomplish all of His purposes for our lives.

c. Today we remain in Genesis as we consider two events in Abraham's life that reveal Jesus.

d. Having created a perfect world and placed man and woman in the garden of Eden they then believe Satan's lies and rebelled against God. They are then banished from the garden and sin begins to spread and become out of control so that by Genesis 6 man's sin and God's holiness cannot co-exist and the relationship man was created for has been broken down. So God sends judgement in the form of a flood; but within the judgement of God our loving Father there is always mercy. So God chooses Noah and his family to start over again after the flood with the command to be "fruitful and multiply" and fill the whole earth.

e. But they didn't fill the whole earth – they remained in one place and by Genesis 11 we see man wanting to "make a name for themselves" thinking they could build a tower and get to God on their own terms!!!! So God confused the languages so that they would spread out into different nations.

f. God then looks for a man He can establish a covenant with and send into the world. He finds Abram, a man of faith and thus begins the outworking of God's plan with a covenant people.

Gen.12:1-3 *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.* ***2*** *And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.* ***3*** *I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

2. Jesus our High Priest

a. In Genesis 14, Abraham wins a huge battle when pursuing the invading kings who had taken his possessions and his nephew Lot. He returns, having regained everything and on his return he is met by a mysterious priest-king who had no clear origin and a highly symbolic name: Melchizedek, king of Salem.

Gen. 14:16-20 ***16*** *Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.* ***17*** *After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to*

*meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). **18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) **19** And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; **20** and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

b. The literal translation of King of Salem is King of Righteousness or king of peace (shalom). This royal priest offered Abraham a meal of bread and wine, blessed him, and received his tithe offering. And then he disappeared from the scene, never to appear in Hebrew Scripture again, except in reference to this event. Then, in Hebrews 11 the writer gives us insight into the significance of this event.

c. In the early church, believers began identifying Jesus as our high priest to which many Jewish Christians objected. How could Jesus be a priest if He wasn't even a Levite? He was born from the tribe of Judah, and only the tribe of Levi could serve in the priesthood.

d. But the writer of Hebrews, drawing from a messianic psalm about the Messiah being a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, explained how Jesus fits this higher, prior priesthood.

Psalm 110:1-4 *The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." **2** The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty sceptre. Rule in the midst of your enemies! **3** Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.*
***4** The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."*

Heb.7:16-17 *…..another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, **16** who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. **17** For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."*

e. Melchizedek appeared centuries before the law at Sinai, which designated Levites as priests. He entered the scene without beginning or end, just like Jesus. He seemed to be a man, but also something more, just like Jesus. He came with a meal of bread and wine, just like Jesus. He received an offering and offered a blessing, just like Jesus. He was symbolic of an everlasting priesthood that would never end, apart from the law of Moses—just like Jesus.

f. This king of righteousness and prince of peace was a startling portrait of the Messiah who would come. It's difficult to know both the story of Melchizedek and the story of Jesus and not associate the two. In fact, many people believe that Melchizedek was actually a vision of the pre-incarnate Christ.

g. At the very least, we can say that centuries before Jesus came, God gave us a picture of His ministry in this incident from the life of Abraham, who had just recovered what was stolen by thieves. Jesus promises to restore all that has been lost and intercedes for us as a priest.

h. The Levitical priesthood which was patterned on the heavenly priesthood of Melchizidek has now been replaced by the order of Melchizidek with Jesus as our

High Priest. The Levitical order was an earthly expression by the law of sin and death which has now given way to the order of Melchizedek by the law of the spirit.

Heb.7:23-27 *[23] The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, [24] but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. [25] Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them..*

i. The point is that the one priest who goes between us and God, and makes us right with God, and prays for us to God is not an ordinary, weak, sinful, dying, priest like in the Old Testament days. He is the Son of God—strong, sinless, with an indestructible life.

j. He is not ministering in an earthly tabernacle with all its limitations of place and size and wearing out and being moth-eaten and being soaked and burned and torn and stolen. Christ is ministering for us in a "true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." This is the real thing in heaven.

k. Our High Priest is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. No Old Testament priest could ever say that. Jesus deals directly with God the Father. He has a place of honour beside God. He is loved and respected infinitely by God. He is constantly with God. God and his Son interacting in love and holiness for our eternal salvation.

l. The revelation of Jesus as our High Priest invites us into our eternal relationship with the Godhead through the Son. As our High Priest Jesus alone can make atonement for our sin and bring us to God. This was the plan from the beginning first revealed in Genesis 14.

3. The Provided Sacrifice

a. As part of the covenant that God makes with Abraham he promises him a son and from that son many descendants who will fill the earth. However, it is not until Abraham and Sarah are in their old age that the miracle son, Isaac, is born. Then in Genesis 22 we read this:

Gen. 22:1-2 *After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." [2] He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

b. Why? Here we have another picture or pattern foreshadowing Jesus. It had to be an excruciating experience for both father and son, first as Abraham accepted the instruction, and then as Isaac realized what was happening.

c. But the experience is also full of faith. Abraham first tells his servants, "We will come back to you" (Genesis 22:15). Then, when Isaac notices the wood and fire but asks where the sacrifice is, his father replies that God will provide. And as the story unfolds, God does provide.

d. He dramatically stops Abraham and turns his attention to a ram caught by his horns in the thicket. Abraham was willing to offer his greatest treasure: his son. And that willingness was what God was looking for.

e. It's hard not to notice the parallels between Abraham offering his son and, centuries later, God offering His Son on the same mountain.
   i Isaac was led up the mountain and bound, like a lamb to the slaughter. So was Jesus.
   ii A multitude of descendants would come through this son, but only after his father gave him up. Same with Jesus.
   iii Even though Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son, he expected to receive him back by resurrection (Hebrews 11:19). So did God in His sacrifice of Jesus.
   iv Mount Moriah is considered to be the site where Jesus was crucified (and also the site of Solomon's temple)

f. In this story, God painted a startling preview of the cross nearly two millennia later. Not only does Isaac represent Jesus in this story, but so does the ram caught by his head in the thicket, a kind of crown of thorns, as it were.

g. Unlike other ancient stories of gods and sacrifices, this one shows us a God who not only demands the sacrifice but also provides it. He issues the requirements and then proceeds to satisfy them. The only response He asks for from Abraham is faith. God completes the assignment Himself.

h. That's a beautiful picture of the gospel. Our sin put us in a position of paying an excruciating cost. God provided a sacrifice so the cost would be on His shoulders rather than ours. We may climb His mountain in obedience, but we find Him there with a provision that accomplishes righteousness on our behalf. God actually did what Abraham was asked and then excused from doing. He gave us His Son.

i. Through requiring Abraham to sacrifice his precious son—and then supplying a substitute—God gave us a remarkable sneak peek of the cross.

1 Peter 1:18-20 *[18] For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. [19] It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.* ***[20] God chose him as your ransom long before the world began****, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.*

4. Conclusion

a. We can see in both of these events from Abraham's life how God was preparing His people for the revealing of His Son in human flesh. We're only in the first book of the bible and already the divinity, priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus have been revealed. How could we not see that God has been writing his divine stroryline from the beginning of time.

b. We were created for relationship with the Godhead and we have to do nothing but recognise Jesus for who He is and submit to His leadership. He will provide all we need as creator and sacrifice and, brings us into relationship by His High Priestly role of intercession.