

# Christ the True High Priest

*By Miles McKee, from a sermon preached on July 31st 2008 at the AFEC conference on Roman Catholic Evangelism*

Hebrews 4:14- *"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."*

Notice who Jesus is, - He is the Great High Priest!

Hebrews 9:11-14 "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Notice what he obtained - He obtained eternal redemption for us. That means His sacrificial work is accomplished. It is finished. It is over, completed and done!

Hebrews 10:11-14 *"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."*

Notice what he accomplished by His sacrifice - He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

I love Roman Catholics---I hope you do too-----How will you minister to Roman Catholics if you don't love them? Now I didn't say I love the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrines---but I do love Roman Catholic folk.

Today, I want us to consider Jesus, the True High Priest. I want to compare Him against any so-called priest of Rome and especially against their chief priest, the Bishop of Rome.

Now I want to advise you that I feel a great amount of passion about the subject of Christ our High Priest and His finished work, so I must warn you that those who would take away from or diminish His work on the cross deeply offend me. If I let loose and 'get to preaching', you might think that I am angry. And do you know what, -- you might be right!

I know that getting angry is entirely out of fashion nowadays. We live in a day and age when we are not allowed to be angry, but did you know that the Bible commands us to be angry? It says, "Be ye Angry, and sin not" Eph 4:26!

Did you know that gentle Jesus meek and mild got angry?

He got angry at the merchandisers in the temple---do you think he went up to those tables and said, "Excuse me, but if it's not too inconvenient I'd like to throw your table on the ground, that is if you don't mind"

No, Jesus got angry-he made a whip----He wasn't bluffing, He was big enough, strong enough and angry enough to clear the temple. They saw in Jesus a man inflamed, enraged and angry against sin. And they ran from Him!

He also got angry at the sin of the religious leaders of the day, ----- those gentlemen who enslaved the people with their rules and regulations and who had perverted the knowledge of God. Time and time again He called them on their error and hypocrisy by delivering to them such verbal bouquets as, "You are a brood of snakes, you are whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones." He got angry with them!

Listen to me carefully; that which makes you angry measures your character! Can you live in this day and age and not get angry with the 'Gay Agenda' being shoved down your throat? How do Christians not get angry about the millions of babies who have been murdered at abortion clinics? How can Christians not get angry about injustice? How can Christians not oppose evil?

Similarly, just as that which makes you angry is a measurement of your character, so, in relation to the finished work of Christ, that which makes you angry measures your love for the gospel. How can we sit back and not get angry when we see people who, in the name of Jesus, pervert the gospel and who by their sacraments attempt to demolish the Finished Work of Christ? How can we not get angry when we see the Bishop of Rome claiming to be the substitute for our Savior here on earth? How can we not be stirred when we see the Bishop of Rome exalt himself to the position of great high Priest, a position reserved for Christ alone?

I have to confess that the Mass also makes me angry. I have to admit that the thought of some bachelor priest claiming to be a necessary sacrificing priest with the power and authority to command King Jesus off his throne and to remake him in the shape of a wafer makes me angry.

The question is not, "Why is Miles McKee all stirred up about these matters", but rather the question should be, "Why are so few of those who say they love the LORD not angry at the attack the Mass and the Roman Catholic priesthood makes on the gospel of the finished and completed work of Christ."

What about you? Does the abuse of the Savior in the Mass make you angry in any way? Does the usurping of Christ's role of the only High Priest in Church not cause some irritation or indeed 'gnashing of teeth" on your part?

Alas, many preachers today have taken some kind of spiritual tranquilizers and have urged folks like us to be more broadminded! And, my, oh my, are we to be broadminded! We are urged to accept everything. We are told that Rome believes and preaches the gospel and we should not say things that criticize her---this makes me angry!

So today I want to speak to you about Jesus, the True High Priest. If I, perchance, get angry at His enemies, I trust I will sin not.

First) This morning I want to submit to you that we have Only One Great High Priest, ---the Lord Jesus Christ,

Second) I further submit to you that the Lord Jesus is the ONLY ONE suitably qualified to be our Great High priest.

Third) I further submit to you that we need only ONE Great high priest, Jesus the Christ.

We have only one Great High Priest---the Lord Jesus. Since, according to the scriptures, we have only one High priest, I find the existence of the Pope of Rome a very strange and puzzling matter. Let's consider him for a moment.

The Bishop of Rome claims to be the visible representative of our Lord Jesus here on earth. He is known as, the Bishop of Rome, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman province, Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City, Servant of the Servants of God and the Holy Father.

Now if these were not titles enough we find that he is also bearer of the exalted designation of Pontifex Maximus

Pontifex Maximus means the Great High Priest. In the Vulgate, one of the Roman Catholic Bibles, the word often translated as 'High Priest' is the Latin word Pontifex (see Hebrews 2:17, 4:15; 5:1, 5:5, 5:10). But the Pope, not content with calling Himself the 'Pontifex', the high priest, also calls himself pontifex MAXIMUS- that means, 'The Highest of the High Priests'.

Listen to me, if he really is the Great High Priest we should all go and kiss his ring and submit to him. If on the other hand he is not the Great High Priest, then he has usurped a title reserved exclusively for the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 4:14- "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.") and we are, therefore, duty bound to oppose him and work for the destruction of his apostate, anti-gospel system.

When I say 'destruction', I, of course, am not calling for violence against the man or his representatives; rather I'm calling for the destruction of the enemies of the Gospel by the preaching and propagation of the Gospel of Christ itself. We must never forget that it is the gospel of Christ that is the power of God unto salvation.

Let's take a closer look at the meaning of the title 'Pontifex'. The word pontifex is sometimes explained as 'bridge builder', but it is also related to the Etruscan word 'pont', which means 'road' and means something like 'preparer of the road'. The ancient Pontifex Maximus of pagan Rome was seen as the bridge builder between the Gods and man or seen as the road to the Gods.

Although the Pontifex Maximus was the high priest of the ancient pagan Roman religion, this title eventually was absorbed by the Roman Emperor who himself began to be reckoned, at times, as being a God or a demi-god. Indeed, all the Roman Emperors,

as head of the sacral pagan Roman society from at least the time of Augustus Caesar, bore the title of Pontifex Maximus, the great high priest.

In AD 381, however, the Roman emperor Gratian declined to use the title of 'Pontifex Maximus' saying it was no fitting title for a Christian to have. Nevertheless, the Bishops of Rome, not having, it seems, the modesty, integrity or humility of an Emperor, were quick to seize upon this title and take it unto themselves.

So let me recap this point of history, -----the heritage for this title, 'Pontifex Maximus' as used by the Roman Church, comes directly from pagan Rome and became available because a Christian Emperor refused to accept that title which rightly belongs to Jesus Christ.

## RED SHOES

Have YOU NOTICED HOW THE POPE often WEARS RED SHOES? Do you know why he wears red shoes? Back in Ireland, when I was a small boy, there was a theological question going round; it asked, "Why does the Pope wear red socks?" And the answer was "To keep his feet warm! We thought it was funny!

But why does he wear Red Shoes? ---On reading up on the fashions of ancient Rome I discovered that the upper class Patricians in Rome often wore red shoes-now are you ready for this---

---The Pontifex Maximus, the high priest of the pagan religion of the Roman Empire, always wore red shoes to declare that he was the High Priest---The Great High Priest of pagan Rome wore red shoes---He was the Pontifex Maximus-----the bridge between the gods and man -----

Mark this down, the present Pope wears red shoes and it's not just a fashion statement for him---it's a declaration that he is the Great High Priest! And he's not the first to wear them; all his predecessors wore them. However, we usually did not see them because of the length of their robes, but this Pope has shortened his garments and now we get to glimpse his telling footwear. I wonder, and I trust you'll excuse the sarcasm, but do they think that Jesus said, "You are Peter and upon you, I will build my Church...but only as long as you are wearing red shoes."

The Pope's red shoes are a reminder to all that he is, in his opinion, the Great High Priest. But this flies in the face of Scripture. Jesus is the only High Priest we have.

Have you ever read the book of Hebrews? The purpose of the book of Hebrews is to declare that the Old Covenant has been divinely annulled. In doing so, the writer demonstrates the superiority of Christ.

Christ Jesus, we learn, is greater than Moses,  
Greater than Aaron

Greater than the Levitical priesthood whose High Priest offered up sacrifices for his own sins and only then for the sins of the people.

We learn from the book of Hebrews that, because of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, the Old Testament priesthood has been done away. We learn that today, in the New Covenant, there exists no priesthood that makes sacrifices for sin.

To claim, as does Rome, that there is yet a sacrificing priesthood, headed by the chief priest of Rome, the Pope actually removes those who claim such a ministry from the New Covenant. Why so? The reason is that, in the New Covenant there is but one priest who has offered Himself once for sin.

The priests of Rome can claim to offer bloodless sacrifices all they like, but their masses are not recognized in the New Covenant. In the New Covenant we have One High Priest and one only---The Lord Jesus.

Jesus offered Himself Once;  
He entered in Once into the holy place;  
He appeared Once in the end of the world to put away sin;  
He was Once offered to bear the sins of many;  
and He offered Himself Once for all.

The moment when Jesus said: "It is finished," Mercy and Truth met together, Righteousness and Peace kissed each other, redemption was accomplished and hell went into a panic! There is no further need for sacrificing priests!

Let's get this clear, the momentous events of Calvary can be remembered but can never be repeated. We read, "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." - Hebrews 9:26

Notice -----Sin has already been put away! A supposed continual offering of Jesus as a sacrifice in the Mass, therefore, does not put sin away---And why not? Because the work of putting sin away has already been finished. There's no need for the sacrificing priests of Rome. The sacrifice for sins was made and accepted 2000 years ago and by that one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, redemption was accomplished.

If sin was not put away back then, it certainly has not been put away since, nor can it ever be for there remains no more sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:26). However, hear the good news; Christ has already put away sin by the sacrifice of himself!

The priestly office of Jesus is connected to His sacrifice. They go hand in hand. He, as our priest, has made a sacrifice for sins by offering Himself. 1 Peter 1:18-20 says,

*"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,"*

Look at the cross-see the spotless Lamb of God---his arms are outstretched-----that's a sign of welcome--- Would you rather receive the welcome of Jesus than the welcome of the Bishop of Rome? Look at the perfect lamb, your High Priest. There He is upon the cross, His head is pierced with thorns, His hands are fastened to the wood by nails, his feet are pierced through, His side is bleeding! Why? It's because He, as our high priest, offered Himself for our sins. His head was pierced and wounded for all the wicked godless views I have held, for all the mischief I have planned and for all the anti Christ thoughts I have spawned. His hands were pierced because of all the wicked things my hands have done. His feet were fastened and pierced because my feet were swift to run after sin and His side was pierced near the heart because of all the times I have given my heart to false gods.

Is this not enough? Why then do I need the supposed ministry of the Bishop of Rome and his legion of priests to make a bloodless sacrifice for my sins? ---Christ Jesus is enough!

Look at him there on the cross bearing our guilt - You see, Christ not only bore our sins at the cross, he bore our guilt. This is an important matter to grasp. Just imagine with me for a moment that there is a very wicked person who is condemned to die. However, before his execution takes place, another man steps forward and volunteers to become that man's substitute. Now let's suppose that this proposition is accepted by the courts and the substitute is now put on death row and you go to visit him. You say to the man, "You are dying in the place of that criminal. How does it feel to be a man guilty of such terrible crimes? He would say to you, "I may be the substitute and I'm going to die for that man, but I'm not guilty of those crimes! The other man is!"

I want you to understand something, Jesus Christ, as our substitute, is entirely different from this! He is our substitute who not only payed for ours sins, He took our very guilt upon himself. Let me ask you, who was treated as the greatest adulterer who ever lived? It was Jesus! Who was treated as the greatest thief, murderer, pornographer and blasphemmer?-It was Jesus----

"But he was holy harmless undefiled" ---yes He was---So how then can he be all those horrible things?---I'm talking about the cross! He was reckoned as guilty because on the cross He took our guilt---He became chargeable for our crimes against God and was treated as the greatest and vilest criminal who had ever lived.

Hallelujah, what a savior! I don't need another high priest, thank you very much! I'm going to stick with Jesus-He is enough-I need no other!

"No other priest in Heaven I need,  
No other priest on earth to plead,  
His wounded feet and hands and side,  
Exclude all other need of priests beside.  
Thus I enjoy through Him alone,  
Glad fellowship with yonder throne!"

The Lord Jesus is the ONLY ONE suitably qualified to be our Great High priest. Christ Jesus has come and has manifested Himself as the uniquely qualified High Priest. He alone has the qualifications necessary to redeem man. Here are some of his qualifications as our priest!

First of all, He is man. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Hebrews 5:1. As humans, we need a human priest, not an angel, to redeem us.

The priest must enter into the redemptive work with the same nature that caused the havoc of sin---Well you say, the Pope is a man, so if all that is needed is to have a human nature then the Pope could well qualify as the High Priest. But wait a minute---I wasn't finished with the qualifications! To redeem us perfectly, our priest had to be a perfect man! He had to be a sinless man! He cannot be in any way guilty of the calamity that has befallen man! He must be holy, harmless, undefiled: He must be sinless. This brings us to the second qualification.

Second Qualification: Christ's Sinlessness. Christ is the only sinless man who has ever lived. He was a perfect man. Only a sinless sacrifice could redeem sinful men. A sinful priest needed to make atonement for himself before he could sacrifice for others. A sinful priest cannot save anyone, for he himself needs a Savior. We needed a perfect, sinless high priest, and we have one in Jesus Christ.

But, how do we know he was sinless? Ask His friends---Peter what do you have to say about it? You lived with him and observed him for three years-And Peter says, "He was the lamb without spot or blemish" 1 Peter 1:19

"Anything else Peter?" Yes, He was the holy One, the just one, Acts 3:14

John what do you have to say about it? John says, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" 1 John 3:5

'Yes but His friends are likely biased' ----OK, let's ask his enemies---"Judas, what do you have to say about this matter?" And Judas says, "I have betrayed innocent blood" Matthew 27:24

Jesus was sinless! That the sinless, spotless Lamb of God had to offer Himself as our substitute should show us something of the horror of our sin. Now, because of Calvary, the shed blood of Christ is the only meeting-place between unholy sinners and the all-holy God. The law proclaims that the wages of sin is death, but the shed blood tells us that these wages have already been paid. This is good news!

Our only appeal for continued acceptance before God is the person and work of our great High Priest, Christ Jesus our Lord. Yes indeed, the one and only ground of our acceptance is the Christ who shed His precious blood on our behalf. We may be in Christian service and ministry but we are never accepted because of our service. We must always remember that the only acceptance we have before God is Christ crucified and His blood!

For acceptance, therefore, before God we need the Christ and His finished work plus nothing. It is not Jesus plus the ministry of the Roman priest which saves, it is Christ

alone who saves. It is not Christ plus the ministry of the Pope that saves, it is Christ alone who saves!

Third Qualification, He is the appointed mediator 1 Timothy 2:5 "there is one mediator between God and man the man Christ Jesus.

To be an effective mediator He must be both man and God! To be a mediator, one has to be able to understand both sides. And this is why Jesus is uniquely qualified to be the mediator for in Christ both God and man meet. In Jesus man encounters God. Jesus is the exegesis of God; He is God spelling Himself out in clear and unambiguous language. So in Christ, man meets God! But not only so, in Christ, God meets man. Christ is man as God intended man to be. He was perfectly obedient, worshipful, and prayerful and He delighted to do the will of God.

Now I want you to notice something more of the qualifications of Jesus to be the high priest.

4th Qualification: He is qualified to be our High Priest because he was set aside from eternity for this task.

We have already read how Peter tells us that Christ was, "foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you," 1Peter 1:20. But let me draw your attention to Romans 3:25. Romans 3:25 also shows us the purposes of God from all eternity to establish Jesus as our High Priest. It says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"

"God hath set forth"---this was no secondary plan, this was no accident. According to both Vine and Vincent, the Greek language in this verse reveals that God purposed and determined to set Christ forth as our propitiation.

The cross was no accident. It has been foreordained from the foundation of the world and was fulfilled in time! We are now living in the day and age when God's redemptive plan has already BEEN FULFILLED-THERE IS NO NEED TO SUPPLEMENT IT OR AUGMENT IT. It is finished.

That Christ would be our high priest and that He would perfect the work of redemption was the purposed plan of God from eternity. The eternal plan was Jesus and His Finished Work, not the Pope and his ever-sacrificing priests! There is now, therefore, no further need for other priests to obtain or apply redemption to us. There is no need to repeat or continue Christ's sacrifice for the Father looks at the work of the Son and is satisfied.

Those who suppose they offer him often as a bloodless sacrifice are in great and awful error! There is neither need nor rational that He should be offered continually for our sins. Nor indeed does any man have the ability to command Him off His heavenly throne and sacrifice Him once again for the sins of men.

We only need ONE high priest, Jesus the Christ.

Christ is the Only High Priest that we need! Why? Because every blessing we have is because of the person and work of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ!



He has made a perfect sacrifice

He has offered perfect blood

He is the perfect redeemer

And He is our perfect High Priest---we need no other priest.

Did you know, if Christ were not ascended and seated on His throne we would receive none of the benefits of redemption? It is because He lives that we live! It is because He is our Priest and King that He is applying all the benefits that he obtained for us at the cross. He is our living, ruling and reigning High Priest and He needs no help from pretended human priests to apply His redemption to His people.

Because of the work of our high priest we are already complete in Him! Now that Christ alone is our High Priest, we do not have to put up with the delusional, fictitious so-called priests of Rome who would try to place themselves and their ministrations between God and us.

Why would we possibly need another priest other than Jesus?

### The High Priest of Heaven

We need no other high priest in heaven for Jesus has entered into "heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us", Heb 9: 24-so heaven is covered! Jesus is now in Heaven, in the presence of God, and there He is enthroned as our perfect High Priest. He put away sin forever when He offered Himself and He has now sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High!

### The High Priest on Earth

Just as we need no other High priest in Heaven so we need no other High Priest on earth. Why? Because the Old Testament sacrifices have been done away with; and since there are no more sacrifices to be made for sin, it means, therefore, that all earthly priests and priesthoods have been made redundant! Redemption has been accomplished! Sacrificing priests have been outmoded and rendered obsolete. It is finished! Calvary cannot be repeated, nor does it need to be.

### Apostolic Succession

The Roman Church makes much of Apostolic Succession. It is one of the pillars of their Church. But the Apostles did not become the successors of the priestly ministry of Christ! There is no record of them, any of them, ever offering a Mass for the sins of the people. And there's a reason for that. In Hebrews 7:24 we read, "But this man (Jesus), because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." The Greek word ('aparabatos') from which we get the English word "unchangeable" also means "intransferable" or "non-transferable". This means that the priesthood of Christ cannot be transferred ! ---not even to the Apostles. This is one of the many verses that sounds out the death knell to Rome with its fantasies about them having a priesthood which can get you into heaven. Christ will not change or transfer his priesthood to another!

Mark it down; no Pope, no Cardinal, no cleric nor any dignitary from any ecclesiastical organisation is the successor to Christ's priesthood. Christ's priesthood is non-transferable! Those, therefore, who say they are Christ's successors are impostors and should be diligently avoided in all ecclesiastical matters!

Jesus claimed the exclusive skill to, in Himself, have the ability to bring us to God. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." - John 14: 6.

From this verse we learn how the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself, and in Himself alone, the ONLY Way to the Father in heaven. So perfect a Way is He that all true believers are carried IN HIM right up to the very throne of God.

Notwithstanding man's ruin through the 'Fall', there is access to the throne of God by the blood of Christ. All this is contrary to the teaching of Rome. When you accept the ministrations of the Roman priests in the sacraments it is a confession, whether conscious or not, that Christ alone is not the only way to the Father.

In Conclusion. One of the most glorious doctrines of the gospel is that we have a Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus. In the Old Testament, coming before a priest was similar to coming before a judge... and the phrase sympathetic judge is almost an oxymoron! But now through the gospel, we discover we have a Great High Priest who has bought and paid for us. We can now run boldly to the throne of grace and always find our sympathetic high priest! What wonderful encouragement there is in this truth.

On the other hand, one of the most appalling doctrines of Roman Catholicism is the doctrine of their priesthood. It teaches that all men may not come freely to God, but that God has appointed a special class of officers in His Church to act as mediators between Him and men, and to be channels through which He conveys the blessings of salvation. This is anti-gospel and anti-Christ!

We must never forget that there is no place in Christianity for any sacrificing priesthood-An ongoing sacrificing priesthood is an affront to the full and final priesthood of Jesus Christ Himself. The presence of any sacrificing priesthood on earth implies that atonement for sin has not yet been made. Any sacrificing priesthood on earth, calling itself Christian, therefore, makes a mockery of the Gospel.

So, which would you rather have, Christ Jesus our great high priest that is passed into the heavens or the Bishop of Rome? "Well can I have both?" No! By his claim to be the Pontifex Maximus, the Bishop of Rome has attempted to usurp the exclusive position of the Lord Jesus. By his performing the Mass and teaching his minions to do the same, he is denying the gospel and refuting the clear teaching of the Bible that Christ alone has finished the sacrifice for sins and that no other sacrifice for sins is needed.

Our high priest to Heaven Ascended  
Lo the Lamb, as it were slain  
Our high priest to Heaven Ascended  
On God's throne He lives again  
Pleads the sacrifice of wonder

Claims the fruit of all his pain  
Our high priest to Heaven Ascended  
Peace on Earth, good will to men.