

Hebrews 7:23-27

April 1, 2018 – EASTER FESTIVAL

Jesus Is Our Eternal High Priest ¹✠ **He met all our needs for us. (vv.23-25)**✠ **He lives to intercede for us. (vv.26-27)**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise?” (Psalm 106:2 NIV84)
So what do you think? Is “April Fools’ Day” a good day to celebrate Easter?

“Fool(s)” is listed 128 times in NIV84. Including: ***“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.”*** (Psalm 14:1; 53:1) ***“The senseless man does not know, fools do not understand, that though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be forever destroyed.”*** (Psalm 92:6f) ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”*** (Proverbs 1:7)

Jesus says “fools” are folks who reject Him as God’s Son. Paul the Apostle referred to those who deny their Creator: ***“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools....”*** (Romans 1:22 NIV84) But Paul also said to the Christians in Corinth: ***“We are fools for Christ....”*** (1 Corinthians 4:10 NIV84)

Through the centuries pagans mocked and mimicked the strange customs and ceremonies God commanded for His people Israel. For instance when the first high priest Aaron died, his garments were placed on his son Eleazar. So they passed from father to son as generation after generation died. They were sinful men, and ***“the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** (Romans 6:23 NIV84) **Jesus is Our Eternal High Priest.** He lives! This is great because...

✠ **He met all our needs for us. (vv.23-25)**

Israel’s high priests were sinful human beings. According to Jewish historian Josephus, eighty-three high priests served from Aaron (1500 B.C.) to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, when sacrifices ended. They all had to sacrifice innocent animals for their own sins before they could offer sacrifices for the people. They had good reason to fear God’s wrath. Aaron lost two sons to God’s fiery wrath. (Leviticus 10:1-5; 16:1f) On *Yom Kippur*, the great Day of Atonement, during the Second Temple Period (516 B.C. – A.D. 70), the lesser priests would tie a rope to the high priest’s ankle when he entered the Most Holy Place. In case he was struck dead, they could pull his corpse out without suffering wrath.

So is there is a hell? They obviously believed it. Billy Graham used to point out that the One who speaks the most about hell in the Bible is Jesus. He called it the place where ***“there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** Jesus said, ***“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*** (Matthew 10:28 NIV84)

There was a guest preacher in a different church who felt bad. Finally he asked, “Was it something I said that you did not invite me back?” The congregation president replied, “You told us there is no hell. If you’re right, we don’t need you. If you’re wrong, we don’t want you.”

That’s why I’m so glad that Jesus died for me. I’m so grateful He rose again for me, for you, for all. He was without sin. Pilate admitted Jesus was innocent. So did the Jewish Sanhedrin when they used false witnesses to condemn Him. Judas said, ***“I betrayed innocent blood!”*** None of Jesus enemies

¹ Based on 2017 NPH Series by James Janke: *Jesus Christ Is Our Great High Priest.*

could prove Him guilty of a single sin. God Himself said, ***“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”*** So the writer to the Hebrews says Jesus is the ***“high priest [who] meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”*** He could offer Himself as the perfect and permanent Sacrifice for sin ***“once for all.”***

We can't see it until it comes. It's like a huge bumble bee buzzing all around us. You can't help your heart almost stopping when you hear it. But look a little closer at that angry bumble bee of death. Its stinger has been torn out. Christ who died, ripped the stinger from death when He rose again on Easter morning. Now the Holy Spirit through Paul taunts: ***“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Corinthians 15:55–57 NIV84) Jesus says, ***“Because I live, you also will live.”*** (John 14:19) One of the greatest assurances that soothes our fears in life and death is this: **Jesus is Our Eternal High Priest.** His focus is always on you and your needs.

✠ **He lives to intercede for us. (vv.26-27)**

Death prevented Israel's high priests from continuing in office. It was sad separation. Israel mourned thirty days for Aaron their first high priest. On the other hand, there was great rejoicing when they lived together in peace, anointing a high priest so that oil flowed down his beard and the collar of his robes. (Psalm 133) They needed an intercessor, a mediator, between their sinfulness and the holy God. Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, then lost his life and family when the ground opened up to swallow them all. The rest of the people complained, so God sent a plague. Moses ordered Aaron into the middle of the death scene to sacrifice for them. 15,000 died; many more were saved.

God calls His people ***“a kingdom of priests.”*** (Exodus 19:6) He says, ***“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*** (1 Peter 2:9 NIV84) Are you praying for our nation? For our presidents – past and present? God can control evil into a blessing, and bring good in mercy.

It's all because Jesus lives as our **Eternal High Priest**, our merciful Intercessor. Think how during His ministry Jesus kept praying for His disciples. Warning Peter about his pride, Jesus said, ***“I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*** (Luke 22:32 NIV84) For the soldiers crucifying Him Jesus prayed, ***“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”*** Jesus is so intent on mercy that He said through His angels that first Easter morning, ***“But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’ ”*** (Mark 16:7 NIV84) ***“Tell...Peter....”*** What peace and joy in that!

Now Jesus lives to intercede for us at God's right hand. He cares personally for you too! Even when your heart condemns you for your sins, Jesus still intercedes. Through His Apostle Paul our risen Lord asks: ***“Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*** (Romans 8:34 NIV84)

We can't help singing: *He lives to bless me with his love; He lives to plead for me above. He lives, my hungry soul to feed; He lives to help in time of need.* (CW 152:3)

It's okay to be ***“fools for Christ”*** today and every day. ***“Wisdom is proved right by her children.”*** Heaven will tell the full story because there we will be able to ***“fully declare His praise”*** for all eternity. For now, we pray for true repentance and God's wisdom for all – first our hearts, then our homes, our community, our dear country. But when you're on your knees, head bowed, hands folded or lifted up to heaven, look beside you. There is Jesus – always praying day and night whether we wake or sleep. Christ our risen Lord, our **Eternal High Priest, lives to intercede for us.** Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! And all God's people say, **“Amen!”**