

Priests and High Priests: Foreshadowing Jesus Christ

Speaking of the ordination of priests in the Book of Mormon, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland wrote, “God has ordained priests ‘after the order of his Son.’ . . . They have been ordained in a way that serves as a type and shadow of Christ, letting the people know in what manner they may look forward to the Son of God for redemption.”³⁴ The priests who ministered in the Old World under the Mosaic law system, too, were types and shadows of Jesus Christ. Their sacred duties typified Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice (see Lev. 9, 16, 17) by

making atonement on the people’s behalf for their iniquities (Lev. 4:20).

A major difference existed, however, between the earthly priests and Jesus Christ. The earthly priests were subject to sin, but Jesus remained a “high priest . . . who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26). More significantly, Jesus was a “merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

Theme	Priests/High Priests	Jesus Christ
Priestly Office	Aaron’s sons held a priestly office (Num. 16:3–10, 40).	Christ is a “faithful high priest” (Heb. 2:17).
Called of God	Aaron (and sons) were called of God (Num. 16:5; Heb 5:4).	Jesus was “called of God an high priest” (Heb. 5:10).
Holiness	“Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Ex. 19:6).	Jesus Christ, “an high priest . . . who is holy, harmless” (Heb. 7:26).
Undefiled	Priests and high priests shall not “be defiled for the dead” (Lev. 21:1).	Jesus was “undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26).
Daily Sacrifices	High priests and priests offered daily sacrifices (Lev. 6:19–23).	Jesus “needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice” (Heb. 7:27), rather Jesus offered a sacrifice “once, when he offered up himself” (Heb. 7:27).
Tabernacle	Priests served in the tabernacle, which was made according to “the pattern shewed to [Moses] in the mount” (Heb. 8:5). This was called a “worldly sanctuary” (Heb. 9:1) and “first tabernacle” (Heb. 9:8).	Jesus is the “true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8:2); His was “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands” (Heb. 9:11).

Theme	Priests/High Priests	Jesus Christ
Types and Shadows	Priests are “the example and shadow of heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5).	Jesus is the fulfillment of the ancient priests’ example.
Blood	High priest offered the blood of goats and a bullock.	Jesus’s sacrifice was “neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood” (Heb. 9:12).
Two Covenants	The first covenant, the law of Moses, was a type and shadow.	The second covenant was Christ’s higher law; it was a “better covenant,” had “better promises,” and was “faultless” (Heb. 8:6–7).
Written Law	Part of the law of Moses was written on stone tablets.	The higher law: “I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts” (Heb. 8:10).