

Our High Priest

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[0:00] I have some good news for you.

This evening, my message is very brief! Good news. However, it is preceded by a very lengthy introduction.

The actual message is down to a few minutes, but the introduction may go until late tonight or early in the morning. If you are in my class on Sunday morning, you know, or I hope you've figured out by now, that we are in the book of Hebrews because we're in the last chapter.

So hopefully they've finally come to grips with that. But we finally arrived at the final chapter of Hebrews, meaning we should be finished by no later than November, maybe December of this year.

But the New Testament book of Hebrews is, for all practical purposes, a commentary on the Old Testament book of Leviticus.

[1:19] If you really want to understand Hebrews, read Leviticus. If you want to understand Leviticus, read Hebrews. Because it is a commentary on what goes on in that marvelous and somewhat mysterious book of Leviticus.

Some of us begin each new year well-intentioned to read through the Bible. I'm actually doing that. I'm in 2 Chronicles.

But Leviticus is often where we get somewhat bogged down in types and shadows and symbols that really make little or no sense to us.

Now, it should not be so. Leviticus is filled with great truths concerning the worship of the true God. It is in Leviticus that we come face to face with the supreme holiness of our Lord.

And it is in the book of Leviticus where we really see the Arianic or the Levitical priesthood in action. Those terms are interchangeable.

[2:26] We learn that that priesthood was a type of the priesthood of the Messiah, but with one major difference.

Christ, as the eternal high priest, was vastly superior to the temporary and earthly service of the Levitical priesthood.

In fact, the Levitical priesthood was temporary. It would pass away. And so it was here on earth for a time. It has passed away under the new covenant.

Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night and wonder things like, I wonder what Jesus is doing right now? I do those things. I don't know why. But the answer is, if you ever ask yourself that, he is interceding for us.

Because he ever lives to intercede for his children. In fact, if Christ is not at this moment at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, then we are miserably lost and destined for an eternity in hell.

[3:39] But Christ, our high priest, is seated, and that's an important term, in the heavenly realm, pleading our case.

Now remember from 1 John chapter 2, he is our advocate. And that is a Greek word meaning defense attorney. That's a nice system. He's also our judge.

If you ever have to go before the judge and it ends up being your defense attorney, that's a pretty good system to have. But he pleads before the Father. He petitions before the Father.

He intercedes. And Jesus, our high priest, is there responding to charges leveled against us by that deceiver, Satan, who for a temporary period of time has access to the throne room to make accusations against us.

That does not necessarily mean that Satan is lying. He probably doesn't have to. He just tells them what we've really actually done. And Jesus then steps in and says, they belong to me.

[4:44] And the Father says, I'm satisfied. And his wrath has been satisfied. So Christ today serves as our great high priest in the heavenly places.

In that regard, he is the fulfillment of the earthly high priest that we can read about in Leviticus and other books of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.

He is the fulfillment of that earthly priest who was a mere shadow of the superior things that would come.

So, just how important is Christ as the great high priest? How much superior is he to his earthly counterpart?

And I would suggest two reasons tonight, and I'm sure there are many, many more. But the first reason Christ is superior to the earthly high priest, his seat is at the right hand of the Father.

[5:47] Very important concept. Secondly, he dwells in the heavenly sanctuary. Again, another important concept. So, we will first look at the seat of Christ.

And remember, this is my introduction. We're going to look at the seat of Christ. It may sound unimportant, but in reality, it is vitally important. Let me read to you out of Hebrews 8, verse 1.

Now, the main point in what has been said is this. We have such a high priest who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.

This is a very important verse of Scripture. Why did the Holy Spirit deem it important to speak of the seat of Christ in the heavenly places?

Well, to really understand that, you need to have an understanding of Leviticus and some of the other Old Testament books. In those books, you'll recall the first house of worship was the tabernacle.

[7:01] It was a temporary place of worship. It was made of animal skin and ropes and all this. And it was temporary. Later, the temple came along. I've always found it amazing that something like 243 verses describe how to construct the tabernacle, a temporary place of worship, yet when God talked about creating the stars, he said he made the stars also.

You know, billions and multiple hundreds of billions of stars. Well, he made the stars. But the tabernacle, he went for 243 verses, even though it was going to pass away.

So we had the tabernacle. And the tabernacle had no seats. Couldn't sit down. Then later, under Solomon, came the temple.

And the temple had no seats in the holy place where the high priest, or in the holy of holies, where the high priest ministered. And so the Levitical priests never sat down.

There was no place to sit. Why? Because their work of sacrifice for the sins of the people was never finished.

[8:20] There was always another sin to atone for. Always another sin to atone for. I'm reminded of Luther when he was in a monastery and pre-salvation, really, but he was under deep conviction.

They'd have confession to the father, the Catholic father. I'm just shocked everybody. Luther was a Catholic? Yes. Luther was actually a Catholic. And he would confess.

And, you know, guys would go in for five minutes and confess their sins. You know, Luther would go for eight hours, ten hours. One time it was recorded he confessed for 15 hours.

I mean, how much trouble can you get in in a monastery? You know, in the 13 or 15 hundreds. And what do you do? Well, you know, last night I coveted Brother Ralph's mashed potatoes.

I mean, that's pretty much it. But Luther would go. And they thought he was a malinguer. He was getting out of work and everything. One day he recorded in his diary he confessed for like 12 hours. He left and he remembered one sin that he hadn't confessed.

[9:27] He went back and said, we've got to start over again. That was Luther until he met Jesus. Until he met Jesus. Well, here the sacrifices were not permanent.

The work of the earthly priests were never permanently effective. And there was always another sin to atone for.

And these sacrifices, of course, had to be repeated over and over. They went on for 1,600 years.

They went on until 70 A.D. when Titus Vespasian, the Roman general, later the emperor, destroyed the Temple Mount.

So they had sacrifices up until then. And it was this assembly line of sacrifice because there was always more sin to atone for. And so for that reason, the earthly priests and even the high priest, earthly high priest, never rested from their labors.

Never rested. Since their work was never done and there was always another sin to atone for, seats were of no value. Didn't have time to sit down. God provided no seating in his blueprint for the construction of the tabernacle or the temple.

[10:45] Now, we do hear of the mercy seat in the earthly holy of holies. But that was not a seat for men. The earthly high priest, you'll recall, entered this area once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to offer sacrifice.

By the way, that was a 24-hour ceremony. Bloody. Like seven changes of clothing, seven ceremonial washings, dozens and even hundreds of animals slain.

And it was a bloody sacrifice. All of it pointing to the cross. All of it pointed to Jesus. But the mercy seat was the only seat in there that represented God's throne and His special presence.

The earthly high priest to sit on that would have been the height of blasphemy, and he would have sustained immediate death. He'd have been struck dead. In fact, so serious for them, they put a rope on him in case he did something wrong and died inside.

They reeled him out like a fish. They couldn't go in after him. They'd go in there and be instant death. And we saw this. You remember Nadab and Abihu, who we think got drunk and offered strange fire to the Lord, and he consumed them.

[12:04] And then Uzzah, who steadied the ark when it was going to fall in the mud, and God struck him dead. You cannot rush into the presence of God with unconfessed sin. You can't do it.

When Jesus offered His own body as the perfect sacrifice, He entered into the Holy of Holies, the heavenly Holy of Holies, and the Scriptures say, and sat down.

I really like that. He sat down. He did not do so because He was tired. He wasn't desiring rest. He did so because He was qualified to do so, and His work of atoning was done.

The cross is a one-time event in the history of the universe. From the cross, He cried out, It is finished. One word in the Greek language, meaning it is accomplished.

The debt has been paid in full. The sins of God's people are atoned for. Christ had done what all of the accumulated efforts of the earthly priests could never do under the Old Covenant.

[13:17] All the millions of animals that were sacrificed could never do. Jesus had accomplished the forgiveness of sins for His people. They were now reconciled to the Father.

The peace treaty had been signed. The Father's wrath toward them, which started, by the way, in the Garden of Eden, has been quashed and was satisfied with the sacrifice that had been offered.

And the Lord accomplished all that with one sacrifice. By one sacrifice, He is perfecting His children. It was the sacrifice of Himself, and therefore a sacrifice worthy for time and eternity.

Now, when it comes to our salvation, the Lord has taken His seat. And I really like that. That is a beautiful way, again, of saying it is finished. It is done. He has accomplished everything that needs to be accomplished for the redemption of mankind.

People who say, well, I'm looking for something more, something different. I mean, they're on the verge of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. There is no other name under heaven by which we are saved.

[14:32] Nothing need be added to Christ's finished work. Nothing can be added to Christ's finished work. And yet, what may go down as the monstrous absurdity of all time, people do continue to try and add to the sacrifice of Christ.

There are whole denominations that teach that it is Christ plus good works, Christ and membership in the right church, or Christ in addition to giving perhaps the correct amount of money, and so on. It just depends on what denomination you are in. When we try and add anything to the sacrifice of Christ, we have entered into the realm of sin, grievous sin.

Nothing can be added. Nothing need be added. It is finished. Now, this fact, and remember, we're dealing with the book to the Hebrews.

That tells us something, right? These were Jews coming out of Judaism, some of them already saved, some weren't, some would never be, this mixture in this congregation.

[15:44] But that should have been joyous news to the Hebrew congregation receiving this message in this book we call the book to the Hebrews. As Jews, they had labored for millennia under the sacrificial system.

They were like Luther. They'd sacrifice. They'd go outside. They'd remember, oh my, I forgot that one sin. And they'd start over again. Day after day, the earthly priests had entered the temple to offer the blood of bulls and goats and turtle doves and all these things, rams, to make atonement for

the sins of the people.

Now, let me stress to you, they were offering, as prescribed in the Old Covenant, gifts to the Lord for the temporary atonement of the people.

Those gifts were bulls and oxen and lambs and rams and all these animal sacrifices. Imagine the thrill of these Jews in this Hebrew congregation to hear there has been one sacrifice, a final sacrifice, an eternal sacrifice.

The work of redemption is finished. Forgiveness for your sins has been accomplished. That is joyous news for that Hebrew church. It's joyous news for Highland Park. It's accomplished.

[17:08] It's finished. This high priest could not only sit down, but he could also sit down at the right hand of the Father. And I just want to inject this, and we're getting this on our Monday night study.

When we speak of the Father, we're talking about the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world likes to say, well, you know, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Yeah, right. I've been to 43 countries. I haven't found that yet.

We're talking about the Father of the Lord Jesus. And Jesus is seated at his right hand. The Bible frequently mentions the right hand of the Father or the right hand of the throne.

Why is that important? The right hand of a monarch represented the place of honor, exaltation, and power.

That's what it represented. One derived honor from being allowed to even stand at the right hand of the monarch, of, say, an earthly monarch or king.

[18:13] But to sit at the right hand of the king was a supreme honor. Christ, of course, sat down at the right hand of the most honored and holy throne in the universe.

If this sounds utterly amazing, listen to what John in the book of Revelation had to say in chapter 3, verse 21. He who overcomes, and by the way, that's another word for Christians.

We are overcomers. He who overcomes, Wow.

Did you hear that? I will grant to my children to sit down with me on my throne. That's amazing. The saved of eternity are going to be allowed to sit with Jesus on His throne at the right hand of the Father.

That's a big throne. That's a big throne. It's going to accommodate every believer of every age to sit on His throne. Now, not being Jewish believers, we cannot appreciate the great comfort those words had to the saved of this Hebrew congregation.

[19:37] You have to understand something. When a Jew was saved and came into the body of Christ, he joined a local Christian church, he was totally ostracized by the Jews in his area.

Totally. Even if he wasn't yet saved but merely attended the Christian church, he would be excommunicated from all Jewish life. The Jewish society booted him out.

This meant no temple worship, no visiting the local synagogue, loss of social standing, loss of job, and loss of family. They boot you out as well.

Often, when a Jew became a follower of Christ, the family held a funeral, complete with a casket, that was actually lowered into the ground, buried, and by that act, the family was declaring, this member of our family is dead to us.

He is now a follower of Christ. A crucified Jew. A carpenter. Whom they considered to be a blasphemer. They were dead to that family.

[20:50] I am told that among the Orthodox Jews of Israel, this is sometimes done in our day, that they will hold a funeral. So the writer of Hebrews is reminding the congregation that though they may have been deprived of earthly temple services in Jerusalem or elsewhere, they had not been deprived of the heavenly services or of the temple in which God reigns.

They were excommunicated from that service and from that temple. They had the true, perfect, eternal, great high priest in the real, heavenly, holy of holies of which the earthly one was only a poor and soon-to-pass-away shadowy type.

They had the real deal. One of the most beautiful, though in human terms tragic, picture of being at God's right hand, I think occurred when Stephen was being martyred.

We call Stephen the first martyr of the church. I don't know why we don't call Jesus that, but we call Stephen the first martyr of the church. And we are told in Acts chapter 7, Stephen gazed intently into heaven.

Now he's being killed. He's being stoned to death. And there's a guy, by the way, over there egging him on saying, here, let me give you a bigger rock. That was a guy named Saul, later Paul.

[22 : 15] And Stephen says, Stephen gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Very interesting. Jesus stood up. He's got a seat. He stood up. Why was Jesus not seated at the right hand of the Father?

Being seated is an expression of our finished redemption. But when a child of God falls into trouble, and I'm sure none of you have ever done that, but I have, when we fall into trouble and are accused, Jesus stands up because that is the position of action and advocacy.

He is our defense attorney coming to His feet to defend us. Immediately, His power and energy are brought to bear on behalf of His beloved that are in trouble down here on earth.

He is seated as our Redeemer, but He stands as our helper and our advocate. You may recall that Jesus once stood in judgment before the earthly high priest of Israel, Caiaphas.

[23 : 32] He stood before Him and Caiaphas was judging Him. And He told the high priest that one day He would see Him, Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father.

That's when the high priest tore his robe. Really got upset. And for the earthly high priest, Christ sat in judgment. He would sit there and that man's been before Him, we think, obviously.

And for the earthly high priest, who was not a believer, he saw Jesus sitting and for Stephen, he saw Jesus standing.

Position of advocacy. The position of the interceder interceder is that of standing. And as I was preparing this lesson message, I was struck by the thought, I wonder how many times my sinful actions have caused the Master to rise from His throne, position of redemption next to the Father, and have to intercede with the Father on my behalf.

How many times have I forced Jesus out of His rightful seat so He could petition the Father and say, He's one of mine. He's a mess, but He's one of mine. Another staggering thought is Jesus is not through with us.

[24 : 57] Here we have the glorified Son of God Most High still preoccupied with ministering to and for His children.

Some in the church believe our sins will ultimately cost Jesus to cast us back into a state of lostness. There are whole denominations built on that. Nothing could be further from the truth.

He ever lives to make intercession for us. He is always serving His bride here on earth as she is even now being ready to be with her husband, the King.

He is with His bride both in heaven and on earth. We talk about the bride of Christ on earth. We're the caboose, by the way. Most of the bride of Christ is already in heaven.

We're bringing up the tail end. So Jesus then is a better high priest than His earthly counterpart because He is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

[25 : 59] He is also superior because the sanctuary where He dwells is superior to its earthly counterpart. In fact, the earthly counterpart has disappeared. a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man.

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices so it is necessary that this high priest also should have something to offer. Now, if He were on earth, He would not be the priest at all since there are those who offer the gifts according to the law who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things just as Moses was warned by God when He was about to erect the tabernacle. The sanctuary in which Christ is presently ministering is infinitely superior to the one in which the Levitical priest ministered, whether it was in the tabernacle or later in the temple.

The tabernacle was made of animal skins, the temple of gold and cedar and white marble floors.

The heavenly temple is infinitely more beautiful than those earthly counterparts.

It is the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man, according to that verse in Hebrews. Unlike the earthly temple, the heavenly can never be destroyed, crumble, or deteriorate.

[27 : 26] The true temple is the one that is permanently fixed in heaven. This is also true of our world compared to the heavenly realm. Folks, this world is passing away.

It is passing away. Everything is wearing out, whether they be mountains, continents, forests, rivers, and people. We see more and more evidence of that daily as the world groans for the return of its creator God who made it.

Things on earth pass away. In fact, there is only one exception to this rule, and by the way, that rule is actually the second law of thermodynamics, which says everything is wearing out.

There is one exception. The one thing on earth that is not subject to deterioration is the invisible church, the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. That is the one exception on this earth. It is not passing away. It is going to be taken out, but it is not leaving just yet, right before we get home.

[28 : 36] All other things are passing away. The old covenant passed away and was replaced with the new covenant. The sacrifices passed away when the perfect sacrifice was offered.

Our earthly worship is a mere shadow of what our heavenly worship will consist of. That is one reason I like to read the prayers being offered by the saints in heaven in the book of Revelation. If you get into a dry spell on your prayer life, go over to Revelation and start looking up those prayers. It starts about chapter 5, and there is a bunch of them in there. There is a bunch of them in there.

Now there, we can experience true worship. And again, Hebrews chapter 8, verse 3, For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices.

That is the earthly high priest. Went in there once a year with gifts and sacrifices. But listen to this. So it is necessary that this high priest, and that is Christ, also have something to offer.

[29 : 50] You know, you can read the Bible for years. I may have read that passage a hundred times. Maybe more. But when it came time to teach it a few months ago, all of a sudden that passage jumped off the page yet.

That will happen from time to time. You read a passage your whole life and then all of a sudden it takes a new meaning, it's fresh, and it just leaps off the page at you. You know, I sit there and wonder, why haven't I heard that before?

Did it just get included? You know, of course not. That is the very reaction I had when I read, this high priest, speaking of Christ, has something to offer.

It was like I had never seen those words before. So, I start this thought process. Jesus is physically in the throne room. We know His Spirit is with us, but physically He is in the throne room.

What does He have to offer to the Father? I mean, He owns the cattle on the Thousand Hills. He's completed the work. It is finished. Does He even have a flow of gifts coming to Him that He presents to the Father?

[31 : 08] And by the way, we've left our introduction. Now we're into the message. When Jesus was on the cross, again, He cried out, it is finished. But was it?

In the sense of our redemption accomplished, the work was finished. But Jesus is not floating on a cloud, strumming a harp, and neither will we one day.

Jesus is quite busy carrying on the priestly duties of the great high priest. And we see a counterpart of that in the Old Testament, particularly Leviticus.

He still has gifts to bring and present to the Father. And that just boggled my mind. So that begs a question.

What gifts could Jesus possibly possess to present to the Heavenly Father? And this will change your life. The Lord Jesus presents to the Father the gifts we present to the Lord Jesus.

[32 : 14] Well, let me read that again. The Lord Jesus presents presents to the Father the gifts we present to the Lord Jesus.

Now that is earth shattering. What are these gifts? Do you and I have gifts to present to Jesus? And the answer is yes, we do or we should.

We should. We present to the Lord Jesus Christ our praise, our worship, worship through the Word, worship through music.

We present to Jesus our adoration, our thanksgiving, our confessions of sin. The people of God redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are presenting to Jesus their gifts of praise, prayer, and worship.

The Lord Jesus takes those gifts of praise and presents them to the Father. Those are the gifts that He is presenting.

[33 : 27] Elsewhere, the Lord, it says He even puts our prayers in a jar. Takes them out from time to time. They're a sweet-smelling savor to the nostrils of God. Those are the gifts that our Heavenly High Priest presents to the Father.

Our gifts of praise and our gifts of worship. So it begs the question, are you a praising, worshipping, thankful member of the body of Christ?

Do you go to the Lord daily and even hour by hour to Christ presenting acceptable gifts of worship to Him and through Him to the Father?

If you are, these are the very gifts that Jesus is presenting to the Father as our great High Priest. He presents them to the Father.

This comes from His church, His bride, this unique mixture of Jew and Gentile, mostly Gentiles in this age we call the church. Presented to the Father by the very Son of the living God.

[34 : 34] Now listen carefully. If you are not doing those things, then Jesus doesn't have anything to present to the Father on your behalf. You have got to be engaged in prayer, praise, worship, adoration, thanksgiving and all those other things.

Let that thought roll around in your head this week. How much wasted time have we engaged in in this lifetime, time that we could have spent praising the King, presenting gifts to the Father through the Son.

And please mark this down. None of us can praise God or thank Him or commit or dedicate ourselves in worship, obedience, and service to Him apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this crowd knows that. Because, you know, like Dr. McBride said, we're talking to the remnant anyway. This is the remnant. Under the Old Covenant, no Hebrew could offer a gift or sacrifice to God except through a priest.

You didn't just walk into the tabernacle or the temple and say, I'm going to go inside there and slay this lamb. It didn't work that way. You had to go through a priest. Always had to go through a priest.

[35 : 53] Under the New Covenant, no one can offer a gift of praise or worship to the Father except through our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. No one comes to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot come to God apart from Christ. The world tries to do that all the time. Well, I believe Jesus is a good guy and man of love, but I don't need him. You know, I believe in God.

No, not the God of the Bible, not the God of the universe. We cannot come to God apart from Christ. We cannot confess sin apart from Christ.

We cannot seek forgiveness apart from Christ. We cannot worship and serve God the Father apart from Christ. We can do nothing apart from Christ.

Colossians 3.17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. That's one of the gifts.

[36 : 54] Ephesians 5.20 Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. Jesus continues to minister on our behalf because he continually brings our gifts of worship, praise, repentance, dedication, and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father.

It's my hope, my prayer, that this will serve to motivate all of us to greater deeds of worship, more praise, good works that have been set out before us.

Read Ephesians 2.10 about your good works you've been called to. And these are all packaged up, presented to the Father as love gifts through the High Priest Jesus for us.

He who died in our place so that we might live in and through him. A.W. Tozer said this, it is impossible to be too thankful to God.

I really like that. It is impossible to give him too much thanks and praise and worship and adoration. So, let me challenge you this week and all the weeks to come, give a gift of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ that he might present those to the Father.

[38 : 18]