

Sunday April 23rd sermon: "Our Priest Sacrificed Himself! The God of All Comforts (Pt 13)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Hebrews 7:26-27; Leviticus 16:1-15

God comforts us by the oath He made to Christ, appointing Him our high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Christ is a far better priest than Aaron, and the oath entails all the perfections of Christ as our high priest.

By that oath, He was made the surety of a better covenant of salvation, the New Covenant.

Christ Alone bears all the cost, as our priest, in the place of the beneficiaries, we who are poor lost people. God's oath to Christ assured us that Christ will stand good for the terms of this better, New Covenant, by which we are saved from all our sins.

Christ is responsible to perform this covenant, not us!

Christ is also our permanent intercessor before God. His intercession never ceases; it's no mere "one-off" intercession, but continues forever, because Christ was sworn by God to be our priest forever.

Christ is very suitable to us as our high priest, because He is immaculate, completely without fault, without sin, without spot, without blemish. He is completely innocent of any harm to anybody, as Isaiah 53 also stresses.

Christ is undefiled and perfect, and in His humanity, was never disobedient to the law or to His Father.

Though He was numbered with the transgressors, yet He is separate from sinners. He lived with and ate with sinners, talked with sinners, preached to sinners, healed sinners. He bore the sins of many sinners, and yet He never sinned or became a sinner.

Christ was separated from sinners in Adam, for Christ was never in Adam, and was not represented by Adam in the great fall into sin.

Christ never was in communion with sin, or encouraged men to sin.

In all these ways, Christ is a high priest far exalted over, and far better than, the priests of Aaron!

Another superiority of Christ is that He is exalted higher than the heavens! He sits in the very presence of His Father in glory, interceding for His people. Aaron never could appear in glory, because he was a sinner himself.

In fact, Aaron failed to intercede for his people, in the matter of the golden calf. He himself was implicated in that great crime against God, and then he tried to throw his people under the bus, blaming them for what he participated in.

But Jesus is perfect and exalted in His intercession for His people.

Because of all that, Hebrews next points out that Jesus never has to make a sacrifice for His Own sin, for He has none!

But priests of Aaron were sinners, and had to make a sacrifice for their own sins, before they could offer up a sacrifice for the people!

Leviticus 16 outlines this elaborate scheme. Aaron washes his flesh, and then puts on the beautiful white garments of the priesthood. Then he makes a sacrifice for his own sins, and enters into the holy place and sprinkles the blood upon the mercy seat. He must obscure the glory of God by offering incense on the golden altar, lest he be struck dead.

Only after that can Aaron offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people.

By these sacrifices, Aaron makes an offering of propitiation for the sins of Israel. The sacrifices must be repeated over and over again, because animal sacrifices could never take away our sin.

Several witnesses judged Jesus to be righteous and without fault at all when He was sacrificed at Calvary. Pilate had already found Him to be completely without fault.

Then, the penitent thief on the cross declared that "this Man has done nothing amiss!" It is an astounding thing that a criminal, being put to death for his crimes, should exonerate another who is suffering the same judgment!

Finally, the very Roman centurion who had overseen the murder of Christ on the cross, declared Him to be a righteous man, and gave glory to God! In doing so, he implicated himself and Rome in the great crime of murdering an innocent man. His statement against his own interest is telling indeed.

But it is in the last half of Hebrews 7:27 that the penny finally drops, and the ultimate purpose of Christ's being our great high priest is disclosed. No doubt the Jewish believers understood somehow that Jesus had died to save them, but what does any of that have to do with a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek?

Hebrews slams the truth down on the table in one short phrase: Christ offered a one-time, all sufficient sacrifice for our sins, when He offered up Himself!

This is the very first mention in Hebrews of Christ being our sacrifice! It was previously said, that He purged our sins by Himself; that He took on our humanity so that He might taste death for us all; that He died to destroy the power of the devil, and deliver us from death itself; and that He cried strong tears to God, Who could deliver Him from death.

But now, finally, Hebrews declares that Jesus is, Himself, our offering for our sin!

Christ is the high priest that provided the perfect Lamb Himself! When no other animal offering could save us, our Lord Jesus delivered up Himself as our offering. God's wrath against our sin was exhausted on the Lamb of God at Calvary, and all our sins were taken away by Jesus!

It had been foretold long before that somehow, God would make satisfaction for our crimes Himself.

It happened when Isaac asked his father Abraham, here is the wood, here is the fire, but where is the lamb for the offering?

Abraham's response is both heartrending and majestic: God will provide Himself a Lamb for a sacrifice!

Finally, we can understand the glorious point of Christ being made our great high priest, by a solemn oath of God to Him.

That priesthood entailed the requirement that Jesus find a suitable offering for the saving of His people.

That suitable offering is the body and blood of Christ Himself!

One other distinction: Aaron wore beautiful garments when he made offerings for the people's sin, but not so, our Lord Jesus.

Jesus was stripped naked and strung up in shame, as He sacrificed Himself for our crimes.

No wonder Hebrews assures us, that the solemn oath of God to Christ, making Him a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, is our exceeding comfort and consolation!

For it is Christ's work as our high priest, and as our sacrifice for sin, that reconciles us to God, and puts away for eternity our crimes, and releases us from eternal judgment, unto everlasting life!