

Why Christians don't have priests, part 2

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[0 : 00] All right, this morning, if you would, I want you to open your Bibles to two places. We're going to go to Leviticus chapter 9 in just a few moments, but I also want you to open up to Hebrews chapter 8.

Hebrews chapter 8. We're going to read Hebrews 8 in just a second to begin with, and then we'll get to Leviticus chapter 9. We're walking through the book of Leviticus because it teaches us some important things about how can sinful people come to a holy God?

How can we ever be in his presence? How could we ever come to him who otherwise we would never be able to see?

Because his holiness is great. His righteousness is great. The foundation of his throne is justice and righteousness. The psalmist asked, who can ascend the hill of the Lord?

And the answer is really only those with clean hands and pure hearts. And that's none of us. But yet God has made a way. I shouldn't gain from his reward, but we do.

[1 : 08] We do gain from his reward. And how is that? And the book of Leviticus gives us an object lesson and teaches us how that's possible. And so why don't we begin with just a word of prayer, and then we'll read our passage and dive in.

Father, it is our prayer that you would open our eyes to understand what we're seeing here in your word. Apart from you, not only will we not understand it, but we won't be able to apply it to our lives. And we need to do both. So I pray that you would open our eyes. You would help us to see. And you would help us to do.

You would help us to believe. You would help us to worship. And we pray this in Christ's name.

Amen. Hebrews chapter 8, beginning of verse 1, says this.

Now, the point of what we are saying is this. We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of majesty in heaven. That's the Lord Jesus Christ, right?

[2 : 20] He is a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. All right, just pause there, verse 2, and think about this.

What tent did man set up? The tabernacle, the temple. That's the tent that man set up. So there's another tent that man did not set up.

Okay. Verse 3. Now, if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.

They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. They serve as a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things.

For when Moses was about to erect the temple, the tabernacle, he was instructed by God saying, see that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.

[3 : 30] Now, you get what's going on here, right? He's telling us something that happened back in the book of Exodus, that when Moses went up on the mountain to see the Lord, the Lord told him, yes, you're going to make this tabernacle for me.

You're going to make this tent for me. And the pattern after which you're going to make it is what I'm opening up the heavens for you to see. You're going to see the real tabernacle. You're going to see the real thing.

You're going to see the real salvation. You're going to see the real priest. You're going to see the real sacrifice. And Moses, make everything according to what you see. Verse 6.

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better since it's enacted on better promises.

Here's my goal this morning. My goal, you know the story of Elisha and his servant? Like there was this army and they were just really sick of Elisha and they had decided they were going to go wipe

out Elisha because every time they sent emissaries and envoys to Elisha, they were killed.

[4 : 38] And so this foreign army, they come and they gather around Elisha and his servant, two men against an army. And his servant is just absolutely scared to death.

And Elisha prays and asks the Lord to open the servant's eyes. And once his eyes were opened, he looked up and he could behold that surrounding the army that was surrounding them was the host of heaven.

But he needed his eyes opened. And I know that you love Jesus and I know that you follow Jesus. And I know that many of you, you have such a deep love for Christ.

My goal this morning is just that your eyes are open just a tiny bit more so that you can see just a little bit more of who Christ is so that you're overwhelmed by his splendor and his glory and his majesty.

And we're going to see that because we're going to look at the shadow of the priest in chapter nine that then points forward to the substance, to the real thing, Jesus Christ as high priest.

[5 : 41] And one of the fascinating things is that chapter eight gave us this whole idea that God is consecrating and setting up his high priest, calling him to serve in this manner.

In chapter nine, now the priest gets to work. Now the priest is going to do the work he's been consecrated to do. So we're looking at the work of the priest, and this is going to demonstrate to us the Lord Jesus Christ.

Three things about the work of the priest. And what we're going to do is we're just going to go through these three things there in Leviticus. We're going to talk about them, show you where Christ is in that. And once we get through with all three of them, then I'm going to make application of all of this in one fell swoop.

So it breaks down into three parts, basically. You have verses one through 14. This is where the priest sacrifices for his own sin, right? He sacrifices for his own sin.

And let's take a look at that. We're going to read Leviticus chapter nine, verse one through four, and I think we'll be able to catch what we need to from here. Beginning in verse one, it says that on the eighth day, Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel.

[6 : 49] And he said to Aaron, take for yourself a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish and offer them before the Lord.

And say to the people of Israel, take a male goat for a sin offering and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish for a burnt offering and an ox and a ram for peace offerings to sacrifice before the Lord and a grain offering mixed with oil.

For today, the Lord will appear to you. What we have in verses one through seven of chapter nine is instructions are given to the priest and the people about what the priest is about to do, right?

Then verses eight through 14, you'll notice that it sounds repetitive. And that's because now in verses eight through 14, you see him doing what he's been instructed to do.

So you get instructions first, one through seven, you get the actual doing of it, eight through 14. And the basic idea of these verses is that the priest is told that he must offer sacrifices.

[7 : 51] And you can see them listed there, right? You see a burnt offering, a sin offering. There's going to be a peace offering, a grain offering. And even what the people bring, the priest is going to have to be the one to do this.

So Aaron is anointed and consecrated as a priest in chapter eight. Now he gets to work and now he gets to do these things. But a part of the reason that he's making a sacrifice for himself is because he needs to be cleansed.

Now you'll remember because we talked about the sacrifices, I'm not going to go back over and tell you all about the sacrifices because we've already done that. You can go back and listen to those. But we did that because we needed to know what those were as we go through here. And you see that he's going to offer a sin offering, which is about purification.

And then he's going to offer a burnt offering, which is about reconciliation, about having the ransom paid for him, dealing with punishment that his sin deserves. But he needs to be cleansed.

[8 : 54] He needs to be reconciled because he is a sinner. Just like all of us. And as a sinner, he becomes unclean, one, because of actual sin, and two, because just living life.

Sometimes that happens. And Aaron as a high priest then, being this one who needs to be cleansed, how does that foreshadow Christ?

You see, this has always kind of bothered me and I've struggled with it a little bit because it almost makes it sound like Jesus needs to be cleansed. But that's taking and reversing the order of the shadow and the substance, right?

Think about this. If you have a thing, you've got the substance, you've got my big old self here, and then you've got my shadow down here. The shadow is just mirroring what's here.

So for Aaron to properly mirror Jesus Christ, Aaron has to be cleansed, right? Because Christ is perfect and cleansed.

[10:01] As a matter of fact, it tells us in scripture that Jesus, our high priest, is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens, tempted as we are in every way yet without sin.

So because Jesus Christ, the God man, the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and I got to thinking, maybe some of you don't know who Melchizedek is.

So let me just encourage you, go read Genesis chapter 13 and 14, okay? And then come ask me questions later, right? But because he is this high priest after the order of Melchizedek, because he's perfect and he's unstained, he's tempted as we are yet without sin, Aaron must be cleansed by these sacrifices in order to properly mirror or foreshadow or point towards Jesus Christ, who is our great high priest.

So that's the first part, right? He mirrors or he points to the fact that Jesus Christ is perfect. The second thing we see begins in verse 15, it's verse 15 through 21, right?

And here, he's not making a sacrifice for himself, but he's making a sacrifice for the people. And I just want to read to you verses 15 through 18. He says this, he says, then he presented the people's offering and took the goat of the sin offering for purification, that was for the people and killed it as a sin offering like the first one.

[11:32] And he presented the burnt offering, that's reconciliation, and he offered it according to the rule. What's the rule? It's what we've already read in chapters one through seven, right?

And he presented the grain offering. Remember what the grain offering is? It's this idea of being thankful and devoting ourselves to the Lord for what he's done for us. So he did the grain offering, took a handful of it and burned it on the altar beside the burnt offering in the morning.

And verse 18, then he killed the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings. Remember what peace offerings were? I call that the barbecue sacrifice, right? That's the time to rejoice because of all that God has done for us.

And Aaron and his sons handed him the blood and he threw it against, Aaron's sons handed him the blood and he threw it against the sides of the altar. You see, what he's doing is that he's already cleansed himself. And he has to do that because in order for the high priest to offer sacrifice for the people, he must be clean.

And so he's now offering a sacrifice for God's people. They're offering the sacrifice for purity, offering the sacrifice to take their punishment, offering the sacrifice to devote them to the Lord and to give rejoicing.

[12:42] And this mirrors the Lord Jesus Christ. It's patterned after his crucifixion and his resurrection because in the death of Jesus, he takes our punishment. In the death of Jesus, he cleanses us from our sin.

In the death of Jesus, he calls us to worship and to thanksgiving. But how can he do that in one fell swoop?

How can he do that in one fell swoop? It takes five different sacrifices in the Old Testament. Why is it that he just dies once and it's all done?

Listen to Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25. Consequently, he's able to save to the utter most those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

It's that word utter most. It's two Greek words have been slammed together and the two words mean all times. He's able to save to all times, unto all times, those that come to him.

[13:53] You see, his death is so glorious that in that one death, he could accomplish all of these things that took five sacrifices. He's able to accomplish it all in his one death because he's able to save to the utter most, to all times.

Well, that brings us to this third thing of the work of the priest. And this third thing is that he intercedes for the people. We see that in verses 22 through 24.

It says in verse 22, Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them. And he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offering. So you get the picture, right?

The altar that's outside for sacrifice was probably raised up and had a little bit of a ramp and a platform, much about like the height here, right?

So he's down on the ground and to make the sacrifices, he's got to come up. And now he's turned and he's blessed the people, right? He's blessed them because the sacrifices give him the ability to bless them.

[14:57] And then he comes down. He's walking down. Where is he going? Verse 23, And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. So they're going into the presence of God. God has shown up at the tabernacle.

That's why Moses couldn't go in. This is the first time anybody has been into the tabernacle since Exodus chapter 40, right? They built it. God put his presence there and nobody could come in. And now that the high priest has made sacrifice, he is able to go into the tent of meeting. And when they came out, they blessed the people.

And the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Now, this blessing is that he's gone into the presence of the Lord, taking with him the blood of the sacrifice, taking with him the names of all the tribes of Israel on the breastplate.

And as he goes in there, he is interceding for them. He's taking their names before the Lord. And because the Lord has been pleased, he comes back out and he blesses them again.

[16:03] One blessing from the high priest. The other blessing from the Lord himself through the high priest. Verse 24, In other words, God was pleased.

God is showing his pleasure by taking their sacrifice and consuming it. And then they are able to see this and be afraid and worship him.

And they've seen the glory of the Lord. I mean, do you get this idea? Then he is interceding for the people. That's what he's doing. And that's why these benefits and these rewards come out.

What does it mean to intercede? Well, it means that he takes the blood of the sacrifice and he brings it before the Lord.

And he pleads that blood on behalf of the people. To intercede. You see, it's one part of the work to make the sacrifice.

[17:06] It's another part of the work to take the blood into the tabernacle and intercede the blood on behalf of the people. When he comes back out, they are blessed.

And so Jesus Christ himself does the same work. That's what that Hebrews 7.25 was about, right? Consequently, he's able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Christ, yes, went to the cross and died upon the cross for us and for our sin. But he then also goes into the holy place, the true tent, and he pleads the merits of his blood on behalf of his people.

His people who deserve punishment, he goes to the Father pleading his own blood on their behalf. He pleads the virtues of his blood for their cleansing.

He pleads the excellencies of his offering in order to pay the restitution that God's people need to pay. This is what the priest does. Now the question is, do you see what I'm talking about?

[18:18] I'm going to move that mic because I feel myself going boom, boom. Because if you don't see what I'm talking about here, nothing else that I'm about to say is going to make any sense.

There is this idea, I think, sometimes that places us in the place that says that it's just about Jesus' death on the cross.

But the work of Jesus is way more than just dying on the cross. And one of those things that he does is he intercedes for us.

And we get that sort of object lesson from the priest as he goes into the tabernacle. So what does this mean then? What does this mean for us? How are we supposed to think about this?

How are we supposed to apply this? Well, if you're not a Christian, there's a particular way that you need to be thinking about this. And let me just say that maybe there's somebody in your life, maybe it's a family member, maybe it's a neighbor or a coworker or somebody like that.

You need to think about what I'm about to say for their benefit as well. Because if a person's not a Christian, then they still have a debt of sin.

[19 : 36] They still deserve punishment. They still have an infection of sin in their heart. And what is it that we're trusting in that's going to rid them of that stain?

What are they trusting in to rid them of that stain? What is it they're trusting in that will repay God for the debt of sin that they have?

What is it that you expect is going to satisfy the punishment that you deserve? Do you think that your baptism or your church attendance can make you clean before God?

Do you think that your Bible reading, your prayer, your singing worship songs, that God is going to count that as righteousness on your part?

Do you think being a helpful, nice person, raking yards and handing out food is something that God is going to say is better to pay off sin than the death of his son?

[21 : 04] You see, the only hope that anyone who is not a Christian, including you and anyone that you're related to, the only hope is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know it's hard. I know it's hard. So look at your loved ones and think about where they've been in their life and think about, you know, that at one time when they were younger, there was this thing that happened and then to look at them today and to state and to say the words, but they seem to be without Christ and if they don't repent and turn back to him.

It's because most of us believe that the most important thing to happen in somebody's life is for them to pray a sinner's prayer. But Scripture doesn't talk about it that way.

Scripture talks about it. Those who persevere to the end will be saved. And that is not to say that they can work for it, but it's the point of saying that there's a lot of people that think that they're believers and there's a lot of people that we have in our lives that we thought they were believers, but in truth, they're not.

And it's hard to say that and it's hard to admit that. But if the only way that a person can have their sin dealt with is through the death and the intercessory ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, then nothing we try to get them to do is ever going to be good enough or count in order for them to be able to see God.

[22 : 50] Our only hope is to come to Jesus Christ. He's proven himself worthy to the Father.

And the Father is pleased with his sacrifice, much like the Father is pleased with the sacrifice there in Leviticus 9 and then consumes it with his own fire to bring it to himself.

As his son comes upon this world, he says, this is my son in whom I'm well pleased. And he was so pleased with his death upon the cross that he raised him back from the dead.

So why is Jesus not enough? But here's really the crux of the matter and it's for you and I as Christians.

Because the high priestly work of that intercession, as you look at this scene in Leviticus and you watch them go into the tabernacle and you're going to see it again when we come to chapter 16, it's even a stronger picture of that intercession.

[24 : 05] But as the blood is let outside and you go into the presence of the Lord, past the holy place, into the holy of holies, you plead that blood. The high priest pleads that blood.

If you think about that and you think about that for Jesus Christ, that that's what he's doing for us who are believers, this is actually a truth that Christians need to know more than non-Christians need to know it.

because when he intercedes this way, he's not interceding for someone who's not trusting him in that moment.

You go back to Hebrews 7, verse 25, he says, consequently, he's able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him. Since he always lives to make intercession for them, he's making intercession for those who draw near to God through Christ.

He does not intercede with his blood for those who will not draw near to God through Christ. And so it is for you who are saved. It is for you who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 17] It's for you who have seen your sin, recognized your wicked place, understood what your future would have been, and you saw the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel, and you trusted and gave your life and your heart to him, and you know that this day, right now, if you were to die this day, you would be in heaven with the Lord.

You would be with the Lord forever. If you know that, then you need to understand that his intercessory ministry is for you. He's interceding for you.

He has pled his blood for you. And you need to know that because of two things. First, because when he interceded for you, he set you free.

He set you free. He is able to save to all times. He's able to save to the uttermost because he makes intercession for you.

I know that as Christians, we know that because we've trusted Christ, we're free. But do we understand why we're free? Do we understand what that even means? You and I, because we were in Adam, we're enslaved to sin.

[26 : 40] We couldn't do anything but sin. Before you became a Christian, everything you did was tainted with sin. And there was not anything that you did that was pleasing to the Lord because you didn't have that relationship with him.

And so not only did we have sin because we broke his law, but just because the very nature of who we are, we tainted everything.

And so that's how we were in Christ. But when you became a Christian, his high priestly ministry means that you have been set free from the obligation to sin.

Now you have the ability to both sin and not sin. If you're in Christ, you have the ability to sin and not sin.

And the reason this is important is because there's this mindset among Christians that says, well, that's just the way I am. I've been this way all my life.

[27 : 41] I don't know that that's ever going to change. And maybe that's not the words that are used, but the sentiment is there for a lot of Christians. And it's this idea that there's some sort of sin that I've got in my life and I have trouble not committing this sin.

It haunts me. It's there all the time, but I've kind of come to the place of just saying, well, you know, that's just the way it's always been. And, you know, I know the Lord's going to be gracious and he'll forgive me. In other words, there's just not this, this idea that sin is something to run from.

For some people, they just feel so doomed by this sin that they just resign themselves to thinking, well, this is just the way it is. But because Christ is pleading his blood for you, you've been set free.

That no longer has to define you. You know, that holding that grudge and anger because of whatever so-and-so did that you've held on to for 20 years, it doesn't have to be there anymore.

You're not obligated to hold that grudge. If you think about some of the other commandments, you think about the idea of, you know, not bearing false witness.

[29 : 21] Maybe for you, the struggle in your life is that it's really hard to tell the truth. You're always shading it just a little bit.

You always have. You've never gotten caught. So you just keep going that direction. Because, I mean, it's just the way you've always lived.

But you don't have to be enslaved to that anymore. If you're in Christ, you've been set free. Right? It could be this idea of the sin of lust.

Right? You can look at the seventh commandment and see that the sin of lust is something that grips a lot of people. And you can think to yourself, well, you know, that's just the way it is. And, you know, I try to keep it at bay, but, like, you know, I just really can't do much about it.

But, you know, here's the thing. You're not obligated to commit that sin any longer if you're in Christ. And the way that you take and appropriate all of that and you think about that in order to get away from that sin and to realize that you're not obligated to sin is that you've got to think about the death of Jesus and all that He's accomplished on your behalf.

[30 : 38] You've got to look at Him there upon the cross and look at that as punishment you deserve. And then, once you see that, then you see Him going into the holy place before His Father and He pled the blood for you, He pleads the blood for you, and its virtue and its excellence and its righteousness stands for you.

And you've been set free. And so you've got to think about that all the time. You've got to get that in your mind and then you have to reckon in your own mind that these things are true about you.

If you don't, if you just look at it as some sort of past historical event that's really neat but not a present reality that's true for you, then what good is it?

I've told you before, I'll tell you again, my besetting sin is my anger. And it has been that way since I was young.

To the degree that when I was young I had someone tell me that they hoped that I never got married because they were afraid what might happen. And I am not a great example of perfection.

[32 : 12] I know you think I am but you're sadly mistaken. Just visit with my wife for a second and she'll give you a list. But I'm going to tell you that by God's grace my anger does not rule me as it once did.

I am not subject to it. I am not its slave. Because of what Christ has done for me I can command my anger.

And I cannot get angry. I know there's a thing such as righteous anger. There is such a thing as righteous anger. I think that's about 1% of the time and 99% of the time we have unrighteous anger. So if you ever think to yourself well you know I don't really struggle with anger like you do I bet you do. You got 99% chance that you do. But here's the third thing about this is that then you got to live in the freedom that Christ has gained for us.

And the way we live in the freedom that Christ has gained for us is that we look at what he tells us to do and we just do the things he's told us to do. We do those things instead of these other things. [33 : 28] Right? That's what he says in Ephesians. He says be angry and sin not and don't let the sun go down upon your anger. So there he's not saying it's a good thing to be angry.

What he's saying is you got to deal with anger quickly. You don't need to let it last a day. You don't need to become a root of bitterness in your heart. And so he's telling us instead of being angry deal with it quickly.

And so his high priestly ministry his intercession for us means that we don't have to sin anymore. But the second thing that it means is that his high priestly intercession gives you forgiveness. And I know that we sort of know this but I think we've got to understand this at a deeper level because I think it'll help us.

Because here's the thing. I think that a lot of people have this image of God that because of what Jesus did on the cross the forgiveness that they get is similar to like God being some grandfather doling out candy to his kids.

[34 : 31] He's like you know I'm so proud of my son I'm going to give you all a present. Because have you ever had the thought like maybe maybe it was right after you were saved or maybe it was some other time have you ever had the thought to yourself once you're saved and you sin again what is God going to do to me?

I mean I was saved but now I'm going to sin again what's going to happen? I think a lot of us have right theology in that we know that all of our sin is forgiven.

we know that but still we sort of treat it like it's no big deal you know we treat it like you know God's just sort of there and out of his compassion he just doles out this forgiveness to us.

That somehow Jesus' death turns the father into a happy generous forgiving God man but the scriptures describe him as a consuming fire I mean in Leviticus 9 as this fire he comes out and consumes the sacrifice the book of Hebrews tells us our God is a consuming fire it's a little bit like the sun right how close can you get to the sun without dying we're almost there right we can get a little bit closer but not too much I think that if we don't understand God as a consuming fire then we don't really understand how terrible sin is but as we come to the father and he's the consuming fire we don't get burnt up because we know that Jesus's death makes it possible for us to approach him but how because he's pleading his blood on our behalf when the son pleads his own blood to his father for you and for me the father is then willing to forgive us not because he's nice not because he's kind not because he's lovable not because he's gracious he does not forgive us because of grace that's really controversial you're all going to be like going what are you talking about okay yes he does forgive us by his grace but there's more to it than that think about this think about if you if you went into a courtroom and there was a judge and as he's doing the court case he finds the defendant guilty and then lets him go is that just no it's unjust do you remember what first John 1 9 says if we confess our sins he's faithful that's a whole nother sermon and just to forgive us of our sins what that means is that because the Lord Jesus Christ took our punishment upon the cross and then takes his blood before his father the father out of justice justice forgives us out of his justice because he's pleased with what his son has brought he looks at what his son has brought and he is pleased with what his son has brought which has been his own blood and out of the justice of God because of what his son has done he forgives us and all of that came by his grace but but you understand the point that God that there's something spiritually legally happening right there in that moment a transaction between the father and the son that we can't feel with our bones that we can't feel with our heart that we can't feel with our emotions and what I want you to get out of this is just this one simple thing that that to recognize that he has taken his blood and he's pled that before the

father means that all of your sin has been covered and forgiven because god is just and so don't wait for a moment that says i feel forgiven or i don't feel forgiven to reckon with and realize that you are forgiven it's a truth that's there whether you feel it or not your emotions will follow but reckon with this truth that if christ has died for you then all of your sin that you have committed and ever will commit is gone not just because he died but because he pled his blood on your behalf and so that means that every day every night right before you go to bed confess your sin to the lord take a moment take a moment to think about what you've done over the course of the day think about the sins you've committed all day long now i'm going to tell you if some of you are saying to yourself it's like well i don't have any sins in the course of a day uh that's a problem and you need to really examine your heart i think most of us recognize no i've got sin i got sin go to the lord and list them off now why you need to list them off does god need you to list them off no but you need to list them off and then say lord forgive me and the promise is he is just to forgive us and to cleanse us and you may not feel forgiven in that moment but it's okay that you don't feel forgiven you are forgiven because of the blood of jesus christ may god open our eyes to the glory and the splendor of christ let's pray takeNING