

Our Great High Priest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 May 2022

Preacher: Rev RJ Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Amen. Seeking the Lord's blessing and help, we shall turn to the portion of scripture that we have already read, the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews and chapter 5, and we shall read from the beginning of that chapter.

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity, and by a reason he hath offered he ought as for the people, so also for himself to offer for sins.

And no man taketh his honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, today have I begotten thee, as he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Paul writing to Timothy says, For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Now as mediator, Jesus exercises three offices or functions, namely those of prophet, priest and king.

[1 : 4 2] As prophet, he represents not man, but God before men. Therefore, the nearer he stands to God, the better he is qualified to act as prophet.

As John reminds us, No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. His whole work as prophet is to reveal the will of God and to teach and instruct us.

As king, he represents not man, but God. He acts in the name of God and for God towards man.

God has anointed him king on his holy hill of Zion, and he rules in the name and majesty of God. In God's name, he rules his subjects and subdues his and their enemies.

However, Jesus functions not merely as prophet and king, but also as priest. And as priest, he represents man before God.

[2 : 5 2] Now the book of Hebrew focuses very much upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. From the very beginning, for it starts with a grand statement of who Jesus is and what he has done.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time passing to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, for he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

And the rest of the book of Hebrew dwells upon the supremacy and the sufficiency of Jesus as our saviour. He is greater than the angels. He is greater than Moses.

He is greater than Joshua. And greater than Aaron, the high priest of Israel. The book also stands out because of its detailed presentation of the priesthood of Christ.

John Calvin writes, There is indeed no book in the Holy Scripture which speaks so clearly of the priesthood of Christ, which so highly exalts the virtue and dignity of that only through sacrifice which he offered by his death.

[4 : 30] And one of the main themes in the book of Hebrews is Christian perseverance in the midst of all the struggles and all the challenges and all the trials and sufferings that may confront the Christian.

The writer reminds us that the motivation and the comfort for the Christian to persevere in the midst of all the struggles and challenges and trials, that the motivation to persevere is the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ.

In the previous chapter, the writer says, Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

The reason behind our perseverance is the person and work of Jesus Christ, who as the Son of God and as our great high priest has secured for us our salvation.

And he is able to save to the uttermost. The plan of redemption is not a divine afterthought.

[5 : 53] It is not a plan B because of the failure of plan A. The plan of redemption is rooted in eternity.

There were eternal transactions between the persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with respect to the work of redemption, to the work of our salvation.

And those transactions were covenantal in nature, which we name the covenant of redemption. Therefore, God has committed himself to our salvation.

All the persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, has committed, has been committed to our salvation.

The origin of Jesus' priestly function lies in the councils of God, which are hid in God. What we learn of them is given to us by external revelation and effects.

[7 : 06] The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of his law.

You know, in a state of innocence in the Garden of Eden, there was no need for a priest or a sacrifice. The first promise of Genesis 3, 15, regarding the seed of the woman, and consequently the first revelation of the need for a priest and sacrifice, was after the entrance of sin.

And it was with respect to the recovery of the sinner, to the glory of God. The design of the priesthood of Christ is by grace, but the necessity of it arises because of the justice of God, which demands the punishment of sin.

The whole plan of redemption is by grace. It is God's undeserved favour. The whole plan of the priesthood, the design of the priesthood of Christ, is by grace.

But its necessity was because of the justice of God, which demands that sin be punished. And as we look at the priesthood in the Old Testament, as we look at the priesthood of Christ, there is a binding relation between priest and sacrifice that is unbreakable.

[8 : 48] They jointly or mutually assert or deny each other. Where one is, so also is the other. Where there is priesthood, there is sacrifice.

For even when it is in a figurative or symbolic sense, like it was in the Old Testament. Later on, the writer here, speaking of the priesthood under the Old Testament, says, which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience, which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of Reformation.

There the writer is telling us that under the Old Testament, the priesthood had proper sacrifice, although he calls them carnal sacrifices, to offer. But he is there indicating the connection for us that is between priest and sacrifice.

An unbreakable connection. Where there are no priests, there are no sacrifices, and where there are no sacrifices, there are no priests. It is two things that we cannot separate at all.

We cannot disjoin them, priesthood and sacrifice. As that is shown to us figuratively under the Old Testament. So it is also true when we come to the priesthood of Christ.

[10 : 17] We cannot disjoin them, priesthood of Christ, and sacrifice. They are together, unbreakable. And here in chapter 5, the writer sets out for us the qualifications of a high priest.

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

Here we are told four things that belong to the priesthood. The priest had to be one in nature with the people whom he represented.

So he is taken from among men. The high priest is taken out of mankind. Then we are told that he is ordained for men. He is there to act on behalf of mankind.

The condition of entering into the high priesthood is to be human because the nature and work of the high priesthood is to represent other humans.

[11 : 22] His priestly office is absolutely groundless, meaningless and empty, but as it is related to and acts for men, for individual persons.

He is ordained as a priest expressly for them. He takes office for them. He will act for the people that he represents. Then we are told that he is ordained for men in things pertaining to God.

The priesthood or the high priest represents men before God. And then we're told that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.

Well, as we said, we cannot think of a priest without thinking of a sacrifice. We cannot think of a priest and sacrifice without thinking of sin.

As we have already noted, by the entrance of sin into the experience of mankind, the justice of God demanded punishment for the soul that sinneth shall die.

[12 : 32] Now, how were sinners to be saved from the punishment that they deserved? How was I anew to be saved from the punishment that our sins deserved?

Well, God, in his grace, designed the priesthood of Christ to meet with what his justice demanded.

In Christ, grace and justice meet. Salvation is all of God. Now, as we noted here, it was necessary that the priest or the high priest would be one in the same nature as the person he represented.

Therefore, we have the man, Christ Jesus. Therefore, his qualification is measured by his nearness to man. And John reminds us in the Gospel, in the beginning it was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Although the Bible often emphasises the divine nature of Jesus Christ, he is the Son of God.

[13 : 49] The emphasis here is on the human nature of Christ. He had to condescend and become man in order to represent us.

I know that today we hear the phrase very often that the Son left heaven and came to earth. I am not very keen on that phrase at all because that would mean a vacancy in heaven and a vacant place in heaven and there never was a vacant place in heaven.

Although the Son was on earth he was still in heaven. He was still God. He was God. But he condescended to take to himself human nature.

He condescended to take our nature in order to represent us to fulfil his priestly role.

He is God manifest in the flesh. Probably the best comment we could make on this is brought to us by the Apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 2.

[15 : 05] Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men and been found in fashion as a man he humbled himself and became obedient into death even the death of the cross.

The Son of God has two distinct natures. the divine nature and the human nature. The divine did not mix in with the human or the human with the divine.

He has two distinct natures but he remains one person forever. He is the God man. He is Emmanuel.

He is God with us. And as God he is everywhere. but in his human nature he was confined or limited.

Our great high priest who is the son of God took unto himself the nature of those he represented. That is as we already noted he took to himself human nature.

[16 : 20] The writer to the Hebrews not merely makes the high priest a man but insists upon it that the very nature of his office as priest requires him to take human nature. It requires him to be man.

Wherefore he says in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. Or as the AESV puts it there he had to be made like his brothers in every respect.

What did this identification of nature mean for Jesus? What did it mean for Jesus to take our nature to him? It meant that it became necessary for him that he should be identified in the common possession of flesh and blood.

In the previous chapter verse 14 we read For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise to part of the same in other words the incarnation his becoming human was absolutely necessary for him to function as our priest as our great high priest Ensuring the inadequacy of the Old Testament rituals or sacrifices the writer of the Hebrew quotes from Psalm 40 he says Wherefore when he cometh unto the world he saith sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not but a body hast thou prepared for me oh the amazing thing is this that he took unto himself by his own act of will that very dust of the earth and that he united it to his divine person the taking of our nature was his own act he took it and he united it to his own person and once he took that nature into himself he never laid it aside in his ascension he took that human nature into heaven with him in his ascension

God manifest in the flesh entered heaven in psalm 24 we have these words lift up your heads oh ye gates and be lift up ye everlasting doors and the king of glory shall come in who is this king of glory the lord strong and mighty the lord mighty in battle in his ascension something new entered heaven something that was not there before entered heaven yes it was designed before but now it entered it actually entered heaven God manifest in the flesh God the second person taking that nature that he united with his person into heaven something new entered heaven God manifest in the flesh so the writer of the hebrews says seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens

[19 : 41] Jesus the son of God reminding us that he did not discard his humanity but he took that humanity to the very throne room of God and then he sat down as the God man in the midst of the throne bodily body form and he will come back from heaven in bodily form that means that humanity itself has now been elevated to the most exalted place of highest possible authority one divine said this he said the divine descended but the human ascended as our high priest it meant for Jesus not only identification of nature but also identification of experience not only did the word become flesh but the word also dwelt among us he shared not only our nature but also he shared our history and our experience so that in his humiliation he stood where we stand he shared the joys of friendship he shared the creaturely dependence upon his heavenly father and upon the holy spirit he shared these common frailties that belongs to us the mystery of our human condition and existence as determined by our fall into sin like poverty weariness thirst hunger temptation sorrow and death here in verse 2 we read who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity previously the writer wrote for in that he himself has suffered been tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted for we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like us we are yet without sin all this belonged to the priesthood of Christ all this belonged to our great high priest now although he had an identification without nature and without experience he had no personal experience of human sin he was separated from sinners he was without sin he knew no sin he could never offer the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart for he could never offer repentance because he was sinless yet he could give his people the gift of repentance and do give his people the gift of repentance

but he could never repent with them he was probably tempted more so than any person but these temptations never seduced him to sin what this identification of experience means for me and you is that we have a high priest who knows how we feel and who knows what we need the priesthood of Christ is so important to grasp and to try and have some level of understanding about it because it is so comforting for the Christian who finds himself for herself facing trials and facing challenges the priesthood of Christ is so important to grasp in those situations because we have one at the right hand of the

Father today who knows how we feel and who knows what we need because of his identification with our experience a qualification that was necessary for the priesthood for the priesthood of Christ because his experience has taught him to have pity and compassion so that we have a compassionate high priest we have a high priest to whom we can go with all our burdens we can cast them upon him for he cares for us for he cares for us it was also necessary that the person who acted as our high priest would not be guilty of the same crime as those for whom he acted as high priest in other words that he would be sinless therefore we have the man Christ

Jesus in Jesus our great high priest we have the second man we have the last Adam in Hebrews chapter 7 we read these words for such an high priest became us who is holy harmless and defiled separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens yes here we find the infirmity that belonged to the priesthood under the Old Testament because here it says and on them that are out of the way for that himself also is compassed with infirmity and by reason he also for the people so offer for himself to offer for sin that is showing us that there was a need there was a need for another high priest to appear that would be sinless that would be without sin and we find that in the person of

Jesus we are told that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin yes we have a high priest who is holy harmless and defiled separate from sinners made higher than the heavens but one of the functions of the priesthood was that he may offer both gifts and sacrifice for sin the work of the high priest is all too clear namely it was to deal with sin the high priest was appointed by God to represent sinners before God by means of atoning gifts and sacrifices probably the writer here has in mind the day of atonement that day which summed up the whole priestly function or enterprise although the high priest of the

[28 : 03] Old Testament as we have noted was obligated to offer sacrifices for his own sin as he does for those of his people but our great high priest is sinless Jesus as our high priest was sinless but remember that he became identified with our sin he was sinless but he became identified with our sin for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew you know sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him Isaiah the prophet writes the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all and becoming identified with with our sin he became accountable for what did not belong to him but for what was reckoned to his account in other words as our high priest Jesus identification of nature and identification of experience meant also that he became our substitute our sins were reckoned to him he became identified with what our sins deserve so the priesthood of

Christ identification of nature he became man identification of experience but also he became our substitute so as our high priest Jesus asked for us before God and that meant for him to become our substitute therefore to become identified with what our sins deserve identification of nature of experience and to become identified with what our sins deserve we cannot think as we said of a priest without thinking of a sacrifice and for him it was a sacrifice for our sins it was a sacrifice to make atonement for the high priest in Israel that meant an animal was substituted and had to be sacrificed but for Jesus as our priest the sacrifice was not an animal but himself himself

Christ as our great high priest not merely offers the sacrifice he actually becomes the sacrifice he was not only our great high priest but he is also the sacrifice the sacrifice John the Baptist as we noted to the children one day pointed to the person of Jesus and says behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world and here we are told and no man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest but he that said unto him thou art my son today have I begotten thee as he saith also in another place thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek here we are told that Jesus is not only qualified to be our high priest but that

God has appointed him to be high priest and it proves that Jesus was appointed by citing two Old Testament verses the first is Psalm 2 that we sung already today thou art my son today have I begotten thee and the second is again from a psalm we sung today Psalm 110 thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchized now the first quote we also have in the first chapter of this book Hebrews 1 been made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they for unto which of the angels said he at any time thou art my son this day have I begotten thee again Paul cited this quote in his sermon at Antioch in Acts chapter 13 and we declare unto you glad tidings how that the promise which was made unto the fathers God hath fulfilled the same as unto their children and that he hath raised up

Jesus again as it is also written in the second psalm thou art my son this day have I begotten thee so that quote obviously through the preaching of Paul we understand speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ what is in view here is not the establishment of Christ's nature as the son of God but his public declaration and confirmation as son and heir the resurrection and ascension were the fulfilment of this Old Testament citation he entered heaven as son as heir and as high priest in Roman society and in the ancient world when a son came of age and if he was approved by his father he would be ceremonially received and bestowed with his name so by raising Jesus from the dead God gave approval of his son as heir and as high priest the resurrection and the ascension of

[33 : 37] Jesus was God's approval of him as our great high priest thou art my son this day have I begotten thee this day have I approved and declared you to be the great high priest the second citation is the first of nine references in the book of Hebrews to Melchizedek we often find him mentioned in this book who first appeared in the story of Abraham in Genesis chapter 14 there Melchizedek was described as king of Salem and a priest of the God Most High a thousand years after Abraham Melchizedek's name appears again in Psalm 110 with no real explanation there given and after Psalm 110 his name never appears again in the Bible until the book of Hebrews and the writer to the Hebrews has much more to say about Melchizedek but at this point the emphasis like the second

Psalm is to show that Jesus did not exalt himself to be made an high priest so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest he was appointed by God and that was an oath as Psalm 110 says to us the Lord has sworn and will not repent there were a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek God's appointment of Jesus as high priest is an oath and that oath cannot be changed will never be changed or rescinded he is a priest with an oath Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest well if there's one thing that is clear from the gospel accounts it is that Jesus in his life and in his death did not come seeking glory for himself Jesus said if I honour myself my honour is nothing it is my father that honour of me on another occasion he said

I seek not my own will but the will of the father which hath sent me so we can see from these few thoughts upon the words that we have here in chapter five how important it is for us to have some hold and grasp of the priesthood of Christ of the priesthood of Christ what it meant for Christ and what it means for me and you today where is my boldness where is my confidence to come before God in prayer where is my boldness where is my confidence to come and lay out my petitions before God in prayer my boldness and confidence is the fact that Christ as my great high priest is at the right hand of God and that he is there in my nature and the nature that he took to himself that he can have compassion on me that he can sympathize with me that

I have a compassionate high priest in heaven today that's my boldness that's my confidence that's how I persevere in the midst of all that confronts us all the challenges that confronts us the trials the difficulties the casting down all these experiences that we go through in this world how can we persevere through them how can we persevere to persecution how can we persevere it is all down to the very fact that we have a great high priest all down to the priesthood of Christ and he's a priest by an oath that means it'll never change it'll never be rescinded he is there as our great high priest well is he your high priest did he die for you have you repented of your sin and trusted in

Jesus Christ as your saviour is he now in heaven as your high priest is he there as your advocate pleading your cause with his own blood is he there as the lamb slain and the councils of God before the foundation of the world was slain the reason that Christians will persevere is that Jesus has done everything necessary for their salvation it is all of grace he is now on throne as our great high priest I will declare the decree the Lord hath said to me thou art my son this day have I begotten thee ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost powers of the earth for thy possession he is there as a great high priest and he is saying father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where

[38 : 53] I am that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world yes we stumble yes we fall yes we backslide yeah we sin but we have a great high priest at the right hand of the father who is our advocate if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us but we have our high priest who has offered the sacrifice for our propitiation now that might be a big word propitiation but what that means is to turn away the wrath to turn away wrath the wrath that was due to us he is our propitiatory sacrifice there at the right hand of God priest and sacrifice seated at the right hand of God that is how we shall persevere looking at

Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith the one who has begun that work in us through his spirit he's not going to forsake that work but he will bring it to perfection in his own appointed day may these thoughts be blessed to us let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we give thanks to thee today that in the midst of all the challenges and difficulties and trials that we go through that we can lift our eye of faith and look into the very throne room of God and there see one in our nature who is our great high priest who is our advocate who is our propitiation sitting before thee and that in and through him that we have boldness and confidence to seek thy mercy and to seek thy grace to help us in our time of need we pray

Lord that thou bless thy word to it and our meditation upon it that we will always be found meditated upon the priestly office of Jesus we pray Lord that thou would bless us and go before us in the evening if that be in accordance with thy will and all that we ask is in Jesus name and for his sake Amen we shall conclude by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 121 I to the hills will lift my eyes from whence doth come my aid my safety cometh from the Lord to heaven and earth hath made thy foot he will lift my eyes from whence doth come my aid I to the hills will lift my eyes from whence doth come my aid my safety cometh from the

Lord who hath another hath made thy foot cannot cleanse life nor will he chamber thou be near be holy a king's Israel he chamblen nor cease the Lord thee keeps the Lord thy shade on thy right hand dust still the moon by night it shall not smile nor yet the sun by day the

Lord shall keep thy soul it shall preserve thee from all ill and for thy going out and in God he forever will the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen