

Text: Heb. 2:17

Title: "The High Priest of Hebrews"

Time: 11/17/2013 pm

Place: NBBC

Intro: Let's begin this evening with a little Bible trivia. Can anyone guess what Old Testament book of the Bible contains the verse that is most often quoted by the authors of the New Testament in the New Testament? Answer: Lev. 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."

I bring that up because second place goes to the first verse of Psalm 110, a Psalm that happens to be very important to the theology of Hebrews. Let's read that verse together as we begin this evening. Psalm 110:1 is used in that conversation Jesus had with the Pharisees, when He asked the question that finally closed the mouths of those who were trying to trip Him up with their words (Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43).

It is also used by Christ to answer the high priest's question during the trial that condemned our Savior as a blasphemer worthy of crucifixion. The question was, "Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus's answer was, "I am the One Psalm 110:1 speaks about" (Matt. 26:64, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:69).

Peter referred to this verse in his Pentecost sermon to prove from the Old Testament that God had made the Jesus, whom they had just crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:34-35). And the author of Hebrews, who, as we saw last time together, presents Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever, as the pre-existent Son of God, the obedient Son of God, and the exalted Son of God, refers to the theol-

ogy of Psalm 110:1 in support of that last truth, that Jesus is the exalted Son: "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

But one of the wonderfully unique things about this author's use of Psalm 110 is the fact that this author does not stop at verse 1. Instead, he continues on to verse 4 (read). The author of Hebrews, like no other New Testament author, sees great significance in the relationship between verse 1 and verse 4 of Psalm 110.

The exalted Son is also ordained to be a priest in His exalted state at the right hand of the Majesty on high. More specifically, He is "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Like no other New Testament book, Hebrews tells us about the significance to our lives of Christ's work as our great High Priest, a work that He accomplishes as the exalted Son of God.

I have titled the message this evening, "The High Priest of Hebrews," and I want us to notice three emphases about Him tonight from the book.

I. The High Priest of Hebrews had to meet certain qualifications (5:1-10).

Illustration: We normally have to improve to meet the qualifications that are necessary for something we want to do. A young lady aspiring to a nursing career must improve her skills through education and experience and testing to qualify to become a nurse.

Application: Christ had to do the opposite to be qualified. Note with me the two necessary elements of His qualification to be the High Priest of Hebrews:

1. Our high priest had to be able to represent us (vv. 1-3, 7-10). For Christ, this requirement involved great suffering, humiliation, and obedience on His part. What are we willing to go through to be qualified to serve Him (5:11-14)?

2. Our high priest had to be called and appointed by God (vv. 4-6). The crucifixion was the end of the qualifying obedience for our high priest. The resurrection was His call from the Father to begin His high-priestly ministry (see Acts 13:33).

Man desires to appoint his own way to God; God declares that Jesus Christ is the only way. He alone is the high priest of eternal salvation, because He alone is qualified by means of His incarnation and atoning sacrifice.

II. The High Priest of Hebrews had to be better than the Levitical priesthood (7:4-11).

Illustration: When I am hungry for a hamburger, I do not want a picture of a hamburger on my plate for dinner. I want the real thing.

Application: For ages sinners had been given a specific picture that was designed to lead them to the real thing that could satisfy the hunger of their souls. The author of Hebrews asks, "Who needs the picture still when we now have the full revelation of the real thing?"

Note three ways in which the real high priest after the order of Melchizedek is better than were the pictures of the Levitical priesthood:

1. He is a royal priest (sovereignty; 7:1-2, 12-14). Jesus is the king of righteousness and the king of peace. He decides

who gets to experience these things, and He must be obeyed by those who receive these gifts from Him. In Him we have not only a Savior, but also a Lord.

2. He is an eternal priest (perpetuity; 7:3, 15-25). Perpetuity ought to characterize our commitment to Him, for we can draw near to one who never stops His help, never quits on us, and saves us to the uttermost. With a resource like that, quitting on Him is simply inexcusable.

3. He is a holy priest (perfect, not weak; 7:26-28). Holiness is the godly perfection that is the opposite of human sinful weakness. In Christ, holiness is characterized by innocence, purity, separation, and exaltation. Innocence, purity, separation, and exaltation summarize well what God is doing in our lives as he transforms us from the weak and sinful image of ourselves into the holy image of our perfect high priest. We are to be the priesthood of our high priest.

III. The High Priest of Hebrews had to fulfill the Day of Atonement (9:6-10).

Illustration: Last September 14, Jewish people celebrated Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is the Jewish Day of Atonement. It was instituted after Nadab and Abihu offered their strange fire before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2; 16:1).

Application: Man needs a day of atonement, because his sin is an offence against a holy God. Man cannot atone for his sin his own way, because he is too sinful to do so. Man's sin must be atoned for God's way, and Jesus is God's way.

Note some of the specifics of God's atoning provision in Christ with me.

1. He atones for sin in the heavenly tabernacle (2:17, 9:11). The work of atonement is a work that must be done in the presence of God. He is the one offended, and the work of atonement must satisfy Him. God's wrath is propitiated by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

2. He atones for sin with His own blood (9:12-14). God's just judgment of sin is always horrific in our eyes, but this is because sin is always horrific in the eyes of our holy God. We must never minimize the need in the requirement of God for the shedding of Christ's blood for our sin. His atonement was as brutal as our sin is offensive.

3. He atones for our sin voluntarily (9:12, 14, 25, 26). Jesus offered Himself and His own blood. He willingly died for us as an expression of His great love for us. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). We who know atoning grace cannot escape the ramifications of its love, nor would we want to.

4. He atones for our sin vicariously (9:28). He suffered in our behalf and in our place as our substitute on the cross of Calvary. Do you have peace with God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ this evening, or are you determined to offer up your strange fire to a holy God instead? Do you believe that what Jesus did on the cross affected heaven's wrath against you, involved the shedding of blood to wash the stain of your sin, was executed willingly by a Savior who loves you, and happened as your substitute – experiencing what you deserve? This atonement is God's gracious provision for your salvation. This grace we receive by faith.

IV. The High Priest of Hebrews intercedes with mercy and strength in time of weakness and need (4:14-16).

Illustration: All of life is a time of weakness and need when it comes to spiritual things. Our flesh profits nothing. "The arm of flesh will fail you, you dare not trust your own" ("Stand Up for Jesus," verse 3 is the key to the whole song – "Stand up, stand up for Jesus; stand in His strength alone. The arm of flesh will fail you; you dare not trust your own. Put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer. Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there).

Application: We live in a day when desperate calls of duty and danger are being unheeded. The place of duty and spiritual danger has few if any well-armored soldiers there. How do we do better than this? His strength alone. Where does that come from? It comes from two responsibilities related to our high priest's intercession for us:

1. We must make intercession before Him (4:14-16). We must pray. We should start every day with bended knee and open Bible. We have a great high priest ready to give us mercy when we sin in weakness and strength when the burden is too great for us to bear. But first He asks us to bow, and to hear His words of comfort and correction.

That we have not prayed more must be one of the unanswerable mysteries that confuses even the wisest of the hosts of heaven, who see what mercy and grace go undesired and unrequested.

2. He makes intercession for us (7:25). This He does perfectly and perpetually. What does He say when He intercedes for us? John 17 is known as the high priestly prayer of Christ for His people. Surely, much of what we read there is

included in this work of intercession. Because He never fails to pray for us, and because the Father hears Him unfailingly, He will save us to the uttermost, and we are completely secure in Him.

Conclusion: We have a great high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Does that mean anything at all to you and to me this evening?

If not, perhaps what He wants us to know tonight about ourselves is what this author had to say about some of his readers (5:11, "Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing").

May our hearts be tender and our ears well-tuned to the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of Hebrews. He met the necessary qualifications, He did what the Levitical priesthood could not do as our atonement, and He stands willing and able with mercy and grace to help in time of need.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*