

## Jesus, Our Glorious High Priest.

Text: Heb 9:11-15

1) His Glorious Person

Suggested Hymns:

2) His Glorious Office

141, 47, 161, 108, 173

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Hebrews 9:11–15, <sup>11</sup> *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.* <sup>12</sup> *Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

<sup>13</sup> *For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,* <sup>14</sup> *how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

<sup>15</sup> *And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our text is taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the object of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to set forth that Jesus Christ is the only true High Priest, whom the high priest in the Old Testament merely prefigured and foreshadowed.

At the time when this Epistle was written, the temple still stood in the city of Jerusalem. The veil of the temple, the heavy curtain which separated the holy place from the most holy place, and which was torn in two from the top to the bottom when Jesus died on the cross, had been repaired and readjusted a long time ago.

The priests and Levites attended to the daily sacrifices. The high priest appeared in his gorgeous attire, dressed in gold and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen on the great day of atonement, and passed through the holy place into the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice against the ark of the covenant, while the people were anxiously watching the door to see him return to them from the presence of God.

The disciples of Christ, of course, could no longer take part in these religious exercises at the temple. But, as we heard last Sunday, there were two kinds of people in the early Christian congregations, those who formerly had been heathen, and those who formerly had been Jews, and among those who had formerly been Jews there were many who still held to their old Jewish rites and ceremonies.

They could not forget their beautiful service in the temple, and longed to take part in the exercises on the great day of atonement. It was a hard thing to convince them that no more sacrifices must be offered, and that the priesthood and all that pertained thereto was ended.

These are the people whom the holy writer addresses in this Epistle, the Hebrews. He points out to them the glory of the New Testament. He shows that their Old Testament service was but a shadow of things to come, and that in Christ Jesus they have the body.

He emphasises the fact that Jesus Christ is the one, the only true High Priest, before whom the former high priests in all their glory and splendour must pale and fade, and who has done infinitely more for His people than the former high priests could ever accomplish.

But this has not been written for the Hebrews alone. It has been written for all Christians. It is a praise of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, and can we ever sufficiently praise Him who has redeemed us? The theme for today is *Jesus, Our Glorious High Priest*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. Jesus, Our Glorious High Priest** **His Glorious Person**

The Apostle says, <sup>11</sup> *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that*

*is, not of this creation. <sup>12</sup> Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all.*

Here the glory of our High Priest Jesus Christ is set forth in His glorious person. And what are we told of the glory of His person? How does He differ from the former high priests as to His person? In what does He appear far above the former high priest's person? In this respect, that He is both true man and true God.

Jesus Christ, our glorious High Priest, is true man. Now the high priest in the Old Testament was a man also, and he had to be a perfect man, without blemish, without any bodily deformity.

The Jewish historian Josephus tells of an incident during the time when Hyrcanus was high priest. There was a party against him, and one of his bitterest enemies bit off one of his ears, so that he could no longer hold the office; for the high priest had to be a man without blemish.

But how does that high priest with all his bodily perfection sink into insignificance when compared to Christ! Christ came, as the Apostle says, "***with the greater and more perfect tabernacle;***" that is, to be our High Priest He assumed the human nature. He assumed a true human body in the incarnation. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He became true man, having body and soul, the same as we.

He did not assume a fictitious body, as was claimed by false teachers in the early times of the Christian Church, not a body which only appeared to be a body in the eyes of men, not a body such as the angels assumed when they appeared and spoke to men.

Neither was Jesus without a true human soul, as others claimed, so that His God-head served Him for a soul. He had a true human body and a true human soul, and is, therefore, true man, as the former high priest was true man.

But how different was He from the high priest even as to His human body and soul! The high priest, it is true, was privileged above the rest of the people. He was the only man in Israel whom God allowed into His immediate presence, the only man who could pass through the veil, who could walk into the holy of holies and stand before the holy shrine, the ark of the covenant, once a year, on the great day of atonement.

But this privilege was not given to the high priest because in his own person he had been any better or holier than the other priests, or the Levites, or the common people.

In his own person the high priest was as great a sinner as the rest, and every time he ventured into the presence of God that he might deal with the Almighty on behalf of the people, he had to fear for himself. He had to fear lest fire might come forth from the Lord and devour him as it devoured Nadab and Abihu,<sup>1</sup> the sons of Aaron.

He had to make the most careful preparations before he entered the tabernacle, and had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins before he could sacrifice for the sins of the people.

But what a glorious High Priest have we in Christ! Though He is true man, He is without the slightest taint of sin. In the Gospel of today we see Him challenging His enemies and saying, *<sup>46</sup> Which of you convicts Me of sin?*<sup>2</sup> and they do not even make an attempt to lay any sin to His charge.

And does not the Apostle distinctly say, *<sup>26</sup> For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; <sup>27</sup> who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's?*<sup>3</sup>

And Christ, our High Priest, is true God. The Apostle says, *Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come.* He does not say that Christ became High Priest, and that He was something else before He was made High Priest. No; He came into this world as our High Priest.

He did not receive His priesthood from men, as the former high priests did, but He brought His priesthood with Him from heaven. And He is a High Priest of good things to come, a High Priest who does not only secure for His people earthly blessings, but heavenly treasures, future happiness, forgiveness, life, and salvation. Now this plainly shows that Jesus Christ, our glorious High Priest, is true God.

Look, then, how glorious our dear High Priest is in His person! The Israelites were delighted when they saw their high priest as he stepped forth in his gorgeous attire wearing upon his breast the breastplate of twelve precious stones

representing the twelve tribes of Israel. But what was this earthly splendour compared to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ? Our great High Priest is God and man in one person.

As the Apostle says, *<sup>15</sup>For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*<sup>4</sup> And He is a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He is God. He is almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent. How glorious He is in His person!

## **2. Jesus, Our Glorious High Priest His Glorious Office**

And glorious is the office of Christ, our High Priest. This is the second part of our discourse.

Christ's office is threefold. He is our Prophet, High Priest, and King; but His priestly office is the centre of all. It is the foundation of our salvation.

Now what has Christ done for us as our High Priest? The high priest's function was threefold. He had to sacrifice, to pray or intercede for the people, and to speak the blessing or benediction upon them. But his chief function was to offer sacrifice and to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice against the mercy-seat in the holy of holies.

By this act, which had to be repeated every year on the day of atonement, he obtained redemption from defilement, so that the children of Israel who had transgressed the ceremonial law, and had thereby defiled themselves, were no longer to be considered unclean. He secured external cleansing for one year.

So Christ has performed this function of the high priest to sacrifice, and how glorious is the work which He performed in this office! The Apostle says, *<sup>13</sup>For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, <sup>14</sup>how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Here we have several points of comparison. The high priest sacrificed goats and calves; Christ sacrificed Himself, and shed His own precious blood on the altar of the cross. The high priest had to go into the holy place every year with

the blood of the sacrifice; Christ entered but once, and with His own blood, into the tabernacle which is not made with hands, that is, into heaven. The high priest secured nothing more than external cleansing by performing the duties of his office; Christ, by His great sacrifice, has obtained for us eternal redemption.

But the point which the Apostle makes is this. If the blood of goats, and calves, and bulls, and heifers could do such great things, how much greater things will the blood of Christ do! If the blood of victims could sanctify and purify the flesh, how much more will the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanse from sin! Look, then, what a glorious High Priest you have in Christ Jesus!

Who could do more for you than Christ has done? He has sacrificed Himself for you. He has shed for you His holy, precious blood. He bled and died for you on the cross. And for what purpose? To obtain for you eternal redemption, to redeem you from sin, and from death, and from the power of the devil, to secure for you life everlasting.

Who could do more for you than Christ has done? Should you not praise Him, and thank Him, and glorify His holy name, and magnify His glorious work, His great high-priestly work, as long as your lips are able to move?

Yes, how glorious is the great sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest! So great is the wonderful power of this sacrificial offering that it covers the sins of the whole world; it extends forward into the future, and reaches back into the past; it atones for the sins of all people from the first man, Adam, to the last man born into this world.

The Apostle says, <sup>15</sup> *And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

The Apostle is telling us to look at the wonderful all-cleansing power of Christ's blood! It was shed when our great High Priest died on the cross, when He inaugurated the new testament.

But which are the sins for which our great Mediator and Redeemer made atonement when He sacrificed Himself on the accursed tree? Did He make atonement for those sins only which are committed in the time of the New

Testament? No; He made atonement for those transgressions also that were under the first, or the Old Testament.

So great is the power of His blood that it blots out all the sins of the past, and hence it is that all those in the time of the Old Testament were saved and received into eternal life who believed in Him as the future Messiah, and comforted themselves with the great atoning work which He would perform. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Do not doubt, then, my friends, that all your sins are forgiven, and that you have been made an heir of eternal life. Do not despise the great sacrifice of your glorious High Priest who has reconciled you with God whom you have so grievously offended by your sins, Jesus, who even now makes intercession for you before the divine throne.

Rejoice in your Saviour, believe in your Mediator and Redeemer, cling to your glorious High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will bless and comfort you, and uphold you in all the unpredictable changes of life, and finally lead you into the heavenly inheritance. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 26:61

<sup>2</sup> John 8:46

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 7:26-27

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 4:15