

Office of Priest

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[0 : 00] Well, we can turn back to Hebrews chapter 7 and read again verses 24 and 25.

But he, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

Therefore he is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Well, as indicated last night, we were thinking about the three offices of Jesus, a prophet, priest and king.

And last night we thought about him as a prophet. And just now we'll think a bit about what it means for him to be a priest. And then tonight, what it means for Jesus to be king.

[1 : 20] Often we mention these descriptions, often, at least for myself anyway, I sometimes use them but don't know what I'm saying when I'm using them.

And I think we all do that, don't we? We can use words and we know we're meant to use these words. But what the words actually mean is we might not have worked them out.

I do that all the time and I think most people do anyway. I heard lots of people speaking about the badger last week.

And I think the one thing that marked most of them was he didn't know what the badger was about.

But they all had something to say about it. And I think we can do that with Bible words as well.

And what do we think of when we think of the word priest? And when we say Jesus is a priest? I suppose the normal idea that will come into our minds because we're used to seeing them in one way or another is that we'll think of a priest in a church, a Roman Catholic priest or Eastern Orthodox priest.

[2 : 55] That's what we'll think a priest is. Or if we have seen TV programs or films involving priests, well, we might think of somebody who's dressed in white and who is involved in offering a sacrifice of an animal or something and in an ornate temple.

Or we might think of a priest as someone who is asked to do some religious activity in public. If a prayer has to be made on some occasion, we'll see this man usually a very striking-looking person. And he appears and, I mean in the film, it's a striking-looking person. He appears and offers this well-spoken prayer. And maybe we think, that's a priest.

And it's inevitable, isn't it, that we would think of priests, just because of how we use the word in everyday life.

And that kind of thing would have been true as well to the people who first got this book of Hebrews.

I mean, when they thought of a priest, they would think of the individuals that they saw every day going to the temple.

[4 : 34] Or they'd have seen in their villages, because the priests lived all over the country and would have taught the people various things, and they would see the priests. And they would be familiar with their practices and so on.

And automatically they would say, when they said, Jesus is a priest, they would probably think of that. But is that the kind of priest that Jesus is?

How would we describe it? If somebody said to us, I heard this morning, you were thinking about Jesus being a priest. What does that mean?

And we'll try and think about that just now. As I'm sure we know, the Bible uses two different types of priests to picture Jesus.

And there has to be two types, because one type by itself doesn't describe him wholly. That's W-H-O-L-L-Y.

[5 : 51] It doesn't describe him fully in its details. And one of them is the priests that were in Israel, the Order of Aaron.

And the other one is an unusual character who appears in the book of Genesis, in one chapter called Melchizedek. And they're not of the same order, Aaron belongs to Israel, while Melchizedek, he belonged to the Canaanites who lived in Palestine before Israel went there, and who Abram acknowledged as a priest of the Most High God.

And both these individuals, Aaron and Melchizedek, tell us two things that apply to Jesus. The two things that Aaron tells us is that the High Priest had to make a sacrifice for sinners, for sinners, and the High Priest had to make intercession for sinners.

That's what the priests of Aaron's line tell us. And of course, there's various days in the Old Testament calendar in which they did these two things.

the obvious one that comes to mind is the annual Day of Atonement, because on that particular day, the High Priest descended from Aaron, he would offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people, and then he would go into God's presence to make intercession for the nation.

[7 : 48] So that's the two things that his priest who tells us about Jesus, because Jesus also did these two things. And one of the two things that Melchizedek tells us about a priest's activity, and the two things that he tells us is, one is that he refreshes, because when Abram came back after his pursuit of these kings who had captured Lot, and we can imagine that he retired after that campaign that he engaged in, and he met Melchizedek, and Melchizedek brought out to him bread and wine.

It's nothing to do with the Lord's Supper, it's just refreshments that a weary person needed. And Melchizedek provided that for Abraham.

And that's a picture of what Jesus does. He provides refreshment. And the second thing about that Melchizedek points to with regard to Jesus is that Jesus is also a king.

I mean, Aaron, he was only a priest, but Melchizedek, but Melchizedek, he was both a priest and a king. And he's, that's just the system that he was under, or the system that he was ahead of, and that applies to Jesus too, because not only is he a priest, but he's a king.

So that's what these two individuals tell us about Jesus, our priests. So in answering the question that someone says to us, what do you think Jesus does?

[9 : 39] Well, there's four things, isn't there? He deals with our sins, he makes intercession for us, he refreshes us, and he rules everywhere.

This was a thing about three things, and briefly, well, just now. And the first one is, how does he deal with our sins? And then the second one is, what does it mean when he makes intercession for us?

And then the third question is, what benefits does he give us to refresh us? We'll see what God says about these three areas.

So first of all, how does Jesus deal with our sins? One way that we can approach that is imagine what it would be like to go to a service in the temple in Jerusalem.

and we go there, and the first thing we have to do is we find an animal that is perfect, with no flaws.

[10 : 58] And then we have to take it to the priest and he'll examine it, and if it's flawless, it will be used as our sacrifice.

And before it becomes our sacrifice, we've got to put our hand on its head and we have to lean our full weight on it.

Now, now, we try and imagine that. Here's a lamb, a little creature, and we've chosen it, and we've taken it to the priest, and we don't just stand there with our hand lightly touching its head.

We lean our entire weight on it. And there's a message in that, because what would it have been like for the lamb to have the weight of an adult crushing it?

And that's just a picture pointing to what our sins would have felt like for Jesus.

[12 : 19] But anyway, we take the animal to the priest, and the offerer kills it, and the priest hands right the deals with the victim.

What is that telling us to do in a far higher sense? Why do we need a perfect lamb? And, of course, the answer to that question is that the one that had to make atonement for our sins had to be flawless.

And we know that Jesus is flawless. But how do we know that he's flawless? Have we ever examined him?

Because that's what the priest had to do with the animal. He had to look at everything. Because one little mark would disqualify that animal as the victim.

And I suppose if the animal could have spoken, it would be hoping it had a mark. Because that would prevent him being put to death.

[13:42] But how do we know that Jesus is flawless? And there's two ways of knowing that, isn't there? one is that we've examined him ourselves.

Or the other is we're just repeating what somebody else has said. And surely the best way to know that he is flawless is that we've examined him ourselves.

And that leads us to ask, where do we examine him? And the answer to that question is we examine him in the Bible. Because there's his story.

There's his biography, we might say. And in the Gospels, we find Jesus in all kinds of different situations. And all of them are situations if you and I were in them, that we would sin.

sin. But when Jesus appears in these situations, he never sins. He always does what is right.

[15:00] Whether he is thinking of something, or whether he is speaking, or whether he is doing something. He always does what is right.

right. And that's why he's written, that's why he arranged for his followers to write the Gospels, so that we can examine him and see that he is perfect.

And therefore, where we, as it were, lay our hand on his head, we are doing something that we discovered is worth doing.

That we can lean on Jesus. I mean, the person that went up to the temple with the animal might have examined himself and realized that he was a sinner.

there. And that's not a very pleasant discovery to me, but it's a good discovery to me. And when we made it about ourselves and discovered that we are sinful and we go to God and we discover that God wants us to have a perfect substitute, we should be glad that Jesus is there.

[16:21] I'm very glad that Jesus was nice to Nicodemus. I'm very glad that he spoke nicely to the women of Samaria.

I'm very glad he spoke faithfully to the Pharisees. Because when he does that, he's telling me he's perfect. And therefore, I can lean on him.

And every person, believer, can do that. sin on him, as I mentioned in a weight Jesus had to carry, because it wasn't just one person that leaned on him. There's millions.

And who can tell the weight of their sins? He went to the cross, and as we sang in Psalm 22, there he paid the penalty.

And there's always an answer to the question, why have you forsaken me? He says to the Father, and the answer is because of all the hands who are leaning on your head.

[17:56] All the sinners whose hands are on your head at the moment. That's why I'm forsaken you. And that's where our sins took Jesus.

And we should be thankful that's the case. Because when God brought somebody to deal with our sins, he was the Lamb of God, but he was also one who was mighty.

And he could carry our sins away. Which he did when he paid the penalty for them. So we have a perfect Lamb, and of course he's described there in verse 26 of Hebrews chapter 7.

He's holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. I mean, obviously in a literal sense, the animal that was taken to the sacrifice, well, after the sacrifice was over, that was the end of that animal.

that was our high priest. That wasn't the end. Although he did pay the penalty for our sins, he is risen from the dead, and as the writer says at the end of verse 26, he has become higher than the heavens.

[19:29] And that leads us to our second point. That our high priest makes intercession for us. And what does that mean?

Well, we have to avoid thinking about it sentimentally. Sometimes we can say to ourselves, which I have anyway, Jesus is praying for me.

And my thinking there is a wee bit sentimental. And that's what it's based on. Rather what the Bible says.

Or I may think at certain times that his intercession is just an enlarged version of my kind of intercession. So, we all pray for people, don't we?

And, we may think that, well, Jesus' work, now in heaven, is just a bigger version of that. And, it may be that, and it may not.

[20 : 58] a third way of looking at it is to imagine that because we know that he was involved in prayer, Gethsemane, where he was in great agony, mental distress, and energy, and a real focus that consumed him, that we might say, well, that's how he does it in heaven.

But that's not right. So, how does he make intercession for us? Well, the first question, I suppose, we could say is, where does he make it?

Where is he as he makes intercession? Well, the Bible tells us where he is. He's on the throne.

And, that should tell us right away that his intercession has got to do with his sovereignty. He is not requiring something to be done that he can't do himself.

He's there. He's in the place of all power. All authority is given to him in heaven and on earth. So, therefore, whatever his intercession is, it's an expression of his control.

[22 : 46] And, it's an expression of his ability to do whatever he wants. So, that's the first thing about it.

He intercedes as the king. the second thing we can remember about what Jesus does as his intercession is that, well, you and I, when we pray, we don't really know always whether or not we're going to get an answer.

and the reason why that is the case is that we don't know what God wants. But, Jesus, he's both God and man.

And, as he functions there on the divine throne, he has constant and perfect access to God's secret plans.

he's never in the dark about what God wants. He knows because he was there when the plans were devised.

[24 : 10] He knows every detail about them. He knows what's going to happen next. He knows every link and every chain. So, when he makes intercession, he does it with total knowledge of whatever is required.

He does it as one who is both God and man. He does it as one who interacts with the Father as his equal and who has this constant communion with him that is far beyond the way we communicate.

And, when we are drawing near to try to understand this, we are stepping into something that's mind-blowing. at the same time, although he's gone and man with such an incredible knowledge of what is all going to take place and so on, and what's happened and everything like that, he's also full of sympathy.

Usually, when I pray, and I suspect you're like me, the person I've got the most sympathy for is herself.

Is that not right? Why is this happening to me? So I pray about it? But when Jesus intercedes, all his sympathy is for, others.

[25 : 58] Because he's beyond the place where he has to have any sympathy for himself, isn't he? He's in the world of glory.

He's totally focused on those who are outside that world in a sense, and who are in a situation where there's difficulties of one kind or another, whatever his intercession is, makes him continually sympathetic.

So here we are today, and it's good to know that Jesus sympathizes with us. Jesus also, by his intercession, always involves the Holy Spirit.

This may not be the best way to think about it, but I would put it this way, whatever Jesus thinks about one of his people, the Spirit comes and deals with that person.

and how often does Jesus think about his people? All the time.

[27 : 16] And that means his Spirit is continually coming, because Jesus thinks about us. And that was pictured in the day of atonement, the high priest with his names on the breastplate, and Jesus makes intercession.

He doesn't beg. Jesus begged for nothing since he ascended. He doesn't implore, but he focuses on anything.

He does it as a king. And he always gets his way. He's got a very successful intercession.

It's never failed, and it never will. So what blessings come to us?

They come because it says that he's a surety of a better covenant, in verse 22. And that better covenant is a new covenant that the writer goes on to describe in chapter 8.

[28 : 51] And there in chapter 8 in verse 10 and 11, we're told what the benefits are of this incredible new covenant that Jesus has initiated, or the fathers initiated and that Jesus administers.

And they tell us what he does. What he's, we could say that this covenant is the guidelines for the mediator. Although he doesn't need to remember them, of course, but they're the guidelines that he has as he functions.

And what are these guidelines? Well, one is that we are going to be forgiven. That says there in verse 12, God, for God be merciful to our unrighteousness and their sins and their wallace deeds I will remember no more.

Isn't that incredible? The terms of this arrangement are that our sins are forgiven. forgiven. You and I have sinned today.

That's just a fact. Sinned in our minds, maybe with our words, maybe with our actions.

[30 : 18] But if we're under this new covenant arrangement, forgiven. that's what Jesus focuses on and his intercession, forgiveness.

And then in verse 11, there's a second blessing that he deals with, and that is that we'll know God. for all of them will know me, from the least to the greatest. I mean, this is not saying every believer is a theologian, because there's some stuff in theology that's got nothing to do with the Bible.

But he is saying here that everyone that he represents, will discover who God is. And that's what Jesus tells us, God is merciful, kind, full of love, and so on.

And connected to that is they'll share their knowledge with each other. So there's fellowship. None of them shall teach his neighbor something that the others don't know, because they all know him.

[31 : 51] Because Jesus teaches them, and therefore they share together the things of God. And then in verse 10 there's another thing that Jesus is concerned about as a priest, and that is that we love God's law from our hearts.

I have put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts. What's Jesus doing today? What's he doing for you and for me?

these three things. He's forgiving us, he's showing us who God is, so that we can tell each other.

And he is ensuring that we love his law with our mind, we love it intelligently, and we love it with our hearts, we love it emotionally.

And that's the blessings, and it's good to know that, because we can go to Jesus, the priest who administers his new covenant, and we can ask him, Lord, give me these blessings.

[33 : 22] So as we close, I just want to mention two things. the last sight the disciples got of Jesus as he ascended from Bethany, his hands were raised and blessed him.

He ascended as a priest, and that blessing doesn't stop. These eleven men got it then, millions have got it since then.

men. And the last thing I want to mention is that it's a wonderful thing to think about, but at this moment, Jesus the priest is leading the praise of the universe.

He's leading the praise of the redeemed in heaven. men. And in a way we don't understand, he is gathering together all the praise of the earth.

And there's one huge choir, and at the head of it is Jesus the priest, celebrating the victories that he has accomplished, and will yet accomplish.

[34 : 38] And it's good for us, I think, on this Lord's Day to think of that. So may we do so. And we can sing.