

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 180

A Great and Glorious High Priest (2)

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 26th March, 2000**

Text: *“But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9. 11, 12).*

Surely there is no sweeter subject than the everlasting priesthood of the Son of God! Apart from it, each of us must be ruined eternally. But what a sweet attraction to a sinner feeling his need, his sin, his guilt – this great High Priest! You see, as a High Priest, as a Mediator, there are two great works that belong to His priesthood: one, the offering, the sacrifice; and the other, interceding on behalf of those for whom the sacrifice was offered. Under the law, this was solemnly symbolised on the great day of atonement. Israel's high priest offered the sacrifice, and then with the blood he entered into the most holy place and there he sprinkled that blood and there he interceded on behalf of those for whom the sacrifice had been offered.

I tried to speak to you especially this morning on our great High Priest offering the one sacrifice for sin, His own blood, and the wonderful accomplishments of it, that He “obtained eternal redemption for us.” For under the law, “every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. ... For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Now,

“Here is our hope, our joy, our rest;
Hither, when hell assails, we flee;
We look into our Saviour's breast.”

This is our anchor ground where our anchor, hope, must firmly be fixed.

So I tried to speak to you this morning especially concerning our great High Priest offering the one sacrifice and by it obtaining eternal redemption. Now this evening with the Lord's help I want to speak

especially of His entering into the holy place, and then at the end just to touch on these “good things to come” which are the blessed effects of His everlasting priesthood.

“But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place.” So this speaks of His glorious resurrection. He died, He shed His precious blood, the sacrifice was offered, and as the proof that the sacrifice was accepted, God raised Him from the dead. So we have here His resurrection and then His ascension into heaven. “He entered in once into the holy place.” Israel’s high priest offered the sacrifice, the blood was shed, and then he took the blood into the holy place and sprinkled it there. “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” That is why He entered in once into the holy place; that is why He entered into heaven: “now to appear in the presence of God for us.” There is a great High Priest in heaven tonight and He appears there in the presence of God, but He appears there on behalf of sinners. “Ye children of Zion, now dry up your tears; for you the Redeemer in glory appears.” “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself.”

“He entered in once into the holy place.” I notice in this chapter there is an emphasis on this word *once*. It keeps coming in, that “Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many.” “Now *once* in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Now this *once*. Under the law there were ten thousand sacrifices for sin. All the blood that was shed on Jewish altars, that awful reminder of the dreadful iniquity of sin, that blood that was offered year by year as one priesthood was succeeded by another, for “they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” But that sacrifice of Christ was once, and once for all, and once only. Why? Because it was a finished work. Those priests stood “daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Now it is a finished work. It is a complete work. That one sacrifice, divine justice satisfied, the sins of the people of God for ever put away. It is that one sacrifice.

Once He suffered; once He died. And a guilty sinner there can find a sure foundation on which to rest his eternal hope.

And so as He died once, “He entered in once into the holy place.” Year by year, generation after generation, on the day of atonement Israel’s high priest entered into the holy place, but he came out. And then the year after he went again and he came out, and so he did until he died, and then another high priest did the same. “But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come ... He entered in once.” Why? Because His work was finished. Why? Because the sacrifice was accepted. Why? Because there was no more work to be performed on earth. So “He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Now you notice He entered “by His own blood.” He entered so that in heaven He might present the merits of His one sacrifice on behalf of His people. It was “by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place.” He entered in that He might intercede.

“For all that come to God by Him,
Salvation He demands;
Points to their names upon His breast,
And spreads His wounded hands.”

There is the sacrifice of Christ. There is the all-prevailing intercession of Christ as He presents there the merits of His blood. “By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place.”

“This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Perhaps some of you younger ones find it just a little bit difficult to understand the exact meaning of this word *intercession*. It is one praying, it is one pleading on behalf of others, and in this case interceding on behalf of those who were guilty and interceding on behalf of those who were unworthy of pardon, unworthy of this blessing. I have sometimes told this little story to illustrate the intercession of Jesus, though it is only at best a feeble illustration. There was a famous event in medieval history in England when our country was at war with France. Calais had been captured and the burghers of Calais were brought forth with their halters round their neck and they were going to be put to death. The sentence was decreed and the time for execution had come. There they were before King Edward. Now his queen appeared and pleaded on their behalf,

interceded for them. She interceded on two grounds: first of all her relationship to the King and the deep love he had for her; but also secondly, whilst he had been in France she had ruled most wisely in England. She had even conducted a successful campaign in the north of England. So she pleaded with her husband on two grounds: her relationship to her husband and his love toward her, and also merit, the things she had done. So she prevailed. It was mercy; it was liberty. The intercession of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in heaven is on those two grounds. First of all because of the love His eternal Father bears toward Him; but secondly on the ground of merit, because of the sacrifice He has offered, the blood He has shed, the work He accomplished.

“For Thy people Thou art pleading;
There Thou dost their place prepare;
Ever for them interceding,
Till in glory they appear.”

There is just the one weakness in the illustration. You must never think of the eternal Father being unwilling to save His people, not wanting to do it. Why, it was the Father who sent His Son. But the point is this: that His justice must be satisfied as well as His mercy. “By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place” – not only to present the merit of His blood, but He entered in by His own blood. On the great day of atonement, Israel’s high priest was not allowed to enter without the blood. He had to offer it for his own sins and for the sins of the people. Now apart from the blood he could not enter. Now with the Lord Jesus there were no sins that were His own. “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” But He could not enter without blood for the salvation of His people. You see, if you can follow me on this, when the Lord Jesus became Surety for His people, He undertook to save them. All their sins, He became responsible for them. Well, if He lived and died without making a full atonement for those sins, then how could He enter heaven? But “by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place.” His blood had availed to atone for all the sins of all His people. His Father was satisfied, and “by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Of course one view of it, you can see the Lord Jesus entering heaven as Zion’s God and King, a triumphant Conqueror, having conquered sin, death, hell and the grave. But here He enters as His people’s great High Priest.

“By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” And He entered into heaven as His people’s Forerunner. You know what a forerunner is: somebody who goes before. And the Lord Jesus has gone before His people into heaven, and that means that as surely as He is in heaven, so surely one day His people will be with Him where He is. “Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” It is a wonderful thing to think of this great High Priest entering heaven as His people’s Forerunner to prepare a place for them. He says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” He entered in once by His own blood as His people’s Forerunner. And we think of that very, very solemn verse that at one time used to be quoted so much in our pulpits:

“How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
For heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus’ blood thy only plea?
Is He thy great Forerunner there?”

“Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” As His people’s Forerunner, “by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place,” that is into heaven itself. And beloved friends, if at last we are to enter into that holy place, it must be on the same ground, the identical ground, through the blood of our great High Priest. There is no other entering into heaven. It is the only plea that will avail in the great day. The only ones to enter into heaven are sinners who are washed in the blood of Christ.

Now, “He entered in.” He entered into the holy place by His own blood. Is it ever a concern to you that we are not here for ever? Our days are short. Life is uncertain. Death is on the way. When you come to the end, is it ever a concern to you whether you will enter heaven? Do not take it for granted. There will be thousands who will never enter heaven. There are many who spent their lives in Strict Baptist chapels who have never entered heaven. It comes very close. It is very solemn. You can go a long way in religion. Bunyan speaks of that one who seemingly went all the way. He appeared a good Christian, a godly man. He came to the long, dark river. He paid the ferryman to cross over and came to the gates

of heaven. He was asked for his certificate and he fumbled in his bosom but could find none. Bunyan said, "I perceived that there is a way to hell from the gates of heaven." You girls and boys, we are very pleased to see you in the house of God, but that will not enable you to enter heaven at last. The only way you can enter heaven is through the blood of Jesus. How do you gain an interest in the blood of Jesus? We cannot merit it; we cannot earn it. But it is this: if led and taught of the Spirit, feeling our sin and need, our helplessness, our unworthiness, we will see the preciousness of the blood of Jesus and we will plead it for our acceptance. It will be our only plea, and no sinner ever yet pleaded the blood of Christ in vain. All those of you who feel your need, those of you who are concerned about eternity, those of you who tremble lest you should not enter heaven at last, plead the blood of Christ, for no-one ever pleaded the blood of Christ in vain. "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place." That is the ground on which every sinner saved by grace will enter into heaven at last: through the blood of Jesus. "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

O may we be enabled by faith tonight to look up to heaven and see this great and glorious and exalted High Priest entered into the holy place, there to see Him ever living, ever interceding. And He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." And you see, eternal life is to know Him, to be blessed with that vital, personal, saving knowledge of Him. "Jesus, Thy Godhead, blood, and name, O! 'tis eternal life to know." Now may you look up to heaven and see that great High Priest entered in once into the holy place, even into heaven, and may you see Him there almighty to save. And may that be an encouragement for you to come, to come to Him as the only Saviour. May you view Him in all the wonders of His love and mercy and the riches of His grace, everything you need for your pilgrimage.

"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." We have our profession. We have the problems, the trials, the sorrows, the difficulties, the opposition of Satan, the opposition of the world and sin. But seeing "we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," all you need is there, all the grace, all the love, all the mercy, all the power to uphold you, to preserve you, to help you, to keep you. It is all in Him. It is all in Christ. O may you look up to heaven and see this great High Priest and remember that one great point of His Priesthood is this: that He should be able to "have compassion on the

ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” “Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

“By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” And this is the place where prayer is heard and answered. Have you anything to pray about tonight? Anything concerning your soul, your spiritual state, your sins, eternity? Anything concerning the day of your death, the judgment? Anything concerning your family, your business, your relationships with other people, your problems, your sorrows, your troubles, your disappointments? Any mountains you have to pray about, any crooked things to pray about? What about your loneliness? What about your disappointments? Have you anything to pray about for tomorrow or next week or in the unknown way? Now this is the ground and foundation of prayer, the blood of Jesus. We have to pray; we must pray; we cannot stay away; and yet Satan tells us that we are so unworthy, we are so guilty, we do not deserve our prayers to be heard and answered, and we know that his witness is true.

I do like the way the Puritans used to speak about the everlasting priesthood of Christ in heaven and His all-prevailing intercession. One of them put it like this. He said, “You would not recognise your poor, sinful prayers if you could see them entering heaven.” He said it is like a little girl whose father is ill and she goes out to pick some flowers, but picks more weeds than flowers and puts them in an old jam jar. Her mother takes them out, find a beautiful vase, takes all the weeds out and arranges the flowers beautifully and adds some flowers of her own, and then it can be taken in. Now the old Puritan said that is just what Christ does. Your poor prayers come up to heaven. There is so much sin in them. He takes all the sin out of them. And then there is so much lacking. Well, He adds everything that is lacking and then He takes them personally and presents them to His Father. He said you would not recognise your poor prayers if you saw them entering heaven. The ground of the acceptance of our sinful persons and poor, unworthy prayers is the everlasting priesthood of Christ as by His own blood He has entered into the holy place. “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

“Our great High Priest, before the throne,
Presents the merits of His blood;
For our acceptance pleads His own,
And proves our cause completely good.”

“By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” And He is entered into heaven “now to appear in the presence of God *for us*.” Do not neglect those two little words. Luther said there is great divinity in the pronouns. It is to have a personal interest there. “For us.” You say, “It is for His chosen.” It is. You say, “It is for His beloved people.” It is. You say, “It is for those who are led and taught by the Spirit.” So it is. But it is for every sinner feeling his need who is brought to the feet of this great High Priest to say, “Thou, O Christ, art all I want; all in all in Thee I find.” This is salvation, and this is the only religion that will take a sinner to heaven. “But Christ.” O you see, all these other things, these failures, these faults, these disappointments. It is the answer to everything.

“But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Now just one or two thoughts on the good things to come. “Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come.” As we read in our reading this evening, “The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.” Now what are these good things to come which are brought to sinners through the work of their great High Priest? Well really, everything that was shadowed under the law. These good things to come were the substance, the reality of all that was foreshadowed. “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.” There were all these types and sacrifices and offerings, but now these good things to come. In a word, grace here, and glory hereafter. Everything that was prefigured, foreshadowed under the law; the pardon of sin, an interest in the death of the Lamb, cleansing through His blood, the complete putting away of sin and guilt on the day of atonement, peace procured, salvation. All these things that were foreshadowed under the law, now these are the good things to come, and now the people of God have them in their reality, in the substance. And then heaven at last, all that heaven has, all that heaven contains, for poor, wretched, unworthy sinners.

“Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come.” And these good things come to sinners through His finished work. “By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,” and having obtained all these good things to come. And now in this dear, exalted High Priest, there are treasured up to all eternity these good things which He procured and which He has to give and which He delights to bestow. In a word,

“Christ has blessings to impart,
Grace to save thee from thy fears;
O the love that fills His heart!
Sinner, wipe away thy tears.”

Now all this should endear the Lord Jesus to us. All this should make Him precious to us. All this should bring us to cling and cleave to Him.

“But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

(The morning sermon on the same text was published last month.)