

A Great High-Priest - His All-Prevailing Intercession

by J.C. Philpot

Jesus, as our royal priest, continues to intercede for us in heaven, presenting the blood of the sacrifice and the smoke of incense to God, and enabling us to draw near to God.

Scripture: Psalm 110:4, Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 7:1-9, 1 John 2:1, Revelation 5:6, Revelation 19:13

Topics: "Christ's Intercession", "Eternal Priesthood"

Description

J.C. Philpot delves into the sacred humanity of Jesus as a royal Priest after the order of Melchizedek, emphasizing His eternal priesthood, typified by Melchizedek's dual role as King of Salem and Priest of the most high God. Philpot explores the significance of Jesus' intercession in heaven, likening it to the high priest's role on the day of atonement, highlighting the connection between Christ's sacrifice on earth and His intercession in heaven. He underscores the power and prevalence of Jesus' intercession for believers, pointing to the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice and the sympathy of His loving heart as sources of encouragement and consolation.

Transcript

Chapter Twelve from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

We are now led to another character of our blessed Lord, as wearing our nature in the courts of heaven, for in the prophecy of him just quoted, it is promised that "he shall be a priest upon his throne." The high priest under the law never sat upon a throne. He was a servant, not a sovereign; for he "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." #Heb 8:5 . But Jesus is a royal Priest, and as such was typified by Melchizedek, who united in himself the two characters of priest and king, for he was "King of Salem, and Priest of the most high God." #Heb 7:1 . This was "the order of Melchizedek," according to which Jesus was made a high priest by virtue of the ancient oath: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." #Ps 110:4 . There were three especial features in the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek which distinguished it from the Levitical order:

1. It was a royal priesthood; for Melchisedec was "by interpretation King of righteousness (that being the meaning of his name), and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace." #Heb 7:2 .

2. It was made by an oath . "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest; (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him. The Lord sware and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." #Heb 7:20-22 .

3. It was for ever, for so ran the promise, "Thou art a Priest for ever." Jesus was, therefore, not a temporary high priest, as the high priests under the law, whom sickness struck and death removed, for "they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." #Heb 7:23 . But Jesus being "made not after the law of a carnal commandment," as was the high priest under the law. "but after the power of an endless life," continueth ever, as having an unchangeable priesthood. And in this consists much of the suitability and blessedness of his priestly office as now carried on in heaven, as the apostle speaks: "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." #Heb 7:25 .

Let us, then, as the Lord may enable, now take a view by faith of the Lord Jesus, as the high priest over the house of God, and this may give us holy boldness to venture nigh. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." #Heb 10:19,20 . If thus enabled to draw near with a true heart, we may find a benefit in meditating upon our blessed Lord in this relationship to his church and people.

The high priest, under the law, on the great day of atonement, which occurred once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, made a solemn atonement, first for the sins of himself and his house, and then for the iniquities of the children of Israel. #Le 16:34 . But this he did in two ways by offering a bullock as a sin offering for himself, and a goat, upon which the Lord's lot fell, as a sin offering for the people; #Le 16:6,9,11 ; by taking a censer full of burning coals from off the altar, and filling his hands with sweet incense beaten small, and entering therewith into the most holy place. This was that sacred spot called "the holy of holies" or "the holiest of all" #Heb 9:3 ; which contained the ark of the covenant on which, between the cherubim, was the Shechinah or visible manifestation of the presence and glory of God. Into this holiest of all, the high priest never entered but on the great day of atonement; and even on that day he was forbidden, under the penalty of death, to come within the vail which separated it from the holy place, unless he had washed his flesh, had put on the holy linen garment, taken with him the blood of the sacrifice, and put the incense upon the burning coals in the censer. All these things were highly typical of Jesus as the great high priest. The washing of the flesh denoted his purity as high priest; the holy linen garments, the holiness of his human nature; the blood, his atoning blood shed upon the cross; and the incense, his meritorious intercession. The most holy place was typical of heaven, and the vail typical of the separation between God and us, and that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." #Heb 9:8 . When Jesus died, this vail was rent in twain from the top to the bottom #Mt 27:51 ; to show that there was no longer a separating vail between God and his people.

But the high priest going within the veil, with the blood and the incense, was a special type of Jesus, our risen High Priest, entering into the courts of heaven. There was a connection between the intercession of the high priest without, and within the veil. Outside the vail the sacrifice was offered, but the blood was taken inside it. The brazen altar was without the veil, but the ark of the covenant was within. The high priest shed the blood without, but sprinkled it within. The burning coals were taken from the brazen altar which stood in the open court; but the incense was put upon them as he entered into the most holy place,

that the cloud of its fragrance might cover the mercy seat on and before which he sprinkled the blood of the bullock, offered for his sins, and that of the goat, for the sins of the people.

Thus our most blessed High Priest, after he had offered his holy body and soul as a sacrifice for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended up on high to enter into heaven in his pure and sacred humanity, typified by the holy linen garments worn by Aaron, when he went within the veil, that he might there fulfil that part of his priestly office - to make intercession for us. This was beautifully typified, as we have already hinted, by the high priest taking the incense beaten small within the veil, together with the atoning blood. The incense was beaten small - bruised, not cut, not only that the fragrance might more freely flow forth when lighted by the coals, but as typical of the sufferings and sorrows of our agonising High Priest. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." #Isa 53:10 . "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." The coals from off the brazen altar typified the wrath of God, for the fire on the brazen altar, kindled in the first instance by the Lord himself, #Le 9:24 , was never put out; and on it were burnt not only all the whole burnt-offerings, but every part of the other sacrifices, as the fat of the sin-offering, which was laid thereon for that express purpose. The cloud of incense which filled the most holy place, and covered the mercy seat, represented the fragrances of the present intercession of our great and glorious High Priest in heaven. And the blood, sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, typified "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel;" #Heb 12:24 ; even that precious blood "which cleanseth from all sin;" which he took with him into heaven when he entered there in his holy humanity, and the efficacy of which to purge a guilty conscience from filth, guilt, and dead works, to serve a living God, he still makes manifest when the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the soul with his own divine power.

A believing view of Christ, as typified by the high priest under the law entering within the veil, on the great day of atonement, will prepare our minds more clearly and fully to contemplate him as now carrying on his priestly office in the glorious temple above; for he "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." #Heb 9:24 . The entering in of the high priest within the veil was one special part of his sacred office, by which he was distinguished from his priestly brethren, who might offer the ordinary sacrifices, #Le 1:5 , but not go into the most holy place with the blood of the bullock and the goat. #Le 16:1 . Thus part of his priestly office was without, and part within the veil; and yet the two parts were continuous, connected, and inseparable.

So it is with our great and glorious High Priest now within the veil - hidden, indeed, from mortal eyes, as the high priest was from the children of Israel by the veil of the tabernacle, but as really and truly still ministering in our nature there as Aaron ministered in the holy of holies, when he sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy-seat, and filled the place with the smoke and fragrance of the incense. We have already traced a connection between the blood of the sacrifice shed without the veil and the same blood carried within, and a similar connection between the coals taken from the brazen altar and the incense beaten small, the smoke of which covered the mercy-seat. So there is a necessary and most blessed connection between the blood-shedding and sacrifice of Christ on earth and his intercession in heaven. The fragrance of his intercession rises from the altar of his sacrifice, as typically from the burnt offering of Noah "a sweet smelling savour" ascended up to the Lord; and as he is ever presenting his blood-shedding and death on behalf of his people here below, he, in this sense, "ever liveth to make intercession for them." #Heb 7:25 .

We need not suppose, therefore, that the intercession of our blessed High Priest is a vocal intercession, carried on by actual prayers and supplications. In the typical intercession of the high priest, on the great day of atonement, it was not his vocal prayers which prevailed with God, for of them no mention was made or commandment given, but the blood of the sacrifice and the smoke of the incense. Thus his office is described by the apostle: "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." #Heb 5:1 . And as a remarkable illustration of this we may instance what occurred when the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and the Lord was about to consume them as in a moment: "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people." #Nu 16:46,47 . Moses did not bid Aaron pray for the people, but make an atonement for them; so that it was not the prayers of Aaron, as the interceding high priest and typical mediator, but the incense lighted with fire from the brazen altar, which prevailed with the Lord, and stayed the plague which had already begun. #Nu 16:45-48 .

So it is the presence of Jesus in heaven in our nature, and the continual presentation of his blood-shedding and sacrifice on earth before the eyes of his Father in which the power and prevalence of his intercession consist. Thus he is represented as "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood;" #Re 19:13 ; and John had a view of him in the courts of heaven as a slaughtered lamb, for he says, "And I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." #Re 5:6 . His office as an interceding High Priest was thus represented, for as "a lamb as it had been slain " is a type of his sacrifice for sin, so his standing as a slain lamb in the midst of the throne denotes that his precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, #1Pe 1:19 , yea, of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," in the predestinating counsels and purposes of God, #Re 13:8 , now continually avails for the salvation of the redeemed, and is ever presented before the eyes of the Father.

The present intercession of our great High Priest at the right hand of the Father, as viewed by the eye of faith, is full of encouragement and consolation to every believing heart. There are but few of the Lord's living family who do not at various times and seasons sigh and groan under a load of sin and sorrow. Now there are two especial features in the intercession of Jesus within the veil which meet this twofold burden: the prevalency of his intercession; the sympathy and compassion of his loving heart. The former suits the burden of their sins; the latter that of their sorrows. We will, with God's help and blessing, consider these two points separately.

Let us first, then, take a glance at the prevalency of his intercession, and see how suitable it is to relieve the soul under a burden of sin. "If any man sin," says John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." #1Joh 2:1 . What can we do with our sins? - their burden, their guilt, their filth, and their power? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but to sink under them; for we can neither put them away nor subdue them. But Jesus can do both, for he "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." #1Co 1:30 . To him, then, a poor, guilty, miserable, sinking sinner may look to plead his case, for in him he has "an Advocate with the Father," one of God's own appointing, and therefore sure of the ear of the Judge, a wonderful Counsellor, #Isa 9:6 , who can stand up in the court of heaven on his behalf; one who never lost a cause, rejected a humble petition, or disappointed a client.

But the power and prevalency of this advocacy in heaven rest on his atoning sacrifice offered on earth; for John immediately adds, "And he is the propitiation for our sins." It is because "he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and "was once offered to bear the sins of many," #Heb 9:26,28 ; it is because he "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" #Col 2:14 ; it is because his is a finished work; #Joh 17:4 19:30 ; and he has made peace through the blood of his cross, #Col 1:21 , that he is now our prevailing Advocate and successful Intercessor in heaven, where the cause is heard and decided.

We are very apt to lose sight of these most blessed truths, and that we have such a Friend above. We believe them, indeed, firmly and fully, anchor in them, and have no hope but what is connected with and springs out of them. But in seasons of darkness and distress, when guilt from repeated backslidings lies hard and heavy on the conscience; when the mists and fogs of unbelief gather over the foundations of our hope; when our evidences are beclouded and our signs but dimly seen, then we want a living Advocate who can plead our cause, we being unable to do it ourselves, and by presenting on our behalf his blood and obedience, his sufferings, sacrifice, and death, may bring us off more than conquerors against every accusing plea and every opposing adversary. As Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua the high priest, to resist him; #Zec 3:1 ; as the accuser of the brethren accuses them before God day and night; #Re 12:10 ; and neither Joshua nor the brethren could plead a word in their own defence, and yet both came off conquerors by the help of the Lord and the blood of the Lamb; so poor guilty sinners now prevail through the power of their heavenly Advocate. It is, then, because we feel the weight and burden of sin, yet see by faith that our great High Priest has passed within the veil, that our eyes, hands, and hearts are all up unto him.

As thus realised by faith, there is a peculiar power in this believing view of our heavenly Advocate, which draws desire and supplication out of the soul unto and after him. Nay, it is this living and daily intercourse with Jesus in heaven in which the very life and power of godliness consist. "Because I live, ye shall live also." #Joh 14:19 . He, as exalted above all principality and power, is the church's glorious Head, #Eph 1:22 , "from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." #Col 2:19 . This union with him as a living Head brings about communion with him; for as he communicates grace out of his own fullness, there springs up in the soul a sweet and sacred fellowship with him, as viewed by faith on his throne of grace as the Mediator between God and man. And these communications of divine light and life out of his fullness, enlightening the eyes of the understanding, and being attended by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him #Eph 1:17,18 , there arises in the heart a gracious view of his beauty and blessedness, of his grace and his glory. #Ps 112:4 Isa 33:17 Lu 1:78,79 2Pe 1:19 . This is drinking at the fountain of life and seeing light in God's light; #Ps 36:9 ; and is the very "light of life," which the Lord gives to those that follow him. #Joh 8:12 .

As, then, the soul walks in the light of these gracious teachings, the blood of Jesus is seen as a fountain of infinite value and unspeakable efficacy for sin and uncleanness; his righteousness as a most blessed covering for all its shame and nakedness; his bleeding, dying love as a most healing balm for a wounded conscience, and a heavenly cordial for a fainting spirit. It is by these teachings that the reality of true religion and of vital godliness is learnt; and in no other way. No truly exercised soul can be satisfied with seeing salvation as a mere doctrine of the gospel - a fixed and certain truth that shines in the inspired page. Glad, indeed, he is that the way of salvation is so clearly revealed in the word of truth; and that there is the light, and life, and power of the Spirit within to bear his inward witness to the truth and certainty of

the written testimony; but all this light and knowledge in the letter of truth falls short of a salvation revealed and manifested to his own heart and conscience.

Here, then, comes in the blessedness of an ever-living Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father, who, by applying his blood and love with power, says to the soul, "I am thy salvation." It is therefore said of him, "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." Who shall describe, as who shall limit God's "uttermost?" David, "from the ends of the earth;" #Ps 61:2 ; Heman, when "laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps;" #Ps 88:6 ; Hezekiah, "from the gates of the grave and the pit of corruption;" #Isa 38:16,17 ; Jeremiah, "out of the low dungeon," where "the waters flowed over his head, and he said, I am cut off;" #La 3:54,55 ; Jonah, "out of the belly of hell;" #Jon 2:2 ; all these deeply-taught and deeply-tried saints of God knew both man's uttermost and God's uttermost, and that man's uttermost was sin, hell, and despair; and God's uttermost was mercy, salvation, and heaven. Never is the prevalency of our Great High Priest's intercession so proved as when it thus saves to the uttermost. And who that knows anything of himself as a sinner, or in whose heart the fountains of the great deep have in any measure been broken up; who that has ever had a view of sin as seen in the light of God's infinite purity and holiness, and trembled before him; who that has ever felt the guilt of backslidings, the pangs of slips and falls, and his own miserable helplessness, not only in the hour of temptation but to remove the load of transgression off his conscience who of all these but has his "uttermost," if not really so deep and desperate as Heman's and Jonah's, yet, in his own feelings, such an uttermost as none can save him from but that High Priest and Advocate who liveth at God's right hand to make intercession for him?

It is here we prove the experimental reality and felt blessedness of having such an Advocate with the Father, against whom and before whom we have sinned. The Lord enables us to commit our cause into his hand, however deep or desperate, and wait and watch for him to appear and save.

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