

The Character and Occupation of the High Priest

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and appreciating the character, place, and occupation of the high priest, Jesus Christ, in order to have peace with God and access to Him.

Scripture: Hebrews 8:1

Topics: "Intercession", "The High Priesthood of Christ"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the significance of Jesus as our High Priest, highlighting His divine character, exalted position at the right hand of God, and ongoing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. He explains that Jesus embodies the perfect High Priest, who is compassionate, eternal, and holy, and who offers a complete atonement for our sins. M'Cheyne urges believers to recognize the importance of having such a High Priest for peace, joy, and access to God, while also calling those without Him to seek His grace. The sermon encapsulates the essence of the Epistle to the Hebrews, focusing on the beauty and glory of Christ's priestly role. Ultimately, M'Cheyne reassures that through Jesus, we have a mediator who intercedes for us and carries our names before God.

Transcript

Hebrews viii. 1,2.--"Now, of the things which we have spoken this is the sum : We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens--a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

In these words, dear friends, the Apostle returns to the main aim of his Epistle--"We have such an high priest," &c. He was afraid lest you should let the chief thing out of your mind, so here he returns to it--"We have such an high priest." Brethren, this is the sum of the Epistle to the Hebrews-- this is the chief object of the Bible--to show you the work, the beauty, the glory, the excellency of this high priest. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." This is the sum of all our preaching--"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Brethren, this is the sum of your belief--this is the precious corner-stone. It is good to know other things ; but the main thing is, to know that "we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens--a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord

pitched, and not man." It is amazing how soon we forget this.

Let us observe three things from these words--

I. The character of the high priest--"We have such a high priest."

II. The place of the high priest--"seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens ."

III. The occupation of the high priest--"A minister of the sanctuary," &c.

I. First of all, the character of the high priest.--What a deal of meaning we have sometimes contained in a little word!--"We have such a high priest." That little word "such," expresses all that the Apostle was speaking about Christ. If a Jew were speaking of Aaron, he would speak of him somewhat in this manner--"We have a high priest taken from among men;" and he would describe his garments for glory and for beauty, and his breastplate, on which were the names of the children of Israel ; and when he came to the end, he would say, "Such a high priest became us." Now, this is what Paul does in the seven previous chapters--he describes Christ. And just look at the character he had gone over.

1st. In the 1st chapter, he went over his godhead : He was the Son--the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, &c. He is better than the angels--"All the angels worship him," "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom : Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity : Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands," &c. This is he that purged away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, --this is he that now prays for us.

2d. The, think again about his manhood. This is spoken of in the 2d chapter. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels ; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands." "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham, wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren," &c. This is the high priest that went in within the veil for us.

And then, 3d. Think of his compassion. Paul speaks of this in the 4th chapter--"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He was "taken from among men:" He was one "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way:" He is one that went through a deeper line of sorrow than ever we are called to go.

Then again, 4th. Think of his call to office.--This is mentioned in the 5th and 7th chapters--"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest ; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." "For those priests were made without 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." We have such an high priest--we have one whom God chose-- "mine elect in whom my soul delighteth"--the fittest being God could find.

And then, 5th. Think again of his work.--This is not fully mentioned till after. You will see something of it in the 1st chapter, and in the 5th chapter--"Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way," &c.--(to the end of the 7th verse). 8th.

And then, 6th. Think of his eternity. This is mentioned over and over in the 7th chapter. "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." And then again,--"They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death ; but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

7th. And last of all, think of his holiness.--This is mentioned in the 7th chapter--"Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"--This is the high priest that we now have. Brethren, this is the sum of the whole Epistle to the Hebrews--it is the whole sum of our preaching.

Many of you last Sabbath said, when you took the bread and wine into your hands, "I have such an high priest." Well, I would say, hold him ; for, remember, you are to retain peace with God by having such an high priest : There is no other way of having peace with God--"We have such an high priest." This is the sum of your peace, your joy, your hope. If you can say this in life, and at death, "We have such an high priest," all hell cannot deprive you of it. Put your hand in his. Brethren, there are many of you who have not such an high priest. Oh ! what shall I say to you, but just this, if you have no high priest, you have no pardon--you have no peace--you have no access to God! How will you stand before him? O ! will you not come with us ? We have such an high priest. We are no better than you : We have sinned the same sins with you : but, O ! we have such an high priest.

II. Let me for a moment speak of the second thing opened up in these words ; and that is, the place of the high priest--"We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." There are three places in this Epistle where Christ is spoken of as sitting at the Father's right hand. The first is in the 1st chapter, 3d verse--"Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." It was after he had purged away our sins that he sat down on his Father's right hand. The second is in the 10th chapter, 11th verse--"And 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." The third is in the passage before us--"We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." There are three things to be learned from this.

1st. The perfection of Christ's atonement.--When the high priest had slain the lamb, and gone in with its blood into the holiest of all, he stood ; but it was different with Christ ; for, when he had offered his sacrifice, he went in and sat down for ever at his Father's right hand. He said when he was on the earth, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." If he had not, by his one offering purged away our sins, he had never sat down at the Father's right hand : He would have been sent back to finish the work.

2d. It teaches you how dear he is to the Father.--The right hand is the place of honour. You remember it is the place where Solomon placed his mother Bath-sheba : He rose up, and bowed to her, and placed her at his right hand. It is the place of affection ; so those of you who are Christ's will sit with him on his throne.

3d. That all power is given to Christ.--The right hand is the place of power. Christ said, when he stood before the high priest, "Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." If Christ has all power, then, he shall not let me and you perish. The winds and the waves may dash against the bark ; but it cannot sink, for Christ is in it !

III. His occupation. Verse 2--"A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." When Christ ascended up on high, he entered into his rest, but he did not rest from his work-- he is a minister still . When he was on the earth he was a minister--he is the same still. Some of you will say, "What does he do ?"

1st. He appears in the presence of God for us. When you sin, or when Satan accuses you, he appears for you--he is a minister of the true Tabernacle.

2d. He receives our prayers. He goes round the Church to receive the prayers of every praying soul !

3d. He offers up our holy gifts. Just as Aaron offered up all the gifts of Israel, so Christ, our better Aaron, offers up our gifts. He is a minister of the true Tabernacle.

4th. And then, last of all, He prays for us. Just as Aaron had on his breastplate jewels, on which were engraved the names of the children of Israel, so is it with Christ--our names he bears on his heart. When Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, Christ is praying for you, that your faith fail not. This is the sum of saving knowledge. Brethren, can you say, "I have such an high priest?" If you can, do not take up your mind about anything else. And unto all I would say, no man cometh unto the Father but by Jesus. May the Lord bless his word ! Amen.

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