



The Book of Hebrews 2:17-18: A Merciful and Faithful High Priest!

February 4, 2024

Holy Text: Hebrews 2:17

Humble thoughts on the Sacred Text:

1. Wherefore ("Therefore" in most versions)...

- This word connects the last two statements of this chapter with the Spirit-given truths that came before them. In other words:
 1. Because Christ did not take on an angelic nature... In order to accomplish the redemptive plan of God, He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb 2:9)
 2. And Because Christ is the Seed of Abraham... Our LORD is the fulfillment of God's promises to Abram! Jesus is the One through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed! (Gen 12:3) He is the fulfillment of every promise of rulership and land and blessings and prosperity concerning Israel! As a result, we (true Israel), through the Singular Seed of Christ, are also children of the Promise!
- This is another apologetic concerning Christ as Savior and Messiah. *Wherefore* demonstrates God's "care for" us. :) He sent the ONLY ONE who could accomplish our redemption/salvation!

2. It behoved Him...

- The phrase "it behoved" is *opheileō* in Greek. Interestingly, this word can be translated "debt" (Matt 18:30), "duty" (Lk 17:10), "bound" (2 Thess 1:3), or "ought" (the most common, Jn 13:14; Rom 15:1; 1 Cor 11:7,10; 1 Jn 3:16).
- What does this mean? Did Christ owe us? Was He bound to us? Did He have some duty concerning us?
- Opinion: the word is chosen to show OUR absolute need, NOT His. It's an incredibly strong word in this context that reminds us that unless the Son of God had condescended, we hopeless, lost, and damned!
- Other versions hint at this: "It was necessary." (NLT) "It had to be." (LSB, NASB, ESV)
- There were (and are) NO OTHER OPTIONS. There is no plan B. It's Christ or no Savior!
- The old gospel song writer had it right: "Can't nobody, do me Jesus! Can't nobody, do me like the LORD!"

3. Made like unto His brethren...

- This seems to be another reference to the miracle of the Incarnation! The eternal Son of God became a man!
- We mentioned the word *condescension* earlier, and what a great condescension¹ this was...God taking upon Himself a human nature!

1. For the Creator to become as unto the creature (Php 2:7-8)

¹ "Voluntary descent from rank, dignity or just claims; relinquishment of strict right; submission to inferiors in granting requests or performing acts which strict justice does not require." Webster 1828 Dictionary

2. For the King to submit himself to earthly parents and the limitations of humanity. (Mk 8:24, 11:12; Lk 2:41-52)
3. For Christ to submit Himself to torture and death!

Luke 22:62-64 (KJV) *And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. 63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?*

Luke 23:33 (KJV) *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

Luke 23:46 (KJV) *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, **Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:** and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*

1 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

- It is important to note again that Christ had to become fully man.
- We've said often that an acceptable Savior who could appease the wrath of God 1) Had to be man, so His sacrifice could count for humanity, 2) Had to be God so His sacrifice might apply to all the LORD would chose.
- In other words, humans sinned, so a human sacrifice was necessary to pay for that sin. But the a single human's life could not pay the untold amount of wickedness perpetrated by billions upon billions. A greater sacrifice was necessary: A Son. A Divine Son.
- "They who deny Christ's derivation of real humanity through His mother undermine the atonement. His very fraternity (Heb. 2:11), as our Kinsman-Redeemer, depended on the fact that He obtained His humanity from Mary. Without this He would neither possess the natural nor the legal union with His people, which must lie at the foundation of His representative character as the "last Adam." To be our Goel (Redeemer), His humanity could neither be brought from heaven nor immediately created by God, but must be derived, as ours was, from a human mother. But with this difference: His humanity never existed in Adam's covenant to entail guilt or taint."²

Romans 11:33-36 (KJV) *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

- But there is another reason Jesus had to be a man: To be a merciful and faithful High priest!

4. A Merciful and Faithful...

- God is merciful! Remember what we said?

² The Attributes of God, A.W. Pink

Out of the Goodness of God flows Mercy...or God's NOT giving His creatures what we deserve. Mercy carries the idea of underserved compassion and kindness. The Webster 1828 Dictionary says that mercy is:

That benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves; the disposition that tempers justice, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries, and to forbear punishment, or inflict less than law or justice will warrant.

That God is Mercifully Good accounts for our lives at this very moment! Indeed, we deserve NOTHING but wrath, death, and hell, and He has stayed His hand! He is merciful unto us!

- Not only has God spared our lives, He sacrificed His Son's! He has forgiven us in Jesus! What mercy!

1 Peter 1:3-5 (KJV) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, **5** Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

- God is also faithful and true (Rev 19:11)! He is trustworthy! He can be believed! He can be counted on!

Deuteronomy 7:9 (KJV) *Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;*

Isaiah 49:7 (KJV) *Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.*

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (KJV) *But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.*

2 Timothy 2:11-13 (KJV) *It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: **12** If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: **13** If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

5. ...High Priest!

A Quick Primer on the Priesthood

- The definition of a priest is one who represents the people before God. (As opposed to the Prophet, who represents God before the people.) This was necessary because of the distance between God and man due to sin.
- The first mention of "priest" in Scripture:

Genesis 14:17-20 (KJV) And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. **18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. **19** And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: **20** And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

- Priests had to be anointed..initially with blood and then oil! Their position was set apart and established by God. They were considered to be ceremonially holy. (Ex 29; Lev 8)

Exodus 29:20-21 (KJV) Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about. **21** And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

Leviticus 8:6-10 (KJV) And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water. **7** And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith. **8** And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim. **9** And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses. **10** And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them.

- The ministry of a priest involved living a holy life (Lev 21), wearing the holy garments (Ex 28), teaching (Lev 10:11; Mal 2:7), overseeing and handling God's worship (Lev 6-7), and caring for God people (Lev 13-15).
- But perhaps his most critical function, especially the high priest, **was that of representative atonement or propitiation.** God is holy and His people are not! A designated, singular representative (a high priest), wearing the outward trappings of holiness, was chosen to stand on behalf of the people before God and offer typological atonements, which would one day have an ultimate fulfillment.

Exodus 30:10 (KJV) And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

Leviticus 16:32-34 (KJV) And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments: **33** And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. **34** And this shall be an everlasting

statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

- In short beloved (much more on this in following chapters), **Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT High Priesthood. He is the Christos...the Anointed One! He is the Master Teacher! He is living embodiment of holiness! He cares for us as no one can! He stands before us before His Father!**
- Just as the Old Testament High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the people, likewise:

Hebrews 9:11-12 (KJV) *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; **12** 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.*

6. Making Reconciliation...

- Our merciful and faithful High Priest made reconciliation for us!
- This word in Greek means “to expiate³ or make propitiation.”

Romans 3:21-25 (KJV) *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; **22** Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: **23** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; **24** Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: **25** Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

1 John 4:9-10 (KJV) *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. **10** Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

- **Christ, as our faithful high priest, appeased the wrath of God by his own blood sacrifice. He offered His life in exchange for hours. He suffered so we didn't have to, and His suffering satisfied the holy wrath of our Just God. Indeed,**

Hebrews 9:28 (KJV) *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

7. For the sins of the people!

- Sin is the problem! Sin is transgression of the law! (1 John 3:4) Sin separates us from God!

Isaiah 59:1-4 (KJV) *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: **2** But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. **3** For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. **4** None calleth for justice, nor any*

³ “Satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing or suffering that which is received in satisfaction for an offense or injury.” - Webster 1828 Dictionary

pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

Galatians 5:19-21 (KJV) *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, **20** Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, **21** Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

- But Christ, our High Priest, has borne our sins!

Isaiah 53:5-6 (KJV) *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. **6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

1 Peter 2:21-25 (KJV) *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: **22** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: **23** Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: **24** Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. **25** For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (KJV) *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, **10** Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

A Heartfelt Prayer

Oh LORD, there is so much here today for which to be thankful. How you deserve our praise! How you deserve the our willingness to dedicate our lives to these precious truths!

Oh LORD, may we never take Thy sacrifice for granted. May we tell others about Thy goodness and mercy. May we share the good news of God come in flesh, suffering, dying, and rising again for our sins to all!

Thank You for Thy love. Thank you for making atonement for us by Thine own blood. Thank You for being our Merciful and Faithful High Priest!

Amen!

Questions:

1. What does the Christ's High Priestly ministry of representative propitiation mean to you?
2. What should your response be to His atoning sacrifice?
3. Who do you know that needs to know these life-changing truths?