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The Eternal Priest (Jun 1960)

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The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to teach that the covenant of the law had been completely set aside, and that a new and better covenant of grace had been established on better promises. In developing his argument the writer demonstrates some wonderful facts relative to the high-priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us obey the exhortation found in chapter 3:1. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

His Person

He was not taken from among men, but from the Godhead (5:1-7): This passage reminds us that every high priest (Levitcal high priest) was taken from among men in order that he may have "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." He, therefore, could understand the problems of the people, because he himself was a man. Furthermore, we are taught that such an one did not constitute himself a priest, he was called of God as was Aaron. Our Lord Jesus Christ, consequently, did not glorify Himself as a priest, but His Father glorified Him in constituting Him our Great High Priest. In so doing, God spoke to Him as His Son, "Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee," and to Him as a priest, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (vv. 5-6). Thus in our Lord Jesus, we have a Great High Priest who is God.

In chapter 1:2-3, we have a revelation of Christ's sevenfold glory as the Divine Son:

(a) He is the appointed Heir of all things.

(b) He is the Creator of the worlds.

(c) He is the brightness (the outshining or out-raying) of the glory of God.

(d) He is the express image of His person. The thought here is that He is the exact expression of Diety. It is as the engraving tool leaves its mark on the reproduction. Jesus Christ is the exact expression of Diety. Consequently, He was able to say “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

(e) He is the One who upholds all things by the word of His power. The word “upholding” in this passage signifies not only holding together as in Colossians 1:17, but suggest a further thought, that of guiding and propelling.

(f) He is the One who by Himself made purification for our sins.

(g) He is exalted and is sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, which suggests a work that completely puts away sins.

We learn further from verse four of this chapter that He has a more excellent name than the angels; that name is “Son.”

Consequently, our Great High Priest is God. What dignity and honour we owe to Him! Because He is God, His high-priesthood is forever. The Levitical priests died and their priesthood passed to others, but our Great High Priest lives forever. The man who during the period of the Levitical priesthood fled to the City of Refuge was safe only as long as the high priest lived. What security

is ours, beloved saints, our Great High Priest lives in "the power of an endless life" (7:16)!

It was necessary for Him to become incarnate to be our Great High Priest (2:14-18): It was necessary for Christ ("it behoved Him" — v. 17) to become Man in order to be a High Priest for us "in things pertaining to God." Verse 14 states that we being human have in common flesh and blood. Christ, in like manner, took part of the same. The Greek word here means "to hold along with." Our Lord Jesus in His incarnation took hold of human nature, without its sin, and held it to Himself as an additional nature, thus associating Himself with the human race in its possession of flesh and blood. He did this, not to help or succour fallen angels, but to save fallen man, the seed of Abraham (v. 16).

The purpose of His becoming incarnate was that He might be a merciful (compassionate) and faithful High Priest. Experimentally, He who is God the Son is able to enter into our trials, since as Man He experienced trials.

He became High Priest through His death and resurrection (5:7-10): Here the writer deals with the experience through which it was necessary that our Lord Jesus pass before becoming actively our High Priest. He had to endure the cross and learn obedience experimentally as a Son by suffering, and then be raised from the dead ("being made perfect" — v 9).

In verse 7 we have the dreadful experience of Calvary through which He passed with "strong crying and tears." His cry was that He might be saved "out from within" death, for such is the literal meaning of the preposition "from" in this verse. Our Saviour, as described in this verse, was not praying to be delivered

from the cross, but that He might be saved out from within death; He was praying for resurrection (Psa. 22:19-21). This prayer, we are told, was heard, and He was raised again by the mighty power of God, was "made perfect," and thereby "became the Author of eternal salvation."

After this experience (Calvary and resurrection) we are told that He was "called" (saluted) of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec" (v.10).

His Priesthood

Our Lord Jesus did not come by the tribe of Levi, and therefore, He could not be a priest under the law. He came as verse 14 states, out of the tribe of Judah. If, therefore, He is an High Priest, it must of necessity be by a new order, and this is what chapter 7 teaches.

A new order of priesthood: a Melchisedec order (7:1-28): Christ's priesthood is after the order of Melchisedec, who, as far as the divine record is concerned, was without beginning or ending (v.3). This is exactly the true character of His priesthood. It is "after the power of an endless (indissoluble) life" (v. 16). He is a priest "forever" (v. 17). His is "an unchangeable priesthood" (v. 24); that is, it is not transferable and will not be passed on to another. The priests under the first covenant died and their priesthood passed on to others, but our Lord Jesus will never die again; He continueth ever, therefore His priesthood is "unchangeable."

Because our Lord's priesthood is of a new order, the covenant He has brought in is a better covenant than that which the Levitical priests served. Chapter ten of this Epistle teaches that sin under the first covenant was

not put away, therefore, there was no perfection of conscience. Under the new covenant brought in by our Lord Jesus Christ, sin is put away, and as a result there is the possibility of perfection of conscience with which we are able to draw near to God with a true heart (10:22).

Further, this new order of priesthood is characterized by a sinless priest: One who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. The priest under the first covenant had to offer first for his own sins and then for the people, but not so with our Great High Priest, for being sinless, He offered a “once-for-all” sacrifice and sat down forever. He put away sin once and forever (10:12).

In addition, because His priesthood is one of a new order, and because sin has been put away forever, He ministers in a better tabernacle, the heavenly tabernacle of which Aaron’s was merely the type (8:1-2; 9:11-24).

Since we have seen, very briefly, from this wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews, a few of the precious truths relative to the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us now examine some of the blessings which are ours as the results of His person and work.

The Benefits of His Priesthood

Because of what our Lord Jesus Christ is in Himself and because of His unchanging priesthood, many indeed are the blessings which are ours through Him.

Since His priesthood is eternal, He saves to the uttermost (7:25): We are taught that because our Lord Jesus has an unchanging priesthood, the salvation He provides is complete. The Greek word translated

“uttermost” signifies that He is able to save completely and forever. The one who comes through our Lord Jesus Christ is saved in the totality of his being, body, soul, and spirit forever. What a salvation! What praise this should draw from our hearts

Because of His incarnation and temptation, He is able to succour them that are tempted (2:18; 4:15): He has Himself passed through the experience of being tried as a Man, the God-Man, and because of that experience He is able to succour them that are tried. That is, He runs to the cry of those in danger and brings them aid. What strength this gives us as we pass through trials in this life, when we know He is with us in the trial and is willing to minister aid!

Not only does our Great High Priest bring aid to His tempted and tried ones, He also is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (4:15). He is now exalted above the heavens (“passed through the heavens” 4:14), and in that exalted place, He sympathizes with us in our infirmities (weaknesses) to the extent of entering into our experiences and feelings, our heartaches.

Regardless of how rough the road may be, or how great the trials, the Christian has One who has passed along the same road and is now exalted above the heavens; One who is able to provide aid in those trials.

Moreover, because He is now on the throne, He invites you to come to Him to obtain mercy and find grace for every difficulty and to give you the grace and strength to meet every problem in this wilderness journey. He knows the way by actual experience and is able to give grace to you and to me.

Because of His death and resurrection, He has made a way for us to draw near to God as priests: Our High Priest became incarnate, died and rose again, and He now has entered into the holy place by His own blood (9:12). He could have gone back to heaven by virtue of His own person, but that was not the basis of His return there. It was by His own blood He entered once for all into the holy place, He has opened up “a new and living way” so that we too enter that holy place by His blood, and serve in the true tabernacle as priests of the living God. What a privilege to be able thus to draw near (10:22)! Because our Great High Priest has entered within by virtue of His own blood, we, in like manner, enter as priests through Him, there to worship our God.

Behold I Come Quickly (Mar 1962)

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The final message of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Canon of Scripture closes is, “Surely I come quickly” (Rev. 22:20). As one considers conditions in the world today, he realizes that this promise is soon to be fulfilled; the moment of Christ’s coming for the redeemed is at hand. The Church stands on the very threshold of that event for which she has waited throughout the ages: “That blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:13).

This is a day in which the prophetic Scriptures are being fulfilled. The things written in the Word of God are coming to pass so rapidly, it is possible that some of these outstanding world events escape notice. The prospect of going to meet the Lord thrills the soul, and should result in the united earnest cry, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”

One can imagine the joy the first advent of our Lord produced in those who waited for that long-promised event. One may visualize the aged Simeon as, after waiting so many years, he takes the child Jesus in his arms. One may also sense the pleasure as he exclaims, “Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!” Furthermore, one may understand the excitement as the aged prophetess Anna came into the temple, and as she “gave thanks likewise unto the Lord and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” So it is, (or should be) with us today, for we are looking for Him to break the clouds at any moment.

The Book of the Revelation reveals “the things which must shortly be done” (Rev. 22:6). If the world was ever on the verge of the fulfilment of this amazing Book, it is now. The Church is now in the Laodicean period (Rev. 3:14-22); the next event, therefore, must be the coming of Christ as symbolized in the words to John, “Come up hither” (Rev. 4:1).

May the Spirit of God direct our souls by this glorious promise as we examine briefly the two main political movements of the Book of the Revelation. As the event approaches may each redeemed heart express itself, “Amen, Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

The first of these great political movements is the return of Israel to the land of Palestine. Israel is seen throughout the Revelation under various symbols. Without being dogmatic, these are as follows: the 144,000 (chap. 7), the two witnesses (chap. 11), the woman who gives birth to the man child (chap. 12), and the wall of the city (chap. 22).

The regathering of Israel to the land of Palestine is one of the major signs of the return of the Lord Jesus. Many rejoiced when on December 9, 1917, General Lord Allenby, commander of the British forces in Palestine, dismounted and with head bare walked into Jerusalem claiming it for the Allies, without firing a shot. The news of the liberation of Jerusalem filled the Jews with gladness, as it also did the saints of God the world over.

Some still remember the interest and excitement of the prophetic students when on May 11, 1948, Israel was proclaimed a nation; and again on May 14, 1949, when Israel took her place in the organization of United Nations. The Lord said, “Now learn a parable of the fig

tree (a figure of Israel); when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matt. 24:32-33). Here is one of the more important signs that the coming of our Lord Jesus to set up His millenial kingdom "is near, even at the doors."

As a boy one heard brethren speak of Israel's going back to Palestine. Most, at that time, felt the Lord would come for the Church prior to this event. Thirteen years have passed, consequently, the conclusion must be that His return for the Church, which is at least seven years earlier, is at the very door.

The writer has beside him a little book entitled, "Facts about Israel," obtained from the Zionist Organization. Through it the heart is stirred to see the advancement of Israel in agriculture, education, industry, etc. Without question, the coming of the Lord Jesus for the Church is near; this glorious prospect may immediately be realized.

The second great political movement in the Book of the Revelation is the revival of the Roman Empire which is indicated as: the beast with seven heads and ten horns (chap. 13:1-10), and the scarlet coloured beast on which the whore sitteth (chap. 17).

In Daniel's Prophecy we are told of four Gentile world powers. These were revealed to Nebuchadnezzar as a magnificent image; a man with head of gold (the Babylonian Empire), breast and arms of silver (the Medo-Persian Empire), belly and thighs of brass (the Grecian Empire), and legs of iron with feet part iron and part clay (the Roman Empire). Such was the vision of

these world powers from the human perspective. Daniel the man of God, however, had them revealed to him in the same order but as four wild beasts: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and an unnamed beast, “dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly.” All are aware that the Roman Empire which crucified our Lord and banished John to the Isle of Patmos, ceased to exist about A.D. 476. However, the Prophecy of Daniel teaches that our Lord comes and destroys this fourth world kingdom; consequently, it must be in existence at His second coming. Indubitably, in Revelation 13:2, we are given the description of the fourth beast of Daniel chapter 7. The Roman Empire, in the light of Revelation 13 and 17, will be revived in a ten-kingdom confederacy, as suggested by the ten crowned horns. Revelation 17:12-14 provides the details of this fourth Gentile power, its resurrection, and its head. Five forms of government in it had passed before John wrote; therefore, he, John, was living under the sixth form prophesying that there would be a seventh, out of which an eighth would appear which would be part of the seventh, the “little horn” or head of the revived Roman Empire.

It is believed that the stage is being set for the revival of this mighty power. NATO, certainly, with its fifteen nation membership, gives the possible framework of the revival of this Empire from the past. Many of these fifteen nations were part of the old Roman Empire.

However, recently, a much greater indication of the resurrection of the Roman Empire is apparent; namely, the Common Market, composed of France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Much has been heard of this union since Britain’s decision to seek entry into its community. It is

interesting and significant that the so-called Common Market is actually the Treaty of Rome. Time magazine, October 6, 1961, Cover Story, states that in “1957 the Common Market was ratified in the Treaty of Rome, and no one missed the memories of past unity which the name of that city still evoked in Europe.” It is most remarkable to read of the rapid progress of this union. Its monetary reserves have swollen to more than $16 billions in the short period of three and a half years, nearly equal to the U.S.A. reserve of $18 billions. Those that head the treaty not only seek the removal of trade barriers, but they envisage a political union. The European Commission’s President, German Economist Walter Hallstein has said, “Make no mistake about it, we are not in business, we are in politics. We are building the United States of Europe.” Surely, surely, these developments are most exciting to the student of prophecy.

Recently, on a large Radio Network, an editor of a Halifax, Canada, newspaper gave his views of the Common Market and Britain’s entry into it. This man, to our knowledge was not a Bible student, but he emphasized the fact that the six nations now comprising the Common Market were anxious to have Britain join, and that if she did, likely other nations would follow. He stated that should this happen, the common Market would be the strongest block against Communism in the world, much stronger than the United States of America. He went on to give his opinion of what would happen in Europe, suggesting that one nation of the Common Market would eventually rise and become the dominant power, and that out of that one nation one individual

would emerge to give leadership to the nations of the Common Market.

It would appear that this is one of the most outstanding present day signs of our Lord's return when we consider such a statement from a newspaper editor, almost in the concepts of Holy Scripture. Such details as the division of Germany into East and West along the boundary line of the old Roman Empire, convinces one of the imminence of the second coming of Christ. As one watches prophecy unfolding, he can expect to hear the shout at any moment. May every heart respond with joy, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

As the importance of this great event is forced upon the heart by the Spirit of God, it should impel Christians to seek the lost, to warn them of Christ's advent, and to point them to the Saviour. It is amazing that so little of this event and its imminence is heard in our meetings and conferences. It is high time to awake and sound out the message, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet Him." Our time of service is quickly passing and soon we shall be called to meet Him.

If we believe that His coming is at hand, should we not bury all our minor differences, differences not in conflict with the Word of God, and go after the lost? Should we not seek loved ones and friends and win them to our adorable Lord? If we are expecting Him at any moment, we should discard all hard, bitter, critical attitudes, remembering that we are soon to appear at His judgment seat. It is only as united that we can be a power for God. With the short time remaining, let us do all in our power to work together to see sinners brought to Christ. The Lord Himself prayed, "That they all may

be one; that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me” (John 17:21).

In view of these things may the appeal of the Apostle Paul impress every heart: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.”

“Your Care” (Sept 1962)

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“Parents attempt to give away a a six months old baby at a shopping plaza!” Such was an item heard on a news broadcast recently. This absence of “natural affection”, although extreme, is nevertheless indicative of the spirit of this age and not only is it characteristic of the ungodly, but sad to say it is in evidence among us who profess to be the people of God. Paul wrote of it in his day to his son in the faith, Timothy, “At my first answer (defence) no man stood with me, but all men forsook me” (2 Tim. 4:16). How often we too have failed our brethren and sisters in Christ when they sorely needed our help and care!

While Paul experienced the lack or absence of care, yet he also had cause for rejoicing in the tender care shown him by the saints of God as seen in his letter to the Philippians, “But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again” (Phil. 4:10). Mr. Vincent, in his “Word Studies in the New Testament,” gives this literal translation, “Ye caused your thinking on my behalf to bloom anew.” Expositor’s give it thus, “You let your care for me blossom into activity.” The care and thoughts of the saints at Phillipi blooming anew and blossoming into activity brought joy to the Apostle Paul at a time when all seemed to have forgotten and forsaken him.

Let us think of Paul’s condition as he writes. He is an old man now, surely an object of care. He is incapacitated and unable to move about as he once did because he is a prisoner. Further, he had physical defects (possibly poor

eyesight) which handicapped him, and caused him great exercise and concern before God (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8).

Paul is a picture here of so many people of God today who need our care and help. We think of the aged, the sick, the infirm, the lonely, and those who are passing through mental anguish from various causes. May God exercise our hearts and cause our care for all such, and for all His saints, to bloom anew, to blossom into activity.

We shall consider how the care of the Philippians for Paul blossomed anew in a twofold way. First, they met his emotional needs by sending to him Epaphroditus. Notice how Paul responded to this when he spoke of Epaphroditus in chapter 2:25 as “my brother, and companion in labour and fellowsoldier.” It was a great joy to Paul in his loneliness to have one whom he calls “my brother.” What a comfort and consolation to have with him a brother, one with the same interests, one who thought similarly and understood him, one with whom he could converse and in whom, he could confide, “my brother!” Paul spoke of him as “my companion and fellowsoldier,” sharing the loneliness during his imprisonment. We can only surmise what this meant to Paul if we were under the same circumstances. So many times just a visit to a saint of God in need, a short letter or a card from a brother or sister has meant more to one than any words can express. Thus the Philippians met Paul’s physical and temporal needs, for again in chapter 2:25 he writes of Epaphroditus as “your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.” The word “minister” suggests priestly service and, whatever it involved, Paul recognized in Epaphroditus one sent by the Philippians to minister to his physical and temporal needs as a Priest. This brought further comfort and joy to Paul as

he received the necessities of life from the Philippians by the hand of Epaphroditus. He says in chapter 4:18, “Having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you.” It cheered and delighted him as he saw in Epaphroditus one serving him as a priest from God. Thus they met Paul’s need (cf. 4:17).

How many there are of God’s people today who stand in need of such care! They have emotional problems and physical needs. It is our privilege to meet these as the Philippians met Paul’s. Alas, it seems often that those who need our care and interest most are forgotten, whether intentionally or thoughtlessly. May God help us to be ready, regardless of circumstances, to encourage and help all God’s children.

Let us see the spirit in which such care is to be administered. Chapter 2 of Philippians gives us examples of true Christian service. First, it is to be in lowliness of mind and self-sacrifice as exemplified by our blessed Lord (chap. 2:5-8). He sacrificed His all for others, in the dreadful death endured on the cross. This should be evidenced in our service and care — looking “on the things of thers.”

Second, our service is to be in selflessness as seen in the example of Paul (chap. 2:7). Paul was content to be as the drink offering poured upon the sacrifice, which quickly disappeared. Such a spirit is to be manifested in our service and care —not to obtain glory and praise for ourselves, but simply to serve the saints of God.

Our service is to be likewise sincere as seen in the example of Timothy (chap. 2:20-21). Paul speaks of him as one “who will naturally (genuinely) care for your state.” This is to be the character of our care for others.

Last, our care for others is to be without regard for personal safety, as seen in the example of Epaphroditus (chap. 2:30) who had risked his life to minister to Paul.

This type of service is a wonderful way in which to care for those who belong to the Lord. Beloved brethren and sisters, how is it with us? Do we have this care for all our brethren and sisters in Christ? What is our motive? Are we seeking self glory and the praise of men? Or is our desire simply to be like our blessed Lord, serving in lowliness of mind with self hidden, in all sincerity, and without regard to personal safety and comfort?

There are, however, compensations in such unselfish service. One can understand the joy of the saints at Philippi as they read Paul's words, "I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at the last ye caused your thinking on my behalf to bloom anew" (chap. 4:10). When we see those rejoicing to whom we have ministered, that same joy fills our souls and is compensation for service. Paul writes further that it was "an odour of a sweet smell" to God (chap. 14:18). Surely, this would reward the Philippians for their service. However, that is not all. Paul writes that it is "a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God." Finally, he tells them that it is fruit to their account (chap. 4:17). Such was the rich compensation then, and it is no less now. Our heavenly Father sees every act of kindness. Our blessed Lord said, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42).

Lest it seem impossible to so serve one another, God gives us a word of encouragement as to the source of

ability and strength, “My God shall supply (satisfy to the full) all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (chap. 4:19). Thus not only are we given the example of these beloved saints at Philippi, but we have the encouragement and the promise that in so doing, God will supply to the full all our need by Christ Jesus. What more do we require?

Would to God, we in this day could adopt the motive of the Philippians! In place of this, many times we hear unkind words, backbitings, the belittling of one another, Such was not the way of the Philippians. Others might speak of Paul in an unkind way, deny his apostleship, accuse him, of guile, of false motives, and wrong methods, etc. The saints at Philippi, nevertheless, lavished their care on him unselfishly.

May we learn like the Philippians to have a care for one another. If we do, happiness and joy will fill our souls and rich compensations will be our portion.

May we look upon the saints of God in their individual needs and may our care for them bloom anew for His Name’s sake.