

Sunday July 2nd sermon: "Not by the Blood of Animals -- The God of All Comforts (Pt 22)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Hebrews 9:23-26; Matthew 26:26-32

God comforts us by the oath He made to Christ, appointing Him our high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, God provided a picture that pointed to Christ as the only real sacrifice that takes away sin. Those animal sacrifices pointed to Jesus as our substitute in the judgment.

One day, the Lord Jesus would take upon Himself the flesh and blood of His poor people, Whom God loves, so that Christ could offer up Himself as a sacrifice to redeem us!

Hebrews states very clearly, that God provided the blood of the sacrifice to make an atonement for the souls of His people!

Just as God gave the people the sacrificial animal's blood as a temporal, earthly atonement for their souls, so He gave His Son's life and blood to forever purge our sins!

Hebrews again compares the heavenly reality with the earthly types and shadows: while both required innocent blood for an atonement, in the heavenly tabernacle, the sacrifice offered must be far better than that offered by the Aaronic priests.

This is why Christ does not act as a priest in the earthly tabernacle – the picture of the true – but rather in the heavenly tabernacle, where the full and final reality of God's dealing with our sins takes place.

Christ, in His incarnate human body, raised to glory now, appears in

heaven before God, to carry out His everlasting high priestly duties for us!

He is a far better priest than Aaron, who was broken and polluted by his own sin and failure.

But Christ our great high priest is impeccable and glorious in all things! He never fails, never ceases His intercession for His people, and never presents an inferior sacrifice that cannot save, like Aaron did.

But there is more! Aaron had to appear repeatedly to offer an animal sacrifice, that could never take away the guilt of sin, because they all were mere pictures of the true sacrifice of Jesus.

Christ does not appear often to make new sacrifices in the heavenly tabernacle, for His one offering finishes the work of atonement for His people for all time.

That's because Aaron only appeared with "the blood of others," that is, with animal sacrifices. But those poor beasts could never provide an adequate offering for sin.

Neither could the sacrifice of any sinful man, blemished and imperfect as we all are.

Here lies another glorious contrast between the Aaronic priesthood and Christ's priesthood: were Christ like Aaron, He would have to enter over and over into the heavenly tabernacle, bringing sacrifice after sacrifice of Himself, suffering over and over for our crimes.

That would mean that Christ's sacrifice possessed the same defect as the animal sacrifices of Aaron – they both couldn't settle the sin debt for God's people once and for all.

But no, Christ appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself!

He did so at the "end of the world," Hebrews tells us. Jesus appeared in the fullness of time, at the appointed time, and when the Old Covenant came to an end.

That's when animal sacrifices were forever retired, because the true sacrifice of Christ took place! There was no longer any need for a type or picture of Christ, for now at last we have Christ publicly making the perfect once-for-all offering for our sin unto God.

It was a single, unique, and all-sufficient sacrifice that Christ made for us, and presented to God in the heavenly tabernacle.

No wonder God has comforted us by His oath to Christ, to make Him our priest forever after the order of Melchizedek!

Jesus Himself described His death on the cross as just such a sacrifice, the night He was betrayed. He said of His memorial supper, "this is My blood of the New Testament, shed for many for the remission of sin."

Then a bit later, Jesus described how God's sword of wrath would smite Him, and scatter the sheep.

No doubt these were dark sayings, and grievous to be heard by His disciples. How could a dead savior save anybody?

But to us, they are a part of our comfort, because now we are assured that our Redeemer never again need suffer in our place, or lay down His life to save us from our sin.

All the sorrow, and agony, and humiliation are over for our beautiful Lord Jesus! That's because Christ has forever put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.