

**Only One High Priest is
Holy, Harmless, undefiled, Separate from Sinners**

Hebrews 7:25-27, Lent Evening IV

February 27, 2008

Beloved of the Lord..... In the Old Testament, there were thousands upon thousands of priests who made thousands upon thousands of animal sacrifices for sin. While there was always a remnant of true believers, who knew that the Messiah alone would deliver from sin, the majority thought that by their sacrifices they were earning forgiveness of sins. Many of the Levitical priests thought this as well, for prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others often rebuked these priests and warned of God's upcoming punishment, except they repent. Hebrews 7:23 says, "They truly were many priests, because they were not permitted to continue by reason of death." The fact that all these priests died from sin proved their priesthood was far from perfect. They too needed a Savior from sin. Only those priests who trusted in the Messiah were delivered and now they are in heaven.

It is no different in our world today. Every pastor, priest, minister, reverend, prophet or so-called prophet, will die because of their own sin. No pastor, priest or prophet has a special "in" with God, nor are they of a more holy order. The Office of the Keys is not given to the pastor, but the Church. The called pastor publicly exercises those keys in the name of Christ and the congregation. While God does command a certain respect for those who hold the Office of the Ministry, He guards that Office with the condition that they faithfully teach God's Word. They are especially charged with preaching the Gospel of Christ crucified, that Jesus alone is our Great High Priest! He alone is the High Priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

After Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, after He was betrayed by His own disciple Judas, Jesus was led as captive to the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin. The Council chamber was filled with the chief priests, elders, false witnesses, and Caiaphas the ruling high priest. But it was a sham trial, conducted in the darkness of the night, perhaps 3 or 4 AM. The time alone reveals its complete lack of legitimacy. This was the hour of darkness. Christ now stands as the holy, harmless, and undefiled High Priest, surrounded by His enemies, who want only His blood. Rest assured, the Prince of Darkness is also in the room. And so Christ the Light, stands before all the forces of evil. We should remember the light which shines through Christ when we are surrounded by the darkness of this world. Jesus said, "I am the light of

the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He conquered those powers of darkness through the cross. He likewise gives His victory to all who trust in Him. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Many false accusations were then leveled against Jesus. But they were all baseless and without foundation. Even the attempted quote of Jesus' words concerning the destruction of the temple, they boggled. "Neither so did their witness agree together." Too often we are guilty of the same sin of the Jews. Sometimes we falsely accuse our neighbor or even our own brother. It is in man's nature to prefer to think evil of others, rather than to put the best construction on everything.

Consider how Jesus is just the opposite of us. He is holy and separate from sinners. Jesus never lied, nor falsely accused anyone, but only spoke the truth. "I am the way, the truth, and the life", Jesus said. Jesus was not born in sin as we are. Therefore when charged with false accusations, He was so innocent that He kept His silence. There was nothing to say. This smote the conscience of the guilty so that they were seething in rage. Finally Caiaphas said, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" For our sake and for our salvation, Jesus said, "I AM! and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Jesus swore under oath before God and men He was indeed the Christ, the blessed Son of God, God incarnate in the flesh! Here then lies immense comfort for the believer. Though man could not save Himself from sin, God Himself came down from the heavens to save us! When we look to Christ for forgiveness of sins, we can have all confidence that He is well able to save us, for it was not just a man that saved us from our sins, but God as well! His holy, precious, and innocent blood carries with it the power to blot out each and every transgression. In Isaiah God says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." 44:22

Of course those who want to live in their sin, or those who already think themselves righteous will never find a need for Jesus. When Jesus said, I AM, Caiaphas said "Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands." He was abused, stricken, smitten, and afflicted. Here are the true colors of our own human nature....here are the depths of our sin.

Our sins were there, upon Christ, as if our sins were His. But that is why He came. He wanted and was willing to do this for us. He came to be what we have never been: holy. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Notice He became us! God became man! So great was His love toward fallen mankind, that He would hang on the cross as a fallen man, as if He were the world's greatest criminal! The sacrifice of the very blood of God was necessary, if man were to be redeemed from sin. Dear soul, you were redeemed, "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." His sacrifice alone was acceptable to God, because Jesus alone was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

That is why dear soul, you need not doubt your own salvation if only your faith is built upon you holy and undefiled High Priest, Jesus Christ. His sacrifice is so perfect and acceptable that God you by faith as righteous, holy, harmless, and undefiled. Indeed by grace through faith, God counts us as separate and distinct from this world. God sets us apart from this world, for we are marked with the redeeming blood of our Savior. He counts us as well beloved, even holy children. When we die His own angels will come and take us to His heavenly bosom above. As Christ after the cross was exalted to glory, so we after our cross on earth will be exalted to the glories of heaven above. He will indeed rescue you from this vale of tears! That is God's divine promise, His blood oath to you! "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." To the uttermost ends of the earth Jesus through the Word, calls men to repent and let go of their sins, and cling to Himself by faith, the Savior of all men. He is the one and only High Priest who is Holy, Harmless, Undefiled, Separate from Sinners. With Him there need be no more sacrifice for sin, only offerings of praise for His mercy! Jesus said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." His blood has perfect power to save. Even now in heaven, your beloved Savior intercedes for your sake, so that God's grace and mercy are continually upon you throughout your life. Your prayers are acceptable to Him, so that we can ask Him for anything we need, in a child-like faith. Therefore let us not be downcast or downtrodden this Lenten season, but lift up our eyes

to heaven, from whence comes our salvation! Soon enough we will be singing "He's risen, He's risen, Christ Jesus the Lord!" Blessed are all they that place their faith in Him. Amen.

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