

Christmas Eve 2022

Welcome/Explanation (Nate) This advent we've been looking at Jesus, who He is, what His incarnation means, & what offices He fulfills. Tonight we'll be reviewing where we've been & then looking at Jesus as our great Priest. In doing so, we'll mostly be reading Scripture & let it speak for itself. As we begin, let's prayerfully consider Jesus as we listen to...

Joan – Silent Night

Jesus is Fully God & Fully Man (Nate)

Jn 1:1-3 -- In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, & the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, & apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Phil 2:6-8 -- Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, & being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jn 1:14 -- the Word became flesh, & dwelt among us, & we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace & truth.

Jesus is full deity, He is God. & yet He is completely human. Jesus is God in human flesh, 2 complete natures in one Person. While remaining fully God, He took on human flesh. Let's remember Him as such as we sing together...

#231 *O Come All Ye Faithful* (1,2,4)

#222 *Angels From the Realms of Glory* (1,4)

#242 *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (1,2,3)

Virgin Birth/Jesus as Prophet (Nate)

Matthew 1:18-23 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. & Joseph her husband, being a righteous man & not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; & you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD & SHALL BEAR A SON, & THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

Because God wanted to save the world, He took the initiative & sent His Son through a virgin girl & the power of His Holy Spirit. The virgin birth teaches us that salvation is entirely by God's grace.

The virgin birth isn't a myth or fairy tale. It's absolutely true & critical to our salvation, because we

need a Savior. The Bible presents Jesus as being fully human. He was born like us, lived like us, & died like us. Whatever it means to be truly human, was true of Jesus. He wasn't an alien or an angel or a half-man, half-God creature. He was fully human. He was also fully divine, fully God. He didn't give up His deity when He humbled Himself & added humanity to His nature. What was the 1st OT anointed office He fulfilled? That of prophet, who spoke for God to the people. God promised through Moses,

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, & I will put My words in his mouth, & he shall speak to them all that I command him (Dt 18:18).

After Jesus called Philip to follow Him, we read...

Philip found Nathanael & said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law & *also* the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (Jn 1:45).

Jesus Himself said in His prayer in Jn 17...

Jn 17:6-10 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours & You gave them to Me, & they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; & they received *them* & truly understood that I came forth from You, & they believed that You sent Me. I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; & all things that are Mine are Yours, & Yours are Mine; & I have been glorified in them.

& then the writer of Hebrews tells us,

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions & in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son... (Heb 1:1-2).

Jesus came as the perfect Prophet because He's the very Word of God Himself. In His incarnate state, Jesus taught God's Word & was Himself the Word, the fullness of the godhead in bodily form.

Let's sing together remembering His virgin birth & His role as the Prophet who reveals God to us.

#236 *Silent Night* (1,2,3)

#216 *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* (1,2)

#223 *The First Noel* (1,4)

Scott & Cyndi – Special Music

Jesus as Priest (Nate)

Jesus came as the promised Messiah, the anointed One, fully God & fully man, to fulfill the OT shadows of the 3 anointed offices: Prophet, Priest, & King. Tonight we see Jesus as Priest. What is a priest? A prophet was God's representative to the people, His messenger, & One who brought

God's Word to them. A priest was man's representative with God. The priests central mission as mediators between the holy God & sinful people was to offer sacrifices & prayers that will lead to atonement for sins & reconciliation of sinners with God. Jesus, as Priest, approaches God for us, speaking & acting on our behalf. Prophets represented God to the people & priests represented the people to God. Did Jesus function as a priest during His ministry on earth? Yes! We find in the gospels Jesus doing what priests do, although He isn't called a Priest there. He teaches the law, purifies the unclean, cleanses the temple, forgives sins, & prays for His followers. His actions culminate in the sacrifice of Himself He offers to God. His actions are unmistakable, Jesus acts like a Priest because He is our Priest. We see this clearly in Hebrews. Let me just read some of what we learn of Jesus as our Priest.

1. We have a great high Priest -- Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy & find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:14-16).

2. We have a real salvation – The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Heb 7:23-25).

3. We have a perfect high Priest -- For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners & exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins & then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, made perfect forever (Heb 7:26-28).

4. We have a better Covenant – They, the high priests of Israel, serve as a copy & shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises (Heb 8:5-6).

5. We have a finished sacrifice -- when Christ appeared *as a* high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater & more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; & not through the blood of goats & calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb 9:11-12).

6. We have a better sanctuary -- you have not come to *a mountain* that can be touched & to a blazing fire, & to darkness & gloom & whirlwind... But you have come to Mount Zion & to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, & to myriads of angels, to the general assembly & church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, & to God, the Judge of all, & to the spirits of *the* righteous

made perfect, & to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, & to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel (Heb 12:18, 22-24).

Jesus has accomplished all of this for us as the ultimate Priest of God. Jesus offered Himself to be the sacrifice for sin. Jesus was born to die as our substitute sacrifice. This priestly work of Jesus is found all through the NT. Here's a sampling.

Jn 1:29 -- The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him & said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Rom 5:8 -- God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Gal 3:13 -- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us...

1 Pt 3:18 -- Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

Jesus, on the cross, bore our sin, & in doing so, bore the punishment our sin deserves. God is now appeased & can now look on us who believe in Jesus as blameless & righteous. We can now confidently say, **Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1)**. Aren't you glad Jesus is our Priest?

Think of it this way: Most likely you put up a Christmas tree this year. If you put up a real Christmas tree, the tree you put up wasn't the same one from last year. Despite our best efforts, they eventually die & have to be thrown out. So every year, if we want a real tree, we have to go get one. But that tree, no matter how perfect we think it is, will die & have to be replaced. Real Christmas trees only last so long. That's why some 65% of Americans put up a fake ones. While it doesn't smell as good as a real tree, it's one less thing to spend money on every year. Unlike real trees, fake ones don't die & don't have to be replaced every year. Not to be sacrilegious, but like a fake Christmas tree, the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus' sacrifice lasts forever. In **Heb 9:24-26** we read,

Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Jesus offers a once & for all sacrifice that lasts forever. It doesn't have to be repeated year in & year out like the sacrifice of the OT priests. The sacrifice Jesus offered wasn't some special bull or goat. No, Jesus is the true & better Priest because He offers Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf. He goes to the cross & it's His blood that's spilled instead of that of an animal. Jesus was able to offer Himself as a sacrifice because He's perfect. He never sinned nor rebelled against God. He was never God's enemy who deserved God's wrath. His relationship with the Father was never compromised or severed. He never needed a sacrifice offered on His behalf like the High Priests of old. So He was able to become the sacrifice for our sins. But that's not all. Jesus' work on our behalf isn't all in the past. It's still ongoing. As a Prophet He continues to speak us from God & as a Priest He continues to represent us before God. Heb 2 brings these 2 dimensions together.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh & blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, & might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful & faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb 2:14-17).

Jesus, our great high Priest, delivers us from bondage to Satan & delivers us from the wrath of God. He does both of these things through His ministry as Priest. Jesus offered *Himself* as a sacrifice, a Man in place of men. His full & perfect sacrifice was accepted by God. That's why God raised Him from the dead. He's now seated at God's right hand. He doesn't continue to stand like the OT priests in a daily repetition of His sacrifice. He has no need to! As the high Priest who is Himself the sacrifice, He's finished His atoning work. In Christ our sins are fully & finally forgiven! His sin offering of Himself deals with our guilt & propitiates God's wrath & sets us free from the grip of Satan. By nature as sinners, we're under God's wrath & deserve to be. If we can't deal with our sin & guilt, we certainly can't deal with the wrath of God. But it was to bear that wrath that Jesus, as our high Priest, went into the holy place, the presence of our holy God, & experienced the awful unleashing of divine judgment. This is why, when the resurrected Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples, His 1st word was, *Shalom! Peace!* As the angel announced at His birth, **peace among men with whom He is pleased** (Lk 2:14). Now, at last, we can have peace with God (Lk 24:36). This is Christ's finished work as priest.

There's even more to our Lord's ministry as our Priest than this. He has been made like us in every respect. He can sympathize with us in our weakness because He's been tempted in every way like us. Even more, **He always lives to make intercession for us** (Heb 7:25). The intercessory work of Jesus is based on His atoning sacrifice. Paul writes

Rom 8:31-34 -- If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

1 Jn 2:1 -- My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. & if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Jesus holds His children with one hand & holds on to His Father with the other. As He draws near to God, He says, *Father, here am I with those You've given to Me. Because of My sacrifice, they are in Me & are Your beloved children.* As we light our candles, representing the light that Jesus has brought to us in this dark, sinful world, concentrate on the words of the song we're about to sing, *Before the Throne of God Above*. This speaks to Jesus' priestly work on our behalf.

#187 *Before the Throne of God Above* (1,2,3)

Our response (Nate) How do we respond to this wonderful Jesus? Heb 10:19-21 summarizes what Jesus did as our Priest & then vs 22-24 gives 3 **let us** phrases, 3 invitations to respond to Jesus.

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new & living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, & since *we have* a great priest over the house of God... **(Heb 10:19-21)**.

Because Jesus has done this for us, how must we respond? **Heb 10:22-24** says,

Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience & our bodies washed with pure water. **Let us** hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and **let us** consider how to stimulate one another to love & good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another & all the more as you see the day drawing near*

Come close. Hold fast. Reach out. Christ has made the way for you to draw near to Him, to hold fast to Him, & to do it alongside other believers who can stir you up & push you forward. This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This news is too good to keep to ourselves, we must go & tell others.

#225 *Go Tell it On the Mountain* (1,3)