

Christ Our Great High Priest

"Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." – Revelation 1:13

Summary:

Christ's priestly clothing in John's vision reveals him as our great High Priest. The high priest under the law mediated between God and the people, foreshadowing Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant. His work is seen in three actions. First, Christ makes expiation: unlike the repeated and limited sacrifices of the old priesthood, his one offering of himself perfectly atones for sin. Secondly, he intercedes: having entered heaven with his own blood, he appears before God for his people and pleads his finished sacrifice. Thirdly, he blesses: as the priest emerged to pronounce peace, the risen Christ pours out the Holy Spirit and sends the Gospel's joyful assurance that believers are reconciled, accepted, and forever favoured by God.

Outline:

1. **Christ appears in priestly glory**
 - His long garment and golden girdle identify him as the High Priest of our profession.
2. **The high priest was the appointed mediator**
 - Israel's priest stood between God and the people, foreshadowing the Mediator of the new covenant.
3. **Christ makes perfect expiation**
 - His sinless, once-for-all sacrifice surpasses every repeated and limited offering under the OT law.
4. **Christ continually intercedes**
 - He appears before the Father for his people, presenting and pleading the merit of his own blood.
5. **Christ bestows the promised blessing**
 - Through the Holy Spirit and the Gospel, he assures believers of reconciliation, acceptance, peace, and lasting favour.

Text

The dress was priestly, reminding John that our Lord was the High Priest of our profession—one of his three great offices in salvation. He is the Prophet promised to rise like Moses, the King in Zion, and the High Priest seated at the right hand of Heaven's Majesty, ministering in the sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord—not man—established.

And we make no scruple to say that the kingly and prophetic offices derive their efficacy—and even existence—from the third. Under the law, the high priest was a remarkable, important figure who mediated all relations between God and the people, foreshadowing Jesus, Mediator of the new covenant.

In tracing the resemblance, we shall pass over his personal qualities, consecration, anointing oil, and vesture, including the golden bell and pomegranate on its skirt. We shall note only the three actions he had to perform.

First, expiation: He offered sacrifices to atone for the people's sins. Their slaughter showed sin's penalty and deliverance—life for life—for without bloodshed there is no remission.

The high priest typified the Saviour, but the Saviour surpassed him: the priest offered sacrifices for his own sins and the people's, while Christ was harmless, holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The priest's repeated sacrifices could not perfect worshippers; Christ's single offering perfected forever those being sanctified. The priest atoned only for Israel; Christ takes away the world's sin.

Secondly, intercession. Whether the high priest spoke is unknown, but his actions spoke clearly. After slaying the victim, he carried its blood in a basin into the holiest place, bearing Israel's tribal names on his breast. He sprinkled the mercy seat and burned incense, whose sweet savour reached the one seated between the cherubim.

Having borne our sins in his body on the tree and secured eternal redemption, Jesus entered heaven with his own blood. There he appears before God for us, presenting his sacrifice and grounding his claims for his people in its satisfaction. The Scriptures say, "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And again, "We have an Advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins."

Thirdly, benediction. As he burned incense inside, the people prayed outside until he emerged and blessed them: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

This was more than the high priest's wish: it was the blessing of the one they had offended, acknowledging that God was reconciled to them, they were in his favor, and could leave joyful and glad.

Christ's Church did not wait long after his ascension to glory. He came forth in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, blessing the Gospel's preaching with life everlasting. The Gospel assures us that Christ's death reconciles us to God, that we are accepted in the Beloved, and that we will be satisfied early with his favour. *"Happy art thou, O Israel." "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."*

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises (January 23, Evening), first published in 1854.