

The *direction* of the Christian life is always to be centered on the saving power of the death of Christ. Because of that death, we are cleansed from dead works by Christ's blood, given safe passage to the heavenly city of God, nourished in our souls on the benefits of Christ's death, given safety in a world of hostile powers, and given grounds for joy in worship that can never be taken from us.

Add to these that our Lamb of God who was slain now lives forever by the power of His "indestructible life" (Hebrews 7:16), and we can therefore be sure that Christ's ministry as our king and priest continues forever at God's right hand. May this week's notes deepen our appreciation for Christ's death for us and the life which He now lives on our behalf in Heaven.

Mon/Tues/Weds: Read Hebrews 9:11-15; Hebrews 13:8-10 & Hebrews 13:20-21

Bought & Paid

The first benefit of Christ's death – in terms of the impact His death has on our daily lives – is that His blood cleanses us from dead works (Hebrews 9:14). Now we can cease from all efforts of self-justification and religious good works done out of fear and guilt, and we can sit with Jesus, worshipping and feasting with Him (Hebrews 13:10 & 13:15).

Without Christ's blood, the priests of the Old Testament tabernacle participated in a service that would never end (Hebrews 13:10). Their legal, Mosaic sacrifices always ended in a bloody death and had to be repeated since there could be no lasting promise of success.

Thus man-made religion is a continual *doing* of new religious works, since there can be no assurance that we have done *enough*. Have we made amends sufficiently? Have we confessed all our sins? Have we paid off our debt to society? Have we made the necessary reparations? Can we find that religious guru, that authority, who can assure us that we are sacramentally clean? Do we have a sufficiently active social conscience? What should I be protesting now to show I am an activist? Have I "earned" the new lease on life which Private Ryan sought as he walked around the cemetery in Normandy in the opening scene of that movie?

All such dead works are endless and unable to produce that Rest which Christ alone gives. For the Old Testament unbelieving but religious person, there was never enough water, never enough blood, never enough holy festivals and meals. Every high and holy day in Jerusalem meant make the pilgrimage again, fast again, give alms more and more: never enough.

But for the heart of Old and New Testament believers alike, established in grace (Hebrews 13:9), the good news is that whether we eat or drink, or *whatever* we do, we can do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31) and not worry about justifying ourselves; Christ paid it all for us on the Cross. Our whole of life is now a thank offering of praise for what God has accomplished once and for all through Christ!

So we must correct our bearings, the marks of reference on our map, when we live in the light of Christ's Cross. We are no longer living on "personal self-improvement time," tied to what we expect from our lives. We must get the benefits and timetable of the Gospel straight: Jesus Christ by His rising from the dead *by the blood of the eternal covenant* is the only one able to transform death for sin into a life-giving event. In terms of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, because Christ was dead but now lives, we can come and feast with Him and His Father, giving up our litany of our own hard work or personal achievement (the elder brother in the parable) in order to feast "at the table of the king." We also give up comparing ourselves with all others who gather with us. Our ticket is paid by another.

Meditate and Pray: Do you find such Good News of the finished work of our salvation hard to believe? We may think that we need our “religious merit badges” in order to gain lasting assurance. Can we really sit down with our Redeemer simply to have Him stuff our mouths with the good things of His Kingdom (Psalm 81:10)?

Yes, in fact we must. For Christ’s blood seals the Covenant of Grace whereby God the Father now ... “freely offers to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ.” (Westminster Conf of Faith chap. VII:III)

The following poem underlines beautifully how we must simply sit with Christ and by faith rest in His finished work of our salvation:

LOVE bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
 But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
 Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack’d anything.

‘A guest,’ I answer’d, ‘worthy to be here:’
 Love said, ‘You shall be he.’
 ‘I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on Thee.’
 Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 ‘Who made the eyes but I?’

‘Truth, Lord; but I have marr’d them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.’
 ‘And know you not,’ says Love, ‘Who bore the blame?’
 ‘My dear, then I will serve.’
 ‘You must sit down,’ says Love, ‘and taste my meat.’
 So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert

Thurs-Sun: Read 2 Chronicles 24:15-22 & Hebrews 7:13-28

Many Leadership Failures, One Enduring King

The Old Testament is the story of God’s search for godly kings and priests to carry on His work of salvation; there is a mighty, historic struggle as the Spirit of God demonstrates to His people Israel and to the world that *no single Old Testament priest or king fits the bill*. Both Israel and Judah desired to be like the other nations by having kings, though they put much stock in the exalted worship of the Lord under the leadership of priests. Because of Adam’s sin and personal character corruption, king after king and priest after priest fall short, and even the bright spots end through death.

We have seen, for example, how all the line of Jehu falls. He is the general who by military coup destroyed the house of Ahab according to the will of God. Because of his zeal in destroying the royal family of Ahab and Jezebel, God gives him four generations of rulers to sit on the throne of Israel. But he like all the other kings of Israel, he falls into the sins of Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, worshipping the golden calves at Dan and Bethel (2 Kings 10:31). The same holds true for his sons (2 Kings 13:2; 13:11; 14:24 & 15:9). Things get so bad

that the man of God in 2 Chronicles 25:7 tells the king of Judah not to go to war with Israel's army since the Lord is no longer with Israel.

The same failures prevent the office of Priest in the Old Testament from functioning for the lasting salvation of God's people. As Hebrews 7:23 & 28 prove, all the priests of the old covenant were prevented from continuing because they sinned and they died. Their service was a continual reminder of the wages of sin, which is death, and of the limitations of their office. Even godly Jehoiada was not able to permanently establish the kingdom of Judah by planting a new heart in Joash the king.

Yes, Joash king of Judah for decades benefited much from the godly tutelage of Jehoiada; yet, as soon as that priest died Joash caved to his friends and peers in their idolatry. When they came and did obeisance to him (2 Chronicles 24:17) Joash agreed to abandon the exclusive worship of the Lord – even though the Lord sent countless prophets to urge the king to repent and return to the God of his spiritual father Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 24:18-22).

Jehoida, one of the godliest priests in any period of Israel, the Protector of the only scion of Judah to survive the massacre of the house of Judah by Athaliah (2 Kings 11:1 and 2 Chronicles 22:10), was not able to preserve the kingdom Judah after his death. When he “grew old and full of days” (2 Chronicles 24:15-16) and died, not even the honorable memory of this great priest's burial among the kings of David's line was able to restrain king Joash. This king sunk so low as to order the murder of Jehoida's son Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:21-22).

Meditate and Pray: What are we to learn from such a terrible downfall among the greatest royal line of the Old Testament? Yes, we are not surprised that Israel's kings turn out to be rotters, as that kingdom was founded on the idolatry of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. But Judah? How could this royal family fall so badly when the Lord had promised David that his offspring would rule “forever” over His kingdom? The same could be said about the failure of the priestly house of Levi. What are we to learn from priests who were unable to continue in service and who died as failures?

It is only through the painful failure of David's (and Jehoiada's) houses that our eyes of faith would be lifted up to look for another, higher, godly, royal and priestly line. Only Christ answers our prayers and fulfills our hopes.

Hebrews 1:1-4 declares that we now have a king who has been commanded to sit at God's right hand (ruling over all spiritual and physical realms of men and angels) since He as priest has provided once and for all purification and forgiveness for all of our sins. This priest-king from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14) is the first royal priest who both rules and forgives; who gives us a new heart to make us willing in the day of His power (Psalm 110:3) and who has inherited a new priesthood that has no beginning or end – the priesthood of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4).

No wonder the writer to the Hebrews rejoices that we now have a priest who can “save to the uttermost” (Hebrews 7:25) because of the power of His “indestructible life” (Hebrews 7:16). No wonder that this Jesus, because He is priest marked by a perfect, holy, innocent and blameless life, is able to come and rule over us forever. “He is separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26) and therefore has an “indestructible life” (Hebrews 7:16) that will forever reign and rule over us for our salvation!

Let's close this week's bible notes by singing hymn # 242 as a thankful acknowledgment that the Lord has provided another source of our salvation, another sinless king and priest to lead us all the way into the kingdom of God.

1 Not all the blood of beasts
on Jewish altars slain,
could give the guilty conscience peace,
or wash away the stain:

2 But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb,
takes all our sins away,
a sacrifice of nobler name
and richer blood than they.

3 My faith would lay her hand
on that dear head of thine,
while like a penitent I stand,
and there confess my sin.

4 My soul looks back to see
the burdens thou didst bear,
when hanging on the cursed tree,
and knows her guilt was there.

5 Believing, we rejoice
to see the curse remove;
we bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
and sing his bleeding love.