

“Assurance On Oath”

Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 7:20-28

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Jeff: Our gracious and heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day. And what a way to start off each day, to be thankful and joyful and prayerful!

Father, as we come, we come joyfully despite our experiences and despite our present circumstances. We're joyful because of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of what He has done on our behalf, because of our life in Him and because of His Spirit opening our eyes to the glories and the beauties of life in Him. And Father, as we come we are also thankful for Your word, for indeed it is Your word. It is a safe place to stand in a world that is uncertain. And it has a word for us that penetrates bone and marrow, soul and spirit. And Father, Your Spirit, while it is His word, and He takes it up in our lives and applies it in such ways as we welcome, and sometimes in our worst moments we do not welcome, because it brings not only comfort, but it does bring conviction. And so let us both receive the comfort and the conviction, knowing that both of them will prove to be to our good. And so, Father, we ask as we come here today that You will teach us from Your word as we look at Hebrews chapter 7.

And we certainly not only pray for your word and Your Spirit to be active and present in our lives, but we also pray for Paul and for his tests upcoming. We pray for Kevin and for his procedure. And Father, we pray that You will hear our prayers of thanks with regard to Pastor Brunson.

Father, these things as they are on our hearts and minds throughout the morning, we pray that You will not exclude them from our study. But we pray that even these things You will take up and You will remind us of good things concerning these men, and ways in which You work in their lives and in the lives of others. And remind us of that throughout the study, even Father as Your Spirit leads and teaches us Your word, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. So we are in Hebrews chapter 7 and verses 20-28 this morning. So let me have you turn there. Let me read to you now the word of the living God.

“And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this One was made a Priest with an oath by the One who said to Him: ‘The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, You are a Priest forever.’ This makes Jesus the Guarantor of a better covenant

“The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He now lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

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“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people, since He did this once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.”

Participant: This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. So today I want us to look at several points as they emerge from this text. I want us to think about some introductory points as we normally do. Then I want us to think about *God’s promised help* and *God’s assurance of help*. And then I want us to think about the simple question *why do we need that help?* So those are the four basic things that we’re going to look at as we move through the text this morning.

And the first thing I want us to think about has to do with *background*. Now one of the things that you know is that every letter has a background. And every letter’s background may not be known to us. And this is one of those letters that we’re just not absolutely certain when it was written. And so its background is a little bit elusive for us. And that’s the way it is with the author as well. Some people are very committed to Pauline authorship of this letter. But the fact remains that the authorship of this letter is a little elusive.

But we do know that this letter was written in between at least two periods of time. And I think that becomes important for us in understanding some of the places that we find in the letter. For instance, in chapter 10 we find that there is a reference to past persecution. And there is a reference to the possibility of coming persecution.

Now when you look at a text like that one you can situate it—not exactly, but approximately. So I want you to think about what might be the first possible coordinate. And that would be the Claudian exile, and I’ve mentioned that to you before.

In 49 Emperor Claudius expels the Jews and the Christians because he’s tired of all the ruckus. There are so many disputes between Jews and Gentiles in the early church that Claudius finally says, “Enough already!” And Suetonius, a historian of those days, tells us that Claudius expels them from the land. And so they have to go.

And it’s not an easy trip. They have to leave behind—

Transcriber’s Note: There is an interruption with loud static from the microphone.

Jeff: Oh wow! That was terrible! *(Laughter)* I thought the end times had come!
(Laughter) We won’t need you sometimes.

Participant: The Lord is with us.

Jeff: Did you notice how calm Sig was? He just got up and walked over.

Participant: He’s slow.

Jeff: He’s good. What’s that, slow?

Participant: Slow.

Jeff: Yeah, okay.

Sig: Can you see if it’s working? It’s not working?

Jeff: It’s not working. If you can speak, let me talk with that.

Sig: You can talk and I’ll speak with that.

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Jeff: You know what, though? Let me keep using the mike because it gives a mental thing, you know? *(Laughter)* No, I'll just use that.

Sig: Speak up!

Jeff: Yes. It's just like in the old days, right? So where was I? What was I talking about? *(Laughter)*

Participant: Claudius kicked them out.

Second Participant: The Claudian exile.

Third Participant: Jeff, were the Christians and Jews expelled because they were fighting, but also because the Christians and Jews in the minds of the population were not the same groups?

Jeff: Yes, they weren't the same groups yet. And so that was part of the early church, and you see that in Acts 15. There's still something that they're viewed as being together. Christianity is viewed as being a sect of Judaism. And that persists after the New Testament period for some time. And so you see that there's a continual breaking away or gradually separating in the minds of people, Jew from Gentile. And the reason they were viewed as being together is because the Christians were saying, "Look, we're the fulfillment of your covenants. We're just saying that your Messiah has come." So that's a good point.

So Claudius is not a theologian. He's not going to take the time to sort out the details. He just says, "You're all expelled; you're all gone." So that was in 49. And this letter then may have been written in the mid-50s or even later. And that's the first coordinate.

The second coordinate is in the late '60s. It could be in the late '60s. This was the time when Nero's persecution was beginning to escalate. You know, he was a loose cannon. He didn't start off terrible, but gradually became awful. And so in the early '60s a persecution looks as if it's on the horizon.

And so perhaps it is that there were people who had returned from the Claudian exile who were now in the church. And as the church was in the '60s, it was anticipating another round of persecution.

I think that is a way of looking at the letter that both takes into account the past and the future and situates them in a precarious situation in between. I think that's the background of the letter. And I think that what we need to understand is that it was in this context that people in the church were saying, "You know what?" Maybe they were saying, "You know, I'm going to head back to Judaism."

You know how it can be when you're sitting in a living room, and that's the place where the church meets. And there are no priests and there are no vestments. And there are no sacrifices, no incense. There are none of the accoutrements of Judaism. Do you know what I'm saying to you? And you're sitting in this living room with other people. And you're saying, "You know what? There's no security here. And I'm a little bit afraid that I need to be in a place where I can be secure. This is viewed as a sect of Judaism. I want to return."

Transcriber's Note: A cell phone goes off.

Jeff: Is that me? *(Laughter)* And so part of Judaism that was so crucial in those days was the priesthood. The priesthood was absolutely vital in those days.

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Now not so much today. You know, in *Newsweek* magazine in 2012 Rabbi Yankelowicz (is that Weird Al Yankovich and I misspelled his name?) (*Laughter*) I don't think so. I think this is a different guy, but I'm not exactly sure. But this guy,. This rabbi basically said, You know what? The priesthood is not all that vital to Judaism today. And here's what he said. He said that it's not all that vital to Judaism because there is no temple and there are no accoutrements of Judaism that we might think of happening in the old times, and that sort of thing.

And it's interesting when you think about the parallel with what he's saying and what those in the letter of Hebrews were saying. “Without all of the accoutrements, without all of the frills, without all of the bells and whistles, I just don't have the security. And so I'm going back.” And so Judaism and the priests of Judaism were vital in the thinking of those early believers.

Now the question I think that we have to ask ourselves is this. What's the relevance? I mean, I want you to think about this. We're not Jews. And so Jewish priests, Jewish rabbis, that sort of thing, is really of little consequence to us. And when you think about what the early church was saying, and when you especially think about what later Judaism is saying, that priests are really not that important to us, then the question is what's the relevance of a text like this one for us? We're Gentiles, after all. Why be concerned about this text?

You know, when we encounter Jew/Gentile relationships in the New Testament, there are some pastors who will preach through the book of Romans. And I can think of one who referenced a very famous minister who preached through the book of Romans. And when he got to chapters 10 and 11 he just excluded them.

Participant: Oh, brother!

Jeff: Because there were Jew/Gentile relationships in the early church, and how is that relevant to us? Who needs it? And so the question becomes why is this text so relevant?

Well, I think this is a helpful text. This is one of those texts that produces for us stability in our thinking with regard to our faith. Now hopefully you're going to see that as we go. But take me at my word in the beginning.

So let's look first of all at *the help that God provides for us*. Now God has promised us help. But I want you to notice first of all from where that help comes. That's important.

I think that one of the things that I want to learn is not only the message of what a text says. But I want to know why it is that it's being said. And I want to know how it's being said. And I want to know what the teaching method is while it's being said.

Now I want you to think about this for a minute. When you look at the book of Hebrews, we first of all learn about the divinity of Jesus Christ. We hear about the Incarnation. We hear about how it's possible to know God. And how is it that in each of those cases we learn those things?

It's really interesting. If you go back and you look, the author takes us back to the Bible. I mean, think about chapter 1. Just think about chapter 1. He starts off and he says, “I want you to know something.” He says, “I want you to know that Jesus Christ is the radiant glory of the Father—not derived as Moses' glory was as he came down from the

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mountain, but an original glory. And I also want you to know this. I want you to know that he is the exact impress of the Father, the exact imprint and image.”

Now what does that tell you? It tells you two things. It tells you that the Son shares in the very essence of Deity. And secondly it tells you that He’s not the same Person as the Father.

Now when you think about Trinitarian theology it’s wonderful stuff, because in one verse you’re told some great things about Christ.

But how does he prove that? Well he says, “Let me take you to Psalm 110. Let me talk to you about Psalm 102. Let me talk to you about Psalm 45.” What’s he doing? He’s saying, “Now having said these things, let me take you back to the Scriptures and show you these things.”

And that’s what he does with the Incarnation. When he talks to us about the Incarnation he takes us back to Psalm 40. He takes us back to the Scriptures.

And so one of the things that I say to you is that that’s one of those things where he doesn’t say, “Hey, I’m teaching you how to answer difficult questions. I’m teaching you guys how to answer these questions.” No, he doesn’t say that. You have to catch that. And I think that’s one of those important things that we ought to catch. We go back to the Word. That’s first.

The second thing is this. *The help comes from God in the form of an oath.* Now I think that’s really important. And I think there’s a question that we need to ask ourselves when we look at this particular text, and I want you to answer it. And the question is this. *To whom is the oath given?* Who receives the oath?

Look at the text. It’s in the text.

Participant: The ones who have fled.

Second Participant: You are a Priest forever.

Jeff: Verse 21. The oath is given to the Son.

Now what I want you to notice is this. You know, a lot of times people will say, “You know all that theology stuff? Theology doesn’t matter.” They say, “You know, theology is one of those things that’s superimposed upon the text of Scripture.” And this is one of those places, just like we saw in Hebrews chapter 1 where we saw some teaching about the Trinity. Here we see some teaching that grips our very hearts.

If I were to ask you how Adam was to be saved in the garden, what would you say? How was Adam originally to be saved in the garden? By what?

Participant: *(Unclear)*

Jeff: But before he fell.

Participant: Obedience.

Jeff: Obedience. I don’t know who said that, but that’s correct. He was to be saved by obedience. “Do this and live.”

Now the question is—and here’s the trick question!—I just heard a pastor ask a seminarian this the other day. What does obedience have to do with your salvation? Do you see how open-ended he left it? *(Laughter)* And the seminary student dutifully said it. You know, I was there when he answered that question a second time because I asked him that question when I was pre-examining him. And he said, “Nothing!” *(Laughter)*

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“You feel pretty strong about this, don’t you?” (*Laughter*) Well, when he was asked this by the pastor, the pastor said, “Wrong.” He said, “You’re saved by obedience. It’s just not your obedience.”

Now when we talk like that, what are we talking about? We are talking about what is called *the covenant of redemption*. We always hear about the covenant of works between Adam and God. We hear about the covenant of grace between Jesus and His people. What is this covenant of redemption? The covenant of redemption is that covenant between Father and Son, where the Son covenants with the Father to save, and to save by rendering the obedience that Adam failed to render.

So here we find a glimpse into that idea of the covenant of redemption, this agreement between Father and Son to save.

Now I want you to know something. When you think about the covenant of redemption, there’s one thing that I think that you ought to be thinking about and it’s an important thing. And it’s this. I think you ought to be thinking about how it is that the Father and the Son, when we were still in our sins, covenanted to save us.

Now why is that important? It’s pastoral. It really is pastoral. I can’t tell you how many people I meet as a pastor who have this view that God is really out to get them. If it weren’t for Jesus, God would have taken them out at the knees a long time ago. And the idea that it brings to us is not just in this text. Do you remember what it says in Romans? I think it’s in Romans chapter 5. “*When we were yet sinners, God sent forth His only Son to save us.*”

The idea that God is angry with us still, and that He was appeased by the Son, and if it weren’t for the Son He’d still be after us, is not true. Now it is true that the Father was angry with us. But what we leave out of that equation is that the Son was just as angry. And Father and Son, even when They were our enemies, covenanted to save us from Their wrath. So the Father’s role and the Son’s role have to be thought of in equal terms, at least in terms of that covenant of redemption.

Now what’s a guarantee, at least in this sense? What’s a guarantee? Well in this sense Jesus becomes a Guarantor of One who will save us. What is he saying here? What is the author saying? He’s saying that Jesus assumes responsibility for us.

Now again we need to think about this in terms of that covenant of redemption. What are we saying here? We’re saying that Jesus becomes the second Adam.

I want you to think about it like this. In the garden Adam I took responsibility for us. He was our federal head. And the decision that he made affected us. He reached for the fruit because his wife gave it to him. And he fell into sin and it affected us. His sin was imputed to us, reckoned to us, counted as our sin. He was our federal head. He represented us.

But Jesus comes along in this covenant of redemption. And He assumes responsibility for us as the second Adam. In other words, He is now saying, “I will go and represent them afresh. And I will do what the first Adam failed to do.”

You see this a number of times playing itself out in the Bible. And you know, one of those places in the Bible is when you see Ahaz meeting Isaiah at the Water Gate. Do you remember this in Isaiah chapter 7? And Isaiah says to Ahaz, “I want you to know

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something.” And even though Ahaz is a wicked man, he’s a son of David. And Isaiah says to him, “I want you to know the Lord’s promise to save you.”

And Ahaz says, “Oh, that’s really nice. I’m really glad for that.” (*Laughter*) But he’s terrified because Damascus and Israel are both coming against him, and are about twenty miles away, encamped at that very moment. And he’s out checking the water ducts. And it’s like “Well, it’s very nice of you to say that, Isaiah. I’ve got other things to do.”

And Isaiah says, “no, no, no. You don’t understand. God is going to give you a sign that He is going to save you. And He’s going to let you choose the sign. So choose anything you want in the heights above, in the depths below. You choose it.”

And Ahaz is going, “Time’s a-wastin’ . And you know, Isaiah, I really do not want to tempt God. So if you’ll excuse me.”

Remember this? And Isaiah says to him, “All right. God is going to give the sign. A virgin is going to be with child,” right? That’s the promise that comes out of that.

Now if you were to look in (I forget whether it’s 1 or 2 Kings 16,--you can jot it down and look it up later.) But there you find something really interesting. Ahaz has already written to Tiglath-Pileser, who is the king of Assyria. And this is how he addresses him. Now think about this; this is the son of David. He says to Tiglath-Pileser, “I am your son. Come help me.”

What’s he saying? He’s saying, “I don’t want to be a son of David anymore.” And God is saying, “All right. I’ve had enough of this son of David line. I’m going to send My own Son to be a son of David.” And He gives the promise that His Son will come and be the son of David for them.

And so there’s this kind of thing going on in the Scriptures all the time, where there’s this promise, this failure. Jesus comes and He fulfills it, whether it’s the first Adam or the son of David. It’s just a beautiful thing.

But we see that Jesus comes and assumes responsibility. But here—and I’m going to skip this because I think I want to just—this was just an illustration to show you that the Good Samaritan assumes responsibility for the man that was beaten up. But I want to move to *God’s assurance*, because we’ve seen how Jesus is the second Adam. We’ve seen how Jesus is the son of David who is the fulfillment of that line. But I want to get to *the priesthood*. But before we do that, are there any questions at all that you might have? Yes?

Participant: I’m sorry.

Jeff: Did I give the wrong reference?

Participant: No, no. The thing that I was wondering was that in talking about God’s wrath and then the covenant to fix that issue, the covenant of redemption is outside of time. It’s always.

Jeff: Well that’s the interesting thing.

Participant: And then the question I would ask is, is wrath always?

Jeff: Okay.

Participant: That’s a chronological study in time.

Jeff: Yes, this is a great question. With the covenant of redemption, what you don’t want to do is that you don’t want to push the covenant of redemption into eternity,

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because in eternity there is no covenant made between Father and Son. The covenant of redemption was in the plan of God for temporality, for when creation was created. So the covenant of redemption is a temporal covenant and not an eternal covenant, because prior to creation there is no covenant between God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit. That does all kinds of bad things theologically to the Godhead.

So one of the things that theologians will say is that covenant comes from the things that are in eternity. The term is *paraperesis*, the inner penetration of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In other words, the Father knows the Son exhaustively, the Son knows the Father exhaustively, and all of those good things in that context. And so covenant is a concept that grows out of Trinitarian relationships and is implemented even in the creation itself.

In fact, think about it like this. If you take that concept, that *paraperesis*, that inner penetration, that exhaustive knowledge, God creates in that same way, doesn't He? So God creates, and He creates this world where revelation about Himself is mediated through what He has made. But it's not just external, it's internal. There's a sense of divinity in every person. So even if man closes his eyes and says, "I'm not going to see the revelation of God," he can't even think that thought, because the *sensus divinitatus* is good. You're thinking this thought because of God!—you know, that sort of thing. And then God comes along and says, "By the way, I'm going to talk to you."

So in the creation, pre-Fall, there's this exhaustive sort of revelation of God surrounding man. And so that's covenant. Covenantal condescension is when God bends down and lisps in order to speak to man as he's created. Don, go ahead.

Don: What about Revelation 13:8 and Ephesians 1, which says that "*we were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world?*"

Jeff: Yes. So the decree to save can be eternal. But the covenant itself is temporal.

Don: Okay.

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: So the plan has an expiration date.

Jeff: So the plan of redemption is that which is in—

Participant: The covenant has an expiration date.

Jeff: Well, the covenant has a beginning but not an end. So it's very much like that our souls are immortal in the sense that we have a beginning but have no end, right? And that's the same way with the covenant of redemption. In the covenant of grace there is a beginning, but there is no end. Does that help?

Participant: Yes.

Second Participant: But the offer of salvation ceases when Christ comes again, right? I mean, salvation for us is eternal, but the covenant, the offer, when Christ comes again, those who are not in Christ are not saved. So in that sense—

Jeff: That's correct. And in that sense they are still under the Adamic covenant.

Participant: That's true.

Jeff: Yes, okay. So those who are not saved in Jesus Christ continue to be under the Adamic covenant and punished through all eternity for the sin of Adam. But in Christ they are saved and persist in that salvation.

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Okay. So what is the help that God swore to give? God swore to give a Priest. He swore to give a Priest. Remember that after the first Adam failed, He gives the second Adam. When a son of David fails, he gives the Son of David. When the Levitical priests fail, He promises to give a Priest.

Now what’s a priest’s job? What does he do? Does a priest destroy the wall of hostility that’s between God and man and leave it go at that? Does he destroy the wall of hostility and then go to God and say, “You know what? These people aren’t that bad. You ought to really consider going to them?” Or does a priest destroy the wall of hostility through his work and then point people to God? What does he do?

Well, he does none of those things. The priest brings people to God. That’s what he does. Now the question is, did the Levitical priests do that? And the answer has to be no. Why? Because they had one day a year where they could go into the Holy of Holies. But the problem was that they would go in there. And prior to going in they would have to sacrifice for themselves and for their families. And they would have to burn incense.

This is an interesting question that theologians talk about. What was the incense for? Well, it seems to me that the incense was to create a barrier between the priest and God. Why? Was it so that God couldn’t see them, and so was symbolic of God not being able to look on sinful things? Or was it so that they couldn’t see God, because no man could see God and live? Or was it both/and?

The point is that these priests had many, many problems. And sin was at the root of them all. And so they were not a perfect priesthood, a people to offer a perfect sacrifice.

What’s the point? Verse 18 is pretty clear. This Old Covenant was weak and useless in that it had no power to save us eternally. It was simply a pointer to the perfection that would come. In and of itself it did exactly what God prescribed for it to do, that is to be a pointer. But once you turn it into that which it is not, then it can never do more than it was supposed to do. And so it was weak and useless.

But Jesus who is the Priest what? He brings us into the presence of God. And remember Romans 5:1-5?

Transcriber’s Note: Romans 5:1-5, ESV. *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

Jeff: It’s that beautiful picture where He basically takes us by the hand and brings us before the Father and makes introduction for us, introduces us to the Father. It’s a warm picture. It’s a great picture. But we’re promised a Priest.

Now there are a couple of implications of this. But before we get to the implications, let me just ask you. Does that make sense?

Transcriber’s Note: Silence.

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Jeff: I’m going to take that as yes. A couple of implications. If the Father swore to make the Son our surety, then He is our surety. If the Son’s work is completed, then there’s no need to complete it. If God saved us when we had no power to save ourselves, then we are saved. If we are saved because the second Adam was obedient, if we are saved because the Melchizedekian priesthood in Jesus was our surety, then we are saved. If we are ruled by a Davidic King who is Jesus, then we are ruled. It’s as simple as all that.

And why do we need it? Because it was fitting. In Hebrews 2:10,—you know what? I feel like I’ve taken a lot of time at different points. There’s no clock around here for me. But we’re actually doing pretty well with the time. *(Laughter)* Not bad at all.

Participant: You have all the time in the world, Jeff.

Second Participant: That’s right.

Jeff: Yes. I feel like I’m hastening on. All right, so it was fitting. We see this in Hebrews 2:10. Now in Hebrews 2:10 you saw that it was fitting for the Son. In fact, go back there just for a minute. *“For it was fitting that He”—that is, the Son—“for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the Founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”*

And so it was fitting in this context that the Son of God, who is the Creator and the Inheritor of all things should come. It is appropriate that He should come and redeem that which had been spoiled, and do it through taking on human flesh, and so undergoing Himself the humiliation that is now our lot.

And so it was fitting; it was appropriate. In other words, there is a fittingness to His plan of bringing salvation to us. In other words, it fit the plan. It was what was needed.

And the same is true here. When you think about it, the same is true. What do we need? We need a Priest who will go before us, bringing us into the presence of God.

And that is the second thing that we need. We need this Priest to be holy and blameless. The Levitical priests were good for what they were good for. But Jesus is better than they. He is a blameless, holy Priest. He doesn’t need to make sacrifices for Himself because He is holy, without sin.

And then that leads to the next thing. We not only need a holy and blameless Priest, but we need *a perfect sacrifice*. Remember that the sacrifices had to be holy and without blemish and without spot, and offered up on our behalf. And here what we find is, we find that Jesus is not only a holy Priest, but a holy Sacrifice.

And when you think about the Old Testament, the connection comes in this regard. The priest was to lay hands on the sacrifice before the sacrifice was killed, right? And the act was a transference, first of his sins to the animal for his sacrifice. But then there was the transference of the people’s sins to the head of the animal.

And remember, it was more complicated and detailed than that. There were all kinds of requirements that went along with offering animals. One of them was the scapegoat that would be led out of the camp. And the other one was the animal that would be placed on the altar and burned and consumed, and so giving a couple of different perspectives on how it is that God deals with our sin.

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But the point is that here is Jesus, who when He offers Himself offers Himself not for His own sins. But He offers Himself for the sins of His people. God counts Him as a sinner, that He might be counted with their sins against Him.

And yet here’s the beautiful thing. The beautiful thing—and this is where I’ll end my comments today—the beautiful thing is that we were told last time that this Priest has an indestructible life.

And think about the injustice of the indestructible life being left in the grave. One of the reasons why God raises Jesus up, having offered Himself a sacrifice for sins, is this. He was counted guilty for the sins of others. And He atoned for their sins upon the cross and died for it. But when He was put in the grave it would have been an injustice to leave the indestructible life destroyed. And so God out of justice raises Him from the dead, brings Him bodily back from the dead. I mean, it’s just a wonderful concept to think about. The Son burst forth from the grave.

I think that in part, when you read those texts that talk about Jesus by His own power coming back, and the Father bringing Him back, there’s a reciprocity there between the fact that the Father does bring Him back again, and the Son, who by virtue of His indestructible life and righteousness, really bursts forth from the grave.

Participant: I thought the Holy Spirit brought Him back.

Jeff: What’s that?

Participant: Didn’t the Holy Spirit give Him life again?

Jeff: Well, there are passages in the Scriptures that indicate that it was the Father’s work to do the Resurrection. And then there are passages that indicate that it was the Son who basically takes up His life again. And it would have been in the power of the Spirit that this happens, of course, because—

Participant: But wasn’t it the Holy Spirit who brought Him back to life?

Jeff: The Holy Spirit is really the One who carries out a lot of this work in the creation. But it’s a work attributed to the Father, and sometimes attributed to the Son, though it is a work of the Spirit.

This is probably something else I should mention. And that is that we talked about the covenant of redemption between Father and Son. But I don’t think that you can leave out the Spirit when you talk about the covenant of redemption. And there are theologians who disagree with this. They think, *No no no, it’s just between Father and Son*. But I’m not sure how you can have a covenant of redemption within the Trinity and leave out the Holy Spirit. So I think that’s probably what you’re saying there. Any thoughts or questions before we wrap up?

Participant: That’s a lot to cover.

Jeff: Yes, it’s a lot to cover. And one of the things that you think about is that you kind of have to remember that when we started this section. Remember how he started. You know, we ought to be talking about Jesus as our High Priest. But instead, we’ve got to go back and lay the groundwork, and talk about baptisms and repentance and things like that. And you know, I always feel that when you’re in the weeds here, I always feel both like yes, we are in the weeds. But we ought to feel guilty for feeling like it’s in the weeds. At least I do, because you know, at the outset he’s kind of guilting us a little bit. You

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know, we ought to be able to talk about these things by now. And you’re like, oh, this feels pretty heavy to me. In fact, the things that he talks about as being basic sometimes feel very heavy to me. If you feel like we’re in the weeds, I think you’re feeling like I’m feeling. And you can be guilty with me. Go ahead, Don.

Participant: Speak up, Don; we don’t have a mike.

Don: The verses at the end of the chapter where it says that Christ did this once for all, the once-for-all sacrifice where He offered up Himself—

Jeff: Yes.

Don: That of course has been the focus of controversy for centuries between the Roman Catholic understanding of the Lord’s Supper and the classical Protestant understanding. I just thought I’d point that out.

Jeff: Right. Well, you’re right in pointing that out. And here is the problem. I think that the problem is that the Roman Catholic church will say that we’re not saying that this is a re-sacrifice of Christ. The problem, though, is that when you’re a Protestant you look at it and you say, “Well, when you say the words of institution, then the bread and the wine become the body and the blood.” And when they become the body and the blood, you have a real priest in their mind offering a real sacrifice. And the Council of Trent says that this offer of Jesus on the altar is for the propitiation of sins. And so when you have pieces like that put together, it’s really hard for us to see that as not being a re-sacrifice of Christ.

You know, there are other things. There’s a strong tendency today to try to get away from Trent. But this is the problem. When you are an infallible magisterium, and you utter things with infallible binding cords upon the church, you can just see the church today trying to navigate around Trent. Trent says this. But you hear Roman Catholics say that’s not really what it means. But that’s really what it seems to mean, you know? And when you have all these other things and you put these ducks in a row, it sure does look like a duck.

Participant: So Jeff, in a simple way this whole thing that was unfolded today was set into motion with the Jews at their sacrificial system that God put into place, knowing that one day His Son would be the perfect sacrifice. In other words, He didn’t sort of make it work so it would explain how we are saved. He knew from the beginning, when the Jews sacrificed animals, that that was putting into place the ultimate sacrifice of His Son.

Jeff: Take that like this. He’s the One who created. He’s the One who will inherit creation. When you look at it like that, He not only inherits all that was said about Him and all that pointed to Him, meaning the sacrifices and all the other things about Judaism. He comes and He fulfills and inherits all that was said about Him and all that pointed toward Him. That’s what He says in Luke’s Gospel. Remember Luke 24? He says, “Let me show you what the Old Testament Scriptures say about Me.” And so, yes. It’s not that he sort of fidgets things around and says, “Now how can I be creative about this and sort of get these people to believe that weren’t really said about Me are about Me?”

See, I hate to say this. But that is sometimes what’s being said today. I’m putting it crassly. But Jesus was this creative sort of guy who came into the scenario and said,

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“How is it that I can spin the world view a little bit and get them to believe that what was said in the Old Testament is really about Me?”

Participant: Oh, boy!

Jeff: You were going to say something, Bishop.

Bishop Rodgers: I was going to say that in the new catechism that Rome has fairly recently brought out, they did try to make it to say that it’s not that the priest offers Christ but that He offers Himself through the priest. Now that’s a bit of a new spin. But you still have the whole problem of additional sacrifices for propitiation. And that has been done once for all. That’s our problem.

Jeff: Yes, that’s the sticking point. You know, at the time of the Reformation, in the church at Wittenberg, there were six—

Participant: Explain Wittenberg.

Jeff: Sorry. Wittenberg was the town where Martin Luther served as University professor and pastor. And when he was there in the Wittenberg church there was a main altar, and there were six altars in addition to that. And those altars on the sides of the church would have priests that were going through the Mass. And they were saying the Mass because people had paid to have Masses said for the dead in order that they might spend less time in purgatory. And so this was part of the commerce of the day. In 1517, the year that Luther nailed the theses to the door at the Wittenberg church so that this whole thing could be debated, so that issues could be debated that led to the Reformation, there were over 9,000 Masses said in the church at Wittenberg for the dead—Masses that no one saw. No one saw them except for the priest doing them so that propitiation could be made for the dead.

And I think that kind of contextualizes for you why Trent said what they said in the Counter-Reformation. You know, after the Reformation of the church with Martin Luther, there was the counter-Reformation of the church, where basically the church that became the Roman Catholic Church solidified many of the things that had been just kind of living together with other things in the church, you know? Luther in one sense wasn’t simply the guy and the only guy who was advocating justification by faith. There were others in the church who were saying the same thing. But there were also those in the church who were talking about how works added to our salvation in some way. And the Mass said for us was a propitiation, and that sort of thing. And that becomes solidified at the Council of Trent. Anything else?

Okay, why don’t we pray? Father, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given us to be together. And Lord, these things are deep and rich. And yet, Father, there’s a simplicity to them. We needed a Priest to be brought before You. That Priest, that perfect Priest, was Jesus Christ. We needed a sacrifice for our sins. That Sacrifice was Jesus Christ. Thank You, Father, for the simplicity and yet the complexity of it all. Father, as we look to You, we’re thankful for the opportunity to gather. And we pray that You’ll bless us not only now, but this day. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)