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John Gill's

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

Book 5—Chapter 10

**OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF
CHRIST**

1. Christ was to be a Priest; this was determined on in the purposes and decrees of God: God set him "forth" προεθετο, foreordained him, "to be a propitiation" (Rom. 3:25), that is, to be a propitiatory sacrifice, to make atonement and satisfaction for sin; which is one part of Christ's priestly office; on which, redemption by his blood is founded; to which he was "verily foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:18-20). The sufferings and death of Christ, whatever he endured from Jews and Gentiles, were all according to the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"; and were no other than what his "hand and counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 2:23 4:27,28), and which he endured in the execution of his priestly office; of which, the decrees of God are the spring and rise. To this office Christ was called of God; he did not glorify himself to be called an High Priest, but his divine Father, whose only begotten Son he is, called him to take upon him this office, invested him with it, and swore him into it, in the council and covenant of peace; for he was made a Priest with an oath (Ps. 110:4), to show the importance, dignity, validity, and perpetuity of his priesthood: to all which Christ agreed; saying, "Sacrifice and offering that wouldst not"; "I foresee that sacrifices of slain beasts, offered by sinful men, will not be, in the issue, acceptable to thee; nor be sufficient to atone for sin; "But a body hast thou prepared me", in purpose, council, and covenant; which I am ready, in proper time, to assume, and offer up a sacrifice to divine justice" (Heb. 10:5). And these eternal decrees, and mutual transactions, are the basis and foundation of Christ's priesthood; and made it sure and certain.

In the prophecies of the Old Testament Christ is spoken of as a Priest. Some think he is meant in (1 Sam. 2:35), the characters agree with him; however it is certain, David, under divine inspiration, had knowledge of the above divine transactions, in which the Son of God was constituted a priest, and spoke of him as such (Ps. 40:6,7; 110:4), he is the priest, the Tirshatha, as Nehemiah the governor said should arise with Urim and Thummim, or what were signified thereby, even all light and perfection (Neh. 7:65), but still more plainly in Zechariah 6:12,13 where the Messiah, called the Man the Branch, who was to spring up and build the temple, and bear the glory, is said to be "a priest upon his throne". Moreover, each of the parts of Christ's priestly office are particularly prophesied of, as that he should "make his soul an offering for sin", and should make "intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:10,12) to which may be added, that he sometimes appeared in the habit of a priest, clothed in linen; (see Ezek. 9:2; Dan. 10:5).

There were several types of Christ as a priest; among these the first and principal was "Melchizedek, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God" (Gen. 14:18), according to whose order Christ was to be, and is a priest (Heb. 5:10; 7:17), who this illustrious person was, is not easy to say, and it looks as if it was the will of God that he should not be known with certainty and precision; the Jews generally suppose that he was Shem, the son of Noah; and it is certain that Shem was living at the time that Abraham was met by this person; and he was also a very pious person, and in whose posterity the church of God continued till the Messiah came, and who sprung from them; but this is to be objected to him, that it was well known who was his father, when born, how long he lived, and when he died: it is not worth while to take notice of the various opinions of those that have bore the Christian name; they are so fanciful, and without any foundation, as that he was an angel, or a man created at once perfect and sinless, or the Holy Ghost; that which may seem at first sight more probable is, that he was the Son of God himself; and to this interview with him it is thought Christ had respect in John 8:56. "Abraham saw my day and was glad"; and since of Melchizedek it is said, "That he liveth and abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:3,8), but then this may be understood of him in his antitype; besides, he is said to be "made like unto the Son of God", and therefore not he himself; and this would destroy his being a type of Christ, and Christ's being after his order. It seems best to suppose that he was some Canaanitish king, famous for his extraordinary piety, princely dignity, and divine priesthood; whose genealogy and descent were purposely concealed that he might be a fit type of Christ, who was to be of his order; that is, after the similitude of him, as it is explained (Heb. 7:15), and a very great similarity and likeness there is between them: Melchidezek was a type of Christ in his person, and the eternity of it, he being "without father" as man, and "without mother" as God; who as such had no genealogy or descent, but is from everlasting to everlasting; and in his offices, kingly and priestly; his name was Melchizedek, king of righteousness; as Christ, the church's king, is said to be, just and having salvation, to reign in righteousness, and to be the Lord our righteousness; and his title, king of Salem, that is, peace, agrees with Christ, who is the prince of peace, and who is both king and priest on his throne, as this person was; and Christ's perpetual

never changing priesthood is shadowed out by his being a priest, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16).

Aaron the high priest was an eminent type of Christ, though Christ was not of the same tribe with him, nor made a priest after the same law, nor of the same order, but of one more ancient than his, and which continued in Christ when his was abolished. Yet there are many things in which Aaron typified Christ; in his priesthood, as in the separation of him from his brethren; in the unction of him when installed into his office; in his habit and several vestments with which he was clothed, his mitre, robe and brodered coat, ephod and the girdle of it, with the breastplate of judgment; but especially in the sacrifices which he offered, which were all typical of the sacrifice of Christ; and in his entrance into the most holy place, bearing the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart; in carrying in the burning coals and incense, with the blood of slain beasts, all typical of the intercession of Christ, as founded on his sacrifice; as well as he was a good spokesman, one that could speak well; as Christ has the tongue of the learned to speak on the behalf of his people: and even all the common priests were types of Christ, in their ordination from among men, and for men, and to offer gifts and sacrifices for them, though they were many, and he but one; and their sacrifices many, and were daily offering, and his but one, and once offered, and which was sufficient. Indeed all the sacrifices offered up from the beginning of the world, were all typical of the sacrifice of Christ our great high priest. The sacrifice of Abel, which was offered up in the faith of the sacrifice of Christ; and those of Noah, which for the same reason were of a sweet smelling savour to God; the passover lamb was a type of Christ, our passover, sacrificed for us; and so were the lambs of the daily sacrifice morning and evening, and all other sacrifices offered up to the times of Christ's coming, sufferings, and death, which put an end to them all.

2. Christ is come in the flesh, and is come as an high priest; he came to give his life a ransom for many, and he has given himself a ransom price for all his people, which has been testified in due time; and which is a considerable branch of his priestly office; for the whole of which he was abundantly qualified, being both God and man.

2a. As man; he is mediator according to both natures, but the mediator is particularly said to be "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5), he became man, and was made in all things like unto his brethren, persons of that nature elect; that he might be fit to be a priest, and officiate in that office, and "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God", the glory of the divine perfections, and particularly his justice; to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, atonement for them, whereby the justice of God and all his perfections would be glorified (Heb. 2:17). Christ being man, is taken from among men, and ordained for men, for their use and service, as the priests of old were: not for angels; the good angels needed none, and those that sinned were not spared; no priest, no savior, nor salvation were provided for them, and therefore Christ took not on him their nature; but that of men, that they and they only might reap the benefit of his

priestly office; and being man he had something to offer for them, an human body and an human soul, which as God he had not; as such he was impassible, not capable of sufferings and death; and had he assumed an angelic nature, that is not capable of dying, for angels die not; which it was necessary our high priest should, that by means of death he might obtain redemption from transgressions, both under the Old and under the New Testament; and it was proper that satisfaction should be made in that nature that sinned, and that those of that nature, and not others, should enjoy the advantages of it: also by being man he has another qualification of a priest, which is to be compassionate to persons in ignorance, difficulties, and distress; and hereby Christ becomes a merciful high priest, one that has a fellow feeling with his people in all their infirmities, afflictions, and temptations; to which may be added, that Christ's human nature is holy, harmless, and undefiled; clear of original and actual transgression; and such an high priest became us, is suitable for us, since he could, as he did, offer himself without spot to God; and being Jesus Christ the righteous, he is a very proper person to be an advocate or intercessor for transgressors.

2b. As God, or a divine person; being the great God, he was able to be a Saviour, and to work out a great salvation; being the mighty God, he was mighty to save to the uttermost; and being an infinite person, could make infinite satisfaction for the sins of men, and render his sacrifice acceptable to God, and sufficient to put away, and to put an end unto the sins of his people; and could put a virtue and efficacy into his blood, to cleanse from all sin, and bring in a righteousness that could justify from all, and could make his intercession and mediation for his people always prevalent with God.

3. Christ has executed, and is executing, and will continue to execute, his priestly office; the parts of which are more principally these two, offering sacrifice, and making intercession; to which may be added, a third, blessing his people; for it was the work of the high priest, as to do the two former, so the latter.

3a. First, Offering a sacrifice. The work of the priests was to offer sacrifice for sin; Christ was once offered up to bear the sins of many, and the punishment of them, and to make atonement for them; he has offered himself a sacrifice to God, of a sweet smelling savour (Heb. 5:3; 9:28; Eph. 5:2). It may be inquired,

3a1. Who is the sacrificer? Christ is altar, sacrifice, and priest: as he had something to offer as man, he has offered it; and as it became him as a priest to do it, he has done it; it is his own act and deed, and is frequently ascribed unto him; "He offered up himself unto God", &c. "He gave himself an offering and sacrifice" &c. (Heb. 9:14; Eph. 5:2).

3a2. What it was he offered; or what was the sacrifice? Not slain beasts; their blood could not take away sin; it was not their blood he shed; but it was his own, with which he entered into the holy place; it was his flesh he gave for the life of the world, of his chosen ones; it was his body which was offered up once for all; and it was his

soul that was made an offering for sin; and all as in union with his divine Person; and therefore said to be himself which was the sacrifice: strictly speaking, it was his human nature which was the sacrifice; the divine nature was the altar on which it was offered, which sanctified the gift or offering, and gave it a virtue and efficacy to atone for sin; it was through the "eternal Spirit" he offered up himself (Heb. 9:14).

3a3. To whom was the sacrifice offered? It was offered to God; as it is often said to be (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:14), to God, against whom sin is committed; and therefore to him was the sacrifice for it offered; whose justice must be satisfied; without which, God will by no means clear the guilty: and therefore Christ was set forth and appointed to be the propitiation for sin, to declare the righteousness of God, to show forth his justice, the strictness of it, and give it satisfaction (Rom. 3:25,26), and being satisfied, the sacrifice of Christ became acceptable, and of a sweet smelling savour to God (Eph. 5:2).

3a4. For whom was the sacrifice offered? Not for himself; he needed none, as did the priests under the law; he was cut off, but not for himself, being without sin: nor for angels; the elect angels needing no sacrifice, having not sinned; and evil angels were not spared, and so their nature was not taken by him, nor a sacrifice offered for them: but for elect men, called his church, his sheep, his children; for whom he laid down his life, and gave himself an offering to God. His sacrifice was a vicarious one; as were those under the law, which were typical of his; Christ our passover, was sacrificed for us, in our room and stead; Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, in the room and stead of them; he died for the ungodly, or they must have died; and became the ransom price for them.

3a5. What the nature, excellency, and properties of this sacrifice of Christ? It is a full and sufficient sacrifice, "adequate" to the purposes for which it was offered: such were not the legal sacrifices; they could not make those perfect for whom they were offered; nor purge their consciences from sin; nor take it away from them: but Christ has, by his sacrifice, perform ever all those for whom it is offered (Heb. 10:1-4,14). It is an "unblemished" sacrifice, as all under the law were to be, which was typical of this; as the passover lamb, the lambs for the daily sacrifice; Christ the sacrifice is a Lamb without spot and blemish, free from original and actual sin; in him was no sin, and so fit to be a sin offering for the sins of others; and was offered up, "without spot", to God. This sacrifice was free and "voluntary"; Christ gave himself an offering; he laid down his life "freely"; he showed no reluctance, but was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter", &c. (Isa 53:7). It was but "one" offering, and but "once" offered up. The priests under the law stood daily offering the same sacrifices, because insufficient; but Christ having offered one sacrifice for sin, offered no more, that being sufficient and effectual to answer the designs of it; wherefore in the Lord's Supper, which is only a commemoration of this sacrifice, there is no reiteration of it; it is not an offering up again the body and blood of Christ, as the papists in their mass pretend; that has been done once, and it is needed no more.

3a6. What are the ends and uses of this sacrifice, and the blessings which come by it? Christ "is come an High Priest of good things to come" (Heb. 9:11), or there are many good things which come through Christ's priesthood; particularly through his sacrifice is a full "expiation" of sin, and "atonement" for it; Christ has, by the sacrifice of himself, put away sin for ever; finished it, made an end of it, and reconciliation for it. And the "perfection" of his sanctified ones, that were set apart for himself in eternal election; those he has "perfected for ever", by his one sacrifice (Heb. 10:14), they are perfectly redeemed, justified, pardoned, and saved by it: by giving himself for them a sacrifice, in their room and stead, he has obtained "eternal redemption" for them; through it he has redeemed them from all iniquity (Titus 2:14), "peace" is made for them by the blood of his cross; and through his sufferings and death they are reconciled unto God (Rom. 5:10), full "pardon" of sin is procured, which was not to be had without shedding of blood; and a full satisfaction is made for sin; which is made through the sacrifice of Christ; and so there is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, free and full forgiveness of them (Eph 1:7). In a word "eternal salvation" is the fruit and effect of this sacrifice; Christ being "made perfect" through sufferings; and thereby made perfect satisfaction for sin, he is "become the author of eternal salvation" to his people; and which is owing to his being "called", and officiating, as "an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:9,10).