

The hope we have as an anchor of the soul

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In this set of notes, we are considering the *hope* that belongs to a son of God. This hope is an illumination that we receive by the ministry of the Spirit. It is the means by which we receive and live by the faith of the Son of God, and obtain the blessing that God swore to give to Abraham and his children. The apostle Paul described this hope as ‘an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’. Heb 6:19-20.

The promise to Abraham

Let us begin our study by reminding ourselves of the promise that God made to Abraham. We recall that Abraham took Isaac up Mount Moriah, bound him on the altar, and stretched out his hand to slay him in obedience to the word of the Lord. Gen 22:9-10. The Lord stayed Abraham’s hand, and said to him, ‘*By Myself I have sworn*, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*, because you have obeyed My voice.’ Gen 22:16-18.

Yahweh swore by Himself that all the families of the earth would be blessed in Abraham’s Seed. Christ is Abraham’s Seed. Act 3:25. Gal 3:16. We note, therefore, that Yahweh swore by Himself that Christ, the Father’s Son and Abraham’s Son, would be the One through whom the families of the earth would receive the blessing of God. The apostle Paul described this blessing as ‘the promise of the Spirit through faith’. Gal 3:14. It is the blessing of being born of God and joined to the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Paul drew our attention to this key point in the book of Hebrews, writing, ‘For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no-one greater, *He swore by Himself*, saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you”.’ Heb 6:13-14. Paul then explained that when the Father swore by Himself, He was confirming, *by oath*, the promise that He had made to Abraham. ‘Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, *confirmed it by an oath*, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.’ Heb 6:17-18.

The two immutable, or unchangeable, things by which we are able to lay hold of the hope of the promises of God are the *word of God*, and *His oath*. By these two unchangeable things, Yahweh Son was begotten as the Father’s Son and came in the flesh as Abraham’s Son. We note, in this regard, that when Christ came into the world as the Son of Man, He had two fathers – God the Father and Abraham.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul drew attention to the sonship of Christ, quoting the prophetic psalm, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 5:5. Psa 2:7. This statement revealed the word of the Father through which Yahweh Son was begotten by the Father as the Son of God.

Paul highlighted the point that the Father, who declared, 'You are My Son', *also* said, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 5:6. Paul was quoting the prophetic psalm of King David, who wrote, 'The Lord has *sworn* [an oath] and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek".' Psa 110:4.

The point to note is that the oath assuring that the blessing of Abraham that would come through the Seed, Christ, was the *same* oath through which the Son was designated as priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Consequently, His sonship and priesthood could never be separated. More than this, we recognise that it is through the priestly work of Melchizedek that we are recipients of the blessing that God promised to Abraham.

Christ's designation as High Priest

A key focus in the book of Hebrews is the distinction between the Levitical priesthood of the Old Covenant and the Melchizedek priesthood of the New Covenant, particularly in relation to the Day of Atonement. For example, Paul said, 'The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience.' Heb 9:8-9.

Significantly, Paul explained that the Son was appointed High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek *after* the law of Moses had been given, writing, 'For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the *word of the oath*, which came *after the law*, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever'. Heb 7:28.

Paul's description of Melchizedek helps us to identify when Christ was designated as High Priest. He wrote that Melchizedek was King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God, '*first* being by interpretation King of righteousness, and *after that* also King of Salem, which is, King of peace'. Heb 7:1-2. Paul was saying that although Melchizedek was *both* King and Priest, His identification and expression was *first* seen, by interpretation, as King of righteousness. His identification and expression as High Priest was manifest *afterwards*.

In the first instance, Christ was anointed for His ministry as Melchizedek when He was baptised by John the Baptist. The first interpretation was as '*King of righteousness*'. Jesus said to John the Baptist, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to *fulfil all righteousness*.' Mat 3:15. After Jesus was baptised, the Spirit of God descended like a dove and alighted upon Him as an anointing. Moreover, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Mat 4:1. Jesus then went forth in the power of the Spirit to minister as Melchizedek, with a priority toward proclaiming the kingdom of God. This was His ministry as the son of David, or 'Ben-David'.

In the third year of His earthly ministry, after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Christ's focus shifted towards the priestly work of offering Himself as the Lamb of God. Mat 16:13-16. Matthew noted, '*From that time* Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day'. Mat 16:13.

Not long after this, Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John on the holy mountain. Concerning this event, the apostle Peter recalled, 'For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".' 2Pe 1:17. Mat 17:5. Mar 9:7. During His transfiguration, Christ was clothed in the shining white garments of a high priest. This was indicating His forthcoming offering on the cross through which the great Day of Atonement would be fulfilled. Notably, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about His death which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Luk 9:29-31. This was when the priesthood dimension of Christ's Melchizedek ministry was manifest. He was seen, by interpretation, as 'Ben-Joseph'.

The glorification of Christ as High Priest

Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 5:5. Rather, He was progressively glorified by God the Father. This happened through the wounding events that He experienced in 'the days of His flesh', when He offered up prayers and supplications to God. Christ's offering commenced in Gethsemane as He prayed, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42.

Jesus learnt the obedience of priesthood through the process by which He was glorified and perfected as the High Priest. The obedience that Jesus learnt through suffering was His obedience 'to the point of death, even the death of the cross' as the Son of Man. Php 2:8. Jesus learnt how to be a high priest in relation to every situation and human condition. For this reason, Paul said, 'We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.' Heb 4:15.

Christ was the suffering Priest who priested Himself as a perfect offering. In the course of His offering journey, Jesus fulfilled all the Law and Prophets, including the offerings and feasts of the Old Covenant. Notably, through the abusive actions of the High Priest and the Jewish Council in the court of Caiaphas, the priesthood of the Law Covenant was disqualified, and the Old Covenant was finished. The Law itself was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross when Christ was nailed to the cross. Col 2:14.

Just before 3pm, Christ was delivered by the Father from the waters of forgetfulness. Jesus was now the Head of a corporate new creation. He was set, as it were, on the shore of the new kingdom. Knowing that all things had been accomplished, Jesus said, 'I thirst', and received a mouthful of wine in order for the Scripture to be fulfilled. Joh 19:28-30. At this point, He had an immortal, but physical, body. The blood of the six wounds that He had received during the course of His offering journey was still on His body.

Christ's final prayer to the Father was 'Into Your hands I commit My Spirit'. Luk 23:46. Yielding His Spirit into the hands of the Father, Jesus entered beyond the veil into the most holy place of Yahweh's own fellowship. He was in the presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit, while His wounded and bloodied body hung on the cross. Christ's blood was 'sprinkled' a seventh time when the soldier thrust a spear into His lifeless body, and blood and water flowed from His side. The blood of this seventh wound was the sum of the previous six wounds through which a full redemption had been obtained for mankind.

Blood and water, and a spirit of grace and supplication, began to flow as a fountain from His heart. Joh 19:34-37. Although they flowed from His heart, the source of these

elements was the throne of grace in the most holy place, where Christ now was. Zec 13:1. Heb 4:16. Rev 22:1. By the blood of Jesus, a way had been made open for us, through the veil of His flesh, into the holiest where He was now seated. Heb 10:19-20. In this action, the heavens were also cleansed.

The prophet Zechariah described the blood and water that flowed from Christ's heart as 'a *fountain* for sin and uncleanness'. Zec 13:1. This was significant, for the Lord had previously declared, 'My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, *the fountain of living waters*, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water.' Jer 2:13. With these words, the Lord, through Jeremiah, was drawing attention to the idolatry of His covenant people. They had turned away from receiving the water of God's word, to worship foreign gods and to follow worthless doctrines. Jer 2:4-5. Jer 10:8.

The fountain for sin and uncleanness brings deliverance from idolatry and self-definition to those who receive this ministry. Zec 13:2-6. However, this fountain is not only for cleansing. Jesus said that the water that He gives is 'living water', which becomes a fountain of water springing up to everlasting life within a person who drinks from it. Joh 4:10,14. This fountain was not just the water of the word, which the nation of Israel had forsaken under the Old Covenant. The apostle John said that Jesus Christ came '*Not only by water, but by water and blood*. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.' 1Jn 5:6.

A person who drinks from this fountain receives the word and life of God and, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, is being delivered from their propensity to idolatry. Significantly, they also receive the Holy Spirit, who enables them to express this life. Jesus said, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Joh 7:37-38. Explaining these words to us, the apostle John said, 'But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' Joh 7:39.

The seventh wounding of Christ's physical body marked the *fulfilment* of the Day of Atonement. Jesus had pioneered and finished the pathway of our perfection as sons of God, and had cleansed the sanctuary with His blood. He was now fully glorified as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

The nature of our hope

After Christ rose from the dead and ministered to His disciples for forty days, He was taken up from the Mount of Olives and a cloud received Him from their sight. Act 1:9. This was when the Son of Man ascended back to His throne at the right hand of the Father, and to the glory that He had before as Yahweh Son. Joh 6:62. Eph 1:20-21. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, according to the word and oath of the Father.

Importantly, the Father made this oath so that we might have strong consolation as we flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. Heb 6:18. Christ is our hope who has already entered the Presence behind the veil. We are able to flee to Him for refuge in the sanctuary. As we remain connected to Christ, we have an anchor for our soul in the Most Holy Place of Yahweh's fellowship. Heb 6:19.

We obtain what Christ has finished for us through His offering, as He priests to us a daily participation in His offering. By faith, through participation in His offering journey, we are *being* perfected and are *obtaining* the blessing that God swore by Himself to give to

Abraham and all his children. Paul summarised this reality, saying, 'For by one offering He has *perfected forever* those who are *being sanctified*.' Heb 10:14.

Paul said that this was the focal point of his letter to the Hebrews, writing, '*Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*' Heb 8:1-2.

The apostle John testified of the blood and water that flowed from Christ's heart *so that we may believe*. Joh 19:35. John was highlighting that the blood and water is the word of the cross that is now preached to us by the Holy Spirit through the messengers of God. 1Pe 1:12. A spirit of grace and supplication accompanies this ministry. This word is our ongoing participation in a meal offering and a drink offering; they are the very elements of the communion. Joe 2:12-14.

Those who do not resist God's grace, as the word is proclaimed, are caused to look on Him whom they have pierced, and to mourn. However, our mourning is not without hope! The Holy Spirit joins us to the prayer travail of Jesus, which commenced in the garden of Gethsemane. This is what it means to come boldly, by faith, to the throne of grace. Heb 4:16. Rom 5:2. At the throne of grace, which is Christ, we obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. By the mercies of God, which are new every morning, we are able to present ourselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Rom 12:1. Lam 3:22-23. Grace secures us in this fellowship.

Our soul is anchored in the most holy place because we are joined to Christ, our great High Priest. He is seated there and is ministering to us our participation in His finished offering. As we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering, we are obtaining and living by the faith of the Son of God that He authored and perfected for us. Gal 2:20. Heb 12:2. Furthermore, our hearts are being sprinkled clean from an evil conscience by His blood, enabling us to serve as priests to His God and Father. Heb 9:14. Rev 1:6. By this means, the Day of Atonement that Christ fulfilled through His 'once for all' offering is being fulfilled in us. *We are being progressively perfected!*

Our perfection through Christ's priestly ministry is the fulfilment of the oath that the Father swore to Abraham. Because of the certainty associated with His oath, we can have such strong confidence that, in the midst of every circumstance of life, the Lord is completing in us the good work that He has begun. Php 1:6. This is because our great High Priest is ministering to us a participation in His finished work! By this means, our hope is being realised. We are becoming the son whom the Father named us to be in Christ, and are learning the priestly work that we will continue to do forever in the new heavens and earth.

This hope has an implication for our ongoing participation in the communion. Paul exhorted us, saying, 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.' Heb 10:22-23. We are able to hold fast the confession of our hope as we continue to receive the water and blood that flows from Christ's heart through the ministry of the word by the Holy Spirit.

Significantly, as we come together for communion, we are to consider one another for the purpose of stirring up love and good works. Heb 10:24. To 'consider one another' is to be mindful of the name and sonship of others, and who they are to us. To 'stir up love and

good works' is to be poured out as a drink offering on the service and sacrifice of another's faith. Php 2:17. It is notable that Paul concluded this exhortation by imploring us to not forsake our gathering together to the Lord's table.

The apostle Paul exhorted us, saying, 'Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, *lest we drift away.*' Heb 2:1. A person 'drifts away' when they let go of their hope, and their soul is no longer anchored in Christ. This is the outcome of fear and unbelief in the midst of life's difficulties. We must not cast away our confidence, which has a great reward - our eternal salvation. Heb 10:35. Indeed, we are not those who draw back to destruction, because we believe God's word. Heb 10:39. Our hope is being illuminated to us as the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. By this means, we are walking by faith and are obtaining the salvation that Christ has already perfected for us.