

## **ASCENSION: Acts 1:1-11**

Read Acts 1:1-11.

What is Jesus Christ doing now since He ascended to the right hand of God in heaven? What is Jesus doing until he comes back in the same way he went into heaven?

3 Bible books are dedicated to what Christ is doing now: Acts, Hebrews, Revelation. The OT is preparation for Christ's coming. The Gospels focus on what Christ has already accomplished - his incarnation, atoning death, and resurrection. NOW Christ is serving in his 3 offices/roles as High Priest, Prophet, and King. Jesus' office as High Priest is explained in Hebrews. Jesus' office as Prophet is illustrated in Revelation. Jesus' office as King is demonstrated in Acts and Revelation.

### **HIGH PRIEST:**

Christ's role as High Priest is a ministry of intercession: Romans 8:34: *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

Hebrews 7:24-25: *But Christ 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 always lives to make intercession for them.*

To fully comprehend the heavenly priesthood of Christ you must read and understand Hebrews.

**The ascended Christ in his office/role of High Priest performs 3 primary functions (intercessions):**

**Propitiation:** Hebrews 1:1-4: *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. **After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.***

*2:17: Therefore, Christ had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

The greatest service Christ provides as HP is propitiation for our sins. This is Christ's atonement, his "once for all" sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 26-28; 10:10).

God commanded Moses to set up a sacrificial system with a tabernacle and its furniture, Ark of the Covenant, and Levitical priesthood. It was a copy and shadow of what is in heaven: Hebrews 8:1-7. (*The original Mona Lisa by Leonardo de Vinci is safe in the Louvre Museum, Paris. The one you see on a website is just a digital copy and shadow of it.*) It was all designed to show propitiation or atonement - what happens in the heavenly tabernacle to reconcile sinners to God.

What is propitiation or atonement? Propitiation Is Justice Satisfied

There are protests demanding justice for George Floyd. The police officer will probably be charged with 2nd or 3rd degree murder. If not, then there will be an explosion of riots because justice unsatisfied leads to deep resentment and anger. Justice must be satisfied. The desire for justice is built into human nature because we are made in the image of God. God loves justice and demands it. The people who are protesting (not the violent rioters) don't realize that the very justice they are demanding is the greater justice they deserve for their sins against God. That greater justice has been satisfied by the sacrificial death of Christ for their sins. While the protestors are demanding justice for this crime, God is demanding justice for all of their greater offenses against Him. They demand justice while they deserve it.

Why was the death of Jesus Christ necessary? Because God is holy, righteous, and just. We have sinned against God. Romans 3:23-25: *For all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation (a sacrifice that satisfies the demands of God's justice) by his blood, to be received by faith.* We all deserve God's ultimate justice. We have committed crimes against God. We think we're good people. We're not. We break the 10 Commandments in desire and deed. We lie, cheat, steal, curse, hate, murder, and don't love and worship God.

God offered His Son as a propitiation, a blood sacrifice that satisfies His justice. The justice of God was satisfied by Christ's blood sacrifice.

The shocking and offensive truth of Christ's death is this: Christ's death paid for the sin of the policeman Derek Chauvin who murdered George Floyd if he repents and receives it. Christ's death paid for the sin of George Floyd if he repented and received it before his death.

You demand justice while you deserve it. A tower in Jerusalem fell and crushed 18 people. Some people assumed the people who were killed were worse sinners and asked Jesus about it. Jesus shocked them with his answer, *"Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."* Repent and receive Christ's sacrificial death for your sins or you will perish. (Luke 13:1-5)

Propitiation is God's justice satisfied by the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is also called "substitutionary atonement" because Jesus Christ suffered as our substitute when He suffered the justice we deserve for our sins.

**Preservation:** Hebrews 10:12-14: *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

Understanding the Greek: **"For by a single offering Christ has perfected (perfect tense connotes an accomplished fact) for all time those who are being sanctified (present ptcp)."** The perfect tense "has perfected" (τετελειωκεν) defines a work that is finished, but that is progressively realized in the process depicted by the present ptcp (αγιαζωμενους), "in the process of being sanctified."

We have been perfected by Christ's "single offering" (propitiation) and we are being sanctified. Christ preserves us in righteousness. We have an alien **imputed righteousness**, the righteousness of Christ. We are perfectly righteous as the Father sees us with His Son's righteousness. My practical or **experiential righteousness** has not caught up with my perfect righteousness. I still have a sinful nature and experience my own unrighteousness. There's a gap between my perfect imputed righteousness and my experiential righteousness. Christ my HP preserves me in

righteousness as I move closer to walking in perfect righteousness. This is also the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

This is a guarantee of preservation in the process of sanctification. We will receive and become what we've been promised.

[Analogy 1: Tim received his undergraduate accounting degree at LSU. He was promised a job with PwC but wanted to complete a masters in accounting at LSU. They still offered him a job. He had the assurance of a job while he completed his masters. (They even agreed to pay his student loan and the cost of CPA exams if he passed them.) Tim just had to do the hard work to complete his masters. Analogy 2: For our vacation we already have secured our accommodation in Estes Park, CO. We just need to make a 17-hour drive across Missouri, Kansas and eastern CO.]

We have the promise and assurance of “perfected for all time” while we are in the process of being sanctified in this world. We have the assurance of preservation in righteousness because Christ is our HP in heaven and the Holy Spirit is living in us.

### **Protection:**

Hebrews 2:14-18: <sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and **deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.** <sup>16</sup>

For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, **he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

4:14-16: <sup>14</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

With Jesus as our HP, we have protection from the devil and whatever limited power he possessed to enslave. How did the devil obtain “the power of death”? He got it when A & E sinned. Satan deceived A & E and death became a reality for mankind. Romans 5:12: *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.* But the devil could only exercise his power of death with God’s permission (Job 2:6). With Jesus as our HP, the devil no longer has power over our death. Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension took that power away from the devil for all those who believe in Jesus.

With Jesus as our HP, we have protection from the fear of death. The greatest fear behind all lesser fears is the fear of death. Jesus struggled with the fear of death in the Garden and sweat blood before he died. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same thing...” Jesus’ death was the culmination of His human experience sharing flesh and blood with us. Jesus felt the fear that enslaves with death. Jesus the HP protects us from this fear because he gives us eternal life.

With Jesus as our HP, we have protection from temptation in a time of testing. Every test comes with temptations. The temptation of unbelief, not trusting God in a time of testing. Whatever test with its temptations you face, Jesus has already faced and overcome without sinning. Our HP’s ability to sympathize with us and help us in our time of weakness (test & temptation) is asserted forcefully with a double negative. *For we **do not have** a high priest who is **unable** to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* (GR *συμπαθησαι = share feelings, emotions*) Jesus our HP is not like a counselor who may feel some empathy for us as we share a problem. The person who is best suited to help you during a difficult trial is someone who has already gone through it. That person has sympathy. Jesus says, “I know what it feels like. I’ve been there. I will help you resist. Hold fast to your confession of me as LORD.” There’s no emotional distance. Jesus has sympathy and the power to help because he has shared in flesh and blood.

With Jesus as our HP, we have confidence to approach his “throne of grace.” Christ sits on a throne of grace to offer mercy and grace in time of need (temptation or test). We have confidence because we are not approaching

the bench of a judge who always gives the maximum sentence. We have confidence because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). We have confidence because we're loved. It's a throne of grace; that is, we get what we don't deserve.

*\*Maximum Mike from the Encounter Series on Pure Flix.*

With Jesus as our HP, we are protected by His righteousness imputed to us. Christ defends us against Satan's accusations: **Zechariah 3**. Zechariah 3 gives us a picture of his intercession as he defends Joshua the priest. Christ is the "angel of the LORD" who clothes us with his righteousness which is our defense against Satan's accusations.

1 John 2:1: *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

[GR **advocate** = counsel for the defense in a legal context.]

Imagine a court scene. God the Father is the judge and Christ is beside you as your defense attorney. Satan is the prosecutor. Christ as HP is our Advocate against the Adversary and Accuser (1 Peter 5:8-9 & Rev. 12:10).

Jesus Christ High Priest: Propitiation, Preservation, Protection