

TEACHING GOAL

To study the priestly work of Christ with emphasis on His intercessory work.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Q. How does Christ execute the office of Priest?

A. Christ executes the office of Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and to reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

S.C. 25; L.C. 44; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 67, 70

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: John 17

Support Passages: John 14:6; Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:23-8:3; I John 1:9-2:2

BIBLE STORY

Numbers 16; Moses and Aaron intercede for Israel upon the rebellion of Korah.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"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." (Romans 8:34, ESV)

APPLICATION

The answer to all problems of sin is Jesus Christ. We who sin are to confess our sins to Him and not only will He forgive our sins, but He will be our advocate or helper. We know that He is the propitiation of His people no matter what their nationality.

SUMMARY

We have studied the fact that Jesus is the one who offers a sacrifice for the sins of His people as their appointed representative. Furthermore, Jesus is the Sacrifice, the Blood, the Mercyseat, and the Scapegoat. All these concepts we have studied as well as the meaning of propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. There remains to study Christ as our intercessor.

The study passage contains the great high priestly prayer of the Lord for His own people, spoken while He was yet with us in the flesh. That He is now our High Priest is clear from a study of the word Advocate in John 14:16 and 26 where one will observe the word helper. This word translates the Greek *paracletos* which means one who is called alongside to help. It also includes the concept of legal aid. Jesus as our Helper argues our case before the throne of justice. Does not John say in His first epistle “and if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”? He refers, of course, to the help given to the sinner in the legal sense before God the Father. But that is not all there is to it. In the aforementioned passages Jesus, through His Spirit, comforts and encourages us as our Helper. The legal sense of Christ's intercession is further developed in Romans 8:34 where Paul writes that no one can charge God's elect with sin, for we have been justified, that is, we have received pardon for our sins and the righteousness of Christ put to our account, and we have the risen Christ for an intercessor or advocate. Our lawyer, so to speak, has obtained our pardon and continues to argue our cause at the place of highest authority, God's right hand.

The Catechism uses the word “continual” in reference to the nature of Christ's intercession. We may draw this inference from the description of Christ the Priest in the book of Hebrews. As the priest entered daily onto the temple to burn incense, which symbolized intercession, so does our Lord Jesus Christ. But He is quite different from Aaron in that He never dies. He abides forever. He holds the priesthood permanently. “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7: 25).

For what does our Lord intercede? He most certainly intercedes for us now as He did on that night before His death. As Berkhof writes, "Christ has a great deal to pray for in His intercessory prayer. We can only give a brief indication of some of the things for which He prays. He prays that the elect who have not yet come to Him may be brought into a state of grace; that those who have already come may receive pardon for their daily sins, that is, may experience the continued application to them of the fruits of justification; that believers may be kept from the accusations and temptations of Satan; that the saints may be progressively sanctified, John 17:17; that their intercourse with heaven may be

kept up, Hebrews 4:14, 16; 10:21, 22; that they may at last enter upon their perfect inheritance in heaven, John 17:24." ¹

For whom does Christ intercede? Only for His own people as we have noted in the last lesson; Only for those to whom His atonement effectively applies. Notice the strong distinction in verse 2, John 17. Even though He has authority over all men, yet He gives eternal life only to those that He has been given and He prays only for them (verse 9). In fact, every passage in Scripture that describes the priestly work of Christ limits the effect of His work to the elect only. He offered the sacrifice for His people as their representative (not everyone in the world) and He atoned for their sins only and intercedes for them alone.

¹ L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941, p. 404.