

Catford Lectures 2007-2008

Part 6

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[00:00:01] The Hebrews and chapter 1 Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

[00:01:10] I think we are having a very interesting day. We've already had a demonstration of what clever people would call parallax.

And that fits in very well with the kind of thing we are talking about today. Just to remind you, it's about six o'clock, and if you were standing in the middle of the center aisle, eleven with the two clocks, and you looked at them both at the beginning of this meeting, more or less, they would both say six o'clock. But at that time, if I was standing here, looking at that clock, I would think it was about three or four minutes past six o'clock. [00:02:02] But if I was looking at that clock from here, it would look as though it was three or four minutes to six o'clock. You see, it depends what angle I'm looking at the clock. And when you work it out, and you take account of the fact that the minute pointer, there's a gap between the pointer and the face of the clock, you'll be able to work out why it seems to be different. Now, we are going to look at someone tonight, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is absolutely perfect from whichever angle you look at him. And so much for that.

We've also learned that if you read the Bible, God marks out things that are significant by grouping them together, either in threes, or sevens, or nines. [00:03:01] And we've had some demonstrations of that. And again, that will help us. When we do that, you've got to have a little bit of caution, because when God speaks, because he's a triune God, he speaks in a threefold way, and he often demonstrates things which are perfect or complete by using the number seven. And when there are things that speak about the fullness of the Holy Spirit, things happen in three times, three sets of nine, you have to be very careful not to jump to conclusions, because the devil, the great copier, the great counterfeiter, very often does things that seem to be good, because they're in threes, sevens,

or nines, and when you look carefully, you find that it's the devil, the great counterfeiter, who's copying God, making people think that he is as good as God. [00:04:06] Now, we are going to look at a seven today. But it's one of God's sevens, not one of the devil's sevens. So, whether it's the first time we've considered this, or whether you've looked at it many times before, here is one of the great sevens of scripture. What I'm going to look at now are reasons why Jesus is in heaven.

Now, there may well be more. I'm always happy when someone comes afterwards and says, You've said there are seven, but what about this one? Sure enough, there'll be more. But there are at least seven reasons why Jesus is in heaven. And as we go through them, very simply, we'll see why it is put in that particular way. [00:05:08] To make life easy for us, and God does make it easy for us in reading the scriptures, all the scriptures I'm going to refer to are in the epistle to the Hebrews. And while we'll be jockeying back and forwards in Hebrews, we'll not be going further afield than that. Now, these first three verses, very important verses, they're about the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the things I thought Edwin was going to ask us this afternoon was there are three chapters in the New Testament in particular which tell us about the personal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of course, you would have all been shouting out straight away, John won, Colossians won, Hebrews won. [00:06:03] Well, this is one of them, Hebrews won. And this is the first thing, and it's always important first, to think about the person before you think about things that are true of the person. Now, in verse three, you've got this term, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. Now, we all think of things differently, so I'm going to give you two sets of headings. I'm glad some of you have pens and papers and you're not making shopping lists, you're thinking of something that I've said that you'll write down and that will trigger off your future studies. The first reason why Jesus is in heaven is because of who he is.

That's the first thing. The Lord Jesus is in heaven and it's right for him to be in heaven [00:07:03] because of who he is. Now, if you want a more technical way of saying that, you can say the Lord Jesus is in heaven because of his personal glory, because of the person that he is. And that word is in verse three of this. And, you know, when you think of someone, before you start thinking about things about him, you've got to say, now, what sort of person is this? The Lord Jesus, yes, he came into the world born a baby, a Bethlehem, but it wasn't long before people began to realise that he wasn't an ordinary person like everybody else. There is something special, there is something absolutely unique about the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:08:01] He is the Son of God. Indeed, he is God the Son.

As to his person, he is God.

He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. And because he is God, heaven is God's home.

And because of that, it is right that the Lord Jesus should be in heaven. I'm moving quickly on so that we don't go over time. So then, the first point is, Jesus is in heaven because of who he is, his personal glory. Now, as I say, give other reasons, you'll be building them up in your mind and you'll be wanting to remember them. Bearing in mind that little statement in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 4, about verse 12, where it says something like this, [00:09:03] a three-fold cord is not easily broken.

It didn't take men long to discover that instead of having one thick cord, if you made a lot of fine cords and twisted them together, that would be far stronger than one on its own. And that's demonstrated in that phrase, a three-fold cord is not easily broken. Each strand you add to a cord, you get greater

strength and you get greater flexibility. And what we are thinking about tonight is not a three-fold cord, or a four-fold cord, but a seven-fold cord. And the first one, the central one, that is basic to the rest, is that the Lord Jesus is in heaven because he is God. [00:10:01] Now, move over further in chapter 1 please, to verse 9.

God speaking to the Lord Jesus, well, we'll read verse 8 as well. Unto the Son, God says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

And then again in chapter 2, in more nines tonight, aren't we? It must be significant. Chapter 2, verse 9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. [00:11:01] And he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.

Again, next.

Next. Good time could be spent in thinking what these verses mean. But in simplicity, we move on from the central strand of that very strong cord about the Lord Jesus, that Jesus is in heaven because of who he is. And the second one that we have, which entwines around the central one, tells us this. The Lord Jesus is in heaven because of what he is. Not only who he is in person, but what he is in the kind of person that he is. Now, in parallel with that, the second heading is, Jesus is in heaven because of his moral perfection.

[00:12:01] You know, there are many words in the English language and probably in others, which are not easy to explain. We know what we mean, but it's difficult to put into words. And this word moral is one of them.

Moral things are about understanding the difference between doing what is right and doing what is wrong.

And not only doing the right thing, but having the desire to do the right thing. Now, there have been good men and good women who have lived in the world since the beginning of the creation of Adam and Eve.

But only of the Lord Jesus can it be said that he in himself, as to his thoughts and his words [00:13:01] and his deeds, that he's absolutely perfect. Now, that's what we mean.

With everyone else that's ever lived, God in heaven can look down and see some blemish, some imperfection, some fault, which means he's not suitable to live in heaven. There are sins, there are sinfulness, there are wicked thoughts, there are imperfections, which mean that that person is not suitable for heaven. But of the Lord Jesus, however you look at him, whichever aspect of his life he lived, whatever he said, whatever he did, the central truth about the Lord Jesus is that there's nothing that anyone could ever point at which would mean that it would keep him out of heaven. He would never be debarred from heaven [00:14:01] for anything about him at all. He is absolutely perfect.

So the second reason why Jesus is in heaven is that he is morally perfect.

Not only in heaven because of who he is, but he deserves to be in heaven because of what he is.

Now, I will pause there because I'm speaking about Jesus.

Now, there are many people in the world who speak about Jesus in a very flippant way, a very irreverent way, and I wouldn't want to be like that or for you to think that I was like that. But in the book of Hebrews and the New Testament, more than any other book really for the number of chapters, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, Creator, Sustainer of the Universe is spoken about as Jesus.

[00:15:02] Now, why should that be?

The nation of Israel, when the Lord Jesus presented himself as their long-promised Messiah, they didn't believe him.

They didn't want him. They jeered at him. They mocked at him. They said this, Jesus, speaking of the Lord Jesus in a very disparaging way.

But when God wanted to talk about the Lord Jesus as being absolutely perfect in all his ways, he directed a Jew to write to the Jewish nation and to say, this man that you've thought so badly about is absolutely perfect from whatever angle you look at. And to emphasize that, the Holy Spirit said to the writer, [00:16:03] all the way through, wherever you can, use his personal name of Jesus.

Now, that's why the name of Jesus comes up so often in the epistle to the Hebrews. That the ones that the Jews despised, that so many in the world at the present time want nothing to do with, that the Holy Spirit highlights him as the one who was thought nothing of when he lived in the world, but that he deserves to be at the very highest spot, and we read this, as to who he is and what he is, there's no reason at all why he should not be in heaven. So, instead of being right at the bottom of the heap, in man's estimation, God says he's in heaven rightly, crowned with glory and with honor.

So, we move on to chapter 10.

[00:17:03] I'm taking it in the order I am for reasons that I hope are emerging as we go along.

Hebrews 10, verse 12. Speaking of Jesus, this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.

Spoiled for choice really, there are so many verses that tell us this truth. Yes, the Lord Jesus deserves to be in heaven because of who he is, his personal glory. He deserves to be in heaven because of what he is, an absolutely perfect man.

But this now moves on, [00:18:01] and we read that he's in heaven because of what he's done, because of the work of the cross.

And among the many verses in Hebrews we could go to, this one is very good, very near the top of the list. In chapter 9 it says, Once in the end of the age hath Christ appeared to put away sins by the sacrifice of himself. If there were no other reason for the Lord Jesus to be in heaven now, this would be absolutely sufficient in itself.

The Lord Jesus is in heaven among other reasons to demonstrate that the work that he did at

Calvary in dealing with sin and sins [00:19:04] is demonstrably complete.

God says, I want to demonstrate that the work that Jesus did on the cross was completed entirely to my full satisfaction.

And I'm going to demonstrate that by giving him an exalted place in heaven.

And you can look at him and you can say, the fact that he's there in heaven means that the work of the cross was totally satisfactory to God. See, each of these strands in this sevenfold cord is sufficient in itself. If there was only one reason given in the Bible why Jesus is in heaven, it would be sufficient. But each one that's added as the Bible says, precept upon precept, [00:20:01] line upon line, here a little, there a little, each strand that's added means that the whole truth is more secure and more for the glory of God. So we've considered who is the Son of God.

We've considered what he is absolutely perfect by God's absolute standard. And we've moved on from who he is and what he is to what he's done. I suppose we're moving chronologically through what we know about the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we've moved on from the kind of person he was in the world to consider the work that he came to do just before the Lord went to the cross. We would say anticipatively knowing that he was going to do it just after that.

[00:21:02] The Lord says to his Father, the Son said, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. Now when the work was finished we read that God raised him from the dead and gave him glory. And that glory is defined in these verses that we've read. That God says the token, the proof, the guarantee that the work of the cross is absolutely finished never needing to be repeated is that God has set Christ on high.

Chapter 12.

Chapter 12, verse 2.

Looking unto Jesus see what I mean? The personal name is used. [00:22:02] Reverently, carefully, gently, pinpointing the person who was our Lord and Savior. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was said before him endured the cross despising the shame and was set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Now, you Bible students will be used to linking certain chapters together. Chapters 1, 8, 10 and 12 because these are the chapters that emphasize where Jesus is now and the basis on which he is rightly in heaven. And the trigger to prompt our minds is that at the present time he is set down [00:23:01] at the right hand of God in heaven. And you will examine those and find that they fit in very well. From another angle, a four-fold statement as to why he is set down on the right hand of God on high here in our consideration tonight a seven-fold reason from slightly different points of view.

Now, if you just go back to chapter 10 verse 38 it says the just shall live by faith.

Now, as you know, that's a quotation from the book of Habakkuk.

In Habakkuk the statement is made the just shall live by faith.

There are three parts to that statement. [00:24:01] The first part is about justice and those who are just. Those who are right with God. The just. The next, the middle bit, is about life. The just shall live. And the third part of the statement is the principle on which the just live their lives. The just shall live by faith. Now, in the New Testament the Holy Spirit quotes that phrase three times.

In the epistle to the Romans which is all about justice and the justice of God the righteousness of God we find the emphasis is the just shall live by faith. In Galatians the subject matter is among other things the life that we live the true life before God that the emphasis is the just shall live [00:25:01] by faith. And in Hebrews chapter 10 where we've just read from the emphasis is the principle on which they live their lives the just shall live by faith. Now, after that heading at the end of chapter 10 chapter 11 is a catalogue of good examples of just people who lived on the principle of faith. And then when we come into the beginning of chapter 12 after many good examples of just people who lived by faith you come to the only perfect example the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what chapter 12 verse 2 is about.

The climax of the line of faith by the way if in considering chapter 11 without digressing too much if you wonder [00:26:01] why of those who died in faith because it says all these died in faith if you wonder why Abel is the first one that's mentioned is dying in faith the answer is very easy he was the first one that did die in faith. Whether or not you include Adam is up to you and I certainly would but the reason Abel the line of faith the line of those who died in faith is mentioned Abel was the first faithful person to die when he was murdered by his brother.

But the climax is given chapter 12 verse 2 looking away from everything and anyone else even looking away from all these good examples in chapter 11 the supreme only perfect example is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what's the emphasis then here? [00:27:01] I would say this in considering those who live by faith and die in faith the Lord Jesus is the perfect example in this the only proper terminus for the life of faith lived to perfection by the Lord Jesus Christ the only proper terminus for that the only proper terminal point is glory at the right hand of God.

Sufficient in itself I say even if the other six were not true here is a substantive reason stands on its own feet as to why Jesus my saviour is rightly in heaven you couldn't think of any [00:28:01] other proper answer to the life that Jesus lived upon earth than that it should be glory at the right hand of God and so we have it as the terminus the only proper terminus of the path of faith now we will be in heaven not because we are perfect but because the work of the cross is perfect we know all about our failings we know that we sin but if we confess our sins God is faithful to forgive us our sins because the Lord Jesus at the cross died and paid the price to God for every sin that we've ever committed but it will be all glory to Jesus again I use his personal name because the epistle to the Hebrews does it will be a wonderful thing to say now [00:29:01] there's someone there who's there in his own right because the life that he lived when he was on earth was without spot and without blemish and the only right terminus for the path and the life of such a one now they are relatively easy but turn back turn back please to chapter 4 and we have to think of something a little bit more difficult chapter 4 verse 14 seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens Jesus the son of God let us hold fast our profession for we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as [00:30:01] we are yet without sin chapter 8 now of the things which we have spoken this is the son we have such a high priest who was set on 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 pitched and not man for every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices where for it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer for if he were on earth he should not be a priest seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law [00:31:04] one of the many sets of good things in the epistle to the hebrews is not a 3 and it's not a 7 and it's not a 9 it's a 10 every now and again the writer says we have things that the christian has that the jews of israel could never have in the way that we have them now and in chapter 4 one of the things that we have we are told we have a great high priest priest one of the reasons why jesus is in heaven unlike the others even if none of the others were true it would be true to say that this [00:32:01] is a sufficient reason for the lord jesus to be in heaven now and this reason is because he is our high priest now there are two words about messengers which have a special force one is the word apostle and the other is high priest now in chapter 3 beginning with the verse verse 1 we are told that for the christian jesus is both the apostle and the high priest now jews knew what high priests were about they knew first of all that mooses really you could use the word about him [00:33:01] he was their leader he was their apostle he got god's message he came out from the presence of god to pass on the message god's message to the people of god Aaron the high priest went in front of the people with messages on behalf of the people to present to god mooses was god's representative with the people Aaron was the people's representative in the presence of god now our lord jesus does both but we're not thinking of the apostle at the present time we are thinking about why the lord jesus is in heaven and is in heaven as the high priest in two ways we really need chapters one to seven of the epistle to the hebrews to tell us about [00:34:01] what the bible talks about the wilderness priesthood of the lord jesus christ what does that mean we live in the world god is in heaven keeping sins out of it that's a separate consideration we are so weak and feeble and ineffective in ourselves that we need someone to represent us in the presence of god our lord jesus in the presence of god i deal with all these weaknesses infirmities difficulties and things like that when the people of israel were in the wilderness they would have been in a very difficult position without a high priest but in the mercy of god aaron represented [00:35:01] the people in the presence of god and he went to god with all the things that needed sorting out and he kept their relationship with god right but you see it's not just a question of all the aches and pains of this life for you and me it might be enough if we knew we know we're going to heaven because the bible says so it would be sufficient for us if we knew as it is true that whatever comes along we can turn to the lord jesus unburden ourselves with all our problems and difficulties and he would smooth [00:36:02] right through life the chapters one to seven or certainly two the end of two to seven are about but that's not sufficient for god god wants to resolve all the difficulties we have so that we can feel free to go into the presence of god now to that end the priesthood of the lord jesus our representative in the presence of god is absolutely vital now there are other books in the bible which say that christians are priests of god but this book is so it's so important in this book to think of the preeminence of the lord jesus that he's the only priest that is spoken of [00:37:01] in christianity in hebrews christians are spoken of not as priests but as worshippers and the priesthood of the lord jesus our representative in heaven in the presence of god is so that unburdened of our difficulties with everything from our side sorted out that he'll be able to conduct us praising god in the very presence of god now that is what we get in chapters eight to ten end of chapter two to the end of chapter seven the wilderness priesthood of the lord jesus chapters eight to ten and we had the word at the beginning of chapter eight the sanctuary priesthood of the lord jesus now that is what we get but happily [00:38:01] the best illustrations of things the bible teaches us are given in the bible itself and if we were to turn to john's gospel chapter thirteen you get a lovely illustration of these two things the lord jesus lord of all and yet he bowed down and he washed his disciples feet they had a long day a hot day they were dirtied from the dust of the road they were weary they were sweaty and they were uncomfortable and the lord jesus before anything else eventually he understood it was the lord's will and even [00:39:01] if he didn't understand it he

should submit to it but having done that having sorted out their needs after the heat and the burden of the day and your needs he says you'll be in no position and this is the words the lord Jesus used you'll be in no position to have part with me in my things now that's a wonderful illustration of the distinction the difference between the wilderness priesthood of the lord Jesus as our high priest sorting and being comfortable in his presence he can take us into the present the very presence of god and [00:40:01] be involved indulging in praise and worship and adoration well this is given in picture form as the high priest now the simpler way of saying this the lord Jesus is not only in heaven because of who he is because of what he's done or how he lived on earth he's in heaven now again a substantive reason stands on its own feet he's in heaven now a prime reason is because of what he's doing now as the high priest over the house of god we must keep moving chapter six please middle of verse 18 another we have we have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold [00:41:01] upon the hope set before us which hope we have another we have as an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast which entereth into that within the veil whither the forerunner is for us entered into the veil now the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus made a high priest after the order of Melchizedek look at that word the third word in verse 20 forerunner again even if nothing else was known about the lord Jesus if we know that the bible teaches us that he is our forerunner that is sufficient reason in itself why the lord Jesus Christ is in heaven his [00:42:01] presence there is the guarantee that we will be there now we can think of many reasons why God in his grace has made us fit for heaven but when we think of many other reasons who he is what he is what he's done what he's doing now the lord Jesus it is right for him to be in heaven because of where we are going he is our forerunner even now entered into heaven and we have one more verse thirteen to which of the angels says God at any time sit on my right hand until I make thine [00:43:01] enemies thy footstool God as such speaking to Jesus as such says I'm going to establish you in glory at my right hand not only as the guarantee that those who trust you as saviour will get to heaven but also as the guarantee that the whole universe will one day acknowledge Jesus as absolutely supreme the supreme authority of the lord Jesus to be demonstrated very soon is another reason why the lord Jesus Christ is in heaven now now I'll be happy if you [00:44:01] can give me further reasons as to why he is there but in the meantime I'm very happy to accept this as one of the good reasons of the bible reasons why Jesus is in heaven and he's been kind enough to be my saviour what a wonderful person now let us sing our closing hymn number 29 O blessed saviour son of god who hast redeemed us with thy blood from guilt unto thee and worthy thee proclaim number 29 O blessed saviour son of god who hast redeemed us [00:45:01] with thy blood from guilt and guilt unto thee with thy blood Amen