

Major Bible Themes

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CHAPTER X

GOD THE SON: HIS PRIESTLY MINISTRY

As High Priest over the true tabernacle on high, the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into Heaven itself there to minister as Priest in behalf of those who are His own in the world (Heb. 8:1, 2). The fact that He, when ascending, was received of His Father in Heaven is evidence that His earth-ministry was accepted. The fact that He sat down indicated that His work for the world was completed. The fact that He sat down on His Father's throne and not on His own throne reveals the truth, so constantly and consistently taught in the Scriptures, that He did not set up a kingdom on the earth at His first advent into the world; but that He is now "expecting" until the time when that kingdom shall come in the earth and the divine will shall be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. "The kingdoms of this world" are yet to become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15), and the kingly Son will yet ask of His Father and He will give Him the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psa. 2:8). However, Scripture clearly indicates that He is not now establishing that kingdom rule in the earth (Matt. 25:31-46), but that He is rather calling out from both Jews and Gentiles a heavenly people who are related to Him as His Body and Bride. After the present purpose is accomplished He will return and "set up the tabernacle of David which is fallen down" (Acts 15:13-18). Though He is a King-Priest according to the Melchisedec type

(Heb. 5:10; 7:1), He is now serving as Priest and not as King. He who is coming again and will then be King of kings, is now ascended to be "head over all things to the church which is his body" (Eph. 1:22, 23). His present priestly ministry is threefold.

I. HE IS THE BESTOWER OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

According to the New Testament, a gift is a divine enablement wrought in and through the believer by the Spirit who indwells him. It is the Spirit working to accomplish certain divine purposes and using the one whom He indwells to that end. It is in no sense a human undertaking aided by the Spirit.

Though Certain general gifts are mentioned in the Scriptures (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11), the possible variety is innumerable since no two lives are lived under exactly the same conditions. However, to each believer some gift is given; but the blessing and power of the gift will be experienced only when the life is wholly yielded to God. (In Romans 12, the truth of verses 1 and 2 precedes that of verses 6 to 8.) There will be little need of exhortation for God-honoring service to the one who is filled with the Spirit; for the Spirit will be working in that one both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

In like manner, certain men who are called his "gifts unto men" are provided and locally placed in their service by the ascended Christ (Eph. 4:7-11). The Lord did not leave this work to the uncertain and insufficient judgment of men (1 Cor. 12:11, 18).

II. THE ASCENDED CHRIST AS PRIEST EVER LIVES TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR HIS OWN

This ministry began before He left the earth (John 17:1-26), is for the saved rather than for the unsaved (John 17:9), and will be continued in Heaven so long as His own are in the world. As Intercessor, His work has to do with the weakness, the helplessness, and the immaturity of the saints who are on the earth -- things concerning which they are in no way guilty. He who knows the limitations of His own, and the power and strategy of the foe with whom they have to contend, is unto them as the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. His care of Peter is an illustration of this truth (Luke 22:31, 32).

The priestly intercession of Christ is not only effectual, but is unending. The priests of old failed because of death; but Christ, because He ever liveth, hath an unchanging priesthood. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost [without end] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). David recognized the same divine shepherding care and its guaranty of eternal safety (Psa. 23:1).

III. CHRIST NOW APPEARS FOR HIS OWN IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The child of God is often guilty of actual sin which would separate him from God were it not for his Advocate and what He wrought in His death. The effect of the Christian's sin upon himself is that he loses his fellowship with God, his joy, his peace, and his power. On the other hand, these

experiences are restored in infinite grace on the sole ground that he confess his sin (1 John 1:9); but it is more important to consider the Christian's sin in relation to the holy character of God.

Through the present priestly advocacy of Christ in Heaven there is absolute safety and security for the Father's child even while he is sinning. An advocate is one who espouses and pleads the cause of another in the open courts. As Advocate, Christ is now appearing in Heaven for His own (Heb. 9:24) when they sin (1 John 2:1). His pleading is said to be with the Father, and Satan is there also ceasing not to accuse the brethren night and day before God (Rev. 12:10). To the Christian, the sin may seem insignificant; but a holy God can never treat it lightly. It may be a secret sin on earth; but it is open scandal in Heaven. In marvelous grace and without solicitation from men, the Advocate pleads the cause of the guilty child of God. What the Advocate does in thus securing the safety of the believer is so in accordance with infinite justice that He is mentioned in this connection as "Jesus Christ the righteous." He pleads His own efficacious blood and the Father is free to preserve His child against every accusation from Satan or men and from the very judgments which sin would otherwise impose, since Christ through His death became the propitiation for our (Christians') sins (1 John 2:2).

The truth concerning the priestly ministry of Christ in Heaven does not make it easy for the Christian to sin. On the contrary, these very things are written that we be not sinning (1 John 2:1); for no one can sin carelessly who considers the necessary pleading which his sin imposes upon the Advocate.

The priestly ministries of Christ as Intercessor and as Advocate are unto the eternal security of those who are saved (Rom. 8:34).

QUESTIONS

1. Where is Christ said to be throughout this present age?
2. What ministry does He now exercise?
3. Name the three services Christ is now undertaking in Heaven.
4. What is a spiritual gift and what is accomplished by it?
5. When did Christ's priestly intercession begin, and how long will it continue?
6. What aspect of the Christian's life does Christ's intercession affect?
7. Wherein does it guarantee the believer's safe-keeping?
8. How long will Christ's priestly ministry continue?
9. What aspects of the Christian's life does Christ's advocacy affect?
10. a. What is the penalty of sin in the Christian's life?

- b. What must he do to be restored to fellowship and blessing?
11. a. How does Christ now fulfill the place of an advocate?
- b. What effect would the Christian's sin produce were it not for Christ?
12. What is the significance of the title, "Jesus Christ the righteous"?
13. For whose sins is Christ the propitiation?
14. Why is it more difficult to sin after we understand we are eternally secure through the advocacy of Christ?