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## CHAPTER

### 1

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## Jesus, Our Man in Glory

**H**ave you heard any sermons lately on the Bible truth that our risen Savior and Lord is now our glorified Man and Mediator? That He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavenlies?

Few Christians are fully aware of Christ's high-priestly office at the throne. I suspect this is a neglected subject in evangelical preaching and teaching. It is a major theme in the letter to the Hebrews. The teaching is plain: Jesus is there, risen and glorified, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, representing the believing children of God, His Church on earth.

Here is one of the great biblical encouragements to acknowledge Jesus and to trust Him in His priestly ministry for us:

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 an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

The Scriptures assure us that there is a true tabernacle—a true sanctuary in heaven. Jesus our great High Priest is busy there. In that heavenly sanctuary is a continuing and effective altar. There is a mercy seat. Best of all, our Mediator and Advocate is there on our behalf. What an amazing truth!

Amazing—and yet how difficult it seems for us to comprehend it and to count on it. In the light of God's gracious revelation, I can only ask in humility and chagrin, "Why are we so ineffective in representing Him? Why are we so apathetic in living for Him and glorifying Him?"

### *Everything about Jesus is glorious*

It is well for us to confess often that everything the Father has revealed concerning Jesus Christ is glorious. His past—as we would humanly look on the past—is glorious, for He made all things that were made. His work on earth as the Son of Man was glorious, for He effected the plan of salvation

through His death and resurrection. Then He ascended into the heavenlies for His mediatorial ministries throughout this present age.

In view of what the Scriptures tell us of Jesus, it should be our primary concern to show forth the eternal glories of this One who is our divine Savior and Lord.

In our world are dozens of different kinds of Christianities. Certainly many of them do not seem to be busy and joyful in proclaiming the unique glories of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. Some brands of Christianity will tell you very quickly that they are just trying to do a little bit of good on behalf of neglected people and neglected causes. Others will affirm that we can do more good by joining in the “contemporary dialogue” than by continuing to proclaim the “old, old story of the cross.”

But we stand with the early Christian apostles. We believe that every Christian proclamation should be to the glory and the praise of the One whom God raised up after He had loosed the pains of death. I am happy to be identified with Peter and his message at Pentecost:

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, hav-

ing loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts 2:22-24)

Peter considered it important to affirm that the risen Christ is now exalted at the right hand of God. He said that fact was the reason for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Frankly, I am too busy serving Jesus to spend my time and energy engaging in contemporary dialogue.

### *We have a commission from heaven*

I think I know what "contemporary dialogue" means. It means that all of those intellectual preachers are busy reading the news magazines so they will be able to comment on the world situation from their pulpits on Sunday mornings. But that is not what God called me to do. He called me to preach the glories of Christ. He commissioned me to tell my people there is a kingdom of God and a throne in the heavens. And that we have One of our own representing us there.

That is what the early Church was excited about. And I think our Lord may have reason to ask why we are no longer very excited about it. The Christian Church in the first century was ablaze with this concept of the risen and victorious Christ exalted at the right hand of the Father. Although it worshiped no other man, it urged the worship of this glorified and exalted Man as God, because He had always been the eternal Son, the second Person of the Godhead. Paul wrote to Timothy:

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

Consider with me some of the things we know about the priesthood for which God anointed our Lord Jesus. Not only was He the eternal Son, but He was also the glorified Man. Why should we ignore the reality of such a priesthood and treat it as if it was some appendage to religious forms and traditions?

### *Priesthood in the Old Testament*

The true idea of the priesthood, as it was developed in the Old Testament and fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ, was ordained by God. It came from His mind and heart. It was dimly foreshadowed in the lives of praying fathers, heads of their households, who assumed responsibility and concern for their families.

Job was a good example of this kind of Old Testament family priest. Afraid his children might have sinned, he prayed to God, asking Him to forgive and cleanse them. But the concept is much more clearly embodied in the Levitical priesthood, ordained by God for Israel's forgiveness and cleansing. In its final perfection, the priesthood is portrayed in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We must acknowledge that God's concept of the priesthood arose from man's alienation from God. It is based on the fact that man has strayed

from God and is lost. This is a fundamental part of truth, just as surely as hydrogen is a part of water. You cannot have water without hydrogen. Just as surely, you cannot have Bible truth without the teaching that mankind has broken with God and fallen from his first created estate, where he was made in God's image.

God's concept and instructions are very plain. There has been a moral breach. Sinning man has violated the laws of God. In other words, man is a moral criminal before the bar of God. It is clear from the Bible that a sinful man or woman cannot return to God's favor and fellowship until justice is satisfied, until the breach is healed.

In an effort to heal the breach, man has used many subtleties and rationalizations. But if he rejects the cross of Christ, if he rejects God's plan of salvation, if he rejects Christ's death and resurrection as the basis for atonement, there is no remaining ground for redemption. Reconciliation is an impossibility.

It is a part of my calling and responsibility in the ministry to warn men and women that rejection of the atoning work of Jesus Christ is fatal to the soul. With such rejection, the efforts of the Savior and His intercession as great High Priest have no meaning.

### *Man is at fault*

Alienation was not God's fault. It was man who alienated himself. Man is away from God, like a little island that has pulled away from the mainland. Drifting out to sea, it has lost the attraction

of its original position. So man has morally pulled away from God and from the attraction of God's fellowship. Man is alienated, without hope and without God in this world.

The important element in God's concept of the priesthood is mediatorship. The Old Testament priest provided a means of reconciliation between God and man. But he had to be ordained of God. Otherwise, he was a false priest. In order to help man, he had to be appointed by God.

God, for His part, needs no help. There never was an Old Testament priest who could help God. The work of the priest was to offer a sacrifice, an atonement, so that alienated man could be forgiven and cleansed. In the Levitical order, an offering had to be made to God by the priest on behalf of the sinner. The priest was appointed to plead the case of man before a righteous God.

That ancient priestly system was not perfect. It was only the shadow of a perfect, eternal priesthood to be brought about by the Savior-Priest, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son. Every priest in the order of Levi knew only too well his own sin. This was the point of the breakdown. When that priest stood before God in the holiest place to present an atonement for the sins of the people, he was face-to-face as well with the reality of his own failures and shortcomings.

In our own day, we recognize what this means to us as liberated and forgiven believers. Singing the hymnody of Isaac Watts, we revel in Christ's atonement and God's forgiveness:

Not all the blood of beasts  
 On Jewish altars slain,  
 Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
 Or wash away the stain.  
 But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,  
 Takes all our sins away;  
 A sacrifice of nobler name,  
 And richer blood than they.

The Old Testament priest knew that the ritual of sacrifice could not completely atone for sins or change man's sinful nature. In that priestly system, God "covered" the sin until the time when Christ would come. Christ, the Lamb of God, would completely bear away the sin of the world.

Jesus our Lord qualified completely to be our great High Priest. He was ordained and appointed by God. He was the eternal Son of whom the Father said, "Thou art a priest for ever" (Psalm 110:4). He made reconciliation for the people. He showed the only genuine compassion for lost mankind. The Scriptures affirm that in these qualifications as priest, Jesus our Lord became the Author, the Source, the Giver of eternal salvation.

### *What Jesus' manhood means to us*

Let me review again what it means to us that Jesus was born into this world and lived among us. I once heard a preacher say that Jesus was man but not *a* man. I am convinced that Jesus was both man and *a* man. He had, in the most real sense,

that substance and quality that is the essence of mankind. He was a man born of a woman.

Unless we understand this, I do not think we can be fully aware of what it means for Jesus to be representing us—a Man representing us at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Suppose you and I were able right now to go to the presence of the Father. If we could see the Spirit, who is God, and the archangels and seraphim and strange creations out of the fire, we would see them surrounding the throne. But to our delight and amazement, we would see a Man there, human like we are—the Man Christ Jesus Himself!

Jesus, the Man who is also God, was raised as a victor from the dead and exalted to the right hand of the Father. I think it is safe to say that during this age of the work and witness of the Christian Church on earth, Jesus would be the one visible Man in that heavenly company at the throne.

Of course, there are questions that students of the Bible have discussed for many years. All of us do well to confess that much about the glorious kingdom of God is yet unknown to us and cannot now be comprehended. For instance, what about the righteous dead and their place in the heavenlies?

We might state our question like this: If the risen and glorified Jesus is ministering there, what about the great number of Christian men and women who, having died in the faith, have gone on to meet the Lord? Where are they?

First of all, and beyond any other consideration, we know that they are safely sheltered in

God's heavenly realm. The apostle Paul declares that it is "far better" for the Christian to "depart, and to be with Christ" (Philippians 1:23) than to continue in this world of sin and tears.

At death, only the physical body succumbs. For the believers in Christ, their undying and immortal spirits have passed into a blessed spiritual abode prepared by our God. Let us be assured that God is ever faithful in His gracious plan for His creation and for His redeemed children.

We surely know that all things are not going to continue forever as we now know them. Paul in the first century wrote advice and encouragement to the Thessalonian believers. He told them plainly that he did not want them to be unaware of the state of those believers whom he described as "asleep"—having passed into the presence of the Lord through physical death. His message was one of distinct consolation. It continues to shine as a word of hope for every believer:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with

them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18)

Plainly our Creator-God and Redeemer still has many kingdom secrets not yet revealed to us. But we do know that in that glad day of Christ's coming, there will be great transformations, all taking place with split-second speed. Concerning those great changes, Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:52-53)

Paul used the familiar analogy of plant life to describe to the Corinthians the reality of the promised resurrection:

[T]hat which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. . . .

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in

incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. . . .

And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. . . .

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (1 Corinthians 15:36-38, 42-44, 49, 54)

Surely it was this same revelation by the Spirit of God that caused the writer Jude to exclaim:

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)

We rest upon God's revelation that in the heavenly world today, Jesus in His glorified body represents us at the throne of God. Each of us who loves and serves Him has a right to the great scriptural promises. In that great climactic event of the ages, our Lord will come and we shall all be changed. He will present us before the eternal throne with exceeding joy, glorified even as He is glorified!