

COOPERATING WITH THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

Responding to Christ's Intercession in His Heavenly Ministry

Scripture Reading: Heb. 7:25-26; Rom. 8:26-27, 34; Col. 1:9-11; 4:12

I. Christ as the kingly and divine High Priest is interceding for us—Heb. 7:25-26:

- A. Christ has been constituted our High Priest according to the power of an indestructible life (v. 16), which nothing can dissolve; this is an endless life, being the eternal, divine, uncreated life and the resurrection life that has passed through the test of death and of Hades (Acts 2:24; Rev. 1:18).
- B. Because Christ lives forever without any change, He is able to save us to the uttermost in extent, time, and space—Heb. 7:24-25.
- C. In Hebrews 7:25 the expression *to the uttermost* means “completely, entirely, perfectly, to the end, and for eternity”; this indicates that Christ as our High Priest is able to save us to the fullest extent, that is, to save in every kind of situation and condition.
- D. Christ is able to save us completely because He is interceding for us; He is our perpetual, constant, and eternal Intercessor—vv. 25-26:
 1. God has appointed Him to take care of us, and He is now caring for us by interceding for us; He is interceding for us now, and He will save us to the uttermost.
 2. He appears before God on our behalf, praying that we may be wholly saved and brought fully into God's eternal purpose—9:24; Eph. 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9.
 3. Christ intercedes for us constantly, and eventually His intercession will overcome, subdue, and save us; we all will be completely saved by His intercession; His salvation reaches to the uttermost.
 4. We should believe that Christ is always interceding for us and come forward to God through Him—Heb. 7:25.
 5. Christ can save us to the uttermost because He is living not only in the heavens but also in us—Col. 3:1; 1:27; Rom. 8:34, 10:
 - a. While He is living in the heavens, He is transmitting Himself into us—Eph. 1:22-23.
 - b. He is living in the heavens to intercede for us and take care of our case, but the reality of this is transmitted into our spirit by His Spirit.
 - c. We must learn to see this heavenly vision and enjoy our High Priest; then we will receive mercy and find grace at the throne of grace for timely help—Heb. 4:14-16.

II. In Romans 8 Christ is interceding for us at the right hand of God, and the Spirit is interceding for us in our spirit—vv. 34, 26-27:

- A. Christ died for us, He was resurrected, and now He is in the heavens at the right hand of God interceding for us—v. 34:
 - 1. Our Christ today is in the highest heaven, holding the highest position at God’s right hand—Heb. 8:1.
 - 2. Christ is interceding for our glorification; this corresponds to His interceding for us to be saved to the uttermost—7:25-26.
 - 3. As the consummated and ascended God-man and as the Head of the Body, Christ is interceding for us that we, the many God-men, could overcome opposition and all kinds of circumstances and be kept in union with Him in His unconditional love so that we may be conformed to His image as the firstborn Son of God and thus become His reproduction for the constitution of the corporate and organic Body of Christ—Rom. 8:29, 34-39; 12:4-5.
- B. “The Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”—8:26:
 - 1. The weakness here is our ignorance of how we should pray; we do not know the kind of prayer God desires, and we are not clear how to pray.
 - 2. In our groaning the Spirit groans also, interceding for us; His interceding is mainly that we may experience the transformation in life for growth in life unto the maturity of sonship so that we may be fully conformed to the image of God’s firstborn Son—12:2; 8:29.
- C. “He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God”—v. 27:
 - 1. The mind of the Spirit here is not the mind of the Spirit that is independent of us; it is the mind of the Spirit that has been mingled with our mind and has become part of our heart—v. 6.
 - 2. The Spirit has not only mingled Himself with our spirit (v. 16); He has also mingled His mind with our mind.
 - 3. The searching Spirit prays for us according to God Himself, that we may be conformed to the image of His Son—v. 29.

III. We need to respond to Christ’s intercession in His heavenly ministry—Heb. 7:25-26; Rom. 8:34; Acts 12:5; Col. 1:9-11; 4:12:

- A. Christ’s intercession requires our response; we need to participate in Christ’s interceding life and become on earth the reflection of Christ’s intercession in His heavenly ministry, praying the prayers of the interceding Christ—Rom. 8:26-27, 34; 1 Tim. 2:1; Col. 4:3; 1 Thes. 5:25; 2 Thes. 3:1; Heb. 13:18.
- B. Through our prayer Christ, the Head, is given a way to carry out His administration through His Body—Rev. 5:6; 8:3-5; Eph. 1:10, 17-23.
- C. In Acts 12 we have the intercessory prayer of the church, and in Colossians 1:9-11 and 4:12, the intercessory prayers of Paul and Epaphras:
 - 1. When Peter was in prison, “prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him”—Acts 12:5:
 - a. Behind the scene there was a battle of spiritual forces, a battle between God and His enemy, Satan—vv. 4-6.

- b. By prayer the church fought the battle with God against Satan, the evil one—vv. 5-23.
 - 2. Paul prayed that the saints would “be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”—Col. 1:9:
 - a. Here the will of God concerns the all-inclusive Christ as our portion—v. 12.
 - b. The will of God is profound in relation to our knowing, experiencing, and living the all-inclusive Christ; God’s will for us is that we know Christ, experience Christ, enjoy Christ, live Christ, and have Christ become our life and our person—Phil. 3:7-10; 1:21a; Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:17a.
 - 3. Epaphras struggled on behalf of the saints in his prayers that they would stand mature and be fully assured in all the will of God—Col. 4:12.
- D. The position of prayer is ascension, that is, a heavenly position—Eph. 1:3; 2:6:
 - 1. If we leave the heavenly position, we lose the position of prayer.
 - 2. With the position of prayer there is the authority of prayer; as the position of prayer is ascension, the authority of prayer is also ascension—Matt. 17:20; 18:18-19.
 - 3. When we have the heavenly position and authority, our prayers become God’s administration, the execution of God’s will—6:10; Eph. 2:6; 6:18.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

**CHRIST BEING ABLE TO SAVE TO THE UTTERMOST,
SEEING HE IS ALWAYS LIVING TO INTERCEDE FOR THEM**

Christ is able to save us because He intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25b). As our High Priest, Christ undertakes our case by interceding for us. He appears before God on our behalf, praying for us that we may be saved and brought fully into God’s eternal purpose. We need to simply rest in His intercession, trust in it, and enjoy it. Be assured that our divine High Priest is continually interceding for us. Many times we have been saved by His intercession. We have a perpetual, constant, and eternal Intercessor.

Our divine High Priest intercedes for us constantly, knowing how easy it is for us to fall and, once we have fallen, to remain in our fallen state. Sooner or later His intercession will overcome, subdue, and save us. We all will be completely subdued and saved by His intercession. God appointed Him to take care of us, and He is now taking care of us by interceding for us. Although we may forget that we have called upon His name, He will never forget it. He is interceding for us, and He will save us to the uttermost.

Since we have such a High Priest interceding for us, we should “come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help” (4:16). We need to keep coming forward to God. Morning and evening, day and night, we should come forward to Him, saying to Him, “I am open to You. You are rich. I need You. I want to stay open to You all the time.” (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, p. 3782)

THE HEAVENLY PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

As you are probably aware, the Bible tells us that Christ has three offices: prophet, priest, and king. Christ came the first time mainly as the Prophet foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18. In His earthly ministry He spoke for God, spoke forth God, taught the disciples, and prophesied. This was His role as prophet. Then in the last part of His earthly ministry He began to offer Himself to God until finally on the cross He offered Himself as the

reality of all the sacrifices to God for us. In this He was fulfilling His role as priest. From that point on, He has had this function.

THE EARTHLY PRIESTHOOD FULFILLED

In Levitical times the priests did two kinds of work. The first was the offering of sacrifices to God in the outer court around the altar. Once the offerings were made, the priests entered into the Holy Place. The high priest entered the Holy of Holies. Here he would minister to God on behalf of His people.

The first priestly work typifies Christ's earthly priesthood; the second, His heavenly. When Christ offered Himself on the cross to God for us, He was a priest, offering on the earth in the outer court. Then after His resurrection He entered into the third heaven, which is the Holy of Holies. Here He continues to serve as the heavenly priest. It is this second aspect of His priesthood that we shall consider now.

This priesthood in the heavens is what mostly occupies Christ today. It is a vast subject for us to cover. The book of Hebrews deals with this matter quite comprehensively. Since we are limited by time in our consideration of it here, I recommend that you read the Life-study messages on Hebrews that deal with it (especially Messages 13, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, and 35).

OUR PRIEST BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE

For Christ to be a priest, He must be a man (Heb. 2:16-17). The high priest was "taken from among men" (5:1). If he had been an angel, he would not have had any understanding of human problems. Because the priest was taken from among men, he could sympathize with man's weakness. Our High Priest today, Jesus Christ, is a man. He has partaken of our nature. He has shared in blood and flesh. He has been made like us in all things. He had to eat and drink. Sometimes He even wept. He shed tears at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35), He wept over Jerusalem at the end of His earthly ministry (Luke 19:41), and He prayed "with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7) in the Garden of Gethsemane. Even today He is a man, a man in the glory. "We do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin" (4:15). Because He thoroughly knows all our weak points and problems, He sympathizes with us. Such is our High Priest as a man.

Our High Priest is also God. Because He is human, He can sympathize with us. But because He is also divine, He can take care of us. In the Old Testament the high priest Aaron could sympathize with the people, but many times he could not help them, because he was not divine. Our High Priest, however, is according to the order not of Aaron but of Melchizedek (5:6, 10; 6:20). Of Melchizedek no genealogy is recorded in Genesis (14:18-20; Heb. 7:3) so that he might be a proper type of Christ as the eternal One to be our High Priest perpetually. As a man, Christ knows our case and sympathizes with us; as God, He is able to take care of all our needs. Hallelujah for this God-man who is our High Priest!

The priesthood of Christ is "not according to the law of a fleshy commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life" (v. 16). Aaron was constituted a high priest according to the powerless letter of the law, but Christ, according to the powerful element of an indestructible life. Our High Priest is constituted of a life that nothing can conquer but rather that conquers everything. It is a life that cannot be destroyed and a life that saves to the uttermost. It is the endless, eternal, divine, uncreated life, the resurrection life that has passed the test of death and Hades.

Our High Priest is now serving God for us in the Holy of Holies. He is our Representative in the supreme court of the heavens. He is our Attorney, presenting our case to God. We

do not fully realize how much Christ is doing for us there. Although His redemptive work has been accomplished, His heavenly service to us never ceases.

INTERCEDING FOR US IN OUR NEED

How much we need Him!

I need Thee, Oh, I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee.

(*Hymns, #371*)

Surely every hour we need Him. From hour to hour we do not know what situations will confront us. We may say Hallelujah or Amen in the meeting, but when we get home, our joy may vanish, and instead of Hallelujah and Amen there will be silence and a long face. A problem has arisen. Or we may get chilled and catch cold. Whatever the problem is, Christ is there taking care of our case. He bears us when we have a long face or are ill. His interceding never ceases. His ability to take care of us is unlimited because He is the almighty God. His priesthood is an interceding ministry in the heavens, in the Holy of Holies, before God for us.

You are often unaware of His interceding, but sometimes you do realize that He is thus caring for you. You may be in the midst of an argument with your wife when suddenly your words fail. Why do the angry words no longer come tumbling out? Before you were saved, did you ever have such an experience? In my own case I used to go into a rage that could last the whole day, even overnight. Since I have been saved, however, I have never been able to get fully angry. The most my anger has lasted, as far as I can recall, is a few minutes. How about your case? How long can you stay angry? Not very long, because Christ is there interceding for you at the throne of God, and His interceding is heard.

Sometimes troubles come to us, and we get anxious. Before we were saved, these worries were endless. Now, when anxious thoughts arise, we soon sense a soothing comfort, saying to us, "Why don't you pray? You don't need to worry." Christ has begun to intercede for us, and this is the effect it produces. Then we respond to Him, "Thank You, Lord. You bear my worries. All my cares are in Your hand." We pray just a few short words, and the anxiety is lifted. We can enjoy Him. This is Christ's priestly intercession for us. It is unending.

In Romans 8:34 Paul asks, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." There is no one who can condemn us. Christ surely does not; He died for us, was resurrected, and is now in the heavens interceding for us. His heavenly ministry is to take care of us.

We have all had many experiences of our faithful High Priest's care for us. Many times we have been reminded, comforted, strengthened, and even carried by Him. If we had time, we could hear testimony after testimony of how the help has come, not so much from the outside as from within. The help comes also from the heavens. There is something within and something from above that strengthens, sustains, comforts, and enlightens us. Without this support from our High Priest's intercession, we would long since have been gone. We have been preserved not by ourselves but by our High Priest. (*The Heavenly Ministry of Christ*, pp. 53-56)