

"Watchman, what of the night?"



"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

**"THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST
INTO HEAVEN: ANOTHER
LOOK INTO VARIOUS
ASPECTS OF THIS ESSENTIAL
BIBLICAL TRUTH"**

- 2 -

COVID-19

The Foundation's Response pg. 7

Editor's Preface

In the last Issue of WWN (# 40), we noted that two of the most well known creeds in Christendom - *The Apostles Creed* and *The Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed* - both mention that Christ, at His ascension into heaven, "sitteth [on/at] the right hand of [the Father / God the Father Almighty]." ¹ The seating of Jesus at the Father's right hand is a biblical reference (primarily) to Psalm 110: 1. How one understands this enthronement of Christ has been a topic of serious debate among professed Christians. Many, particularly from the "amillennialist" school of thought, teach that our Lord's enthronement on the Father's throne is the same thing / event as His enthronement on "the throne of his father David." (Luke 1: 32). This is largely due to the fact that the "thousand years" (the millennium) of Revelation 20: 2-7 is understood as a symbolic depiction of the church age (the gospel era) during which the reign of Christ on the Heavenly Father's throne and on David's throne are synonymous events transpiring at this same time. In contrast, "premillennialists" believe that the millennium is a literal thousand year period that occurs after the second coming of Christ. This school of thought generally understands that the seating of Christ at



the Father's right hand and His seating on David's throne are not a synonymous coronation of Jesus, but separate events that do not take place at the same time. However, because practically all premillennialism today is associated with classical dispensationalism, the millennial reign of Christ (on David's throne) is basically presented as a literalistic, earthly rule of Christ, over the world, with preferential honor given to a restored National Israel. Sadly, the seating of the Savior at the right hand of God at His ascension is inaccurately focused upon as the *kingly reign* of Christ is generally confined to the millennium.

Most of the confusion surrounding this issue can be corrected and cleared up by properly correlating the biblical oaths, promises, and types with each other. Primarily, a more comprehensive understanding of the heavenly ministry of Christ and its relationship to this subject is needed. Many of the false teachings on this matter come from a meager knowledge of the sanctuary doctrine.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST INTO HEAVEN: ANOTHER LOOK INTO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THIS ESSENTIAL BIBLICAL TRUTH - 2 -

The Ministration Of Christ Enthroned At The Right Hand Of The Father As The Kingly High Priest After The Order Of Melchizedek -

At the time the angel Gabriel was sent to the virgin Mary to announce the conception and birth of Jesus, he declared unto her:

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the

Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1: 31-33).

This promise was expounded upon by the apostle Peter publicly on the day of Pentecost (31 A.D.), ten days after Christ's ascension into heaven as witnessed by His disciples at that time. First, the apostle leads into his discourse by introducing certain, salient facts about Jesus which relate Him to the Messianic predictions of the Scriptures:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; *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, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." (Acts 2: 22-24, emphasis added).

Peter confirms that the "miracles and wonders and signs" performed by Jesus were done by and "approved of God *among you*." (emph. added). The people were generally aware of the events surrounding the ministry of Jesus, "as [they] themselves also [knew]." Though Jesus had been "taken, and by wicked hands [had been] crucified and slain," this had all been done "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" - revealed by both Scripture and Jesus Himself. However, these same sources also testified to the truth that God would raise the Messiah up from the dead "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it (death)." This all happened to "Jesus of Nazareth" and His resurrection from the dead on "the third day" (1 Corinthians 15: 4) was the

ultimate proof that He is the promised Messiah. Peter goes on to show that this is true by quoting the testimony of King David recorded in the Psalms, beginning with Psalm 16:

"For David speaketh concerning him (Christ), I foresaw the Lord (the Father) always before my face, *for he is on my right hand*, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." (Acts 2: 25-28, *emph. added*; compare with Psalm 16: 8-11).

That David was not speaking of himself in these scriptural passages, but was *prophetically* referring to Jesus (the Messiah to come), is the main point that the apostle continues emphasizing as follows:

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." (Acts 2: 29).

Clearly, because David had been "dead and buried" and was in "his sepulchre (tomb) ... unto [that] day" for many centuries, he could not possibly be the "Holy One" mentioned in this text as his person ("soul") had been in the grave ("hell"/hades) since his death and his body ("flesh") had decayed (saw "corruption") also since his death. Peter then continues:

"Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before *spake of the resurrection of Christ*, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corrup-

tion." (Ibid. 2: 29-31, *emph. added*).

Clearly, the "oath" that Peter expounds upon is the same promise the angel Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary at the time of his visitation with her. It stated:

"For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed. The Lord hath *sworn in truth* unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore." (Psalm 132: 10-12, *emph. added*).

This oath as originally promised to David assured him the following:

"And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom *for ever*. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But *my mercy shall not depart away from him*, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established *for ever* before thee: thy throne shall be established *for ever*." (2 Samuel 7: 12-16; compare with 1 Chronicles 17: 11-14 and Psalm 89: 3-4, 27-37, *emph. added*).

In later years this promise/oath/covenant became known as "the sure mercies of David":

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even *the sure mercies of David*. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou

shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee." (Isaiah 55: 3-5, *emph. added*).

Simply, and *quite literally*, "the sure mercies of David" guaranteed that a descendant of King David (the Christ) would reign "for ever" (eternally) as King, "for ever" (eternally) upon David's throne, "for ever" (eternally) over God's covenant people, and in a kingdom that would "be established for ever" (eternally - "and of his kingdom there shall be no end."). Again, Peter declares plainly and specifically exactly *how* this was fulfilled:

"He (David) seeing this before (that the Messiah/Jesus was the One *who* the sure mercies of David was referring to) *spoke of the resurrection of Christ*, that his soul was not left in hell (hades/the grave), neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God *raised up*, whereof we all are witnesses. (Acts 2: 31-32, *emph. added*).

Approximately 16 years later, during his first missionary journey while at Antioch in Pisidia, the apostle Paul delivered a sermon in which he, too, linked the resurrection of Jesus from the dead with the *fulfillment* of "the sure mercies of David":

"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers (referring to Genesis 12: 3), God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning *that he raised him up from the dead*, now no more to return to corruption, *he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David*. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine

Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God *raised again*, saw no corruption." (Acts 13: 32-37, *emph. added*).

Thus, in a similar manner, both Peter and Paul testify that "the sure mercies of David" were fulfilled by Christ's resurrection to everlasting life. Only One who is immortal (possesses "the power of an endless life" - Hebrews 7: 16b) could in the fullest, literal sense fulfill this prediction. However we dare not, as so many do, understand the ascension of Jesus and His subsequent seating at the right hand of the throne of God *as the same thing* as Christ being seated on the throne of David *at that time*. For Peter next introduces into his Pentecostal presentation the ascension of Christ into heaven and its relationship to King David:

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this (the outpouring of the Holy Spirit), which ye now see and hear. For David *is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself*, The Lord said *unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool*. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made *that same Jesus*, whom ye have crucified, *both Lord and Christ*. (Acts 2: 33-36, *emph. added*; compare with Psalm 110: 1).

It is not David that is "by the right hand of God exalted" because, to reiterate, David was not speaking about himself regarding this when he stated in Psalm 16: 8 that:

"I have set the Lord always before me: *because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved*." (*emph. added*).

Rather, again, it was evident that he was

writing about Christ. Also it is significant, as the apostle Peter continues his discourse, that he quotes the testimony of King David found in Psalm 110: 1 to both reinforce and introduce another facet of Jesus' kingly reign. Some in his audience would no doubt have recalled that Jesus Himself had earlier toward the close of His public ministry expounded upon this passage of Scripture (see Matthew 22: 41-46; Mark 12: 35-37; Luke 20: 41-44). He pointed out to the people, and especially the religious leaders, that David in calling Christ "Lord" in this well known Messianic Psalm, was not referring to simply one of the king's numerous mortal "sons" *only*, but a *specific* "son" (descendant) of David's who "he ... himself" addresses as "Lord" (a title of divinity). This dumbfounded most of His hearers as they did not comprehend - because of erroneous views of the character and work of the Messiah - the divine/human nature of Jesus which identified Him as "both Lord and Christ;" a truth that Jesus (the God/man) was attempting to impress upon them. As such, the understanding of the divine/human nature of the Messiah brings into focus and correlates all the prophesied roles and offices that the Bible assigns to the Messiah. And while they are all interconnected, we must still "rightly [divide] the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2: 15) by allowing the Scriptures to coordinate all the respective functions of Christ's mission and work into their proper harmonious relationship with one another.

Therefore, as noted, the kingly reign of Christ was plainly differentiated between the promise of a reign upon King David's "throne" and a reign with God upon the Heavenly Father's throne at His "right hand." While the promise/oath/covenant made to David ("the sure mercies of David") was

"fulfilled" by Christ's resurrection, nothing is said about Jesus being *seated* on the throne of David *at His ascension into heaven*. Rather, His heavenly ascent is linked with "*being by the right hand of God exalted*" (note the present tense). In fact, all seven verses of Psalm 110 are quoted (or alluded to) throughout the New Testament in reference Christ's enthronement and reign "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8: 1). Psalm 110: 4 contains *another oath* regarding the Messiah's reign:

"The Lord hath *sworn*, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order (manner) of Melchizedek."

Concerning Melchizedek, Paul's letter to the Hebrews states:

"For this Melchisedec, King of Salem, priest of the most high God ... first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace." (Hebrews 7: 1-2; compare with Genesis 14: 18-20).

So we see that Melchizedek was both a king and a priest, i.e., a King/Priest whose office and attributes typified the Messiah to come (Jesus). This means that the reign of Jesus in heaven at the Father's right hand combines both a position of supreme royal authority (King - see Matthew 28: 18) and also a position of an intercessory mediator (High Priest - see Hebrews 5: 1-2) united together "after the order of Melchizedek." The exaltation and enthronement of Christ at (and since) His ascension into heaven is repeatedly spoken in the book of Hebrews as being - "set on the *right hand of the throne* of the Majesty in the heavens" ... "set down at *the right hand of the throne* of God." (Hebrews 8: 1; 12: 2, *emph. added*.) This "throne," associated with the *present*

priestly work of Christ, is introduced as follows:

"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 ... Let us therefore come boldly unto the *throne of grace*, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Ibid. 4: 14, 16, *emph. added*).

In the book of Revelation, the messages to "the seven churches" concludes with this promise from the risen and glorified Savior:

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit *with me in my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down *with my Father in his throne*." (Revelation 3: 21, *emph. added*).

Notice, Christ assures that those believers who overcome "will ... *sit with me in my throne*" (future tense), even as He "also overcame, and am *set down with my Father in his throne*." (present tense). Again, the Father's throne is the one that Jesus is depicted as seated upon *presently* ("with my Father"). Clearly, the Father's throne ("his throne") is the kingly/priestly "throne of grace" which both He and Christ are *now* seated upon. However, Jesus also speaks of a *future* time when those believers who overcome are depicted as seated on Christ's throne ("with me"). Here, Christ refers to His throne as "my throne." And what throne does Jesus anticipate a future enthronement upon (which His resurrection has *already* secured) and when will this occur? He Himself declares:

"When the Son of man *shall come in his glory*, and all the holy angels with him, *then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory*." (Matthew 25: 31, *emph. added*).

Plainly, it is at the Savior's second coming that the enthronement of Jesus upon "the throne of his father David" ("the throne of

his glory") is fully realized. The mediatorial "throne of grace" age closes and the eternal "throne of glory" age begins. The Writings further confirm all these Bible truths. Speaking of "that beautiful prophecy of Zechariah," the Lord's messenger states:

"Says the prophet: 'He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His [the Father's] throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the *counsel of peace* shall be between Them both.' (Zechariah 6: 12-13) ...

"He 'shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne.' Not now 'upon the throne of His glory;' the kingdom of glory has not yet been ushered in. Not until His work as a mediator shall be ended will God 'give unto Him the throne of His father David,' a kingdom of which 'there shall be no end.' (Luke 1: 32-33). As a priest, Christ is now set down with the Father in His throne. (Revelation 3: 21) ...

"And in the ministration in the sanctuary above, 'the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.' 'God *so loved* the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' (John 3: 16)." (GC, pgs. 415-417).²

This coalescing of the kingdom of grace into the kingdom of glory is also illustrated in our Lord's parable of the pounds:

"A certain nobleman (Christ) went into a far country (ascended into heaven) to receive for himself a kingdom (the kingdom of glory), and to return (the second coming). And he called his ten servants (His people, the true church), and delivered them ten pounds (spiritual blessings / gifts), and said unto them, Occupy (invest the blessings / gifts) till I come. But his citizens (unfaithful people, the professed worldly church) hated him,

and sent a message after him (to the throne of grace), saying, We will not have this man to reign over us (a rejection of the kingdom of grace and its present King/Priest). And it came to pass, that when he was returned (from heaven to earth again), having received the kingdom (of glory), then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money (the spiritual blessings / gifts), that he might know how much every man had gained by trading (advanced the kingdom of grace by their faithfulness) ...

"But those mine enemies (the "nobleman's" unfaithful people, his professed worldly church), which would not that I should reign over them (by rejecting and refusing to advance the kingdom of grace), bring hither (after the "nobleman's return), and slay them before me (execution of eternal destruction and loss of a place in the kingdom of glory/the eternal "kingdom of Christ and of God" - Ephesians 5: 5b). (Luke 19: 12-15, 27).
» *To be Continued.*

1. Gary L. Patrick, *"Watchman, what of the night?"* (Nora Springs, IA: Adventist Laymen's Foun-

ation of Iowa, Inc., Issue # 40 - April / May 2020, "The Ascension Of Christ Into Heaven: Another Look Into Various Aspects Of This Essential Biblical Truth - 1 -"), 1. https://www.alfiowa.com/IOWA-BACK-ISSUES/WWN_Issue_40.pdf

2. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy, Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950), 415-417.

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The world over the course of the last half year or so has experienced a sudden and drastic change of events in nearly every area of our lives. All of us, in some degree, have been brought abruptly to the realization that our existence on earth is not as predictable and sure as most generally think. This virus outbreak has again reminded us pointedly that humanity is not as in control of events that occur throughout life as what we have a tendency to believe. As always, it is God who is in control over all of His creation. And in the urgent time we live in, we all need to repent, reform our lives through Christ's grace and face the truth that our "redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21: 28). ❖

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Founder	Elder William H. Grotheer
Editor, Publications & Research	Gary L. Patrick
Associate Editor	Dennis J. Tevis
Proofreader	William E. Caloudes

WEBSITES

www.alfiowa.com
www.adventistlaymen.com

E-MAIL

Editor - alfia@myomnitel.com

Webmaster - webmaster@adventistlaymen.com

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Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc.

P.O. Box 665

Nora Springs, IA 50458-0665

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