

"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"**

- 3 -

Editor's Preface

Continuing forward with A.L.F. of Iowa's coverage of the importance and meaning of Christ's ascension into heaven, this Issue of WWN will address an 'aspect' of our Lord's kingly / priestly reign that appears to be largely ignored and therefore seldom discussed. Exactly *what*, according to Scripture, is Jesus doing at the Father's right hand in His capacity as a King Priest? Even aside from the huge degree of ignorance, apathetic indifference, and complacency concerning this topic, the (relatively) few who do attempt to answer this usually do so vaguely. Often this is characterized by lack of detail, incompleteness or ambiguity. The major problem, again, appears to be a failure to coordinate *all* the various biblical facets together into a harmonious, doctrinal whole. The entire present write-up is therefore devoted to an in-depth exposition of this often ill-defined topic.

**THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST INTO
HEAVEN: ANOTHER LOOK INTO
VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THIS
ESSENTIAL BIBLICAL TRUTH - 3 -**

The Melchizedekian Intercessory / Judgmental Work Of The Lord Jesus Christ During His Priestly Reign In The Heavenly Sanctuary -

Shortly after the miraculous events that occurred on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, the Bi-



ble records another miracle involving "a certain man lame from his mother's womb ... [asking] alms of them that entered into the temple" (Acts 3: 2). The apostles Peter and John, who together were about to enter into the temple "at the hour of prayer," met this man who "asked an alms" from them. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk ... and immediately ... he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Ibid. 3: 6-8). The public healing of this well known lame man caused such an astonishment among those at the temple that "all the people ran together unto them (Peter and John) in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering." (Ibid. 3: 11). Upon seeing this, the apostle Peter "answered unto the people" in a manner somewhat similar to the presentation he had given earlier on Pentecost. After outlining the facts regarding Israel's corporate majority's denial, rejection and guilt in the death of Jesus whom "the God of our fathers, hath glorified" and "hath raised from the dead," he declares that "the faith which is by him (Jesus) hath given him (the lame man) this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." (Ibid. 3: 12-16).

At this point, the apostle delivers a call for corporate repentance to the "men (people) of Israel" akin to that given during his Pentecostal address (see Acts 2: 36-38), along with further mention and elaboration of Christ's ascent into heaven:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when ("in order that" - NASB ¹) the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before

was preached unto you: *Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Ibid. 3: 19-21, emphasis added).

Notice, that before "the Lord (the Father) ... shall send Jesus Christ" (a reference to the second coming), that "the heaven must receive (Jesus Christ - the Messiah, the anointed One) until the times of restitution of all things."

The word translated "must" (Greek, ΔΕΙ, *dei*- "[it is] necessary, inevitable") in the context of this passage means "*necessity* established by the counsel and decree of God, esp. by that purpose of his which relates to the salvation of men by the intervention of Christ and which is disclosed in the O.T. prophecies ... in this use, esp. of what Christ was destined finally to undergo, his sufferings, death, resurrection, *ascension*: Lk. xxiv. 46; Mt. xxvi. 54; Jn. iii. 14; *Acts iii. 21*; etc." (emph. added) ² Verse 21, literally translated from the Greek text into English reads:

"whom it behoveth heaven, indeed, to receive till times of a restitution of all things, of which God spake through the mouth of all His holy prophets from the age." (YLT). ³

Clearly, this scriptural passage in Greek establishes that heaven's reception of Jesus into its realm was a "must" because in this setting it "behoveth," i.e., is necessary, is inevitable, is incumbent upon, is needful, is right and proper, etc., for Jesus to be in heaven "indeed" (Greek, ΜΕΝ, *men* - ("verily, truly")), "till times of a restitution of all things." So rather than viewing the ascension of Christ as a marginal event - treating it as a fringe, peripheral, and even somewhat non-essential teaching as many throughout Chris-

tendom do - the apostle Peter confirms, right at the beginning of the Christian era, the absolutely crucial place that the ascension occupies in God's total, foreordained salvific plan, consummating in "a restitution (restoration) of all things." Considering that we are living toward the *conclusion* of this present age, in the prophetic "time of the end" (compare Daniel 12: 4-9 with Revelation 10: 8-11), we dare not regard this doctrine in the same trivial manner commonly held among the professed Christian community. The "times (Greek, ΧΡΟΝΟΣ, *chronos* - "[space of] time, season") of a restitution of all things" is fast approaching (which the second coming of Christ will usher in)! In fact the present truth for these "times" (which compasses *our time* today) focuses on the *closing* work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary prior to His return. In order for God's *faithful* remnant people to effectively proclaim the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14: 6-12, a progressive understanding of Christ's reign and work as king and priest on right hand of the throne of God is the best, most supreme way of carrying out this divine mandate entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

With this before us, the question that naturally arises revolves around what Jesus is doing in heaven that makes the manifestation of Him actually being there so imperative? The Scriptures reveal a number of reasons why this is so. This study is going to look at one of the reasons why Christ "must" be in heaven by zeroing in on an aspect of His Heavenly work that is seldom taken into consideration. Beginning with Psalm 110, the most quoted or alluded to Psalm in the New Testament, we read concerning the Messianic reign of the divine / human King Priest (Jesus):

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110: 1).

For a king to seat someone at his "right hand" meant that he was occupying a position and place of highest honor - next to the king himself. This was a distinction bestowed upon persons - usually the queen, princes, high ranking officials, dignitaries, etc. - whom the king regarded worthy of the highest public respect. (see 1 Kings 2: 19; Psalm 45: 9). At times, as we shall see (and certainly here as regarding the Messiah), it also signified an exaltation of participation in the reign of the king as a co-ruler of his realm. "The LORD" (the Father) continues, saying to (David's) "Lord" (Jesus), while setting Him "down at the right hand of [His] throne" (Hebrews 12: 2b) upon Christ's ascension into heaven:

"until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Ibid. 110: 1b). Anciently, this was a practice used by kings to publicly demonstrate their power to subjugate their enemies and bring them under the authority of their rule. They were literally laid before the monarch, generally face down, whereupon the king placed his feet on the neck of the person, thereby exerting downward pressure. We have an example of this being employed among the Israelites in the time of Joshua (see Joshua 10: 24-27). The hostility (opposition) of the 'enemy' was thus subjugated, either by obediently submitting to the king's authority or, as was the case in the aforementioned text, death. In the context of this Psalm, the phrase indicates that it is the Father's determinate will to honor Christ *until* all His enemies are brought into submission to His reign. This is the basic truth expressed by this phrase and it is further added to and enlarged upon by allusions from other

Psalmic texts in the New Testament:

"For he (Christ) *must* (Greek, $\Delta\epsilon\iota$, *dei*) reign, *till* he (the Father) hath put all enemies under his (Christ's) feet." (1 Corinthians 15: 25, *emph. added*; compare with Psalm 8: 4-6 and Hebrews 2: 6-9). Here, the apostle Paul confirms this determination of the Father by putting the entire reign of Christ into its final (eschatological) sequence which ultimately leads to the total consummation of all things (prior to the creation of the "new heavens and a new earth." - Isaiah 65: 17; 66: 22; 2 Peter 3: 13; Revelation 21: 1):

"Then cometh the *end* (total consummation), when he (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom (of glory) to God, even the Father; when he (Christ) shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (compare with Psalm 2: 8-9) ... The last enemy that shall be *destroyed* is death. For he (the Father) hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet. But when he (the Father) saith, all things are put under him (Christ), it is manifest that he (the Father) is excepted, which did put all things under him (Christ). And when all things shall be subdued unto him (Christ), then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him (the Father) that put all things under him (Christ), that God (the Deity) may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15: 24, 26-28, *emph. added*).

As we affirmed in the preceding issue of WWN, (# 41), the reign of Christ as king involves a number of integrated, yet distinct steps or phases. ⁴ Briefly, to recap, first there's the King Priest mediatorial / pre-advent judgmental phase (from the ascension to the final atonement / from the final atonement to the second coming), which was typified by the daily / yearly (dual) ministration of the Levitical priests "Who [*served*] unto the example and shadow of

heavenly things" (Hebrews 8: 5, *emph. added*). Next the Kingly executive judgmental phase (from the second coming to the establishment of the new heavens and new earth), and lastly the *final* glorious phase on "the throne (singular) of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22: 3), "in the kingdom (singular) of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5: 5 - from the establishment of the new heavens and new earth onward throughout all eternity). With this distinctive factor in mind, we will continue focusing in this segment of the study on what is involved in the submission of Christ's "enemies" *chiefly* during His intercessory reign on "the throne of grace" at the Father's right hand.

As we progress to verse 2 of Psalm 110, it states:

"The LORD shall send the rod (or "thy strong scepter" - NASB ¹) of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

This reveals that since His ascension to the right hand of the Father, Christ's right to rule with power and authority - symbolized by "the strong scepter of [His] strength," which is His perfect righteousness (Hebrews 1: 8-9; compare with Psalm 45: 6-7) - is being sent by the Father "out of Zion" ("the heavenly Jerusalem" - Hebrews 12: 22). During His intercessory reign as "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110: 4), Jesus is ruling "in the midst of [His] enemies." At this juncture, we need to pause and contemplate the fact that with the entrance of sin into the universe, originating and occasioned by Lucifer's rebellion in heaven, everything that is out of harmony with God *in any way* has (through sin and like Lucifer) become an "adversary" or enemy of God. And because "all (humans) have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3: 23), we are all

as a result of sin God's "enemy." The very heart (core truth) of the of gospel declares that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" (Ibid. 5: 8, 10, emph. added). Among other things, the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross provided the basis for a *conditional* reconciliation of all humanity to God. By our acceptance of this loving, generous gift, by grace through faith alone, we are pardoned, our sins are forgiven, and "we [are] reconciled (Greek, ΚΑΤΑΛΛΑΞΑΜΕΝΟΙ, *katallassó* - ("to change mutually, to change from enmity to friendship") to God. This is all made efficacious in the life of the believer through the resurrected and glorified *living* Jesus, whose exalted and honored position at the Father's right hand in heaven, enables Him to ("much more") "save them to the uttermost ("evermore" - marginal reading) that come to God by him, seeing he ever *liveth* to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7: 25, emph. added).

Therefore, because the interval between the first and second advent of Christ is the time that our Lord has "gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Peter 3: 22), it is imperative that we understand and put into proper perspective exactly *how* Jesus is "[subduing] all things unto himself." (Philippians 3: 20-21). In a manner similar to Psalm 110, Psalm 2 also presents a picture of "the LORD, and ... his anointed," surrounded and opposed by enemies rebelling against Their authority. In fact, as we continue reading the biblical narrative past Acts, Chapter 3 (where we began this exposition), and into Acts, Chapter 4, we

find the primitive church relating their (then recent) persecution and deliverance from political and religious foes (Jew and Gentile alike) to a fulfillment of Psalm 2: 1-2. The defeat (confounding, vexing - Ibid. 2: 4-5) of those early enemies of God and His church was at the *beginning* of Christ's high priestly reign on the "throne of grace" in heaven. This commencement of our Lord's heavenly work corresponds to the "daily" service of the typical Aaronic priests in the earthly sanctuary. Typically, this first stage of priestly ministrations was succeeded by the next (and last) stage, the "yearly" service on the Day of Atonement. Since Pentecost (31 A.D.), this has been progressively continuing onward "From henceforth expecting till his (Christ's) enemies be made his footstool." (Hebrews 10: 13). This "rule ... in the midst of [His] enemies" will come to culmination at the *close* of Jesus' High Priestly Ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and will ultimately bring to completion the total and final "[putting] (subduing of) all things under his (Christ's) feet" (Ephesians 1: 22).

As already noted, this dual stage King Priest reign of Christ throughout this whole time period is based upon a universal conditional reconciliation toward all humanity accomplished by the finished earthly work of Jesus. Considering that God would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" because "The Lord is ... longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (1 Timothy 2: 4; 2 Peter 3: 9), the means by which God first desires to bring sinful mankind into submission to Himself is through conversion to Christ as Savior and Lord by the power of the gospel (Ephesians 2: 4-7, 13-18; Colossians 1: 19-22; Titus 3: 3-8; etc.). Sadly, however, most will

not submit to Christ during this time when His intercessory work above in heaven makes effectual the provisionary reconciliation accomplished by Him at the cross on earth. As typified at times anciently, the subduing of a monarch's foe usually meant life for the enemy that submitted to the ruler's authority or death for those who would not submit. This life or death consequence in Christ's subduing "all things unto himself" is shown in the parable of The Vineyard. Concerning the denial and rejection of Jesus as the promised Messiah, He concluded the parable with this warning:

"And he beheld them (the Jewish authorities), and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Luke 20: 17-18, compare with Psalm 118: 22 and Isaiah 8: 14-15).

"The stone which the builders rejected" is representative of Jesus, the "beloved son" whom "the lord (the Father) of the vineyard ('the house of Israel' - Isaiah 5: 7)" finally sent to the rebellious "husbandmen" (the Jewish authorities) to "reverence" ("give him of the fruit of the vineyard"). "But when the husbandmen saw him ... they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him." (Luke 20: 9-15). The submission of the religious leaders to the authority of Jesus, "to fall upon that stone [and] be broken," however painful to their pride, prestige, and position it may have initially been, would have resulted in their conversion and subsequent eternal life. Instead, their refusal to submit will "destroy these husbandmen" (Ibid. 20: 16) when Christ ("that stone") returns and ["falls"] on them thereby "[grinding them] to pow-

der." (eternal destruction - Ibid. 20: 18; see also 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9). Either way, Christ's dual stage mediatorial/pre-advent judgmental work on the throne of grace in heaven will be the decisive time for determining *how* (the way or manner) that Christ will "subdue all things unto himself."

This same scenario is outlined in the parable of The Pounds with which, again, we concluded the previous issue of the thought paper (# 41).⁴ The "certain nobleman" (Jesus) who goes "into a far country (heaven) to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return ... called his ten servants (loyal subjects) ... and said unto them, Occupy till I come" (submit to the nobleman's authority and right to rule by faithfully serving Him while He is in the far country). "But his citizens (unfaithful and disloyal subjects) hated him, ... saying, We will not have this man reign over us" (a disdain and rejection of the nobleman's authority and determined refusal to submit to His right to reign over them, which they 'sent (in) a message after him,' i.e., while the nobleman was in the far country). Briefly, when the nobleman returns, "having received the kingdom" (of glory), He abundantly rewards His faithful servants (those loyal subjects who submitted themselves to His will while He was in the far country). "But those mine enemies (the disloyal citizens) which would not that I should reign over them (by their hardened refusal to submit to the nobleman's authority while He was in the far country), bring hither, and slay them before me." (subjection through eternal destruction/death). (Luke 19: 11-27).

In light of all the Word of God reveals about the heavenly reign of Jesus, is it not crucial that all who profess to be Christians contemplate much more the ramifications of this vital biblical truth? This teaching is es-

essential in the inauguration of "the times of restitution (consummation, restoration) of all things," as it is "the working (re-creative, resurrection power) whereby he (Christ) is able even to subdue all things unto himself" at this time (Acts 3: 21; Philippians 3: 21). And this is especially dire for those living during the last stage of Jesus' heavenly ministration (the antitypical Day of Atonement) when the final call to submit to "the everlasting gospel" is going forth in proclamation by God's faithful people (the remnant). The Three Angels' Messages, which place the gospel within the final judgment hour context, give the sternest warning against false worship found in the Scriptures with a corresponding exhortation to "worship him (the true God, the Creator) that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14: 6-12). The fact that a symbolic depiction of the second coming of Christ follows immediately afterward in the text magnifies the urgency of this time. (Ibid. 14: 14-20).

It truly behooves us all to bow in submission to the risen, living, and glorified Christ

at the right hand of the throne of God:

"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: 15-16).

» *To be Continued.*

1. *New American Standard Bible* (New York, NY: American Bible Society; The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, California, 1977), 760, 429.
2. Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D., *The New Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon Of The New Testament With Index* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Copyright 1979, 1981 by Jay P. Green, Sr.; Strong's Exhaustive Concordance # 1163), 126.
3. Robert Young, *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, March 1, 1989), 1123.
4. Gary L. Patrick, "Watchman, what of the night?" (Nora Springs, IA: Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., Issue # 41 - June / July 2020, "The Ascension Of Christ Into Heaven: Another Look Into Various Aspects Of This Essential Biblical Truth - 2 -"), 2-7, 6-7.

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

"Watchman, what of the night?" is published by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., P.O. Box 665, Nora Springs, IA 50458-0665, USA.

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