

Many books have been written about the life of Jesus Christ. Most of them commence with His birth and conclude with His death; a few go so far as to include his ascension into heaven. Such an abbreviated record of Jesus' life is understandable if we think only of "the days of his flesh" (Heb. 5:7), the period of His life on earth. However, Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was "crucified and slain," was "raised up" by God and "exalted to the right hand of God" where "he ever liveth" (Acts 2:22,23,32,33; Heb. 7:25).

Could it be that we have given so much attention to His life on earth that we have failed to attach the proper importance to His life as it has continued for nearly 2,000 years in heaven? Actually, the events of His earth-life were the foundation for His continuing life and ministry "at God's right hand" (Rom. 8:34). What He did then was in preparation for what He is doing now, and will do in the future. Although it's important that we know what He did, and even what He will do in the future, it is vital to our Christian life and understanding that we know what He is doing *now*, since He is "now appearing on our behalf in the very presence of God" (Heb. 9:24, Goodspeed).

The Creeds of Christendom, it may be said, do not encourage thought in this direction. They are content to confess that Jesus Christ has ascended to Heaven and is on the right hand of God; of the life He lives there or the work with which He is occupied, they have nothing to say.¹

Success in the Christian life is inseparably linked to "fixing our gaze upon Jesus" (Weymouth), "the pioneer and perfection of faith" (Moffatt) "who is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2), where we (now) see Jesus "crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9). We are instructed to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." "Set your

affection on [‘practice occupying your mind with’—Williams] things above, and not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1,2). Understanding who and what we are in relation to what Christ is *now*, in His present life, will determine our whole character as Christians, "for we realize that our life in this world is actually his life lived in us" (1 Jn. 4:17, JBP).

The prime question, then, is: what is Jesus *now*, and what does that mean to me?

Man

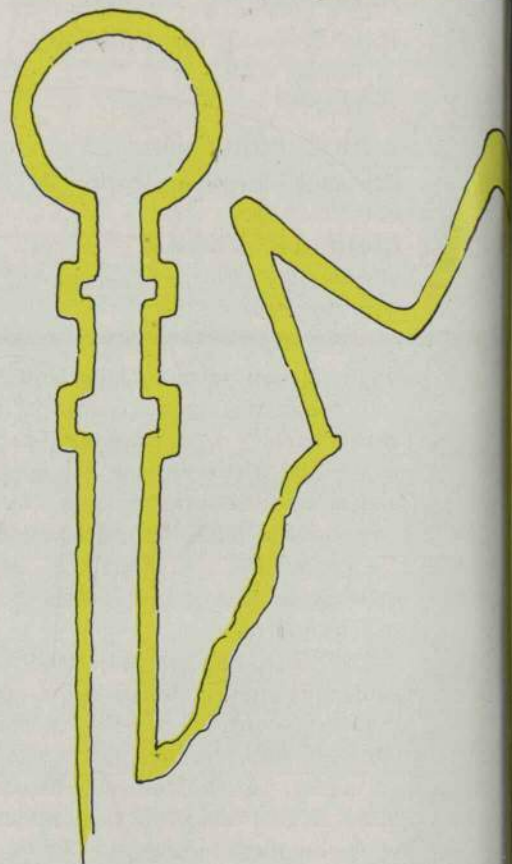
Peter, in his message to Israel on the day of Pentecost, said, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man," is "by the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:22,33). This is God's evaluation of man. Man may see himself as the product of primeval slime, destined for oblivion, but God declares man to be the product of divine creative genius, destined for residence with Himself.

The Bible speaks of two men, significant to the human race—the first man, Adam, and, the last Adam, Jesus (1 Cor. 15:45). Made in God's "image and likeness" (Gen. 2:7), the first man failed to obey the divine commission for his life, and became a man of disobedience producing a progeny "in his own likeness, according to his image" (Gen. 5:3), who became known as "the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). The last Adam, Jesus, born "without sin," became a new life-giving source, whose progeny are distinguished by righteousness and obedience (Rom. 1:5; 5:19).

The first man was commissioned to "rule . . . over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26, NAS) as God's delegated authority, and he forfeited his authority through disobedience. The second man succeeded where the first failed, and because He was "obedient . . . God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:8,9, NAS).

After the fall of the first man and

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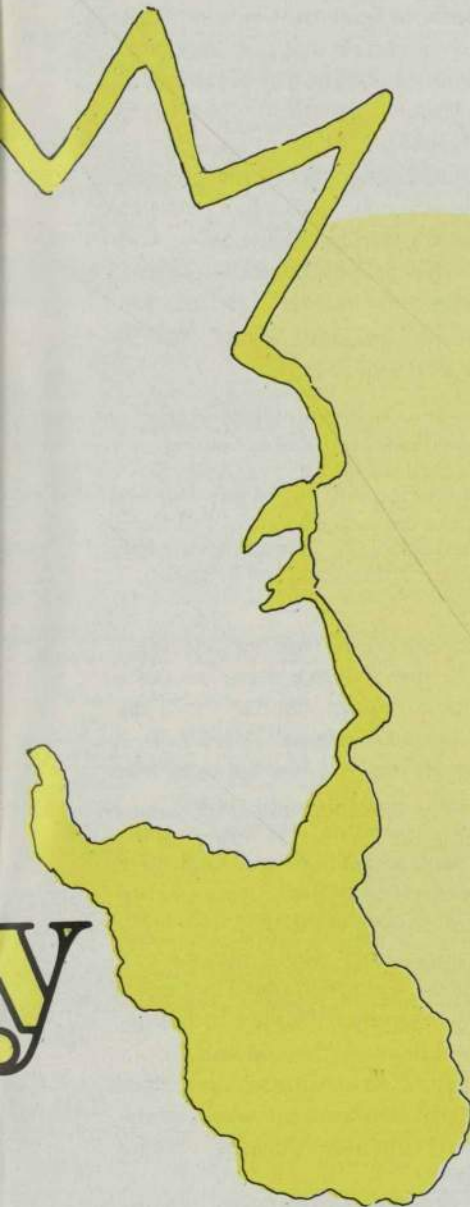
Today

by Ern Baxter

Where is Jesus now,
and what does that mean to me?

¹Swete, H.B., *The Ascended Christ*.

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his forfeiture of authority, God delegated men to represent Him in the earth until the time should come for the second man to arrive on the scene to assume permanent rulership. "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in *the prophets* in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in *His Son . . .*" (Heb. 1:1,2, NAS). The prophets not only declared God's will and requirements to their times, but referred to the coming of the One who would be God's final voice and Ruler supreme.

No sooner had the first man failed, than God announced there would come "a seed" who would "bruise the serpent's head" (Gen. 3:15). The coming of this "seed" became the central theme of the Old Testament writings. The promise of His coming was confirmed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob's twelve sons became a nation, whose illustrious deliverer and leader Moses spoke of the coming of this "seed" as a great Prophet like himself, who would become the leader of the people of God.

Pioneer and Perfection

"In the fulness of time" He came! He succeeded where the first man failed, and as a man, pioneered a way through life which afforded an example of how it can be done (1 Pet. 2:21). What's more, Jesus fulfilled God's intended destiny for men by resisting sin, enduring suffering, defeating death, and going into the presence of God to enjoy unbroken fellowship with Him, without any sense of embarrassment, inferiority, or fear of interruption. He is "alive forevermore!"

There is a *man* in the immediate presence of God. One man has made it! You and I, too, can make it! This is why we are to "fix our gaze upon" Him. As we constantly behold One who has "pioneered and perfected faith," (Heb. 12:2, Montgomery), we are enabled to "run steadily the course

mapped out for us" (Heb. 12:1, Berkeley). In this aspect of Christ's present ministry, it is not so much what He is doing as what He has done that ministers courage and endurance to us. He was the first man to pioneer a way from earth to heaven and provide "the course mapped out for us." He is the only one who has traversed the course. Study "the map" and keep your eyes on the "pioneer."

Messiah-King

God ordained that His leaders in the earth, such as priests, kings, and prophets, should be anointed with oil. Oil was typical of the Holy Spirit, and such anointing declared God's unique presence and enabling with the one anointed. The Hebrew word for anointed was *maschiach*, which is the word from which "Messiah" derives. Although there were many anointed servants of God in history, only One was to become the perfect embodiment of all those divinely appointed offices and ministries, who would be "The Messiah" or, as He is referred to in the New Testament, "The Christ."

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המשיח

Many great leaders in the Old Testament prefigured Christ. Abraham became "the father of the faithful," through whose genealogical line "the seed" should come. Moses was appointed leader of the Israel nation, called "the church in the wilderness," and is a type of Christ who is the Head of His Church, for Israel was typical of Christ's Church.

There was one man, however, who was destined to become significant to Israel's life and future hopes. He was King David, through whom "the seed"

was to become the ultimate "King of Israel" (Jn. 1:49). Of David, God had said:

I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your *seed* forever, and build up your throne to all generations" (Ps. 89:3-4, NAS).

He underlines this promise, saying:

My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David (Ps. 89:34,35, NAS).

The Psalmist in his "verses to the King," speaking of David and prophetically of David's greater Son, wrote:



ERN BAXTER

Ern Baxter was raised in a Christian home and followed his parents into the baptism in the Holy Spirit in his late teens. Through the years he has engaged in considerable inter-denominational activity. For twenty years he pastored one of Canada's largest evangelical churches, The Evangelistic Tabernacle of Vancouver, British Columbia. While there he also was editor of *New Covenant Times*, and served for five years as president of the Greater Vancouver Evangelical Ministerial Association. In recent years, Rev. Baxter has spent much of his time in international ministry.

He and his wife, Ruth, presently make their home in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: Therefore God, thy God, has *anointed* thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Ps. 45:1,6,7, NAS).

The writer in Hebrews applies this to the enthroned Jesus (Heb. 1:8,9, NAS).

When Peter on the day of Pentecost spoke of Jesus' resurrection, exaltation and enthronement, he declared it to be the fulfillment of God's covenantal promise to David. He said that David "was a prophet" and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants "upon his throne," and that David had "looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:30,31, NAS). The anointed King promised to David was the resurrected, exalted and enthroned Jesus—Messiah.

Isaiah also had prophesied of Jehovah's anointed Redeemer-Servant who was to come (Is. 52:13; 53:12), and had written the very words which the Servant would use to announce the commencement of His ministry (Lk. 4:17-19).

Jesus is the Messiah, God's anointed Servant-Redeemer-King. He reigns as David's seed, God's Son, and our Sovereign. The universe is not governed by an *unidentifiable, impersonal force*, but by a man named Jesus who, from a "throne of grace," rules the universe in equity and justice.

The King of Love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never.

I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine forever.²

He is King of Kings *now!* Many Christians are unaware or uninstructed that Jesus is *now* reigning. As a result, they live in relative indifference to the present sovereign rights of King Jesus over the world, including His "rebel-subjects." Such indifference reduces their redemptive and remedial activity as the delegated authorities God has

²From the hymn "The King of Love" by Henry W. Baker and John B. Dykes.

ordained them to be as His Kingdom community in the outworking of His divine government on and over the earth.

Lord

Jesus is also Lord. In the Pentecostal message, Peter, addressing the great multitude of devout Jews, declared, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ [Messiah]—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36, NAS).

During Jesus' earthly ministry, the Jewish religious leaders had refused to recognize Him as either Lord or Messiah. They acknowledged that when Messiah came, He would be "the Son of David." But Jesus pressed them further, asking,

Then how does David in the Spirit call him "Lord," saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet.'" If David then calls Him "Lord," how is He his son? (Mt. 22:43-45, NAS).

It is significant that "no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on, to ask Him another question" (Mt. 22:46, NAS). He not only claimed to be Messiah (Mk. 14:61,62), but He also claimed to be Lord. He was "man of very man, and God of very God." The name used for Jehovah, Jesus claimed as applicable to Himself. The High Priest heard this claim as blasphemy and tore his clothes in furious anger at such presumption. But his furious denial and denunciation did not alter the facts, and God confirmed Jesus' claims by raising Him from the dead and enthroning Him in the place of supreme power.

As David's Son and God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, from His place of enthronement, continues His life and ministry on behalf of both God and man.

In being "joined to the Lord," we are joined to God. This is not just a matter of names and titles, but a matter that has continual vital meaning to those who are "joined." "The man who is in union with the Lord is spiritually one with Him" (1 Cor. 6:17, Williams).

The practical implications of this fact for the Christian are incalculable. Especially when we read what Paul writes to the Colossians about our Lord and ourselves as His people:

It is in Him [Jesus Christ our Lord] that all the fullness of Deity continues to live embodied, and through union with Him *you too are filled with it* (Col. 2:9,10, Williams).

Our relationship with the enthroned Jesus makes available to us the incomputable resources of the triune God.

Head

Closely connected with our Lord's Kingship is His present ministry as "Head." As King, He is more strictly the fulfillment of God's promise to the old covenant people and especially to King David, whereas His ministry as Head has to do with His relationship to "the new man," which is "the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:15). He is also "head over all things" (Eph. 1:22); the "head of every man" (1 Cor. 11:3); and "head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10).

When we speak of Christ as Head, we may think of Him as a supreme authority, or in a more specific sense, as

relating in a living way, united to His people as the life-sustaining and directing "head, from whom the whole body, by the joints which bind it, draws full supplies for all its needs, and is knit together" (Col. 2:19, Conybeare). We might say He is Head *legally* and *vitally*. Let's touch briefly on the various aspects of Christ's Headship.

"The head of every man is Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3). This statement is preceded by a solemn apostolic emphasis—"I would have you know." It also describes a part of an authority structure ordained of God. Disruption of this order at any point would prove destructive of God's intent. "But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every individual man, just as man is the 'head' of the woman and God is the head of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3, JBP). "Every man" in this verse refers to "every male of the human family."³

Paul does not refer to Christians only but to all men. The fact that non-Christians do not know these things and do not even want to know them does not do away with the truth of this statement.⁴

Christ "is the authority over all authorities, and the supreme power over all powers" (Col. 2:10, JBP). "All things . . . that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers . . .

³1 Corinthians International Critical Commentary

⁴Grosheide, F.W., *Commentary on First Corinthians*

were created by Him, and for Him" (Col. 1:16).

The coming of rebellion into the universe divided both visible and invisible powers into supporters of either good or evil. The supremacy of God over these powers never diminished, but in "the fullness of time" they had to be punished and dethroned in order that man, His ordained, delegated ruler, should assume his destined authority. Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son, accomplished the defeat of these rebellious powers, "having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphant over them by the cross" (Col. 2:15, New International Version).

Now, as the God-Man, Jesus Christ has supreme authority over all powers. The evil forces cannot keep us from Him, and the good powers are not needed to mediate our approach to Him. We have direct access to Him, unhindered by evil powers and unmediated by good powers.

This authority as Head is not alone for the purpose of honoring our Lord, but also for making His authority manifest through His Body, the Church.

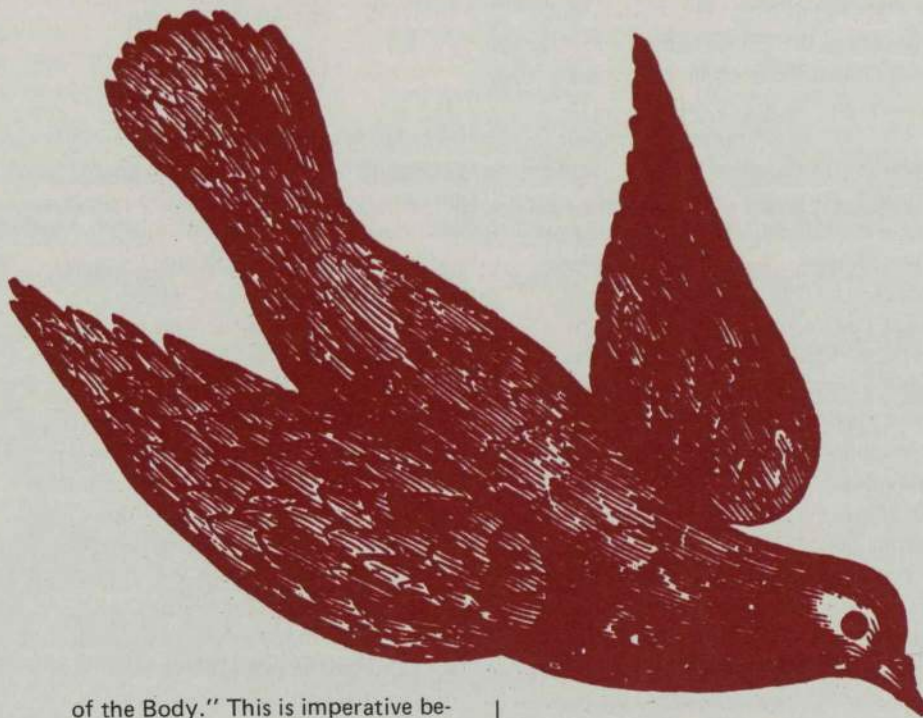
God has placed everything under the power of Christ and has set Him up as head of everything for the Church. For the Church is His body, and in that body lives fully the one who fills the whole wide universe (Eph. 1:22,23, JBP).

This last reference combines the two aspects of Christ's Headship. Although He is Head over all powers by legal right, He also fills the Church with His power vitally in a living relationship, illustrated by the relationship of a human head to a human body. "He is not only the dominating, directing power which the Body obeys and follows, but the source of its vitality and of its vital energies."⁵

There are three major emphases in connection with Christ's vital union with the Church as seen in the metaphor of the human body. First, there must be no question about His right to primacy and supremacy as "the Head

⁵Swete, H.B., *The Ascended Christ*.





of the Body." This is imperative because "He is its origin, the first to return from the dead" (Col. 1:18, NEB). Or as another has rendered it, "He is the Head of His Body, the Church. He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead in order that He Himself may in all things occupy the foremost place" (Col. 1:18, Weymouth).

To know, to do the Head's commands,
For this the Body lives and grows;
All speed of feet, all skill of hands,
Is for Him spent and from Him flows.⁶

In the second place, He must be depended upon as the sole supply of the Body's life, nurture and increase. Two of Paul's great epistles have to do with "the Body" and "the Head." In Ephesians the emphasis is on "the Body," and much wholesome information and instruction is given. In Colossians the main theme is "the Head," and here, our Lord's nature, authority, and ministry are powerfully documented.

In addition to the positive constructive teaching, there is in each epistle a warning relating to the major theme. Where "the Body" is the theme in Ephesians, the warning is to "make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace

⁶As cited from *Colossian Studies* by Handley C.G. Moule.

with one another. You all belong to *one body*" (Eph. 4:3, JBP). In Colossians where "the Head" is the subject, the danger warned against is failing "to maintain union with *the head*" (Col. 2:19, Twentieth Century New Testament).

On the positive side, and in line with the distinctive emphasis of each epistle, the Ephesians are exhorted to receive into the united Body the rich supply of "the Head" (Eph. 4:15,16), while the Colossians are warned that if they "fail to maintain union with the Head" (Col. 2:19, TCNT) the Body will be devoid of life and nurture, no matter how united the Body may appear to be. Taking either error to the extreme, it is obvious that either a head without a body or a body without a head spells certain death. The more likely situation, with which most of us are acquainted, is that any interruption between "head" and "body" produces sickly subnormalities in the life of God's people.

Finally, our heavenly "Head" is

Himself dependent. The teaching of 1 Corinthians 12 is designed to show the need for each member of a human body to function healthily and normally. Therefore, "The Head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you" (vs. 21). "Paul does not hesitate to represent the Head as on His part depending upon the members for the full realization of His office and work."⁷

He has no hands but our hands
To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way;
He has no voice but our voice
To tell men how he died;
He has no help but our help
To lead them to His side.⁸

Priest

Jesus is not only Messiah, Lord, King and Head, but He is Priest. "The Christ-King is also the Christ-Priest."⁹ The first mention of the office of priest in the Bible is linked to the office of king. "Melchizedek *king of Salem* . . . was the *priest* of the most high God" (Gen. 14:18). The great Messianic psalm, Psalm 110, often quoted and referred to in the New Testament, combines these two offices.

Jehovah saith unto my Lord,
"Sit thou at my right hand,
Until I make Thine enemies Thy
footstool."

Jehovah hath sworn, and will
not repent:
"Thou art a priest forever
After the order of Melchizedek"
(Ps. 110:1,4, ASV).

Melchizedek is described in Hebrews as, "This Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all spoils."

⁷Swete, H.B., *The Ascended Christ*.

⁸Cited from *The Letter to the Corinthians* by William Barclay.

⁹Swete, H.B., *The Ascended Christ*.



He "was *first* of all, by the translation of his name, *king* of righteousness, and then also *king* of Salem, which is *king* of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a *priest perpetually*" (Heb. 7: 1–3, NAS).

This order of priesthood is compared and contrasted with the priesthood of Aaron, established under the law of Moses. "Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices" (Heb. 8:3, NAS). Aaron had to do this "continually, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:1,4, NAS). But when Christ, the High Priest of a better covenant appeared,

He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption, not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood (Heb. 9:12, NAS).

He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12, NAS).

It is interesting to note that in the next verse Christ's Kingship is referred to. The time of His remaining seated is "until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet" (Heb. 10:13, NAS). He is the Priest-King!

There are many other contrasts and comparisons between the old and new covenant orders of priesthood, but we would like to point out just one more at this time. Under the Mosaic order there had to be many priests "because they were prevented by death from continuing" (Heb. 7:23, NAS).

Human high priests have always been changing, for death made a permanent appointment impossible. But Christ, because He lives forever, possesses a priesthood that needs no successor (Heb. 7:23,24, JBP).

The glorious consequence of the single and singular sacrifice and the perpetual priesthood is that "He can save fully and completely those who approach God through Him, for He is always living to intercede on their behalf" (Heb. 7:25, JBP).

Mediator

The mention of "intercede" leads us to look at three other closely related activities conducted by our Lord in the presence of God: those of mediator, intercessor, and advocate. The order in which we have listed these three offices seems to be in accord with the sequence of truth which they reveal.

The word "mediator" means "a go-between." The Greek word for "mediator" is used only once in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The single reference, however, is quite instructive: Job, frustrated with the problem of communication between God and himself, cries out:

For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.

Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.

Job contended that since God was not a man and Job was not divine, someone was needed who would qualify to represent each to the other. Centuries later, Job's need for that representative was met in Jesus Christ, who is "God of very God, and man of very man." He is "an umpire who can lay one hand on God and one on man, and mediate between them."¹⁰

At the inauguration of the covenant between God and Israel, Moses had

¹⁰Ibid.

mediated (Ex. 20:19; Gal. 3:19). Our Lord Jesus is the Mediator of a new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). His mediation is available to all men, for He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time" (1 Tim. 2:4–6, NAS).

The Christian can rejoice because the deathless mediator impartially represents both God and man in the working out of the new covenant. He faithfully presses the claims of God on His people, and at the same time compassionately encourages the obedience of the redeemed people to their God. But since the work of Jesus as mediator, or go-between, also extends to "all men," sinners have One standing ready to present their "repentance from sin and faith toward God" to God Himself at any time. There is a go-between. Job's prayer has been answered.

Intercessor

The mediator is also the believer's intercessor. As intercessor, Jesus' ministry is confined to us (Rom. 8:34) who are described as "them that *come* unto God by Him" (Heb. 7:25). This is a work in which the Holy Spirit is also engaged, but with the same restriction, as He intercedes "for us . . . the saints" (Rom. 8:26,27). However, the world is not without representation in intercession before God. Such intercession is to be the unremitting activity of the Christian community, in hope of bringing the unsaved to the "one Mediator" (1 Tim. 2:1–6). Our Lord makes this distinction between His not praying for the world and His praying for His disciples, when He prays to the Father, saying, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me" (Jn. 17:9). It is the Christian's commission to pray for the world.

Probably the most descriptive passage on intercession is Hebrews 7:25.



Here intercession has to do with saving "to the uttermost" and is a part of our Lord's high priestly ministry. Salvation is a comprehensive word which refers to the past (1 Cor. 1:18), the present (Phil. 2:12), and the future (Rom. 13:11). It is a conversion crisis, a continuing course, and a coming completion. Of these three, however, it is the present continuing course that is the object of our Lord's intercession.

Intercession may be defined as "presenting a petition to someone in authority and especially to the king."¹¹ Unhindered by death and permanently established as our great High Priest because of the "once for all" sacrifice and unchanging value of His blood, our Lord is in a position to speak to the Father concerning us. As our infirmities and needs are presented, strength and enablement are released to us, to allow us to know the present salvation of God, and to "go on unto maturity" (Heb. 6:1). As Mediator Jesus brings us to God, and as Intercessor He speaks to God for us. An excellent example of Christ's intercession is His prayer recorded in John 17.

Advocate

¹¹Barclay, Wm., *New Testament Words*.

It would be ideal if we came to God through our Mediator, and then matured in life through our Intercessor. However, the Bible records an "if" that interrupts this ideal. This is where our Lord's ministry as Advocate is introduced.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye *sin not*. And *if* any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 Jn. 2:2).

Let it be clear, that the whole purpose of John's first epistle is to strongly teach that God's children do not practice or "continue in sin." He does not say that they are incapable of an act of sin, but even that is "a paradox in point of principle" since God's child is one who "habitually practices righteousness" (1 Jn. 2:29, Berkley). However, if one should sin, we have an advocate to deal with this exceptional occurrence.

The Greek word from which we get "advocate" is not easy to translate by the use of one English word. However, we have neither the time nor space here to do other than make reference to that fact. The translation "advocate" in our text is good, and suitable to the context in which it occurs. Among other things, the word "was familiar in the usage of ancient courts," and with this in mind, the Berkley Bible says, "we have a counsel for defense in the Father's presence."

The success of our Advocate's case is grounded in His own person. He appears for the sinning believer as "the Righteous." The next verse tells us that He is the One who "is the propitiation for our sins." He pleads our case as the One who legally met the demands of a Holy God against sin. Christ died, rose, and appears before God "that we sin not." But "if we sin," that same precious blood avails to restore us to our normal Christian character as those who "practice righteousness."

To attempt to take improper advantage of Christ's advocacy is to invite a demonstration of another aspect of the Father's character, which can

prove quite painful. The beautiful and heartening truth of our Advocate representing us before the Father is poetically described in one of Charles Wesley's great hymns, "Arise My Soul."

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me;
"Forgive him, oh forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die!"

The Father hears Him pray,
His dear anointed One;
He cannot turn away
The presence of His Son:
His Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God.

Forerunner

One final ministry in connection with our Lord's high priestly office is described by a word which is rich with meaning and occurs only once in the Bible. As our High Priest, having entered into God's presence, He is called "the forerunner" (Heb. 6:20). When this word is understood it inspires hope and joy. "The word signifies one who comes in advance to a place where the rest are to follow, or one who is sent on before as a scout to take observations."¹²

Under the old economy, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies "alone once every year" (Heb. 9:7). He could not remain, but had to come out since the blood of animals could secure no right to remain. Nor could he take anyone with him. He had to go in alone.

But our High Priest, "by his own blood entered in" (Heb. 9:12), and "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12). Jesus is there to establish our right to be with Him in the presence of God *now* in the Spirit and "be forever" with Him after the resurrection. See Him, then, as the forerunner "for us," and rejoice that He is our guarantee of permanent access to the Father. ☞

¹²Evans, William, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, p. 1131.