

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

A Comprehensive View of God's Great Plan from
Eternity to Eternity Illustrated with Chart

By

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CHAPTER NINE

CHRIST IN GLORY — OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

In our last study we considered the meaning of the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ for the saints of all ages. We saw that when He ascended into heaven, He **“led captivity captive,”** taking the spirits of the righteous dead of all time into heaven itself, there to await the resurrection of the body; that is, He took Paradise up with Him into the very presence of God.

We saw in our last study that even now the spirits of all the righteous dead, from Adam to our own day, are **“with Christ,”** and that in the resurrection, their bodies and spirits will be reunited, to be with Him throughout the endless ages.

Today we want to consider the present work of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord for us, His blood-bought children, who are still on earth.

Now let us look at our chart, noting the following outline facts:

- (1) Christ in the glory is even now our Advocate and Intercessor — our Great High Priest;
- (2) during this present age, while He is in glory, His Holy Spirit is in the world, calling out the church, composed of Jew and Gentile;
- (3) the calling out of the church began at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended in great power, and will continue right through this dispensation until the rapture or translation of the church, when Christ returns for His saints.

In other words, Christ is in glory, interceding for His own, while His Holy Spirit is in the world, building His church by adding unto it sinners saved by grace. That is why the Church Age is called the Age of Grace.

In our next lesson we shall consider this church period — from Pentecost to the rapture. Today we want to center our thoughts upon the priestly work of Christ in glory, on behalf of those members of His church who are still on earth.

“Christ Sitteth On The Right Hand Of God” (Colossians 3:1).

Many Scripture passages tell us that the Man, Christ Jesus, is seated **“at the right hand of the throne of God.”** Turn to the following references and read them carefully: Mark 16:19; Romans 8:24; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2. The very attitude of Christ in glory speaks to us of some highly significant facts. Let us see what these are:

1. A Finished Work.

“When he had by himself purged our sins,” He **“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”** (Hebrews 1:3).

When He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, He cried out in triumph, **“It is finished!”** The work of redemption was done! That is why you and I cannot do one thing to be saved, my friend. **“The wages of sin is death”** but **“Jesus paid it all.”** He has finished the work of redemption, while you and I can only accept His salvation as a free gift. All we can do is to go to Him in repentance and pray the prayer of the publican, **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”** The moment we do that, He regenerates the heart and saves us by His grace.

When Christ finished His redemptive work on Calvary, there was no longer a need for the offerings and sacrifices for sin.

In Old Testament times, however, the priests offered **“oftentimes the same sacrifices,”** which could **“never take away sins”** (Hebrews 10:11). Their animal sacrifices were only types and shadows of the promised Redeemer and Lamb of God. But the Lord Jesus, **“after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God”** (Hebrews 10:12).

Had you ever thought of the significant fact that in the Jewish tabernacle and in Solomon’s temple there was no chair? There were beautiful and costly pieces of furniture, but the priest’s work was never done, and the chair is for those whose work is done. Century after century, year after year, day after day, the priest stood, fulfilling the duties of his office. His work was never finished, because it always pointed on to Christ. Thus the Holy Spirit wrote to the Hebrew Christians after Christ had died **“once for all,”** saying that they should not continue to follow the blind leaders of the Hebrew nation who still observed the Jewish ritualism, even after their Messiah had come and had fulfilled the types. And this is what He wrote: **“Every priest standeth”** to minister in his priestly office; **“but this man (the Lord Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God”** (Hebrews 10:11, 12).

When the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, you see, the temple in Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed. The Roman emperor, Titus, later destroyed that temple, in the year 70 A.D. But until that event, the Jewish nation who had rejected their Messiah continued to offer the daily sacrifices.

That is why the Holy Spirit wrote to the Hebrew Christians, saying: **“Every priest standeth”** to minister in his priestly office, in spite of the fact that, since Christ had died on Calvary, there was **“no more offering for sin”** (Hebrews 10:18).

But the blindness of the Hebrew nation does not alter the fact that God's redemptive work is finished!

“When he had by himself purged our sins,” He **“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”** His very attitude speaks to us of a finished redemption. And none of us shall get to heaven by any merit of our own; our salvation is a free gift of the grace of God.

2. *“His Rest.”*

Christ in glory is seated — in an attitude of rest. His creation rest was broken by sin; and He could not rest until the penalty for sin was paid. Then, **“when the fulness of the time was come,”** He went along thirty-three years of sorrow and heartache and trial. He knew what it was to be weary, to find no place to lay His head. As the Man of Sorrows, He went all the way to the cross. From the time sin entered the world, His creation rest had been broken; but since Calvary's cross, He has been resting in His finished work — **“a new creation.”**

It is this rest into which He invites you and me to enter when He says, **“Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28). Our Heavenly Father sees us identified with His Son, our Saviour, in His death and resurrection; He sees us also seated with Him **“in heavenly places”** (Ephesians 1:3). And He bids us enter into His rest by faith.

Chapters three and four of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwell fully upon this fundamental truth.

Read them carefully, prayerfully, repeatedly; for they have a distinct message for the weary, burdened Christian in this day of stress and strain.

As you read this portion of the Word of God, you will note that the Holy Spirit uses two illustrations or types of God's present rest in His redemptive work:

- (1) His creation rest (Hebrews 4:4); and
- (2) the Canaan rest which only Joshua and Caleb enjoyed — of all the redeemed company which left Egypt on the night of the first Passover.

“Not all that came out of Egypt by Moses” grieved the Lord through unbelief. (See Hebrews 3:16). Caleb and Joshua had faith to believe that the Lord God could and would deliver them from the hand of the enemy, and lead them safely into the Promised Land. Therefore, God let them enter into the land and enjoy rest from the weary journey through the wilderness.

But all the others of that great multitude **“sinned . . . because of unbelief”**; therefore, their **“carcasses fell in the wilderness”** (Hebrews 3:17-19). They were not permitted to enter the Canaan rest because of their lack of faith.

This, of course, does not apply to Moses, whom God buried near Mount Nebo, and who was not permitted to enter into the land for another reason.

But, my friend, Canaan was only a type of heaven — and rest — even as Egypt was a type of the world; and the wilderness journey, a type of the Christian's pilgrimage from the cross to the very presence of God.

The real rest of God which He finds through restored fellowship with His redeemed children was only faintly illustrated by the Canaan rest many centuries ago. **“For if Jesus [Joshua]”** — note that this is the Greek translation of the word “Joshua” — **“For if Joshua had given them rest (God's rest), then would he (God) not afterward (through David, 400 years later than Joshua) have spoken of another day”** of rest, as He did in the ninety-fifth Psalm, quoted by the Holy Spirit in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. (See Hebrews 4:7, 8; compare Hebrews 3:7-11). **“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God”** (Hebrews 4:9).

This rest for the Christian is yet future in the fullest sense; for until heaven is reached, there will be weariness and sorrow and suffering.

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” But even now the redeemed soul may enter into that rest of God by faith. How? By ceasing **“from his own works,”** as a means of salvation, **“as God did from his”** — not only in His creation rest, but in His finished redemption on Calvary! (See Hebrews 4:10).

Do you not see, my brother, that you can find rest of heart only by faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? Our salvation is a gracious gift of God, received by faith, and by faith alone.

But it is possible for us to have **“peace with God”** — to be saved from the penalty of sin — and yet miss altogether the **“peace of God,”** because we do not enter unreservedly into this rest by faith?

Worry and anxious care rob many Christians of the rest of heart which God has for them, even in this wicked world of sin — and worry is a form of unbelief. **“Come unto me,”** the risen Lord is saying to us, whatever the care or burden may be. **“Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest.”**

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief,” even as Israel missed the Canaan rest through murmuring and fear and lack of faith in the God who had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage. (See Hebrews 4:11).

3. Our Accessibility into His Presence.

The very attitude of the risen Lord, as He is seated in the glory, is inviting to us.

I well remember how, when I was a lad, if I wanted my father to do something special for me, I did not go to him during his busy hours. I waited until I saw him seated in his arm chair, slippers on his feet, paper in his hand. Then I went in to ask of him whatever was on my heart.

His very attitude was inviting.

And our Great High Priest is seated; He bids us enter into His presence without question or fear.

We have seen in our former studies that **“the way into the holiest of all,”** even heaven itself, was forever opened when the Lord Jesus died on Calvary’s cross. We have seen that the rending of the veil of the temple in that hour was symbolic of the fact that we no longer need a human priest to intercede for us before the Lord.

Every Christian, by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, has access into His presence through prayer!

And the risen Lord, our great High Priest, invites us to enter boldly into His presence, even **“into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way,”** by the way of His cross. (See Hebrews 10:19-22; compare Hebrews 4:14-16).

Because Christ identified Himself with us in His life on earth, we may call God **“our Father.”**

The Old Testament saints could not do that; it was Christ who taught His disciples to pray, saying, **“Our Father who art in heaven.”** And as we pray to our Father in heaven, in the name of His Son, our Saviour, **“we have the petitions that we desired of him”** (I John 5:15).

- No unsaved person need try to pray any prayer to God except, **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”**

- No man who refuses to take Christ as his Saviour can call God **“Father.”**

The Father hears and answers the prayers only of those who approach Him **“in the name”** of His Son. And because we have received His Son, then we are **“the sons of God,”** and have access into the throne-room of His presence.

Some years ago a little boy on his bicycle pedaled along the streets of New York City until he came to the entrance to the First National Bank. There he stopped, entered confidently, walked past the customers, past the policeman, past the tellers, past the vice-president, right on to the office of the president. While others stood outside, and looked at a sign which read, “No admittance,” or waited vainly for entrance, the little lad opened the door and walked right in. Addressing the white haired man behind the desk, he asked, “Daddy, have you got anything for me today?” To which the president of the big bank replied, “Yes, Johnnie; you won’t lose it, will you?” And off the little boy went with his request granted.

Do you know, my friend, you and I could not do that.

The president of that bank was the lad’s father; therefore, his office door was always open to his own child. But you and I have a Father whose ear is ever attuned to our petitions.

In Old Testament times there was “no admittance” into His presence. Only the high priest in Israel could enter the Holy of Holies, and that but once a year, not without blood.

Since the rending of the veil of the temple, however, the humblest child of God may look up into heaven itself, and cry, “**Abba, Father.**”

In the hour of darkness, when you need a friend, my brother, when you do not know which way to turn — then you need not go to an earthly priest. You have a Great High Priest in the Holy of Holies, even heaven itself; and the Father hears your petitions because you love His Son.

And remember! The Son of God, seated at the Father’s right hand, invites us to talk to Him in prayer. He bids us go into His presence with our needs, for He knows all about them.

“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 (or apart from 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).

My friend, we look into the open heavens and see our Great High Priest. “**He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.**” He knows when poverty and sorrow and suffering press heavily upon us. By faith we see Him seated at the right hand of the throne of God, inviting us to approach Him without fear. “**Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace**” in prayer!

4. His Intercession for Us.

Christ in glory, seated at God’s right hand, is praying for us!

Since the veil of the temple was rent in twain, we do not need an earthly priest to intercede for us. “**For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**” (I Timothy 2:5).

In Old Testament times the priest represented sinful man to a holy God. But since the rending of the veil, since “**the way into the holiest**” has been made manifest, the Man, Christ Jesus, represents us before the Father. He is our Advocate, our Intercessor, our Great High Priest.

Since the rending of the veil, all believers in Christ are priests, and have the right to enter into the holiest of all (I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6).

Thus it is that, as our Great High Priest, the Lord not only offered one sacrifice for sin forever; He also ever lives to appear “**in the presence of God for us**” (Hebrews 10:12; 9:24).

Having paid the penalty of sin for us on the cross, He now pleads our cause as our Advocate and Intercessor.

To learn something of the nature of His present ministry for us, we turn to the seventeenth chapter of John, and read His High Priestly Prayer for His disciples.

But let us examine closely the reason why we need an Intercessor.

(a) *He meets “The Accuser” and Pleads for Us.*

Satan, “**the accuser of our brethren,**” has access to the presence of God. (See Job 1:6-12). As “**the god of this world,**” he tempts us to sin; and when he succeeds, he wings his way into the presence of God, there to accuse us before Him “**day and night**” (Revelation 12:10).

He knows that “**the wages of sin is death**”; and he knows that God is holy. But are we helpless? Are we at his mercy? Thank God! No! “**We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous**” (I John 2:1), and He “**ever liveth to make intercession**” for His own (Hebrews 7:25).

When I listen to the voice of the tempter and fall into sin, Satan goes into the presence of God, there to accuse me before Him. Then I think I can hear my Advocate say: “***All the accuser says is true; but, Father, do you see these wounds in my hands and feet and side? I was wounded for that man’s transgressions; I was bruised for his iniquities; and whatever is his demerit, put it on Me.***”

Charles Wesley, while meditating upon the blessed High Priestly work of our Lord Jesus, wrote the well known words that have been such a stimulus to thousands of discouraged Christians:

“Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers;
They strongly plead for me:
‘Forgive him, O forgive’ they cry,
‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die!’”

My friend, Satan cannot touch us if we are trusting in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as an atonement for our souls.

“**Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us**” (Romans 8:33, 34).

(b) *He Presents Our Worship to God — Our Praise and Our Prayer.*

“**We know not what we should pray for as we ought**”; but He looks upon the heart, and He presents our feeble petitions and praises upon the Father in all the power and efficacy of the Great High Priest that He is.

How meaningful are the words with which we often close our prayers: “**In Jesus’ name**”!

As we have already seen, no prayer ever reaches the Father except through the name of His Son, our Saviour. There is no other approach to the throne of grace!

(c) He Receives the Confession of Our Sins.

When we sin, a cloud comes between us and God. Our communion and fellowship with Him are broken, though we do not cease to be God's children. Your own child does not cease to be your child just because he goes contrary to your wishes. When we sin, we lose for a time the joy of fellowship with Christ; but when **“we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”** (I John 1:9).

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7).

Then we must believe what He says, take Him at His Word, and never again mention the confessed and forgiven sin.

Even as a parent wants a penitent child to believe him when he says he forgives him of some disobedience, not asking him over and over again to forgive the same sin, so also God wants us to deal with Him in finality. It grieves Him when we go to Him repeatedly with the same sin, for He has told us that He will remember our sins **“no more for ever”** (Hebrews 10:17).

“A Royal Priesthood”

Our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord is in the glory. If you want to see a picture of Him, my friend, turn to Revelation 1:12-20. There we see Him, dressed as our Great High Priest, in the midst of the lampstands, which represent believers shining in a dark world. He is there, that we may shine for Him, that we may give a good testimony for Him before a world lost in sin.

Our Great High Priest faithfully represents us before the Father. And He has left you and me to represent Him on earth. What if He were as careless about us as we are about His work?

If we let Him, He will use us to make known His love to others who have not found in Him the only Saviour and Great High Priest. His own Word speaks to us very plainly, saying:

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9).

And as we witness for Him, He intercedes for us, cleansing us from sin, meeting our needs, empowering us for service, and blessing the testimony to His own glory. Our Great High Priest is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God; and he **“ever liveth to make intercession for us!”**

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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