

# Present Truth

The *Bible alone* as the only rule of faith and practice; *faith alone* as the only means of acceptance with God; and *Christ alone* as the only mediator between God and men.

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The Condescension of God – p. 3

It is Finished – p. 5

## Christ for Us

The Life of Jesus – p. 9

The Death of Jesus – p. 14

Understanding the Atonement – p. 19

The Love & Justice of God – p. 22

Present Truth goes DIGITAL – p. 17

Christ for Us in Heaven – p. 23

Newman's Hymn – p. 32

**Present Truth** is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity in this generation. It is especially committed to upholding the truth of justification by faith in this time when it is being threatened by humanism, emotionalism, and ecumenism. Our publication is based on the principle of sola Scriptura—the Bible and the Bible only as a rule of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:15-17). We desire to give the gospel trumpet a certain sound (1 Cor. 14:7-9), that through words easy to be understood (Hab. 2:2) people may “be established in the present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12) and like Noah be proclaimers of the righteousness of Christ (2 Pet. 2:5).

**Editor:** Richard A. Marin

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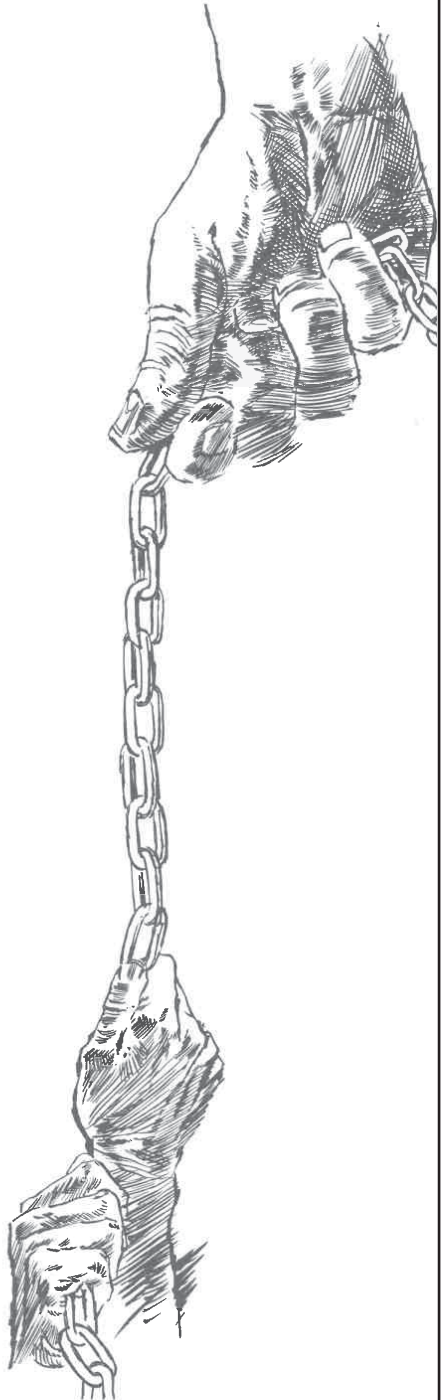
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## Editorial Introduction:

# The Condescension of God



That Jesus left heaven is condescension. That he became human is condescension. That our Saviour became a servant is condescension. That he humbled himself unto death is condescension. The death of the cross is greater condescension still. (Phil. 2:5-8).

Why all this condescension? Why all this coming down? Why all this leaving behind of heavenly glory? It was FOR US! Christ was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21).

For us? Yes, for us! But who are we? Are we so low? Aren't we the creation of God, endowed with power to think and to do? Really, are we that low?

It's not our physical deformity that places us at such a low level. It's not our mental deficiency that finds us in such need. Not even our moral weakness positions us so low as to require the death of God's Son upon the cross. All this physical, mental and moral weakness was his also. Rather, it is our sin that demands such a Saviour. Sin is what brought us low. Humanity fell, and fell far, and fell hard. That fall was because of sin.

Sin means breaking God's holy Law. Breaking means not observing, not keeping it. In Adam, humanity's first representative, we all sinned. Humanity was lost in sin by that one sin of our first father. As children of Adam, we are born lost – condemned to eternal death because of what he chose for all his children (Rom. 5:12-19; 6:23). Being born guilty we

go astray from the womb, adding sin to sin (Psa. 58:3). And so, our guilt becomes personal.

What's so bad about sin? Sin is so bad because the Law is so good. The Law is a picture of who God is. God is righteous and righteousness is portrayed in the Ten Commandments. They are holy, just and good for they reflect the nature and character of God. (Deut. 32:1-4; Rom. 7:12) Because God is so good, sin is so bad!

Sin is unlikeness to God. God is love and sin is to be unloving. Sin is to be selfish while God is unselfish.

It is the unselfishness of God the Father that gave his Son to be the Saviour of the world. It is the unselfishness of God the Son that made him humble himself, even to the death of the cross. It is the unselfishness of God the Holy Spirit to come to our fallen planet to convict us of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:16).

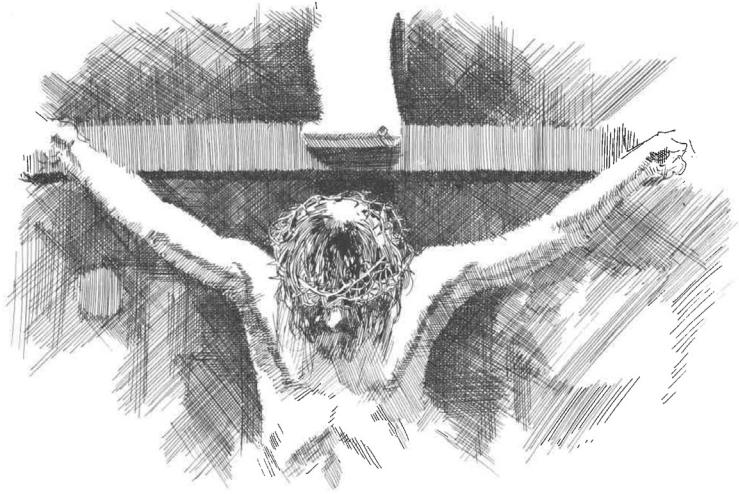
The condescension of God is demonstrated in the plan of salvation. If we get a glimpse of our selfishness and a view of God's goodness, we will exalt the One who humbled himself. He who for our sakes became poor, God has already exalted.

In this issue of Present Truth we wish to see Jesus as God for us. Michael Marsh points us to the finished work of Christ for us. Philip Hughes expands the parameters of that work dispelling a few Christian myths along the way. This editor explores the work Christ is doing for us at this present time. Each of these activities of Christ is something done outside of our experience. Each point to Christ's work for us. Trusting in his work for us will bring the Holy Spirit to work in us what is wellpleasing in God's sight.

Let's search the Scriptures together.

RAM





# It is Finished

by Michael Marsh \*

All that is necessary to obtain our salvation has been accomplished by the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did this alone (Isa. 63:3) and finished it fully and completely (Heb. 1:3). No man or angel can add anything to His finished work (Eccl. 3:14; Gal. 3:15-17).

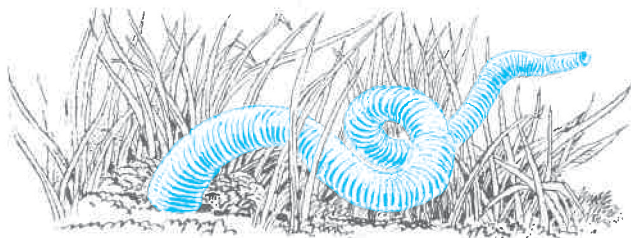
All that Christ did was for us. His incarnation was for us (Isa. 9:6). He never would have been the Son of Man but to make us the sons of God. He never would have been made in the likeness of sinful flesh but to raise us up into the likeness of God. All His miracles were performed to confirm our faith (John 11:42). While He lived here on earth, He was wholly set apart for us (John 17:19). He was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) and died for us (2 Cor. 5:14). He was bruised for us and buried for us (Isa. 53:5; Heb. 2:14, 15). He arose and ascended to heaven for us (Rom.

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\* From a rough, tattooed New Zealand mariner, to a perfectionistic believer, Michael Marsh finished his life trusting in the perfection of his Saviour. This article is reprinted from **Present Truth** Volume 1, #4.

4:25; John 14:2). He lives for us (Heb. 7:25). And when He finally comes again, it is for us (John 14:3).

He who intends to build high must lay the foundation broad and deep. The plan of salvation is founded on the infinite humiliation of the Son of God. He was the brightness of God's glory (Heb. 1:3) yet was so humbled in the form of humanity that He looked not like Himself, nor scarcely like a man (Ps. 22:6; Isa. 52:14; 53:3). His humiliation was real and voluntary before God and man. It is not said that He was humbled, but that "He humbled Himself." Phil. 2:8. He came to this earth in the body of our humiliation and was made "under the law," yet He was "God blessed for ever." Rom. 9:5.



The eternal God was born in time. The Creator became a creature. He who was equal to the Ancient of Days became an infant of days. For the sun to fall from its sphere and become a wandering atom, for an angel to be turned out of heaven to be converted into a worm, would be no such great abasement; for they were but creatures before, and so they would abide still, though inferior creatures. The distance between the highest and lowest species of creatures is a finite distance. But for the infinite Creator of all to become a creature is a mystery exceeding all human understanding. The distance between God and the highest angel is an infinite distance. Yet Christ became a man, not an angel. He humbled Himself, and the world scorned Him (Isa. 53:2, 3). He was called Beelzebub, an illegitimate child or just "the carpenter's son." At His trial one could only refer to Him as "this fellow." (Matt. 26:61).

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. 8:9. He came into this world, and there was no place to lay the infant. He walked the earth, and there was no place to lay His

head. He died, and there was no place to lay the body. When He took our place, He had nothing. As one has said, "He went lower and lower until there was no lower place to go." As Christians we may be humiliated, but irrespective of how low we go, there is always a lower place. But not so with this Man. The infinite God, who is all wisdom, could truly say, "I can search heaven and earth, but I cannot find a lower place to go."

Did a human being offend and violate the law of God? Behold, God Himself became a human being to repair the breach and to satisfy for the wrong done. The highest honor that ever the law received was to have such a One as the man Christ Jesus stand before its bar and make reparation to it. This is more honor and far more glory to the law than if it had poured out all our blood and vindicated itself upon the ruins of the whole creation. It is not so much to see the stars overcast as to see the sun eclipsed. The greater Christ was, the greater was His humiliation; and the greater His humiliation was, the more full and complete was His satisfaction; and the more complete His satisfaction, the more perfect and steady is our consolation. If He had not stooped so low, our joy and comfort could not have been exalted so high. The depth of the foundation is the strength of the superstructure, and "ye are God's building" which is built upon that "foundation" (1 Cor. 3:9-11).

In the light of the cross, the heart can cry out, "The condemnation was Thine, that the justification might be mine; the agony was Thine, that the victory might be mine; the pain was Thine, that the ease might be mine; the stripes Thine, that the healing balm issuing from them might be mine; the vinegar and gall Thine, that the honey and the sweet might be mine; the curse was thine, that the blessing might be mine; the crown of thorns was Thine, that the crown of glory might be mine; the death was Thine, that the life purchased by it might be mine; Thou didst pay the price, that I might enjoy the inheritance." And because of this, "Ye are complete in Him." Col. 2:10.

Though we cannot perfectly and fully satisfy the claims and demands of the law (although we can perfectly keep it by His grace), yet Christ's complete obedience is imputed to us and stands us complete and without fault before God. Oh, what a complete and perfect thing is the righteousness of God in Christ! Let the searching eye of a holy and jealous God turn it every way, view it from every side, and He will not find the least flaw or defect in it. Let Him thoroughly weigh it and examine it, and it will ever appear pure and perfect, containing in it all that is necessary for



our atonement. How pleasing, therefore, and acceptable to God must be that faith which presents so complete and excellent an atonement to Him. Hence the placing of faith upon Christ for righteousness, the approaches of faith to God with such an acceptable offering, are the work He is well pleased with (John 6:29). One such act of faith pleases Him more than if we should toil all our lives at the task of obedience to fully satisfy all the demands of the law. It is more to God's honor and our comfort to pay all that we owe Him in one payment, in one lump sum, than to be paying by very small degrees and never be able to make full payment or see the debt cancelled. By one such act of faith, God counts that all is paid and the debt is canceled.

Because we are accustomed in this world to time payment (buying a thing and paying it off by degrees), in our Laodicean blindness we bring that system over into our spiritual life. We think that by some keeping of the law – and that poorly done – and other services and reforms, we will satisfy the demands of the law. But it is all an abomination to God because it comes from a wicked heart of unbelief, for the debt has already been paid and we are free in Christ. We are inclined to cry out like that poor man in Matthew 18:26, “Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” But, like that man, we have no just conception of the greatness of our debt or the greatness of our wretched poverty.

We are not called to Mount Sinai, to the covenant of works, but to Mount Zion, “to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:18, 22-24). It speaks not of a debt to be paid, a life to be forfeited, but of a debt already paid and a life already given.

It is he whom God accounts righteous without works that is blessed. If we examine the Scriptures, we will see that there is no such thing with God as being partly justified. God either justifies completely or not at all, and we either pay all in one lump sum or nothing at all. For in this matter there are no degrees with God.

The words of Paul to Philemon are but an echo of the words of Jesus to His Father concerning us: “If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account... I will repay.” Philemon 17-19.

Let us then hear His cry, “It is finished!” and come to God by and in Jesus Christ. Then we will not only go away free, but new men and women in Him (2 Cor. 5:17).





# Christ for Us

by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes \*

## The Life of Jesus

The purpose of Christ's birth at Bethlehem was his death at Calvary, but this is not at all intended to imply that the life that stretched between Bethlehem and Calvary was of little significance. That would indeed be a serious misunderstanding. The life and the death of the incarnate Son are so closely related to each other that they form a coherent whole. This is so because the perfection of his life as our fellowman was essential to the effectiveness of his sacrificial death on our behalf. The "becoming flesh" of the Word (Jn. 1:14) was his becoming the last Adam or the second man (1 Cor. 15:45-47) for the purpose of undoing the curse that was brought upon mankind by the first Adam. The coming of the second Adam was to reintegrate our humanity, which had been shattered in the first. This truth is tersely expressed in the lines of John Henry Newman:

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.

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\* Philip Edgcumbe Hughes was an Anglican clergyman and visiting professor at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) This article was extracted from his final book, *The True Image – the origin and destiny of man in Christ* published in 1989 just prior to his death. We have included here portions taken from pages 328-362 (chapters 29-32) and they are reprinted with permission from Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (Grand Rapids, MI) © 1989; all rights reserved. The Bible quotations herein are from the Revised Standard Version. We highly recommend Dr. Hughes' controversial book.

O wisest love! That flesh and blood,  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail.

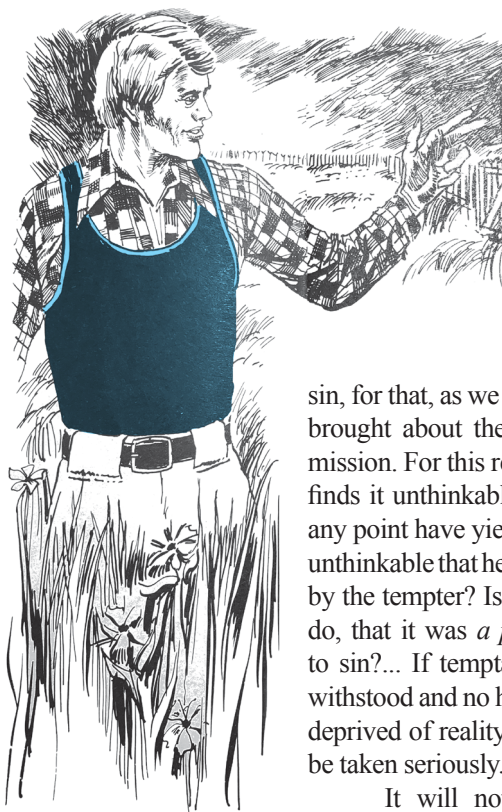
It was not only on the cross but also in his life and ministry which preceded and led up to the cross that Christ strove against the foe and prevailed. The cross was the climax of the lifelong striving of the incarnate Son. Our eternal salvation, it is true, was achieved on the cross, and it is entirely proper that the cross should be the symbol of our redemption and Christ crucified the heart of the gospel message (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18, 23f.; 2:2); but the death of the second Adam could never have had redemptive value had it not been founded on the perfect sinlessness of his life that qualified him to offer himself up, “the righteous for the unrighteous” (1 Pet. 3:18). In speaking of the living Jesus, therefore, we do not wish it to be supposed that his living and his dying can properly be isolated from each other, when in fact they are bound together in the closest possible relationship. The birth at Bethlehem was ever directed toward the death at Calvary. The body prepared for the Son was predestined to be offered up by him in sacrifice to make atonement for our sins (Heb. 10:5-10). The death of Christ was not the end, the last event, of a life, like that of a martyr, but the fulfilment of a coming, as that of a Savior, which opened the gate of eternal life to those who are dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1ff.; Jn. 5:24). His own resurrection was the proof of his power over death and the authentication of his mission now completed....

... first the man of heaven had to establish his own righteousness in mortal conflict with the devil, so that, victorious, he could go to Calvary and cancel our condemnation by bearing our sins in his own body as the spotless Lamb of God (Is. 53:4-7; Jn. 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18f.; 2:24). The requirements for the second Adam, therefore, were that, like the first Adam, he should be truly man, he should be truly innocent, he should be truly tested, and that, unlike the first Adam, he should be truly victorious in his encounter with the power of evil.

The righteousness of him who “died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous” (1 Pet. 3:18), was not simply something given and possessed, not a state of being that cost him nothing. It had to be *established*; it had to be *achieved* by conflict and by conflict and conquest. The pioneer of our salvation had to be *made perfect through suffering*, suffering occasioned by the endurance of temptation all the way to the cross, which was the ultimate and the supreme test (Heb. 2:10, 18; 4:15). The obedience of the

incarnate Son did not flow from an easy, undemanding disposition; it was costly beyond all calculation; it had to be *learned*, and the learning of it was through suffering. It was in this way that he achieved and established his human perfection: “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb. 5:8f.). That obedience necessarily involved obedience “unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). The perfection of Jesus, then, was not just a perfection of being but a perfection of becoming: the former was sustained by the latter, as progressively he consolidated what he was and had to be. But in no sense was the perfecting of Jesus a progress from imperfection to perfection. Had he at any time been imperfect, or had he even momentarily lapsed into disobedience, he would have failed in all that he came to be and do; he would have become as the first Adam became; incompetent then to save others, he would himself have been in need of salvation. The road to his perfection was the road of intense and unremitting struggle, as he joined battle with the devil himself, met the hostility of men with unfaltering love, agonized at Gethsemane, and experienced dereliction on the cross. The incarnation was not a comfortable excursion or an enjoyable interlude. We do not consider sufficiently its extreme costliness in suffering and anguish to him who is the eternal Son of God and the Image after which we are formed; nor do we remind ourselves, as we constantly should, that the perfection of obedience which he established through suffering was not for his but for our sake, “for us men and for our salvation.”





## Was Jesus Immune to Temptation?

A question that has been discussed since the early centuries is whether Jesus was immune to the power of temptation. It would indeed have been calamitous had the incarnate Son fallen into sin, for that, as we have indicated, would have brought about the failure of his redemptive mission. For this reason the Christian believer finds it unthinkable that his Savior *should* at any point have yielded to temptation. But is it unthinkable that he *could* have been conquered by the tempter? Is it right to believe, as some do, that it was *a priori* impossible for Jesus to sin?... If temptations have no force to be withstood and no hope of succeeding, they are deprived of reality and cease to be a threat to be taken seriously...

It will not do, then, to argue that because the person of the incarnate Son is compounded of two natures, of which the divine is incapable either of being tempted or of sinning, therefore there was no possibility that Jesus should have been so tempted as to sin; for it was precisely in our human nature that the Incarnate Son faced and overcame temptation, and in doing so experienced its threatening subtlety and force to the full. Otherwise, his effectiveness as the second Adam is overthrown. It was essential that he should face temptation as the first Adam faced it and experience the full threat of its force as the first Adam experienced it. It was essential, moreover, that he should be obedient where the first Adam was disobedient and gain the victory where the first Adam had gone down to defeat. Christ had to face the tempter in the same way as the first Adam faced him with the same possibility of victory or defeat. His was literally a life-and-death struggle, a true striving against the foe for our salvation. Ours would be no real redemption if it rested on a display of unreal shadow boxing. Since the tempting, which is testing, of Christ took place not only

in the wilderness but constantly and finally, and climactically, at Calvary, it follows logically that if, because of the presence of the divine nature, he was incapable of sinning he was incapable also of suffering and dying, for the divine nature is impassible as well as impeccable; but to approve that logical conclusion would be to bid farewell to the gospel....

...Was there anything false or unreal in the harrowing struggle in the garden against the temptation to avoid the cross and all the horror it involved? What anguish could be more real than that which caused him to sweat drops of blood? – anguish at the prospect not merely of the physical pains of crucifixion, daunting through that was, but of his enduring on the cross our hell and God-forsakenness as the unfathomable price of our redemption. “What shameful softness it would have been,” Calvin expostulated, “for Christ to be so tortured by the dread of common death as to sweat blood, and to be able to be revived only at the appearance of angels? What? Does not that prayer, coming from unbelievable bitterness of heart and repeated three times – ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me’ – show that Christ had a harsher and more difficult struggle than with common death?” (*Institutes* II.xvi.12.) This is the purport, too, of another of the verses of Newman’s hymn:

O generous love! That he, who smote  
    In Man for man the foe,  
The double agony in Man  
    For man should undergo.

That double agony was the agony both of crucifixion and of our hell.

“Man for man”: that is the key to the understanding of all Christ’s suffering. The fact that it was as man, as the Son of God incarnate, that he suffered temptation and death does not negate or diminish that truth that it was God the Son who thus suffered for us. What he suffered as our fellow human being was fully suffered by him who is the eternal Word. Nor did the fact that he was the eternal Word made man lessen or alleviate his suffering; on the contrary, it intensified it beyond all calculation, for his self-humiliation was his endurance of unimaginable rejection and shame. The victory won at such cost was anything but unreal. The purpose of this, as Irenaeus has said, was “that as our race went down to death through a vanquished man, so we might ascend to life again through a victorious man.” (*Against Heresies* V.xxi.1.) And his victory was, from beginning to end, the victory of love; it was love that brought him to us, love that sustained his union with the Father in will and purpose, love that animated all his teaching and manifested itself

in deeds of mercy and compassion to all who came to him, and love that took him through every temptation to the final ordeal of the cross for our sakes....

### **The Death of Jesus**

Death is the consequence of sin. It is so because to turn away from God who is the source of life is to choose death instead of life. Turning away from God is the heart of all sin, and while death is rightly understood as divine judgement it is at the same time judgment which sinful man brings down upon himself (Gen. 2:16; Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Jesus was without sin and therefore was not under sentence of death (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5). Death had no claim on him and was not an inevitability for him. Being himself sinless, his dying was not for his own sins but for the sins of others. The death which he endured, then, was an act of his own free choosing; it was a display of his power, not a proof of his weakness. In dying, contrary to appearances, he was active, laying down his life as a self-offering, not passive, having his life taken from him by others (Jn. 10:11, 15, 17f.). Paradoxically, death is the ultimate weakness, the snuffing out of all power; yet the dying of Jesus, which certainly meant his self-submission to this annihilation of power, was the militant conquest of death through the crushing defeat of the Enemy who wields the power of death (Heb. 2:14; Gen. 3:15).

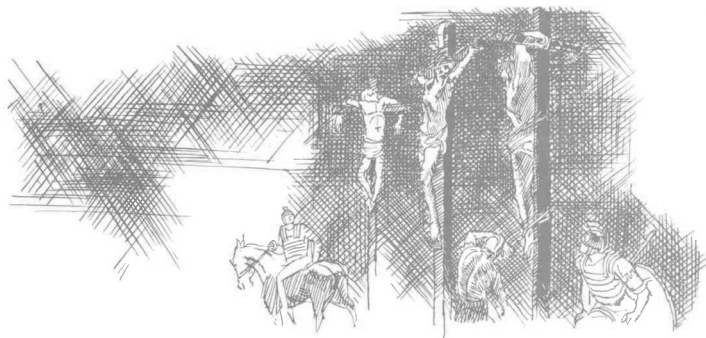
Although his life was not lived, as our lives are lived, in the shadow of death and judgment (Heb. 9:27), it was precisely to die that the Son took our humanity to himself in the incarnation. Repeatedly he spoke to his disciples of the necessity for him to suffer and die in Jerusalem (Mt. 16:21; 17:12, 22f.; 20:17-19). The ministry he had come to fulfil included, as its climax, the giving of his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). It was by his being lifted up on the cross that men were to be drawn to him (Jn. 12:32f.). After his resurrection he opened the minds of his apostles to understand that his death was a foreordained necessity which accorded with the teaching of the Scriptures (Lk. 24:44-46). And thereafter it became an indispensable emphasis in the apostolic preaching that Jesus had been delivered up and crucified "in accordance with the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:27f.; 13:37). His death, then, was a necessity, not for him, but for us. It was inseparable from the purpose of his coming....

It was also necessary, of course, that Jesus should be innocent and free from all offense, not only privately within himself but also publicly before the world. His guiltlessness was plainly attested to all by the perfect consistency of his life of loving and selfless service. But there was need



also of a judicial declaration of his innocence, so that it might be inescapably clear that his crucifixion was the execution of an innocent man. Hence the significance of the formal process of his trial before Pontius Pilate and of Pilate's repeated assertions that he found no fault in him (Lk. 23:4, 14, 22; cf. Mt. 27:24) – a verdict strikingly confirmed by the admission of the penitent thief to his fellow malefactor as they suffered on either side of Jesus: “We indeed [have been condemned] justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong” (Lk. 23:41).

The innocence of Jesus was in turn a necessity if he was to suffer and die as a substitute for the guilty. The vicarious role of his person on the cross is essential to a right comprehension of what was taking place there, for it was there that he achieved the objective of the incarnation, namely, “to give his life as a ransom in the place of many” (Mk. 10:45; cf. 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14). It is the teaching of St. Paul, who wrote that “while we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly,” and that “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6, 8); of St. John, who declared that “by this we know love, that he laid down his life for us” (1 Jn. 3:16); and also of St. Peter, who asserted that “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18; see also Jn. 10:11, 15; 2 Cor. 5:14f.; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:9f.; Heb. 2:9).



The substitutionary function of the death of Jesus was indeed dramatically illustrated in the event itself, for he was nailed to a cross that had been prepared for someone else. Jesus, who had been pronounced innocent, was put to death on the cross to which Barabbas should have been nailed, and Barabbas was a notorious criminal who had been sentenced to death for insurrection and murder. Literally, and for all to see, Christ died at Calvary the innocent for the guilty, the holy one in the place of the unholy sinner. The punishment due to Barabbas was inflicted



on Jesus, and Barabbas walked away a free man. This is a paradigm of the deep spiritual significance of the cross of Christ, for the redemptive reality of what took place on that cross is not local and temporary but cosmic and eternal in its dimensions. The blood shed in sacrifice on that cross was not the blood of a brute beast or of a sinful human being, but “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God,” blood which purifies the conscience of guilty sinners from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). It is the perfect atoning sacrifice offered by the perfect high priest once for all. By this “single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 9:26; 10:14). Through the blood of his cross he has made peace and ensured the reconciliation of all things (Col. 1:20). In him, the crucified Lord, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of God’s grace which he lavished upon us (Eph. 1:7f.). Thanks to what took place on the cross, “Jesus Christ the righteous... is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:1f.).

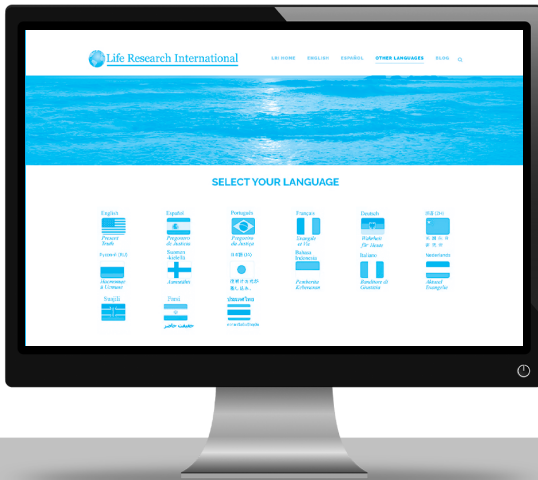
Christ effectively removed the curse that sinful man had brought on himself by absorbing in his person on the cross the dreadful force of that curse. The marks of the curse were displayed in the thorns with which he was crowned, in the sweat of his ordeal, in the pain and agony of his affliction, and in the last weakness of his dying. Indeed, the very manner of his dying showed that he had made himself accursed for us. “Christ redeemed us from the curse,” St. Paul says, “having become a curse for us – for it is written, ‘Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree’” (Gal. 3:13; Dt. 21:23). What was taking place on the cross of Christ was of immense significance for our fallen race, for there he who is above all the Blessed One became accused in our stead.

The grasping of this truth was a life-changing experience for Martin Luther; its wonder and its glory never dimmed for him, and it was at the heart of the gospel he loved to proclaim. He wrote, for example, that

“our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law, and so to be holden under the same that we could never be delivered from it by our own power, sent his only Son into the world and laid upon him the sins of all men, saying: Be thou Peter that denier, Paul that persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor, David that adulterer, the sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise, that thief which hanged upon the cross, and briefly, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men. (*St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 272 [on 3:13]).

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And likewise John Calvin, who declared that “we shall behold the person of a sinner and evildoer represented in Christ, yet from his shining innocence it will at the same time be obvious that he was burdened with another’s sins rather than his own.” The conclusion follows inescapably: “This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God” – a truth of such central importance that it merits the exhortation: “We must, above all, remember this substitution, lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life – as if God’s righteous vengeance, which the Son of God has taken upon himself, still hung over us.” (J. Calvin, *Institutes* II.xvi.5.)

In the death of Christ substitution and propitiation belong closely together: It is through substitution that propitiation is effected. There has been much misunderstanding about this. That the Father arbitrarily and for his own pleasure sacrificed his innocent Son is not what is intended, nor that the Son, being well disposed to us, by sacrificing himself propitiated the Father who was ill disposed to us. God cannot be divided, and in no way can the Son be placed at variance with the Father. There are not two conflicting wills and attitudes within the Godhead, for God is one and the divine unity is a unity not only of essence but also of mind and purpose and action. Nor are the love and the justice of God incompatible with each other, as some have wished to persuade us. For God to be loving and merciful to sinners does not require that he should set aside his justice. The coinciding of substitution and propitiation at the cross of Christ is the assurance that divine love and divine justice meet there in perfect unison. The redemption of man restores the *order* of creation, “God is not a God of confusion, but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33). The design of the cross was not merely to save the sinner but also to deal with sin, and the one could not be accomplished without the other. A God who condoned or ignored the continuing presence of evil in his creation would be neither all-holy nor all-loving. The cross of Christ exhibits God’s holy intolerance of sin and disorder as well as his redeeming love for his fallen creatures. If it is not the place of divine judgment it is not the fount of divine love....

...it was out of pure love for us that he himself satisfied the demand of holiness in our stead. At Calvary it was not the Son propitiating the Father but God propitiating himself. The vicarious self-sacrifice on the cross was also the self-propitiation of God. Propitiation starts, continues, and ends with God, who “in Christ was reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19)... it is God’s holiness that gives his love divine value....

On the cross, then, satisfaction was made for the sin of mankind, and that satisfaction was made not only to God but also by God in the person of his incarnate Son. There the root problem of our fallenness and alienation

was dealt with once and forever. The lifeline linking us to our Creator was reconnected. The power to conform ourselves to the divine image of our constitution was recovered. Our true humanity was reestablished. All this was achieved for us by the Son, who humbled himself to the depth of our God-forsakenness so that by taking it to himself, he might remove it from us. There is no depth lower than that. The incarnate Son's cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the most terrible, the most horror-filled cry in the whole of history. It was the cry of his shatteredness as he entered into our hell for us. His forsakenness opened the way for our acceptance. Such is the awesome mystery of that cross with the Son of God nailed to it in our place. And this was the purpose of the incarnation which made this dreadful self-obliteration possible....

...The desire to "protect" the deity of Christ from the endurance of the torment of Calvary must be resisted. What was experienced by Christ as our fellow human being and in our place was experienced by the eternal Son of God. It was the Word who is God who became flesh and who gave his flesh for the life of the world (John 1:1, 14; 6:51). It is the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20). And this means that this was nothing less than *the doing of God*. Jesus in action was God in action. From first to last the work of redemption is the work of God: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself" (2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:20). The incarnation was the means to this end, and God was no more insulated from the means than he is from the end. Hence the Apostle's assurance that in the incarnate Savior all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and in him to dwell bodily (Col. 1:19; 2:9). By virtue of the incarnation God's putting himself in our place became reality, even to the extreme of self-alienation....

### **Understanding the Atonement**

Differing theories regarding the manner and effect of the atonement have been classified in general as either objective or subjective: if objective, the emphasis is placed on the change in the attitude of God produced by the self-sacrifice of Christ; if subjective, the change in the attitude of man is stressed....

We may... cite Augustine to illustrate... the indissoluble connection between the person of Christ and the work of Christ. The "true sacrifice" which is "due to the one true God... cannot be rightly offered," Augustine wrote, "except by a holy and righteous priest;" moreover, this sacrifice must be "received from those for whom it is offered," and must also be "without fault, so that it may be offered for cleansing the faulty."... Our "one and true Mediator," therefore, was by his deity one with him to

whom he offered, and by his incarnation one with those for whom he offered, whom also he makes one in himself, while he himself was in one both the offerer and the offering. Thus, in the person and work of the incarnate Son, and in him uniquely, what Augustine held to be the four requirements for every sacrifice met together, namely, “to whom it is to be offered, by whom it is to be offered, what is offered, and for whom it is offered.” (*On the Trinity* iv.14). No terser summary of the bond that holds together the person and the work of Christ could be desired than that which is enshrined in the christological affirmation of the creed of Nicea: “...very God of very God,... being of one substance with the Father, ...who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate....” This declaration of belief has been the recital of the universal church from generation to generation....

The concept of satisfaction is the key to the understanding of Anselm’s [d. 1109] objective view of the atonement. The sinner, Anselm explained, stands before God as a debtor who is under obligation to repay what he owes....

The value of Anselm’s theory lies in his insistence, which is thoroughly in line with the teaching of the New Testament, that man is totally incapable of saving himself and therefore that the salvation of mankind is owed entirely to the grace and mercy of God, who is its sole author and perfecter....

...this is how, as a faithful pastor, he [Anselm] interrogated and gave spiritual counsel to one who was near to death:

Q. Do you confess that your life has been so evil that you deserve eternal punishment?

A. I confess it.

Q. Do you repent of this?

A. I repent....

Q. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for you?

A. I believe it.

Q. Are you thankful to him?

A. I am.

Q. Do you believe that you cannot be saved except through his death?

A. I do believe this.

Q. Then do this while the soul remains in you; place your whole trust in this death alone and have no trust in any other thing; commit yourself

wholly to this death; cover yourself wholly with it alone; wrap yourself wholly in this death; and if the Lord God should wish to judge you, say: "Lord, I interpose the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and your judgment; in no other way do I argue with you." And if he should say to you, "It is because you are a sinner," say: "Lord, I plead the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between you and my sins." If he should say to you, "It is because you deserve condemnation," say: "Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between you and my demerits, and I offer his merit in place of the merit which I owe and do not have." If he should say that he is angry with you, say: "Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and your anger..." (*Admonitio morienti* [Migne, PL, CLVIII, cols. 685-687]).

Anselm's younger contemporary Peter Abelard (1079-1142) had a very different understanding of the manner in which reconciliation has been made possible through Christ. His thought has been especially influential on many who have embraced a subjective view of the atonement, and there is some justification for seeing him as a forerunner of those who would today be called liberal theologians. Abelard had little time for the idea of original sin and the fallenness of human nature... Indeed, as he presented things, Jesus seemed to differ from the holy men of old only in degree, appearing as an inspiring example of one in whom the true potential of human nature became fully actualized, and through whom atonement is effected as his selfless example evokes on our part the response of our love. "We are justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God," Abelard taught, "in that through the singular grace displayed to us by the assumption of our nature, by his instruction of us by word and example, and by his perseverance even to death, he has by love bound us more closely to himself." (*Exposition of Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Migne, PL, CLXXIII, cols. 836, 861]). Thus in the thought of Abelard the response of our love to Christ's love for us is to all intents and purposes synonymous with redemption and justification... It is with good reason that Abelard's theory of the atonement has generally been described as the moral influence theory...

The biblical exposition of the significance of the atonement is by no means monolithic. The merciful love of God manifested at Calvary, the satisfaction of his holy justice in redeeming us from sin, the mortal conflict with the demonic forces of evil, and the moving of our hearts to respond to divine grace are not alternatives, nor are they mutually exclusive. They belong together. To isolate or to exclude the one from the others impoverishes and distorts the truth of our redemption. The dying of the incarnate Son on the cross is indeed the supreme demonstration of God's love for us (Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:10); but

Calvary is at the same time the place where God's justice is satisfied through the offering of Jesus Christ the Righteous as the propitiation for our sins and in our place, the Righteous for the unrighteous (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Jn. 2:1f.; 1 Pet. 3:18); and it is there that the decisive battle in the war against Satan was fought and won and our liberation from his bondage achieved (Heb. 2:14f.). The divine love is inseparable from the divine justice and conquest. Only this immeasurable love of God for us has the power to awaken the response of love in our cold hearts, so that we are able to say, "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19)....

### **The Love and Justice of God (Chap. 32)**

The Bible... knows no dichotomy between the love of God and the justice of God, and it does not ask us, as the Socinian does, to choose the God who is loving and reject the God who is just. We can no more live with a God who is unjust than we can live with a God who is unloving. Our own justification before God rests on the solid reality that the fulfilling of God's justice in Christ was at the same time the fulfilling of his love for us. Precisely because he is the propitiation for our sins Jesus Christ the righteous is our advocate in the heavenly sanctuary (1 Jn. 2:1f.)....

The loving God who desires to reconcile his sinful creatures to himself is at the same time the just God whose holiness makes it impossible for him to disregard sin as though it were of no consequence. It is not divine justice and divine love that are antithetical to each other, but the holiness of God's righteousness and the unholiness of our sin, or, still more tersely, godliness and ungodliness, between which there can never be agreement. On the cross we see Jesus, the Holy One, suffering instead of us who are unholy, bearing the punishment due to us, dying our death, and thus meeting the demands of God's, and therefore his own, justice; and this is also and simultaneously the supreme manifestation of divine love. The cross unites the love of God with the suffering of God for our justification. It is the proof that "God himself is righteous," in accordance with his holy justice, "and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus." in accordance with his holy love (Rom. 3:26). As St. John declares: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10). The heart of that propitiation is the satisfaction of the divine justice. Its motivation is divine love. Our turning in repentance and faith is the response of our love evoked by the grace of this holy and loving God.



# Christ for Us in Heaven

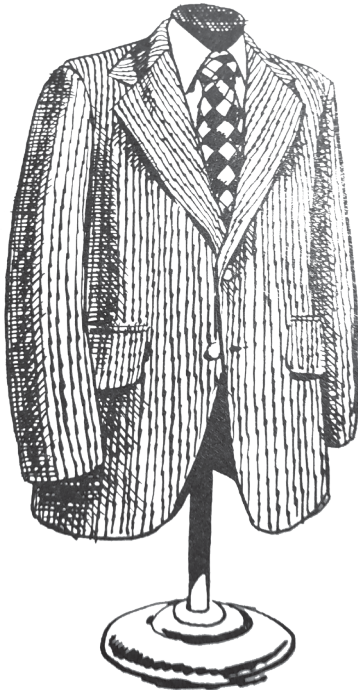
by Richard A. Marin

Have you ever thought about where Jesus is right now or what he is doing since he last ate with his disciples? Does the answer to either of these questions matter to our daily Christian life or our salvation?

Since Jesus taught us to pray “Our Father which art in heaven” and told the disciples “I go to my Father,” he must be in heaven now (Matt. 6:9; John 16:10). His disciples saw him ascend and two angels told them that he would return (Acts 1:10-11).

You might be thinking: what can I learn about salvation from what Jesus is doing in heaven now?

This article will explain why it is especially important to understand what Jesus is doing in heaven now and how our salvation hinges on being included in that work.



## Three Pictures

I have heard some pastors paint a picture of Christ in heaven after his ascension. They say his work for our salvation was accomplished on earth and now he is relaxing beside his father’s throne. They give the picture of a quiet beach scene with beach chairs in a reclining position – a tall glass of lemonade in one hand and the other draped loosely toward the warm sand beneath. Jesus is *waiting* till his Father says he can go get his bride on earth.

Others would have us believe that today Jesus is busily engaged in living the Christian life in his followers on earth. They picture the believer as a fur coat and Jesus as the active agent within. The coat does nothing but hang on his shoulders while Jesus energetically relives his perfect life within. This present-day life of the indwelling Christ is said to be the life that saves us. Of course, since this life is not finished yet, Jesus has a lot of work still to do for our salvation.

Still others believe that on earth Jesus accomplished everything he came here to do. They say that the work that saves us was complete and now he has gone to heaven to apply that finished work to the accounts of those who place their faith in him. For these teachers, Jesus is like a priest that presents offerings in a temple. They describe him as currently interceding on behalf of his people. For them, the word “intercession” means work. So rather than relaxing at his Father’s right hand or energetically living a new saving life within believers on earth they see him *ministering* at the throne of grace in heaven.

The first view suggests that heaven’s books are sealed—that at conversion, at the cross, or before, God decided who would be forgiven and saved. The second view states that the work that saves us is not yet finished – that Jesus is still actively living the life that saves us. The third view places our salvation in what Christ already accomplished on earth yet holds the idea that that work must be applied individually to the accounts of those that accept him as their Savior.

We list here these three exaggerated views to make a point. Each has its strengths: The first emphasizes that Jesus finished his work on earth; the second says Jesus is still working for believers; the third points out that although Jesus finished his work on earth, he still has something to do in heaven for believers.

That Jesus finished his work on earth is obvious for he who never lied, told the Father: “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do” John 17:4.

That Jesus is working in the lives of believers now on earth is also true. This work he does by means of the Holy Spirit that is given to indwell as many as believe in him (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13). Neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit, however, is now engaged in a *substitutionary* work – that work of living and dying in our place, Jesus already accomplished while on earth. The Spirit’s work within believers is not redemptive – rather, it is restorative. The Holy Spirit a) **inspires** *believers* to live godly lives, b) **empowers** *believers* to live godly lives, and c) **guides** *believers* in living godly lives. Jesus said, “If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to

you.” John 16:7 NASB. Having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, Jesus poured forth the transforming Spirit to indwell believers on earth (Acts 2:33; John 14:17). This is how Jesus (though the Spirit) is currently working on earth.

The Bible teaches the third view listed above. While Christ’s work for us on earth was complete; **his work *for us* was not completed on earth.**



Jesus continues to work *for us* in heaven. Apart from his heavenly intercession no one would be saved. Apart from us entering by faith in that work we will not receive its benefits. It is vitally important for believers to understand what Jesus is doing in heaven!

Were our sins forgiven at the cross? Were we justified when Jesus rose from the tomb? Were all our past, present, and future sins forgiven when we believed? Were we justified before the foundation of the world? While such sentiments may appear to uplift Christ’s finished work, they are not in harmony with what the Bible teaches. If justification is by faith alone, then we could not be justified before the foundation of the world. Nor were we justified when Jesus rose from the tomb! We are justified when we believe the Gospel (Rom, 4:22-24; 2 Thes. 3:2; Heb. 11:6).

If sins can be forgiven before they are committed, then Luther was wrong when he posted his 95 theses against the sale of indulgences. Jesus himself taught Christians to daily ask for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 6:9-12) and the Apostle John was clear when he wrote to fellow Christians explaining how their sins could be forgiven: “If WE confess

our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” 1 John 1:9. Right here it becomes obvious that Jesus still has a work to do in heaven.

### **Savior of the World**

What Jesus accomplished on earth he accomplished for **all humanity**, but all humanity is not forgiven. All humanity is not justified. Justification is only for those who put *their* faith in Jesus (Gal. 2:16). Forgiveness is only received by those who confess their sins (1 John 1:9). Since his ascension Jesus is working in heaven. He hears our prayers, intercedes for us, and responds to the cry, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” According to the book of Hebrews, this is a saving ministry:

“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” Heb. 7:25-26.

Jesus lived, died, and rose again that we *might* be justified. But in themselves Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection justify no one. Rather, they provide the **basis** for our justification. Jesus did these things as Savior of **the world**. “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” 1 John 2:2 (See also Heb. 2:9). On him, the Father laid the sins of every human being that would ever live. Isaiah wrote: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” Isa. 53:6. Consider how many have gone astray: isn’t that all humanity? The sins of everyone that has gone astray were paid for by Jesus on the cross. That is **universal atonement**. Since God wants everyone to be saved, Jesus “gave himself a ransom for all” 1 Tim. 2:4, 6 (2 Pet. 3:9).





The work that Jesus Christ accomplished for us on earth has continuing value as he intercedes for us in heaven. On earth he secured the gift of salvation by living a perfect, human life. On earth he made the one sacrifice for sins forever (Heb. 10:12). The gift of his perfect life and the sacrifice of his shed blood are the “gifts and sacrifices” he carried with him to heaven (Heb. 8:3). People today are justified on the basis of his perfect life lived out 2000 years ago. Sins are forgiven based on his blood shed on Calvary. The good deeds of believers can be offered to God as sweet-smelling incense because Jesus is continually cleansing their defects with his blood and filling their void with his righteousness.

Christ’s work for us in heaven is not the same as his work for us on earth. On earth he worked out a perfect human righteousness in our behalf and he died an atoning death in our place. These are unrepeatably acts. When on the cross he cried, “It is finished,” he spoke of his perfect life and our completed redemption. By his death he reconciled the world unto God. He appeared once at the end of the age to make reconciliation by the sacrifice of himself. Having made one sacrifice for sins forever he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high (2 Cor. 5:19; Heb. 9:26; 10:12). His holy life and suffering sacrifice were finished works – they are the works that save us. As many as put their trust in this good news will be saved for their faith enters heaven where Jesus is applying his finished atonement.

### **A Heavenly, Priestly Ministry**

After Jesus made the offering of his life and the sacrifice of his death on earth, he then began his priestly ministry in heaven. There he carries flesh, blood, and incense as offering, sacrifice, and sweet-smelling savor to present in his Father’s presence (Heb. 7:22-8:6; 9:11-15, 24; 10:5-10; Eph. 5:2). Old Testament priests dealt with flesh, blood, and incense – so Jesus must do the same in his antitypical ministry. It was necessary for him to first secure these offerings and sacrifices on earth (Heb. 8:3). “Flesh” represents his perfect life.

“Incense” represents his merits. “Blood” represents his atoning death. Jesus has something to offer in heaven! “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Heb. 9:24.

There are at least three things that Jesus has been doing in heaven since his sanctuary ministry was inaugurated at his Father’s right hand. He has been a) interceding for the justification (acceptance) of sinners, b) ministering his blood for the forgiveness of sins, and c) cleansing the good deeds of his followers so that they are acceptable to God. These were the work of God’s priests on earth. But Jerusalem’s rent veil testifies that their day is forever past. Good deeds, bad deeds, and personal acceptance are now dealt with in heaven. Since justification is by faith alone a person cannot be justified before they are born. Sins are not forgiven before they are committed, and good deeds do not bring joy to God until they are performed. Like the typical services under Moses this ministry deals with people and their relationship with God. “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God” Heb. 5:1. Jesus has work to do in heaven!

### **The Importance of Jesus’ Work in Heaven**

Without Christ’s work in heaven none would be saved. What he accomplished on earth for all humanity must be applied individually to the accounts of those who place their faith in him. Paul wrote that by means of Christ’s sacrifice on earth, God “reconciled us to himself... and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation... Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God... (behold, now is the day of salvation)” 2 Cor. 5:18 - 6:2. This passage shows that unless a person accepts God’s reconciling work in Christ, they will have no place prepared for them in God’s family tree. This salvation is grasped today by the hand of faith alone.

Jesus said: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” Matt. 10:32. In Romans 10, Paul expands Jesus’ thought, showing how we are saved:

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Rom. 10:9-13.

Now is the day of salvation. Jesus is working to procure our justification, to



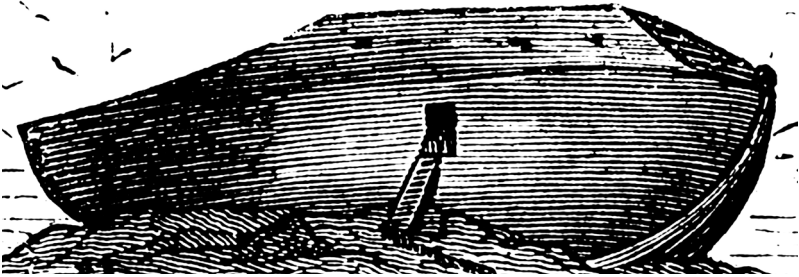
secure the forgiveness of our sins, and to purify our good deeds with his blood.

Faith comes by hearing the Gospel (Rom. 10:17). “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Rom. 8:34. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” 1 Tim. 2:5.

### **Christ’s Two-part, Heavenly Ministry**

Christ’s new covenant ministry in heaven will continue there for a limited time. As he told Noah before the flood, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man” Gen. 6:3.

Just as the Bible distinguishes between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins, between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, between “today” and the “not yet” so there are two phases to Christ’s ministry in heaven. Up to here we have dealt with the first phase that justifies people, forgives bad deeds, and purifies good deeds. The final phase also deals with persons, good deeds, and bad deeds. Only in this phase, the final reckoning takes place and people are permanently sealed into Christ, their good deeds are forever purified, and their bad deeds are blotted out of God’s records, never more to be brought up by God again (see Eze. 18:24-26 where God waits until judgment day to finalize one’s salvation).



Jesus will finish his heavenly intercession just before he descends to earth for his sealed bride. His decision concerning each individual case will be final. The person that is found righteous in Christ will be righteous still and the one that is unholy will remain so still (Rev. 22:11). Like it was in Noah’s day so it will be just before Jesus comes again. The world will be occupied with life’s routine while God is calling all to enter the ark of redemption. Jesus likened it to coming to a marriage. (Matt. 22:1-14). The prophet Joel made the same triple invitation as was done in Jesus’ parable. Only those who respond to God’s invitation by



gathering to heaven's Most Holy Place will receive the blessings offered there -- the blotting out of their sins and the perfecting seal of God's Holy Spirit in Latter Rain power (Joel 2:21-26). Many make excuses. Others delay to gather, fearing ridicule. But soon mercy's door will be shut, never to open again. This is why it is crucial to respond to God's invitation -- to enter heaven's Most Holy Place by faith where Christ will make up his kingdom and close heaven's records. It is there that the bride of Christ is permanently clothed in fine, white linen and the Father examines the guests to be sure they are wearing the robe of Christ's righteousness given them as they came by faith.

Those who do not respond to the invitation to gather will be cut off from among God's people. Their names will be blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 3:5; 22:19) and they will be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 22:13). May that be none of us!

No one needs to be cast into outer darkness. The King provides the necessary wedding garment for entering the marriage and the judgment that precedes it. He says, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage" Matt. 22:14. God gave his own Son as a ransom for all. To all he offers the robe of Christ's perfect righteousness if they will just accept the invitation.

All this makes obvious our need to understand what Christ is doing for us now in heaven. Jesus says: "If any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him" Heb. 10:38.

People are sealed within God's ark of safety and the door is shut. Unbelievers will not realize that mercy's door is forever closed until they see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 24:37-39; Rev. 7:1-8). The final accounting being complete, he comes no longer to deal with sin but to save his elect (Heb. 9:28). When Christ's intercession in heaven is finished there will be no future door of salvation opened to the lost. Neither during the millennium nor at its close does Christ again offer gifts or sacrifices for sin. Then there will only be "judgment without mercy." "Behold, today is the day of salvation!"

Just as it is necessary today for a person to cry out in faith to Jesus in order to be justified and receive the forgiveness of past sins, so in the day of God's final judgment it is necessary for us to plead that heaven will judge us and blot out our transgressions (Psa. 26:1-2; 51:1; Heb. 10:19-22). Paul told us to send our sins beforehand to judgment and Jesus urged us to not make excuse but to enter the marriage by faith in his life and death (1 Tim. 5:24; Matt. 22:4; Luke 14:17-18). John wrote that we are to follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4).

## Conclusion

Upon his ascension to the right hand of his Father, Jesus began his high priestly ministry in heaven. It is a work for us.

First, he applied his finished redemption on behalf of those who lived before the cross. To the account of every true believer from Adam to the crucified thief, justification was entered. All the sins that in faith were confessed over innocent animals had been forgiven because of a sacrifice to come. That forgiveness was then written in God's ledger (Heb. 9:15). All the good deeds performed by Old Testament saints were cleansed from all defilement by the blood of Christ and made perfect by his merits that they might be remembered by God as sweet sacrifices that please him.

Having cared for all previous generations Christ turned his attention to the living on earth. As a priest in God's presence, he offers flesh, blood, and incense: flesh for our acceptance into God's family (justification), blood for the forgiveness of our bad deeds, and meritorious incense with cleansing blood for making our good deeds acceptable to his Father – this is his daily (“continual”) ministry.

This heavenly intercession ends with an antitypical Day of Atonement in which the cases of all who have ever claimed Christ as their Savior will be examined to see if they continued unto the end in faith in their Substitute. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” 2 Cor. 5:10. Only those who by faith respond to the call to come to the marriage will be represented by Jesus, their Substitute. Today the hour of God's final judgment is come! For those who follow the Lamb by faith in his heavenly ministry the declaration will be final justification, eternal security, and the blotting out of their sins. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” Heb. 10:22. “All things are ready, come unto the marriage.”

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# Newman's Hymn

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise;  
In all His words most wonderful,  
Most sure in all His ways.

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail.

And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God's Presence and His very Self,  
And Essence all divine.

O generous love! that He, who smote,  
In Man for man the foe,  
The double agony in Man  
For man should undergo.

And in the garden secretly,  
And on the Cross on high,  
Should teach His brethren, and inspire  
To suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise;  
In all His words most wonderful,  
Most sure in all His ways.

John Henry Newman, 1865