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Christ's Inauguration as King-Priest*

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*An early chapter from a forth-coming book: "The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ"

On the eve of His betrayal and crucifixion Jesus prayed to the Father in the presence of His disciples. He acknowledged the completion of His mission and made a request for Himself:

I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made (John 17:4-5).¹

Exalted Victor

Fifty days later—in heaven—"innumerable angels in festal gathering" (cf. Heb 12:22) witnessed "the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42) "crowned (*stephanoō*) with glory and honor" (Heb 2:9). The inspired writer's allusion to the *stephanos*—the chaplet bestowed on the victor of an athletic contest—rather than to the kingly *diadēma* (diadem) discloses the excitement and rapturous joy all Heaven experienced on this occasion to celebrate the *victory* of our Lord over the forces of evil!

Because God the Son had previously "humbled himself" through His amazing willingness to assume on a permanent basis our human nature, and because He "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross," God "*highly exalted* (*hyperupsoō*) him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:8-11).

Christ's heavenly exaltation presupposed His earthly "exalta-

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tion" or "lifting up" (*hupsoō*) on the cross for "the expiation. . . of our sins" (1 John 2:2).² Jesus had explained to Nicodemus: "As Moses *lifted up* (*hupsoo*) the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man *be lifted up* (*hupsoo*)" (John 3:14). Near the end of His life He made a similar statement to the Greeks who had sought an interview in the court of the Temple: "'I, when I *am lifted up* (*hupsoō*) from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' He said this," adds John, "to show by what death he was to die" (John 12:32-33). In a very real sense Christ's atoning death on the cross, though it appeared at first to be a terrible defeat, was truly the "lifting up"—the exaltation—of a victor! The Father's enthronement of Christ at Pentecost (A.D. 31) acknowledged His Son's magnificent accomplishment (Acts 2).

Glorified Redeemer

Christ's heavenly exaltation is also described by the apostles as His glorification. Peter declared to the crowd in Solomon's Porch that God had "*glorified* (*doxazō*) his servant Jesus" whom they had denied (Acts 3:13 cf. 2:33). John comments that in the days of Jesus' ministry, "The Spirit had not been given [a reference to Pentecost, Acts 2] "because Jesus was not yet *glorified*" (*doxazō*, John 7:39). He also observes that the apostles' understanding of their Master's life (involving the prophecies about it) was clarified after "Jesus *was glorified*" (*doxazō*, John 12:16).

The Father glorified Jesus—that is, honored the incarnate Christ by appointing Him "the heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). In addition, He conferred on Christ "all authority (*exousia*) in heaven and in earth" (Matt 28:18), recognizing Him as "the *head* (*kephalē*) over all things for the church" (Eph 1:22).³ All the attributes of kingly majesty, dignity, and splendor were bestowed upon Christ. Holy angels and the representatives of the unfallen worlds honored the Redeemer and submitted willingly to His sovereignty (cf. Job 1:6; 1 Pet 3:22).

The book of Revelation symbolizes the enthronement of the exalted Christ under the figure of a lamb standing "in the midst" of God's throne "as though it had been slain" (Rev 5:6; 7:17). Twenty-eight times throughout the Apocalypse Christ is referred to as "the Lamb," and the throne of God's universal dominion

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receives the title: “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (cf. Rev 3:21; 22:1, 3).

Revelation 5:6 is the first visionary description of Christ’s enthronement beside His Father. The emphasis of the scene is upon the Redeemer’s atoning sacrifice. “Worthy art thou,” exclaim the living creatures and elders, “for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:8-9).

The ascription of praise and honor to the Lamb is repeated and enlarged upon by the myriads of angels who joyfully exclaim, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power (*dunamis*) and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev 5:11-12).

This particular scene, symbolizing Christ as a once-slain—but again living—lamb standing at the throne of God, carries a significant truth (Rev 5:6). The tense of the verb (“had been slain”) in the original language (a perfect, passive, participle) denotes that Christ had been slain in the past, but the *results* obtained by His death *remain* and are always available for the redemption of repentant sinners.⁴ The horns and eyes of the symbol indicate the glorified Christ’s absolute power and wisdom. But the Apocalypse’s repeated emphasis on Christ’s title: “the Lamb,” and the underscoring by the Greek perfect tense of the continuous efficacy of His sacrifice, clearly mark out the heavenly sanctuary as the command center from which the glorified Redeemer will now carry forward to a successful conclusion all aspects of the Plan of Salvation.⁵

Enthroned King

Upon Christ’s ascension to the heavenly realm, God “made him sit at his right hand” (Eph 1:20). Sharing the eternal throne of universal dominion (Rev 3:21), Christ occupies a kingship “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21). In this position God “has put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22)—and continues to do so until His Messianic reign is accomplished (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28).

The expression, to “sit at his [God’s] right hand” occurs (with slight variations) 20 times in the NT (if we count Gospel parallels

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and citations of Psalm 110:1).⁶ The NT statements are all based on Psalm 110, a Davidic writing. "The Lord [*Yahweh*] says to *my lord* [*Adoni*]: 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool'" (vs. 1). It is evident from His discussion with the Pharisees that both Jesus and the scribes understood the personage addressed as "my lord" to be the Messiah or Christ.⁷

Since the NT writers accept Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of all the messianic prophecies, they recognize His enthronement as co-Ruler with the Father as the direct fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. The expression, "at my right hand," connotes a *place* or position of honor (that is, at God's side), but is in nowise intended to locate the whereabouts of Christ's physical presence in the heavenly sanctuary.

"To sit at God's right hand" is a figurative phrase indicating the Saviour's new, exalted dignity, full authority and majesty, His rank and preeminence over the created universe. Christ Himself speaks of the glorified redeemed in a similar manner when He promises: "They will sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Rev 3:21). Obviously, the phrasing speaks of their dignity as "fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17) and not of a sitting on a single, literal throne which would be impossible for the millions of redeemed persons.

In what manner does Christ now "reign"? What is the nature of His kingdom? When Christ stood before Pilate, He plainly indicated He sought no earthly empire to rule. "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world" (John 18:36).

The advent of "the kingdom of God," which Christ early on announced as imminent, was the kingdom of His grace. Repentance from sin and faith in Him as Saviour were the requirements for entrance (Mark 1:15). The Holy Spirit would work in the heart to bring about an entirely new life (John 3:3-8; cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Many of Christ's parables taught the characteristics of that spiritual kingdom and of those who would become its subjects.

When the Pharisees, who thought only in terms of political rule, challenged Him about "when" the announced kingdom was coming, He replied: "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs

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to be observed; nor will they say, “Lo, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, margin). Those who accept Christ as Saviour and Lord not only obtain “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” from the Father, but are also “delivered. . . from the dominion of darkness and *transferred. . . to the kingdom of his beloved Son*” (Col 3:13-14, emphasis added).

In this age (the Messianic Age) Christ reigns from “the throne of *grace*” in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 4:16). The NT writers view the previous ages from Adam to the Messiah as moving toward “the climax of history” (Heb 9:26, NEB)—literally, “[the] completion of the ages.” Thus, the era in which Christ’s first advent, death, resurrection, and subsequent reign from heaven take place is viewed as “these last days” (Heb 1:2) or “the last days” (Acts 2:17).⁸ The present era of Christ’s reign of grace *also* has its end-time events that will culminate in our Lord’s *second* advent to take His people to Himself (Matt 24:32-33; Heb 9:28).

The reign of Christ from the “throne of grace” is not something mystical or intangible. Through the agency of His church He is extending the borders of His kingdom throughout the world. Just as He once said to the Jewish leaders—“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working: (John 5:17, NASB)—so now He rules in the nations of this world to carry out “the eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11) to bring the plan of salvation to a triumphant conclusion and to terminate the rule of sin.

“Then comes the end, when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father *after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he [Christ] must reign* until he [God the Father] has put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:24-25, emphasis added). When, at the end of the age—at the end of Christ’s reign of grace—the seventh angel blows his trumpet, “The kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ!” At that point Christ moves into the rulership of the kingdom of glory, “and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15) upon “his glorious throne” (literally, “upon his throne of glory,” Matt 25:31).

But Christ’s kingship will always be subordinate to that of the Father. Just as in the incarnation, God the Son condescended to take humanity’s nature so as to be our Representative Head, just so He volunteers to remain in that position eternally. “And when

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all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28, NASB).

Invested High Priest

In his speech to the Jews assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, Peter explained that the Joel-predicted outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which they were witnessing, was the Divine announcement that Jesus of Nazareth had been enthroned at God's right hand as Lord and Christ.

"This Jesus God raised up, . . . *Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God*, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *he has poured out this which you see and hear*. For David did not ascend into the heavens; but he himself says, '*The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.*' Let all the house of Israel therefore *know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ*, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:32-36, emphasis added).

But Peter understood Christ's heavenly role to involve more than kingship. A few weeks later he proclaimed in the Temple courts that Jesus "is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as *Prince (archegos)* and a *Savior (soter)*, to grant (*didomi*, give) repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31, NASB, emphasis added). In this declaration Peter combines the princely or kingly rule of Christ with that of priesthood. In Israel it was the priesthood (the high priest and his associate priests) who dealt with the issues of sin, repentance, and forgiveness.

The apostolic author of Hebrews sums up the argument of the first half of his epistle with an affirmation similar to Peter's: "Now the point in what we are saying is this: *we have such a high priest*, one who is *seated at the right hand of the throne* of the Majesty in heaven, *a minister in the sanctuary (ta hagia) and the true tent* which is set up not by man but by the Lord" (Heb 8:1-2, emphasis added).

Thus, it is evident that in the mind of Peter and his brethren Pentecost (Acts 2) marked not only the enthronement of the exalted and glorified Christ as King, but also His investiture as High Priest. He was inaugurated to be a royal priest on Heaven's highest throne.

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Whereas in Israel, kingship and priesthood were separated (inherited by descendants of Judah and Levi respectively), in Jesus Christ the two roles are united.

But Christ is not merely occupying an impersonal position. He is *humanity's* King-Priest, *our* Royal High Priest, forever linked to us through His incarnation so that He may minister in our behalf the salvation Heaven has devised. "Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, *to make expiation for the sins of the people*. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Heb 2:17-18, emphasis added).

The blood of Jesus Christ is Heaven's currency in its business of salvation. That is, the *merits* of His sinless life and atoning death are what He pleads before God in behalf of every repentant sinner who comes seeking forgiveness and acceptance. As John writes: "*We have an advocate with the Father*, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2, emphasis added). And the apostolic author of Hebrews adds: "Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25).

It is fitting, as Christians, that we should continually look back to Calvary, for there the basis of our salvation was achieved. Every communion service recalls the central truth of the Christian faith: Christ's atoning death (1 Cor 11:26). And it is equally fitting that we eagerly anticipate His Second Coming, the great consummation of the plan of redemption (Heb 9:28). But it is also a Christian's great privilege to focus his/her faith and life's energies in this present era upon the living Christ in the heavenly sanctuary ministering "in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24)!

We approach the living Christ—our High Priest—through the medium of prayer. And we can do this with confidence. He bears our humanity; He has experienced our pain and sorrows. He understands our fears, our hurts, our griefs. "Since therefore we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the religion we profess. For ours is not a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but

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one who, because of his likeness to us, has been tested every way, only without sin. Let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help" (Heb 4:14-16, NEB).

Prophetic Portrayals of Priesthood

King-Priest Like Melchizedek (Ps 110:1, 4). While the Levitical system foreshadowed the priesthood of Christ, certain OT prophecies plainly stated the fact. David wrote the most ancient of these predictions in Psalm 110, the same prophecy that foretold the enthronement of the Messiah at God's right hand (vs. 1). After this opening statement, God continues speaking to the Messiah: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek'" (vs. 4).

This divine commission provides the biblical argument for the apostolic author of Hebrews to prove that the typical, Levitical priesthood with its sacrificial rituals and festivals had come to an end with the Father's appointment of Jesus Christ to a priesthood like Melchizedek's.⁹ "Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, . . . 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek'" (Heb 5:5-6; cf. 7:11-19).

Melchizedek was an Amorite king whom Abraham met during his sojourn in the land of Canaan sometime during the first quarter of the second millennium, B.C. Evidently, the king ruled over a city-state, Salem (known later as Jerusalem, cf. Ps 76:2). Melchizedek was a priest of "God Most High" as well as a king (Gen 14:17-21). This brief allusion to the Deity indicates that the worship of the true God, originally held by all the immediate descendants of Noah, had not died out entirely. Apparently a genuine faith in the Creator still existed in some family lines other than Abraham's, and the patriarch did not hesitate to give this priestly believer a tenth (tithe) of the spoils of war (vs. 21; Heb 7:14).¹⁰

Several hundred years later the Holy Spirit selected the Salem king as a type of the coming Messiah, bidding David to write: "You [the Messiah] are a priest for ever *after the order* of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4, emphasis added). The focus of the prediction is on "the order" or the "nature of" (*taxis*, Heb 5:6) the ruler's priesthood.

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That is, the Messiah would assume a priesthood similar to Melchizedek's.¹¹ Thus, approximately a thousand years before Christ's first advent, Inspiration foretold that the Messiah would rule from God's throne as a *king-priest*! Christ would unite in His person the roles of king-ship and priesthood and would rule and minister in this double capacity at His Father's side.

Ministry of Intercession (Isa 53:11-12). The 8th century B.C. Isaiah, often referred to as the "Gospel Prophet," wrote of the Messiah's priestly ministry. The reference is recorded among what are commonly known as the "Servant Songs." The central personage in the fourth song (Isa 52:13-53:12) is sometimes designated "the Suffering Servant." He graphically portrays the Saviour's substitutionary death for the sins of humanity.

Liberal scholarship rejects the identification of the "Suffering Servant" with Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus applied the prophecy to Himself on the night of His betrayal. Citing a key line in Isaiah 53:12, He said: "I will tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, "And he was reckoned with the transgressors"; for what is written about me has its fulfillment" (Luke 22:37). The early Christians were in full agreement with this identification (cf. 1 Pet 2:24; Acts 8:30-35).

Although the main focus of the song is on the Messiah's substitutionary sufferings, the last two verses make a clear reference to His future, priestly intercession.

"He [the Messiah] shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant [the Messiah], *make many to be accounted righteous* (*sdq*);¹² and he shall bear (*sbl*) their iniquities. . . [H]e poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he *bore* (*ns'*) the sin of many, and made *intercession* (*pg'*)¹³ for the transgressors" (Isa 53:11-12).

When joined together, the last lines of each verse (vss. 11, 12) seem to form a literary chiasm in themselves:

A The righteous one, my servant, [shall] make many to be accounted righteous;

B He shall bear their iniquities (vs. 11).

B' He bore the sin of many,

A' [He] made intercession for the transgressors (vs. 12).

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In this arrangement the statements of **A** and **A'** and **B** and **B'** form two couplets, the lines of each couplet being parallel. Lying at the center, **B** and **B'** emphasize the sin-bearing aspect of the Messiah's death. On the other hand, the intercession of the Messiah stated in **A'** explains how he intercedes the merits of His sinless life and death to cause repentant sinners "to be accounted righteous" as stated in line **A**.

These verses describe the ministry of a priest. It is the work of a priest (1) To bear sin (Lev 10:17) and to make atonement/expiation for it (Heb 2:17), and (2) To intercede in behalf of repentant sinners who seek forgiveness and acceptance with God (cf. Heb 7:25; 9:24) on the basis of the merits of that atonement/expiation.

Tucked away in this ancient prophecy was the most marvelous truth: One day a *righteous* Messiah would bear the penalty "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2) by dying in behalf of humanity, and in His priestly intercessions for repentant sinners would secure for them not only forgiveness, but would cause (Hebrew hiphil-causative) His own righteousness to be accounted to them so that they would stand fully accepted before God!¹⁴

Crowned High Priest (Zech 6:9-15). A third announcement of the Messiah's priesthood was made in Judea after the return of the exiles from Babylon in the last quarter of the sixth century, B.C. Sixteen difficult years had ensued and the building on the Temple eventually was suspended. However, in the second year of the Persian king, Darius I (520 B.C.), the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the leaders and people with promises from the Lord to start the work again on the Temple and to complete the project (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14-15).

During this renewed building spurt, three exiles arrived from Babylon with an offering of silver and gold. Directed by God, the prophet Zechariah crafted a crown from these materials, and taking the high priest Joshua with him, acted out a prophecy in the house where the visitors were staying:

The word of the Lord also came to me saying, "Take an offering from the exiles. . . . [M]ake an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadek, the high priest. Then say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch [*se-mah*], for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple

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of the Lord, and be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices” . . . (Zech 6:9-13, NASB).

According to other OT passages the expression, “Branch” (*semah*), is a technical term for the Messiah (a branch from the house of David).¹⁵ By declaring the *crowned* Levitical high priest to be “the Branch,” Zechariah also foretold the double offices of kingship and priesthood the Messiah would take under God’s direction.

Twice the prediction underscores the fact that the Messiah will “build the temple of the Lord.” Since the Messiah’s priestly rule was yet future, the prophecy obviously transcended the local temple construction that was in the process of being completed by Zerubbabel (Zech 4:9). During His reign as King-Priest, the Messiah would build another and more important Temple: the Church! He alone could accomplish this aspect of the plan of salvation.¹⁶

Furthermore, the Messiah would both “sit and rule on His throne” and would be “a *priest (cōhēn)* on His throne” (vs. 13). This is a remarkable announcement—that the messianic Branch of the Judaic house of David would assume the functions of the priesthood of the house of Levi by Divine direction! The apostolic author of Hebrews himself comments on this point: “It is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.” “Now *if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all*, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law” (Heb 7:14; 8:4, emphasis added). Thus, this enacted prediction implicitly pointed towards a further revelation that the Messiah’s reign as a king-priest *would take place in heaven and not on the earth!*

The last part of vs. 13—“Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices” (NASB)—is understood by scholars in two different ways. Literally, the last phrase reads: “And the counsel of peace shall be between the two of them.” Thus, the American Revised Version (ARV) renders the phrase: “And the counsel of peace shall be *between Them both*” (emphasis added). The question is whether the prophet is referring to *two offices/roles* (kingship/priesthood) or to *two Persons* (the Messiah and Yahweh)?

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In the history of Israel the offices of king and priest were kept separate by Divine arrangement. Priesthood belonged to the Aaronic house of the Levites, whereas kingship belonged to the Davidic house of the tribe of Judah.¹⁷ Since Zechariah's prophecy plainly indicates that the Messiah would unite the roles of kingship and priesthood, many scholars opt for the interpretation that the Messiah would simply unite these two offices in a harmonious manner in His personal reign (as reflected in the NASB version cited above).

However, the echoes of Psalm 110:1, 4 (that the Messiah will sit on Yahweh's throne as a king-priest) are so strong that others, we think more correctly, take the literal expression, "the two of them," to refer to Yahweh and the Messiah, co-ruling in the kingdom of grace to carry out the plan of salvation. Hence, the ARV rendering: "And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both."¹⁸

Inauguration of Messiah's Priesthood (Dan 9:24). Although brief, the three prophecies reviewed above clearly announced the future priestly ministry of the Messiah. But priests do not function apart from temples or other sacred places. But since the Mosaic ritual laws prevented a Messiah of Davidic origin (tribe of Judah) from serving in the Jerusalem temple (cf. Heb 7:13-14; 8:4), where would He minister? Does any prophecy foretell of the Messiah's ministry in a heavenly temple/sanctuary? We believe the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 points in that direction.

In this famous prophecy the angel Gabriel announced the *time* for the Messiah's long-awaited appearance.¹⁹ The prophecy centers largely upon His sacrificial death that would "put an end to sin," would "atone for iniquity," and would "bring in everlasting righteousness" (vss. 24, 26). But the final event in the Messiah's three and one-half year ministry on earth would be "to anoint a most holy place (*qōdeš qodāšîm*)" (RSV).

The expression, *qōdeš qodāšîm*, literally, "holy of holies" and its variants (the holy of holies, holies of holies) occurs 43 times in the OT.²⁰ Apart from this single reference in Daniel, every instance of this expression found elsewhere (with the possible exception of 1 Chron 23:13)²¹ is applied to some aspect of the sanctuary Tabernacle/Temple and its rites.

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Since the phrase quite often carries an adjectival force, it is commonly rendered “most holy.” For example, the golden altar is described as being “most holy to the Lord” (Exod 30:10). On occasion the phrase can be rendered (with the definite article) as a substantive: “*the* Most Holy [Place]”; that is, the second apartment of the sanctuary (Exod 26:33-34). The sanctuary tent, its several pieces of furniture, altars, and utensils were all regarded as “most holy *qōdeš qodāšîm*,” Exod 30:26-30) as were also the incense, sin, and guilt offerings (Exod 30:36; Lev 6:14-17 cf. 6:25, 7:1, 10:12), and any “devoted thing” (Lev 27:28). The evidence is abundant that *qōdeš qodāšîm* is a sanctuary/temple expression.

Although past Jewish and Christian expositors have identified the Daniel 9:24 phrasing (literally, “to anoint holy of holies”) with the anointing of the Messiah, the overwhelming use of the expression in the OT suggests that it refers to a sanctuary/temple and should be translated in the manner indicated by the translators of the RSV: “to anoint a most holy place.”

But where would such a hallowed place be found? And what would its anointing signify? Moses anointed the Tabernacle-sanctuary in a ceremony which inaugurated the Levitical priestly ministry (Exod 40:9-15). Although no record is left of a formal anointing of the later temples, we may safely assume that such was the case. The only sanctuary-Temple that could have been “anointed” by the Holy Spirit at Christ’s inauguration as King-Priest would have been the heavenly one attested to in the NT (Hebrews/Revelation). “Now the point in what we are saying is this: *we have such a high priest*, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, *a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord*” (Heb 8:1-2, emphasis added).²²

Some have suggested the anointing of the *qodes qodasim* in Daniel 9:24 indicates that only “the Most Holy place”—the second apartment of the earthly sanctuary is functional in heaven. In other words, the “Holy Place” (first apartment) of the Israelite sanctuary is thought to represent the Mosaic era, while the Most Holy Place (second apartment) represents Christ’s ministry in heaven during the Christian era. In this manner, Christ has only one phase of ministry, namely, intercession, in “the Most Holy place.”

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However, such reasoning does violence to the Daniel text and Israelite understanding as well as to the typology undergirding the sanctuary system. The usual way to designate the second apartment was to turn the adjectival construct into a substantive construct by adding the definite article: “*The Most Holy [place]*” (i.e. Exod 26:33-34; 2 Chron 5:7). Without the definite article the expression seems to carry only an adjectival thrust, meaning that some object is *very sacred*, that is, most holy. Since the expression in Daniel 9:24 appears *without* the definite article, the force of the expression is that *a very sacred [place]*—*a most holy [place]*—would be anointed for the Messiah’s priestly service. The intent is simply that the heavenly sanctuary—a very sacred place—was to be inaugurated in the sense that a new phase in the divine plan of salvation was to begin with Christ’s priesthood.

The Israelite mind would have regarded the two-apartment sanctuary as the *single* house of God, His dwelling (cf. Exod 25:8) and could not have imagined a separation of the apartments. The *priestly ministration* in each apartment was inextricably locked into each other. Furthermore, the suggested, different fulfillments of the two apartments turns the sanctuary typology on its head. The daily ministry in the first apartment was as symbolic of certain aspects of Christ’s priestly ministry as was the yearly priestly ministry in the second. The notion that Christ has only a “Most Holy Place” ministration in heaven in the Christian era leave out all fulfillments of the priestly type associated with the first apartment.

We may safely conclude, therefore, that the prophecy of Daniel 9:24 foretold the anointing or inauguration of the heavenly temple in a new sense. Now would begin the priestly mediatorial ministry of Christ based on the merits of His actual sinless life and atoning death. The Divine plan of salvation would now move from the realm of *promise* to the realm of *fact* (cf. Heb 9:15; Rom 3:23-26).

Summary

Exalted Victor and glorified Redeemer, Christ presently reigns as King-Priest from His Father’s universal throne.

Both OT prophecies and NT statements affirm the truth that Christ serves as humanity’s High Priest before God in heaven.

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Moreover, we may assert as an unchallenged, scriptural truth that Christ's priestly ministry is as essential to the plan of salvation as was (and is) His vicarious death.²³ Without Christ's priestly mediation, Calvary would have been in vain. While the cross is a perfect atonement for sin, it requires *both* the sacrificial death and the priestly application of the merits of that sinless Offering to achieve the full objectives of the plan of salvation as Heaven designed it.

Calvary fully paid the debt of the world's sin (1 John 2:2). Christ died "once for all time" (*ephapax*, literal reading, Heb 7:27) and will never die again. But the objective atonement accomplished by the Godhead at the cross *saved none automatically* (Rom 3:24-26, 5:18-19). Divine grace extended to the repentant sinner on the basis of the cross must be individually accepted, and its merits must be accounted to the believer individually through the priestly intercession of Jesus Christ. His priesthood is as central to the salvation process as is His death which activates and requires it. In the following chapters we will explore the scope and significance of our Lord's present priestly activity in the heavenly sanctuary which began at the time of the festival of Pentecost (A.D. 31).

Endnotes

Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, 1946, 1952 editions.

2 William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, Press, 1957), p. 858. Hereafter, AG.

3 For helpful remarks on the exalting and glorifying of Christ, see Walter F. Specht, "Christ's Session, Enthronement, and Mediatorial and Intercessory Ministry," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar, eds. Abridged Edition (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), pp. 151-159. Hereafter SA.

4 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Francis D. Nichol, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-1957), 7:772. Hereafter, SDABC.

5 "The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 488. Hereafter, GC.

6 Matthew 22:44 (= Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43); Matthew 26:64 (= Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69); Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22.

7 See Matthew 22:41-45 (= Mark 12:35-37); Luke 20:41-44).

8 From the very first promise (Gen 3:15) God's people began to look forward

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to the coming of a Redeemer to save humanity from its sinful condition. Sacrificial ritual and Divine prophecy increasingly filled in the features of the Messiah and His ministry. From the OT perspective, which the NT writers adopt, the long-hoped-for appearing of the Messiah would mean that “the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11, NASB), or “the end of the times” (1 Pet 1:20, RSV). Thus, the NT writers regard the present age or time, that is, the Christian era, as “these last days” (Heb 1:2). However, they see this present era of the Messiah’s reign from heaven as also having “last days” or a “last time” (cf. 1 Pet 1:5; 2 Pet 3:3; 2 Tim 3:1; Jude 18). Jesus likewise speaks of “the close of the age” (Matt 13:39, 40, 49; 28:20).

9 See Hebrews 5:10; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17 and the reasoning that runs through Hebrews 7 as the priesthoods of Levi and Melchizedek are compared.

10 Much fruitless speculation has been spent on endeavors to identify Melchizedek. He was simply a God-fearing ruler who lived in Abraham’s time and whose royal, priestly, and unrecorded genealogy made him an ideal messianic type. Responding to some who argued that the Amorite king was a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ, Ellen White wrote: “It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father” (RH, Feb. 1890, cited in SDABC, 1:1093).

11 AG, p. 811.

12 In its hiphil form, the verb *šdq* can carry the nuances, “declare righteous, justify;” “justify, vindicate the cause of, save;” “make righteous, turn to righteousness” among other meaning. See *A Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1907), pp. 842-843. Hereafter, BDB.

13 In its hiphil form, the verb *pgʿ* carries the nuances: “make entreaty,” or “interpose,” or interpose in behalf of someone. See BDB, p. 803.

14 Says Alec Motyer, “Isaiah 53:11 is one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned. (i) The servant knows the need to be met and what must be done. (ii) As ‘that righteous one, my servant’ he is both fully acceptable to the God our sins have offended and has been appointed by him to his task. (iii) As righteous, he is free from every contagion of our sin. (iv) He identified himself personally with our sin and need. (v) The emphatic pronoun ‘he’ underlines his personal commitment to this role. (vi) He accomplishes the task fully. Negatively, in the bearing of iniquity; positively, in the provision of righteousness.” *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 442.

15 Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8. Cf. Isaiah 11:1 (*nēyzer*) for a parallel term. The personage represented by the “Branch” in Zechariah 6:12 is regarded as the Messiah by Jewish sources (Aramaic Targum, Jerusalem Talmud, and the Midrash). See Kenneth L. Barker, *Zechariah. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Frank E. Gaebelen, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 7:640.

16 Cf. Matthew 16:18, “I [Christ] will build My church”; 2 Corinthians 6:16, “We [Christians] are the temple of the living God”; 1 Peter 2:4-5, “Like living stones by yourselves built into a spiritual house.”

17 During the Hasmonean rule (143-63 B.C.), the roles of political leadership and priesthood merged.

18 Commenting on Zechariah 6:9-15, Ellen G. White writes: “As a priest,

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Christ is now set down with the Father in His throne. Upon the throne with the eternal, self-existent One, is He who 'hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,' . . . His intercession is that of a pierced and broken body, of a spotless life. The wounded hands, the pierced side, the marred feet, plead for fallen man, whose redemption was purchased at such infinite cost. 'And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.' The love of the Father, no less than the Son, is the foundation of salvation for the lost race. . . ." GC, p. 416.

19 We will examine this prophecy later in more detail.

20 My count.

21 1 Chronicles 23:13 can be translated to read: "Aaron was separated to sanctify *him* as most holy,' etc. If it be so, this is the only place where the forcible term, 'holy of holies' (most holy) is used of Aaron." Philip C. Barker, "Exposition," *1 Chronicles. The Pulpit Commentary* (Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Company, Publishers, nd), 13:376. Other translations render the phrasing: "Aaron was set apart to consecrate the most holy things, . . ." (RSV).

22 See discussion in SDABC, 4:852; William H. Shea, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy. Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*. Frank B. Holbrook, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 3:82-83. Hereafter DARCOM.

23 "The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the Forerunner is for us entered.' . . . Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through His mediation, the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God." Ellen G. White, GC, p. 489.