



## TRIBUTES TO GERHARD F. HASEL

BY

CHURCH OFFICERS

AND

THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

"I have fought the good fight,  
I have finished the race,  
I have kept the faith.  
Henceforth there is laid up for me  
the crown of righteousness, which the Lord,  
the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day,  
and not only to me but also to all who love his  
appearing."



Robert S. Folkenberg  
 President

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
 Silver Spring, Maryland

On behalf of the General Conference family, we want to extend our sympathy to those who mourn the tragic and untimely death of Dr. Gerhard Hasel.

Dr. Hasel was a bright and shining star in theological circles both within and outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Only eternity will reveal the full extent and degree of his powerful impact on this church through his teaching and writing while at Southern College and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. His numerous books and articles will live after him. He will be missed by his peers and associates in the various theological societies and academies of which he was a respected member.

Students at all levels and throughout the world felt the positive influence of this Christian educator. They are better people because of the example he set and the life he lived.

Let me convey my own deep appreciation of his many years of service. Truly, a mighty warrior for God has fallen. Take comfort in these words:

"I [Jesus] have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, encountered your temptations. I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touch no responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 483).

Robert J. Kloosterhuis  
Chairman of the Board, Andrews University  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Dr. Gerhard Hasel's untimely, unexpected death has created an immense void. The effects of this tragic event will be felt by scholars in general, and by Seventh-day Adventist theologians in particular. Yes, a Christian and a respected student of the Word has fallen. The loss is indeed enormous.

His absence will be noted by scholars, students, and friends both within and outside of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He possessed a powerful erudite pen and employed it effectively and copiously. He was held in high esteem in the scholarly world. He was respected and accepted as an authority in his sphere of study and expertise. For many, to cite Dr. Hasel was sufficient, weighty, and trustworthy.

Dr. Hasel's contributions to the scholarly world were prodigious, influential, and far reaching. His scholarship brought stature, prominence, and preeminence to the Seminary, to his colleagues, and to his church. Our church, our society, we ourselves have altered, adjusted, and changed our concepts, perceptions, and perspectives on many issues due to his scholarship and talents.

Dr. Hasel was a man of strong qualities. What he said he believed. What he believed he lived. There was no confusion between his confession and his profession. There was no room for doubt regarding his convictions or where he stood on a given issue. His defense was lucid, well-articulated, and forthright. His analysis of issues were perceptive. They put in bold relief the principle points and clearly delineated the direction to pursue. When it came to defending the authority of scripture, there were no "ifs," "ands," "buts," or "maybes" in his vocabulary. As a man of convictions, all knew where he stood.

I believe Dr. Hasel was a sincere, dedicated servant of Jesus Christ. His hope was anchored in the Savior and His Word. Methinks, if he were able to speak to us at this very moment, his admonition would be positive, his words filled with assurance, his voice lifted up in praise and adoration to the Son of God and encouragement to his loved ones. He would most assuredly point

us forward and upward to "the blessed hope." Yes, a son, a husband, a father, a brother, a friend, a leader in the church has fallen. But he shall rise again on that glad morning.

On behalf of the Andrews Board of Trustees, I extend their profound condolences and deep heartfelt, Christian sorrow. A prince in Israel has fallen. We shall miss him.

C. Raymond Holmes  
Past-President, Adventist Theological Society  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Retired  
Andrews University

This issue of *The Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* is designed as a tribute to Dr. Gerhard Hasel, professor of Old Testament and Director of the Ph.D./Th.D. programs at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, and former Dean of the Seminary.

Dr. Hasel served as the second president of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) 1990-1992, and his presidency constituted a primary factor in its consolidation. He confessed to some of his confidants that he considered his contribution to the development of ATS as one of the most important and satisfying of his life and ministry.

His death was certainly untimely in that with his beloved Church facing crucial issues relative to biblical authority and biblical interpretation, his determined and assured voice was so desperately needed.

Dr. Hasel was a leading figure of conservative Adventist theology, and he was recognized as a major theologian within the larger Protestant Christian context. No other Seventh-day Adventist theologian enjoyed such respect and confidence both within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and among Protestants in general as the tributes in this issue attest.

Though primarily an Old Testament scholar he was truly a biblical theologian in that his interests and expertise included the New Testament as well. His abilities as a scholar were even broader— embracing Christian ethics, biblical archaeology, and systematic theology.

In the first 150 years of Seventh-day Adventist history he ranked as one of the great Adventist biblical scholars, and in the opinion of many of his colleagues he was rapidly emerging as a major theological figure and mind.

I was privileged to serve on the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary during his deanship. When the

history of the Seminary is written, his deanship will prove to have been vital during a sensitive period of Seventh-day Adventist theological history.

As an administrator he was acutely perspicacious. His thought penetrated beneath political forces and concentrated on the theological significance. He had the ability to quickly recognize the long range implications of proposals and decisions, and did not hesitate to let the weight of his opinion be felt when he determined criticality regarding the role and purpose of the Seminary. He was single-mindedly committed to larger goals than the advancement of his own career.

When all the words of honor have been said, the greatest tribute that could be made to the memory of our friend and colleague will be our determination to continue to build on the solid foundation he helped to construct for the Adventist Theological Society. His tragic death must not be allowed to dampen our enthusiasm for the purpose and goals of ATS, but rather inspire the ongoing development of creatively conservative Adventist theology of which he was a major figure.

Let those of us who shared his faith and convictions vow to continue in the strong biblical faith to which his life bore uncompromising witness. While the contribution of ATS to the Church and to Seventh-day Adventist theology will continue, we are profoundly grateful that he was with us for a little while providing an example to be admired and emulated.



**Jack J. Blanco**  
Past-President, Adventist Theological Society  
Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists  
Collegedale, Tennessee

It was late on the evening of August 11, 1994 that I received a phone call from someone in the community asking me if I had heard that Dr. Hasel had been killed. This person thought that since I was a friend and colleague of his, I would want to know what she had heard. I thanked the caller and told her I would try to verify it. I could not imagine it to be true. I immediately phoned Dr. Whymeister, Dean of the Seminary, and was assured that such was the case. Dr. Hasel had been killed in a car accident on his way to a BRI Science Committee (BRISCO) meeting.

The next morning I shared the news with my colleagues; some had not heard. They also expressed disbelief and had difficulty accepting the fact that it was really so. It is always more difficult to accept the sudden death of a close friend or loved one than the passing of a stranger. And this was the case with us in accepting the passing of Gerhard. There is no need for me to elaborate on the immediate cause of his death, how he died. We know the details. The other question of why he died now, is not so easy to answer. "Why did this have to happen to a man who was so committed to Christ and to the upholding of Scripture, and at time in his life when he was the most productive?"

I have not known Dr. Hasel as long nor have I worked with him as closely as have some of you. However, the short time that I did work with him left me without a doubt that here was a man who was committed to using all the talents and gifts that God had given him to uphold the authority of Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* became his motto and *Ein' Feste Burg* became his song. For him Scripture needed no outside help to establish its authority. While he appreciated and used the various sciences to clarify what was written, for him Scripture was the Word of God incarnate in human expression. He would brook no compromise on its authority and was well able to defend his position.

As I consider the circumstances of his passing, I cannot help

but thinking how easy it would have been for the Lord to commission an angel to give the car that Dr. Hasel was driving a little push to get it out of the way of the oncoming vehicle. Then I ask myself, "Why did the Lord not do this? Was Gerhard's work done that God intended for him to do? Had he completed his mission for the Lord?" But what of those articles and contributions that were left unfinished, such as his work as associate editor of *The New International Dictionary of the Old Testament*, or the various other publications still incomplete?

Maybe we ought to take a careful look at the contributions to Christ's commission Dr. Hasel has made in order to better understand what God has in mind for us to do. Through Gerhard's uncompleted articles and publications is the Lord trying to show us that more work of this kind needs to be done? We can only try to second-guess God's purpose in his life and death. But it seems to me that the passing of our friend and colleague does call for a reassessment of our own mission, both individually and as a society, so that we do not drop the torch that he carried so nobly and ably until the day of his departure from us.

Dr. Hasel's fellowship with colleagues extended well beyond his own denomination. He fellowshiped with all, but found the closest fellowship with those who also were unashamedly committed to the self-authenticating authority of Scripture. His prodigious contributions to Theology whether through journals, books, or in the classroom give evidence of his firm and fervent commitment to Jesus Christ and to what he believed. It did not take long before those who associated with him knew where he stood on these cardinal issues of our common faith.

Though Gerhard was not one of the founders of the Adventist Theological Society, once he became a member he put his whole heart and soul into its mission, became its second president. As past-president he continued to serve as Vice-President for Publications. Much of the credit for the growth and success of the Society goes to him, and it is an understatement to say that we will miss his energy, wisdom, and scholarly skills. We will miss lighting our flames from his torch, basking in his friendship, rejoicing in his successes, extending to him a handshake and giving him a brotherly hug. It is with sadness that we say good-bye, but it is with hope in

the resurrection, posited in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we look forward to meeting him again.

E. Edward Zinke  
President, Adventist Theological Society  
Silver Spring, Maryland

Dr. Gerhard F. Hasel died Thursday afternoon, August 11, 1994, in an automobile accident near Ogden, Utah. He was returning in a rented automobile to his motel where he was scheduled to participate in the annual meetings of the Biblical Research Institute Science Committee (BRISCO) when he was killed.

At the time of his death Dr. Hasel was the J. N. Andrews Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology and the Director of the Ph.D./Th.D. programs at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Many considered Dr. Hasel the foremost theologian in the Adventist church today, an opinion I fully share.

It is because of his significant theological contribution that this issue of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Gerhard Hasel. The tributes contained in this issue speak of our appreciation for his work and of our dedication to the God of the Bible which he worshiped.

My tribute to Gerhard has already been published several times.<sup>1</sup> I will not repeat those comments, but I do wish to emphasize his contribution to the theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Gerhard started his teaching ministry at the time my generation was receiving its education. In the Seventh-day Adventist system, we students found a church that, at least intellectually, seemed to be drifting into humanism. Humanism drove the philosophies and therefore the concepts of knowledge of our age. We used our senses to gather and test data. Our minds synthesized this data into knowledge. We tested this knowledge with further investigation. The proof was in the pudding—we were a generation that could produce and afford a 450-horse power car, put a man on the moon, and perform wonders in the operating room.

We were in control of the future. Further experimenting would bring further knowledge which would solve more problems.

Progress was ours. We were the right generation in the right spot to reap the results of right thinking. The scientific method was King, no—it was god. It could answer questions not only in matters of physics and biology, it could also provide a model for the study of history, psychology, sociology, economics, and even the Bible.

If the Bible was to be accepted as true, it had to be proven scientifically, archaeologically, historically, geologically, and (for those who accepted them as viable disciplines), psychologically and sociologically. The network of truth was discovered and defined by the scientific method. This concept of the nature and acquisition of knowledge is a form of humanism. While some Adventist scholars openly and knowingly accepted and advocated humanism, for most its acceptance was more implicit and unarticulated. Scientific humanism simply described the obvious way things are. There was a naive and uncritical acceptance of 19th and 20th century western culture and its intellectual thought forms.

The Bible was accepted and studied within the context of our contemporary humanistic culture. It was tested for its truthfulness on the basis of these humanistic disciplines. Man, come of age, was finally in control of the Word of God. Within the Adventist scholarly community, the Bible was often interpreted both consciously and unconsciously as one would any other piece of literature—from the standpoint of the historical-critical method—a method which arose out of the age of the enlightenment and has therefore had a major impact on contemporary liberal studies. The Bible was studied for its origin in ancient near eastern culture—the concept that the Bible is the folk literature of ancient Hebrew and Christian culture was seen as integral to its acceptance, interpretation and finally to its preaching. When confronted with this kind of thinking, one of my minister colleagues asked in bewilderment, "Ed, isn't there something that Jesus said that I can know about?"

Following in the wake of this humanistic path, there began to arise questions about such fundamental Adventist understanding as a six day creation, a short chronology and the Biblical claim of a worldwide flood, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The role of Ellen G. White as a prophet to the church was also questioned on the same humanistic basis.



It was within the context of this uncritical acceptance of humanistic scientific methods that Gerhard came upon the scene. He had been trained in critical, humanistic methods and therefore understood their workings from the inside. However, Gerhard was a skeptic—he was not willing to accept the thought processes of contemporary culture without critical evaluation. Gerhard did the unthinkable. He questioned that which was absolutely unquestioned in our society—the absolute validity of scientific reason, the contemporary method of humanism.

Gerhard “jumped ship”! He had the audacity of turning the cannon around! The weapon was no longer aimed at the Bible, it was now aimed at contemporary humanism. The canon was no longer grounded in the principles of critical reason; it was founded upon the Bible. The Bible was no longer scrutinized by the methods of contemporary cultures. These methods were now scrutinized by the Bible, a revolutionary idea, so novel that it was absolutely ridiculous, nonsensical, naive, dangerous, a threat to contemporary scholarship and culture (as one of my professors said, “Ed, how can you live in the twentieth century and think that way?”).

It seldom occurs in history that an individual so radically changes the direction of thought of his contemporaries. This was the case with the 16th century reformers, and so it also was the case with Gerhard. Gerhard took a 180 degree turn in the road to return to the fundamentals upon which the Adventist church was started: the sole authority of Scripture as the foundation of our world view, concept of knowledge and thinking processes, knowledge of God and understanding of doctrine, and of the living of our lives.

As is usual with such broad sweeping movements in history, Gerhard was not the only one in the church to capture the essence of this new return to Adventist thinking, but he was certainly at its forefront. Gerhard was a scholar of scholars. Very bright, energetic, forward reaching and prolific. As a result of this new direction in Theology, there is today a powerful movement back to the thinking that gave this church its original reason for existence—its mission that gave justification to its prophetic emergence—the proclamation of the everlasting gospel.

Because of Gerhard’s contribution, there is now a renewed understanding and resurgence of Seventh-day Adventist theology

within the church. There is a new appreciation of Creation, the Judgment, the authority and unity of the Bible and many other doctrines of the church. The book of Daniel has been rescued from the second century and returned to the sixth century. The book of Isaiah is seen to be a unity. The synoptic problem has itself become the problem, and the words of Christ can be heard again. Genesis 1 and 2 are a unity and can be accepted as representing what really took place. God, Moses and Sinai really did cross paths, the children of Israel were really delivered at the Red Sea. Christ really did do the unthinkable, He died for our sins, He was bodily resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven, is now ministering in the Most Holy Place and will return for us—the remnant of His seed—in a literal, visible Second Coming. There will be a literal new earth and an end of sin and sinners.

For the intellectual climate in the church within which Gerhard started his ministry, it was very important that the church be modern in every respect including its thinking process. Gerhard, however, gave a renewed emphasis to the Adventist biblical viewpoint. For him, it was important that the church be thoroughly biblical, including its thinking process.

The Three Angels' Messages do not rest upon the feebleness of human reason and scholarship. They can be preached with certainty. Gerhard has and will continue to contribute to the proclamation of the gospel both within and by the church. We can be grateful that God gave us his ministry for a short while.

Appropriately enough, Gerhard's last presentation to the Adventist Theological Society was on the resurrection. That presentation is printed in this *Journal*!

Come Lord Jesus!

<sup>1</sup> E. Edward Zinke, "The President's Page: Tribute in Honor of Gerhard F. Hasel," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 1-5.

tion" or "lifting up" (*hupsoō*) on the cross for "the expiation. . . of our sins" (1 John 2:2).<sup>2</sup> 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).<sup>3</sup> 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



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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

### 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

and citations of Psalm 110:1).<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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

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).<sup>8</sup> 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

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 (archēgos)* and a *Savior (sotēr)*, to grant (*didōmi*, 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.



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

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.<sup>9</sup> "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).<sup>10</sup>

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.

That is, the Messiah would assume a priesthood similar to Melchizedek's.<sup>11</sup> 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* (*šdq*);<sup>12</sup> 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'*)<sup>13</sup> 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).

