**Jesus Intercedes for us**

We have talked about the deity of Jesus and the humanity of Jesus over the last weeks. I want to continue looking to Jesus today.

We know that Jesus after his death and resurrection, he returned to his heavenly place. We call that his ascension.

Acts 1:6-11

6 *So when the apostles were with Jesus, …He replied, “… you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 9 After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him.*

And we know from Scripture that he now sits at the right hand of God the Father

Mark 16:19 *So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.*

Sitting down denotes that his work is done.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that “*after making purification for our sins, He sat at the right hand of the Majesty on High.”*

For Jesus to be at the right hand of God in heaven tells us that his physical work on earth is completed and He has conquered death as He set out to do.

Hebrews 12:2 … *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus sitting at the right hand of God does not only signify honour, but it also signifies that Jesus is equal in status with God, or within the Godhead, meaning Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity.

Why can I say that? Because no one sits in the presence of a King, yet Jesus did.

Luke 22:69 *the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."*

Jesus shares that same level of authority, power, provision, and strength.

Matthew 28:18 *Jesus said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

It is fulfilling the words of Psalm 110:1, which reads: “*The Lord, says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand* *until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”*

This signifies the kingly nature of Jesus. There are not two thrones, but one throne and Father and Son occupy it.

The Bible mentions the idea of Jesus being at the right hand about 16 times in the New Testament, either seated or standing.

For a person to be at the right hand of someone automatically signifies a special place of honour.

Jesus is King, Prophet and Priest.

As a king, He reigns over all creation, described as the "ruler of kings on earth". As a prophet, He is the "faithful witness" who reveals God's truth to humanity (Revelation 1:5); and as a priest, He offers Himself as a sacrifice for sin, acting as a mediator between God and people.

I want to focus today, not on the kingly role or prophetic role but on Jesus’ priestly role of intercession and mediation that Jesus is now doing for us from heaven.

To understand this, we need to go back into the Old Testament for a minute.

We need to consider the role of an OT priest.

Basically, they represented the people before God, and offered the various sacrifices prescribed in the law,[[1]](#footnote-1) to appease God for the sins of the people.

There were two mandatory sacrifices in the Old Testament Law. The first was the sin offering. The purpose of the sin offering was to atone for sin and cleanse from defilement. There were five possible elements of a sin sacrifice—a young bull, a male goat, a female goat, a dove/pigeon, or 1/10 ephah of fine flour.

The second was the trespass offering, and this sacrifice was exclusively a ram. The trespass offering was given as atonement for unintentional sins that required reimbursement to an offended party, and also as a cleansing from defiling sins or physical maladies.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Priests were defined by their intercessory role. Priests acted as representatives of the divine to the people, and representatives of people to the divine.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In the OT, priests gave themselves to the service of God’s people, standing in the gap between the people and God, standing between their sinfulness and God’s holiness.

Now Jesus is our high priest. He intercedes for us, just as the Old Testament high priests interceded for the people of Israel.[[4]](#footnote-4)

He also offered a sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice to God. In His death He satisfied God’s justice and atoned for the sins of His people. He reconciled us to God and in His present position of authority, He continually intercedes for us.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Whereas the OT priests had to daily offer sacrifices to God as an appeasement to him for the sins to the people, Jesus died once for all.

Hebrews 10:10-12 *we have been sanctified through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands to minister and to offer again and again the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.*

RC Sproul writes that: He is a Priest forever, continuing His mediatorial work, not by continually offering sacrifices to satisfy the justice of God but by interceding for His people in the heavenly Holy of Holies, within the heavenly temple. Just as Christ is both the subject and the object of prophecy, He is the subject and the object of the priesthood. He is the perfect Priest and perfect intermediary, now and forever.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Hebrews 7:25 *“he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”*

He prays for us. He is our intercessor; he is our advocate.

An intercessor serves as a spiritual advocate, praying on behalf of others and standing in the gap to seek God's mercy, guidance, and intervention.

Jesus is our intercessor standing in the gap.

His intercessory role started before he was killed, in his prayer for his disciples and us.

John 17:20-26

*“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. …*

In His priestly role, He made the perfect sacrifice, offering the perfect atonement once and for all. Yet the cross was not the end of Christ’s priestly office. In His ascension He entered the heavenly Holy of Holies, where He continues to act as our Great High Priest. There He prays for His people, interceding with the Father on our behalf.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Hebrews 9:24 *For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.*

His intercession for us continues in heaven.

Hebrews 9:11-15 *When Christ came as high priest … He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

One of the priestly duties Jesus performs for us is to present our prayers to God. He is always interceding for us, constantly appearing for us in God’s presence.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Jesus is our great High Priest. He is the one who bears our burdens on his shoulders, especially the heavy weight of our guilt, which he bore when he died for our sins on the cross.

And another of his duties is to pray to God on our behalf. He is uniquely qualified to do this because he holds our needs so close to his heart.

We have a High Priest who always has us on his heart and in his mind. Our names are engraved, so to speak, on the gemstones that cover his breast piece. He has bound us to himself with the cords of his everlasting love, making us secure forever in a place close to his heart.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Jesus, in His body, is at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, interceding for us. He will be there until He comes again.[[10]](#footnote-10)

He is our advocate.

In the incident of the stoning of the disciple Stephen in Acts 7:54-60: As Stephen is condemned by the ruling council of Israel (acts 7:54ff), he has a powerful vision of Jesus, standing at the right hand of God. [*“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”]*

To be seated at the right hand is to be in the position of the King or Judge. But the defence attorney or advocate stands in the court room, unlike the judge. In the vision, Stephen glimpses the mediatorial work of Christ – Jesus standing in heaven.

Think of it as a palace court. Satan is the adversary and the accuser. He accuses us before God the Father.

To use a legal picture, he is the prosecutor in court, telling of the sins we have committed, urging God that we need to be found guilty and punished.

But Jesus stands as our defence lawyer.

At every accusation made by Satan, Jesus tells God that the penalty for the sins we are accused of have been paid for by him.

1 John 2:1 *“… But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”*

He is our defence lawyer, reminding God the Father that the penalty we so richly deserve has been paid by Christ himself.

Not only does our high priest intercede for us, but he also bleeds for us.[[11]](#footnote-11)

He bled and died to take our sins upon himself and paid the penalty due us by his life. We spoke of this last week. He redeemed us.

Isaiah 53:12 prophesied: *he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.*

He is alive, He now intercedes for our transgressions.

Hebrews 2:14-15 …*through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death*

Though we’re justly convicted of our sins and stand guilty before a holy God, Christ intervenes on our behalf, offering his righteous life and sacrificial death as our defence counsel. Jesus takes our sin on himself, and the Father imputes Christ’s righteousness to us.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

No one—not even Satan—can effectively bring a charge against us because Christ is interceding with the Father on our behalf (Rom. 8:33–34).[[12]](#footnote-12)

Romans 8:34 “*Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*

Even though Satan tries to accuse believers of sin, Christ stands there with the proof in His nail-scarred hands that He has paid for sin with His blood, and the work is finished.

He is the living proof that we are now innocent of all charges because He stood in our place and took the punishment that we deserve.

As we stand before God dressed in Christ’s righteousness, He declares our case to be dismissed, as our debt has been paid in full by His only Son. We are free to walk in fellowship with God because Jesus chose to die and He rose again for the sake of the ones He loves (John 3.16).

Jesus chose to suffer the punishment that I deserved, and on the cross, He cried, “Tetelestai!” [pronounced Tete les tai ] which has been translated as “it is finished” but actually is an accounting term meaning, “Paid in full.” Believers no longer have a debt to pay because we stand under grace and not under the law (Ephesians 2.5-9).[[13]](#footnote-13)

As a writer for the Harvard Law website so powerfully wrote: Jesus is our advocate. He is literally our lawyer. When you mess up, He does the legwork, He makes appeals, He files motions, and He defends us even when we were wrong because of His grace, empathy and forgiveness. How much better to have Jesus as our lawyer than the greatest Harvard mind. He is the fulfiller of the Law, and He is actively fighting for us. There is a real, perfect Man fighting for us in every case, even small claims. He is our Lawyer on retainer, and He bills every hour of the day. And He has another advantage. He is the Son of the Judge! He advocates for us to be judged by the Law of mercy because our Lawyer already paid every penalty. Even when we are guilty of messing up, the verdict is not guilty. And He has a host of angels to enforce His verdict. He has never lost a case. Imagine; the God of the universe is our personal lawyer.[[14]](#footnote-14)

But this freedom from conviction does not mean we have a licence to continue sinning without worrying about it.

Paul rebukes such a thought in Romans 6:1

*What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may increase? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?*

So, in this wee look at Jesus, we see him as King, sitting on the throne of heaven with his Father; but more importantly for this sermon focus, we see Jesus standing interceding for us – praying for us; we see Jesus standing as our advocate where he reminds the Father that he has paid our penalty and we can walk free. He overcomes the accusations of the enemy against us by our imputed righteousness granted to us by him.

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2. https://www.gotquestions.org/Old-Testament-sacrifices.html [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Swann, J. T. “Priest”. In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Barry, J. D., & Kruyswijk, R. *Connect the Testaments: A One-Year Daily Devotional with Bible Reading Plan.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Settle, P. G. “Christian Education”. *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*, 1(2), 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Sproul, R. C. *Who Is Jesus?* (Vol. 1, p. 62) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sproul, R. C. *Does Prayer Change Things?* (Vol. 3, p. 84 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ryken, P. G., & Hughes, R. K. *Exodus: saved for God’s glory* (p. 930). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ryken & Hughes (pp. 881–882). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Tozer, A. W., & Smith, G. B. *Evenings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings* (p. 160) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Elgin, J. D. “Blood Sacrifice and Burning Flesh”. In *Study Like a Pro: Explore Difficult Passages from Every Book of the Bible.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/god-prosecution-defense/ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. https://e360bible.org/blog/jesus-is-our-advocate-biblical-explanation/ [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. https://pblcls.law.harvard.edu/blog/jesus-our-advocate/ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)