

THE MAN IN THE GLORY

"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven." Acts 1:11.

"Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1.

In these days, too many, in speaking and writing of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, leave Him in the tomb. They confess that "He lived a remarkable life," a life which they bring to a close with His death on the cross. They sing their mournful song:

"Now He is dead! Far hence He lies
In the lorn Syrian town;
And on His grave with shining eyes
The Syrian stars look down."

But those of us who have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ have something better than that to sing. We know that He died for us on the cross, and that He was buried in Joseph's tomb, but we know, too, that

"Death could not keep its prey,
Jesus, our Saviour!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, our Lord!"

"Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign:
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!"

After Christ was raised from the dead He walked the earth for forty days in His resurrection body -- walked and talked with men. After that, He was taken up into heaven, that is, He passed through the first heaven, in which the birds fly, the rains form, the clouds float and the winds blow, and the second heaven, the vast expanse in which God has placed the sun, the moon, and the stars, into the third heaven, the eternal abiding place of our eternal God, and that is where He is today, "The Man in the Glory." He is there with a real body, a literal body, which men could touch. In the upper room in Jerusalem He said to those believers there gathered, "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones such as ye see me have."

If Jesus Christ is not "The Man in the Glory," He cannot carry on a present work, nor can He perform a future work. Our salvation falls to the ground if He is not there. We need not expect anything from a dead Christ---one who is still resting under the curse of sin, which is death. Those who believe in Him sometimes live as if He were a dead Christ, but we know better. His own Word is, "I am he that liveth, and became dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore." The Man Christ Jesus took His place in heaven. We shall think of the Man in the Glory in several relationships which He bears toward us.

I. The Man In The Glory Is Our Saviour.

In Hebrews 1:3 we read that Christ, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."
Hebrews 10:12 tells us: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

After His work on earth was accomplished He went into the Holiest in heaven, and sat down. A seat speaks of a finished work. The tabernacle in the wilderness has often been called the "chairless house in the wilderness." God furnished the tabernacle with a table, a candlestick, and so on, but there was not a chair. The priest in olden times always stood --- in the house of worship he never sat down. The reason why he never sat down was because his work was never finished. He might offer a sacrifice today, but it must be repeated tomorrow; he might sprinkle the blood on the mercy-seat this year, but it must be repeated next year --- all this because "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). The high priest in Israel never reached the end of his work. He never sat down. But "This Man" sat down, and demonstrated the truth of the cry that came from His lips near the end of the six hours on the cross; "It is finished!" A perfect Sacrifice for sins had been made; the Saviour's work was done.

There is another word in Hebrews that tells us the same thing. It is the word "once" and it is found in a number of verses. This word "once" used in relation to the work of Christ does not mean, "once upon a time," but "once for all." The word declares the fact that the work for which He came into the world has reached a glorious achievement. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28). This means that Christ went to the cross and bore our sins in His body "once for all." He will never go to the cross again. Salvation is accomplished. "We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

"There's a Man in the glory I know very well,
I have known Him for years, and His goodness can tell.
One day, in His mercy, He knocked at my door,
And, seeking admission, knocked many times o'er,
But when I went to Him, and stood face to face
And listened awhile to His story of grace---
How He suffered for sinners, and put away sin--
I heartily, thankfully, welcomed Him in.
We have lived on together a number of years,
And that's why I have neither doubtings nor fears,
For my sins are all hid in the depths of the sea:
They were cast away there by the Man on the Tree."

II. The Man In The Glory Is Our Lord.

"God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Thomas said, "My Lord and my God," and we join with him in the confession and the adoration. Christ is on the right hand of God, in the place of dignity and honor and power. God's thoughts of Him are expressed in Philippians 2, where we are told that He was in the form of God, yet took upon Himself the form of a servant that He might be obedient unto death, yea unto the ignominious, the terrible, the shameful death of Calvary's cross. Following that statement comes the message, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus Christ was not always in the place of dignity and glory. On earth He went into the place of shame. Men spat in His face when He was here on earth. They plucked the beard from His cheeks, and laid the scourge on His back. His brow was pierced with thorns, His hands and feet with nails, and He was mocked and derided. In agony He cried from the cross: "Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani!" They called back to Him in derision. It may be that some did not catch His words, but others did, and they were ready to make out of them quips and jests. They said, "Why, He's calling to Elijah! God paid no attention to Him, let's see that Elijah will do!"

But that mocking and jeering came to an end. The One Who was in the place of shame went back into the glory from which He came. The feet that had carried the cross up the hill toward Calvary now carried the Saviour up the slant of heaven. The pierced and torn feet that went up the heights to the cross now go up the stairs to the throne of God. That was when this verse from Psalm 24 was fulfilled: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in!" That day when Jesus Christ left the earth, the gates of heaven lifted up their heads, and the King of Glory went in. The word declares that He was "made higher than the heavens." And that means that He was made higher than the inhabitants of the heavens.

Jesus Christ was once on the place of humiliation, but now He is in the place of glorification. He was once in the place of degradation, but He is now in the place of exaltation. He was once in the place of debasement, but He is now in the place of dignity. He was once in the place of the curse, but He is now in the place of the crown. He was once in the place of horror, but He is now in the place of honor. He was once on the accursed Tree, but He is now on the Father's throne --- the Tree was gruesome, but the throne is glorious. He was once in the place of wrath, but He is now in the place of worship. He is our Lord and our God.

III. The Man In The Glory Is Our Priest.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God" (Hebrews 4:14). He was not a Priest on earth, nor could He be one if He were on earth now, for Hebrews 8:4 says: "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest," but He is a Priest in the true Holy of Holies in heaven. His life in heaven is not one of self-gratification. He is there for us, He is accessible to us. We may come boldly to the throne of grace. He hears our prayers.

When the Apostles selected a man to take the place of Judas, they prayed to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, Thou knowest the hearts of men. Direct our ways." When Stephen was stoned to death he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." When Huss was led to the stake, he was surrounded by his enemies who consigned his soul to the devil, but with quiet, calm faith, Huss prayed, "I commit my spirit into Thy hands, O my Lord Jesus Christ." The same One hears our prayers. We know that prayer is to God, through the Son, by the Spirit. We believe that every prayer that gets to God goes through the Son. The prayers of the children of God the Son offers in His incense basket as sweet incense unto the Father. We come to God through Him.

The Priesthood of Christ is unchangeable: "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Hebrews 7:24). It is not passed on to another, nor are its duties delegated to another. Its unchangeableness is our hope. In Hebrews our Lord is contrasted with earthly priests. An earthly priest could only hold office for a certain length of time. If he were not removed from office, he was bound to die, and so the priestly duties were passed on from one man to another. Christ's priesthood never changes, because He has endless life. One man with an endless priesthood because of endless life is better than a long line of priests in succession, because endless life means endless power, and it takes just that to save us.

Jesus Christ is our sympathetic Advocate and our faithful Intercessor. Our Lord's life as Priest in heaven is an exact counterpart of the actions of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies on earth. Once a year the High Priest went into the Holiest Place, and He never said a word. He was there in the presence of God, but He was silent. It is not what our Lord says, but what He is that constitutes Him our Advocate. Herein lies my security. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). If I am unrighteous, He is righteous, and He is there at the right hand of God as my righteousness. God does not want us to sin, but He does recognize the possibility of one of His children falling into sin, and so it says, "If we sin." Every sin of a child of God is a sin against the Father in heaven. You can't do something wrong without hurting and grieving your Father in heaven.

If a child of God sins He has with the Father a sympathetic Advocate, One Who understands the power of sin, since He has Himself felt its tremendous pressure upon spirit, soul and body, and yet One Who has been uncompromising in His refusal to yield to it in thought, word, or deed. Through Him we have cleansing and restoration when we come by way of confession.

"The question of sin, I adoringly see,
The Man in the glory has settled for me!
And as to my footsteps, whatever the scene,
The Man in the glory is keeping me clean;
And therefore I'm singing from morning to night,
The Man in the glory is all my delight."

IV. The Man In The Glory Is Our Captain.

Hebrews 2:10 says: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This word "Captain" means "Prince-Leader." A "Prince-Leader" is One Who has those who come after Him. This is the thought in the statement about Him as the One Who shall bring "many sons unto glory." He is there in glory, and we shall follow. In Hebrews 6:19-20 we are told that Christ entered heaven as a "forerunner." A "forerunner" is One Who goes on before, with others to follow Him. The High Priest in Israel never entered the Holy of Holies as a "forerunner." No one ever followed him. But we shall follow our Lord. Our Lord's entrance into heaven is the pledge and promise of our entrance there. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," is a prayer that will be answered. Christ's death and resurrection and ascension become the guarantee of our own.

The day when we shall be with our Lord cannot come too soon. We know something about the limitations of the flesh. We know something about the cry of a better man than any of us: "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We will be glad when deliverance comes.

V. The Man In The Glory Is Our King.

He sits upon the Father's throne in heaven, but He exercises a spiritual sway over the hearts of men. We have been translated out of the darkness of sin into the "kingdom of the son of his love." We are His spiritual subjects, and He is King of our hearts. Yet His Kingship does not end here, for some day He will sit upon the throne of His father David and have "the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." He will be King of kings and Lord of lords.

Sinner, be warned. Christ is seated now, a mediator between God and men, the Man in the glory. You can take God at His Word and come through Him today, to be saved. You can yield your allegiance to Him now, but if not now, then some day you will be compelled to do so, for some day He will rise from the throne, and when He rises the acceptable year of our Lord will end, and the day of the vengeance of our God will begin.

"A stranger to Jesus? what! do you not know
He is washing poor sinners much whiter than snow?
Have you lived in a land where the Bible's unknown
That you don't know the Man Who is now on the throne?
Ah, did you but know of His beauty and power,
You would not be a stranger another half hour.
I have known Him so long that I am able to say,
The very worst sinner He'll not turn away."

Christians, your Lord is in the glory. Set your hearts and eyes upon Him. "Set your affection on things above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God" is His exhortation to you. Occupation with Him will result in real and victorious Christian living on earth. He represents us before God; let us represent Him before men. Give your life to Him, and His life will be yours.

"There's a Man in the Glory
Whose life is for men,
He's pure and He's holy,
Triumphant and free.
He's wise and He's loving,
Tender is He;
And His life in the Glory,
My life must be.

There's a Man in the Glory
Whose life is for me,
He overcame Satan,
From bondage He's free.
In life He is reigning,
Kingly is He;
And His life in the Glory
My life must be.

There's a Man in the Glory
Whose life is for me.
His peace is abiding,
Patient is He.

He's joyful and radiant,
Expecting to see
His life in the Glory
Lived out in me."