



Volume 80 No.4 MELBOURNE, JULY/AUGUST 1997 GOD'S HOLY TEMPLE

"The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" 1 Cor 3:17

GOD'S EARTHLY DWELLING

The usual Hebrew term applied to the Jewish temple was "heykal", which signifies a royal residence. It was also often qualified by the term "kodesh", sanctuary, to indicate its sacredness as the visible dwelling place of Jehovah among His people. The same significance also attached to the movable tent or sanctuary of Israel, the tabernacle in the wilderness. The idea thus visibly expressed was that God was in the midst of His people, as He said, "And there will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to Me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God."—Exod. 29: 43-45.

In fulfilment of this promise, as soon as the tabernacle was finished, the glory of the Lord filled it, as we read:—"So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle... The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night: in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys."—Exod. 40: 33-38

So also at the dedication of Solomon's temple there was the same divine recognition of this more permanent structure:—"So was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David and his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold and the vessels did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord... And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."—1 Kings: 7:51, 8:10, 11.

The idea conveyed by the several accounts of this glory of the Lord, as it appeared in the tabernacle, in the temple, on Mount Sinai, and as it guided and protected Israel in coming out of Egypt, is that of exceeding brightness, enveloped and usually concealed by a thick cloud, from which, on special occasions, it shone forth. Thus we read, "And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days... And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel."—Exod. 24: 16,17

GOD'S SPIRITUAL DWELLING

But the tabernacle and the temple of God, built by divine direction and under the divine supervision, and thus honoured with the visible, typical manifestations of the Divine presence and glory, were only types of that grander tabernacle, not made with hands, of which fleshly Israel could have no conception, and of that holy temple which should by and by eclipse the grandeur of the earthly temple with all the gold and precious stones that adorn it. Let us, then, look away from, or, rather, let us look through the typical temple of God to its antitype. The apostles tell us that the gospel church, both individually and collectively, constitute the antitypical temple:—"For the temple of God • is holy, which temple ye are."

Considering the matter first in its individual application, we hear Paul say to the consecrated people of God, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people"—1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16. Thus every faithful, consecrated child of God in whom God, by His Holy Spirit, dwells, is a temple of God, a royal residence of the King of Kings, a holy sanctuary. This high privilege is ours through Christ, who first redeemed us by His

precious blood, and thus made us eligible for the call of God to be thus sanctified and set apart wholly to His use—"for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

It was to this that our Lord also referred, saying, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our abode with him. The Comforter which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John 14: 23,26. Thus each individual saint becomes "a habitation of God" through the Spirit, a holy temple, a royal residence.

How precious is the thought, how great the condescension of our God in thus honouring His chosen ones who believe and trust in Him and are fully consecrated to His will and service. "Ye are the temple of the living God"; and "Ye are not in the flesh (in the old carnal condition), but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."—Rom. 8:9. And if the Spirit of God dwell in us, it is to sanctify and glorify these temples of His, that even now we should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

SANCTITY OF GOD'S TEMPLE

It is in this view of our relationship to God that Paul would impress upon our minds the sanctity of these temples of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy." That is if, after he has been made partaker of the Holy Spirit, and consequently through the enlightening and guiding influences of that Spirit has tasted the good word of God and the powers (privileges of divine instruction, etc.) of the coming age he should stifle all these blessed influences, refusing to be further led by the Spirit of God, and turn again, either suddenly or gradually, to the spirit of the world, such a one is destroying his spiritual life—destroying the temple of God, which was holy and consecrated to God. The judgement against all such is, "Him will God destroy." The Lord has "no pleasure" in any who "draw back" from such high privileges. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.... We are not of them who draw back unto destruction, but of them which believe to the saving of the soul."—Heb. 6: 4-9; 10:38,39

It was in allusion to this same thing that our Lord, addressing His disciples, said "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it"; and that Paul also said, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."—Luke 17:33; Rom. 8:13. It is to those who appreciate the sanctity of these temples of God that all the blessings of divine grace belong; for God shall dwell in them and walk in them, and His glory shall be manifested in them and to them. It is their blessed privilege, in reverent humility, to realise the condescending favour of God in recognising them as His temples, and making His abode with them, and to profit by all the hallowed influences of His presence and favour.

If indeed these bodies of ours are the temple of the Holy Spirit, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? How ought these mortal bodies to be quickened by His Spirit that dwelleth in us, quickened into active and diligent service, and to the bringing forth of all the fruits of holiness?— 2 Peter 3: 11; Rom. 8:11.

But while the saints are thus individually the temples of God, they also collectively constitute the great temple in which Peter likens each individual to a living stone, and Christ to the chief or foundation corner stone, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone... ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."— 1 Peter 2:5. Paul also refers to this same thought, saying, "Ye are of the house of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (the foundation of hope in which they trusted, and which they pointed out to us), Jesus Christ being the foundation corner stone of it; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple for the Lord: in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:19-22.

A HABITATION OF GOD

The foundation of this building of God is laid in the heavens, not on earth, and all the other living stones built upon this foundation are drawn and cemented to it by heavenly and not earthly attractions. "Ye are God's building", both individually and collectively, consecrated children of God who have become the habitation of God through the Spirit; ye are the temple of God, Howbeit, though now it is but a tabernacle in the flesh, and though in this tabernacle we often groan, being burdened, we know that when this tabernacle is destroyed we have a building of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."— 2 Cor. 5: 1-2.

Though the church, like the tabernacle in the wilderness, is now a habitation of God, owned by Him, and blessed by His presence, and filled with a large measure of His glory, yet enveloped as it generally is by clouds of trouble, etc., which hide the glory from others (except as occasionally manifested), it is not always to be a moving tent with its glory concealed. By and by her glory will be manifested without the enveloping cloud—"She shall shine forth as the sun."—Matt 13:43. The prophet Isaiah joyfully anticipates that blessed time

when the finished temple of God shall displace the present tabernacle, saying “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee... and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of the rising.”—Isaiah 60: 1-3

LIVING STONES

What a hope is thus set before the faithful ones, who, as living stones, come to Christ to be built upon this foundation! From the eloquent imagery of prophets and apostles we catch the inspiration of that holy joy which shall be fully realised when all the living stones of the glorious spiritual temple of God shall noiselessly come together without the sound of a hammer— in the first resurrection, and when the headstone shall crown this glorious building of God, amid shouting of “Grace, grace unto it.”—Zech. 4:7. What tongue can tell or pen portray the glory to be revealed in the saints by and by? What plummet can sound or line measure the wealth of blessing that will flow to redeemed humanity from the glorified temple of God?

Mindful of this inspiring theme, let us once more return to the thought which the apostle would impress upon the minds and hearts of all God’s people; viz., the sanctity of the temple of God, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God. and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

If the Spirit of God does not dwell in us, then we are not of those addressed, “for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Those who have that Spirit are led in the paths of righteousness and truth. Not only so, but those who have and who are led by the Spirit of God have therein an earnest or pledge of their future inheritance. As the children of God, the apostle tells us, “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”—Eph. 1: 13,14.

Our present divine recognition as children of God is the surest evidence we can have of His recognition when we shall have finished our course. If to-day we have His manifest approval and fellowship, and if these mortal bodies are quickened into loving, active zeal both to know and to do the will of God, we may also look forward with joyful anticipation to that blessed time when we shall see the Lord and be like Him.

(P.P. 6/27)

TRANSFORMED BY INSIGHT

“We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.”—2 Cor. 3:18

The outstanding characteristic of a Christian is this unveiled frankness before God so that the life becomes a mirror for other lives. By being filled with the Spirit we are transformed, and by beholding we become mirrors. You always know when a man has been beholding the glory of God, you feel in your inner spirit that he is the mirror of the Lord’s own character, Beware of anything which would sully that mirror in you; it is nearly always a good thing, but the good that is not the best.

The golden rule for your life and mine is this concentrated keeping of the life open towards God. Let everything else on earth go by the board, saving that one thing. The rush of other things always tends to obscure this concentration on God. We have to maintain ourselves in the place of beholding, keeping the life absolutely spiritual all the way through. Let other things come and go as they may, let other people criticise as they will, but never allow anything to obscure the life that is hid with Christ in God. Never be hurried out of the relationship of abiding in Him. It is the one thing that is apt to fluctuate but it ought not to. The severest discipline of a Christian’s life is to learn now to keep “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.”

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”—Psa. 37:7.

Stay still in the Hand of the Potter,

Lie low ‘neath His wonderful touch. He shapeth and mouldeth in mercy

The clay that He loveth so much;

Surrender thyself to His working,

The curve and the hollow He wills,

Nor shrink from the pain and the pressure

For the vessel He fashions, He fills.

The Power of God unto Salvation

(Romans 1:16,17)

The book of Acts recounts the extensive missionary activities of the apostle Paul and the reactions he received to the message of the gospel which had been entrusted to him, following his arrest by the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road and his conversion from persecutor to chosen vessel of the Lord. Some of his hearers embraced the message and churches were established in various towns, but against this, he experienced much fierce opposition and persecution, particularly at the hands of his own nation. A list of his trials and difficulties is given in 2 Corinthians 11, and if ever anyone was, humanly speaking, entitled to despair and doubt his cause, the apostle might well have been.

Nevertheless, we read in Acts 20:24, his fearless words as he was about to part from the brethren at Ephesus for the last time. *"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."* At that stage, Paul had not visited Rome, but he had long planned to do so, God willing. In his letter to the brethren in the city, he again confirmed his determination not to be hindered by any circumstances from the preaching of the fullness of the gospel in that place. His words, the text from which our title is taken, read - *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."* (Romans 1:16,17)

A SAVING POWER

Something of the comprehensiveness of the gospel is to be seen in these verses, but it is further bought out by the apostle in his writings and in his farewell words to the Ephesian brethren. *"You...know how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you publicly and from house to house, testifying...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:20-27) So we begin to realise the scope of the gospel, but first that it is the power of God unto *salvation*. This is then the object of the preaching of the gospel by Paul and by those who have followed right down to our day, namely, that men and women of all races and ages might find salvation from the penalty and power of sin and death.

At this time, which we call the gospel age, this is a selective rather than an all-inclusive work- that awaits a later time. But in this manifesto, as we might call our text verses, Paul clearly has more in mind than the moment of turning away from the past life and the acceptance of Christ as Saviour. This experience is fittingly referred to as "being saved" or "receiving salvation"; it is certainly a demonstration of gospel power, and Paul states by way of personal testimony that his call and commissioning by the risen Lord was only by the effectual working of God's power in him. (Eph. 3:7) This power, no doubt, had had some earlier but unrealised effect on Saul, as he then was, as he saw the faith and courage of those whom he was persecuting and especially in the steadfast testimony of Stephen, but on the Damascus Road it changed him for all time.

The Christian experience, however, does not end at the point of "being saved"; this is in reality a beginning and the apostle's words in Phil. 2:12,13 remind us that our salvation is a lifelong process, which needs our full co-operation with our Heavenly Father, whose workmanship we are. *"Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure."* This process in each believer's life is again a demonstration of God's power unto salvation as daily, yielded to His will we are being developed into the likeness of His dear Son.

AN OUTWORKING PRAYER

When this process is complete, and only then, will each one enter into the experience of full and final salvation, to His praise. This does not imply any deficiency in our original step of salvation by faith in the Saviour, but the outworking of it to its ultimate completion. In another picture, we are spoken of as begotten of God here but entering into fullness of life beyond the veil of death and entry into the presence and joy of our Lord. How fitting for our day are Paul's words in Romans 13:11-14- *"Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.... Put on the Lord Jesus and make no provision for the fleshly appetites."*

It is important for every child of God to grow both in grace and knowledge and the apostle had to take his Hebrew readers to task because they had not gone on to the stronger meat of the Word, and were still such as needed milk. But at the time of our first acceptance of Christ, the simple facts of human need and of God's gracious provision are, in essence and in that context, the personal gospel message. What must I do to be saved? asked the Philipian gaoler. In reply, Paul pointed him directly to the only way of salvation - "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:30,31)

But the gospel message which Paul and the other apostles preached goes on from that point and reaches into every aspect of Christian life and hope and doctrine. Its power unto salvation is expressed in many ways, all essential to progress and growth in Christ. First, it is a resurrecting or new life giving power, but it is also a keeping power, a faith-building power, a witnessing power and a power that is at work in the heart and life of every true Christian. Paul, in one of his lovely prayers for the brethren, prays that they may come to know *“What is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.”* (Eph. 1:19-21) This is the power which lifts up the sinner out of the dying condition into new life.

A LIFE GIVING POWER

The Psalmist's words seem to foreshadow this experience - *“I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it and fear, and trust in the Lord.* (Psa. 40:1-3) An interesting point here is that David saw that God's work in him would also be a witness to others; this should also be so for the Christian...Paul's desire was that this life-giving power be continually operative in his own life and in Phil. 3:10, he lists those things which he particularly longed to know, or rather to experience firsthand and to the full with Christ - the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity unto His death. All these are comprehended in the fullness of the gospel of Christ, and represent the power of God unto salvation to every believer.

Looking further ahead, we realise that the gospel is ultimately to bless all the willing of mankind, and we read in Gal. 3:8 that its first preaching was to Abraham. *“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”* We who live in what we term the Gospel Age are, after Christ, the firstfruits unto God of that promise and the outworking of God's power in us, in preparation for a part in the future work of blessing all mankind, which is at the heart of the gospel, is the present phase of the gospel.

However, God's purposes also encompass His dealings with the faithful characters of old, and with the nation of Israel, as well as with the Church of this present era. All are comprehended in the context of the promise to Abraham and all will have a role in its ultimate fulfilment, For it is only at the final culmination of all God's plans, which Paul describes as *“the dispensation of the fullness of times”*, that God's power unto salvation and its final sublime results will be seen in their perfection. Only the ultimate blessing of all nations as promised to Abraham so long ago can and will bring in *“the desire of all nations”*.

A SUSTAINING POWER

Returning to the theme of present personal salvation, we find that the gospel message does not leave the new Christian to his or her own devices once Christ has become Saviour and Lord. The power of God unto salvation is also a keeping and sustaining power. The apostle Peter tells his readers (1 Peter 1:5) that they *“are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.”* Here he brings in also the third phase of our salvation as we might call it, the final culmination, but he assures us that the keeping power of God is effectual all along the way. Again, in 2 Thess. 1:11, the apostle Paul, in another of his prayers for the brethren, asks that *“God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power”*, while in Eph. 3:20, he assures us that God *“Is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”*

The gospel is then not only the saving power of God, but the keeping, upbuilding and sustaining power of God. Another interesting aspect of God's power at work in His children is given in 2 Cor. 4:7 - *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”* The wonderful illumination of the gospel of God's glory is not given to us that we may be exalted but that, in our weakness, His power working in us and through us may be manifest, and be a witness to others. In the days of the early church, it was recorded that it was with great power that the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Such witness came not only by their own power but by the power of God and of the gospel which they lived and preached.

To the world in general, the gospel is still foolishness or devoid of interest, even as it was in the apostles' day, possibly more so in these times of materialism and licence. Brethren in various parts are seeking to present a message of hope and comfort, a message of challenge and invitation for any listening ear or receptive heart. But it is only as the power of God reaches out and strikes a chord in one here or one there that there will be any fruitage. This need not deter us, nevertheless, from taking such opportunities as present themselves to give witness to the gospel. This requires much careful thought as to the best message to offer in today's world, for there are many fanciful and false messages being presented from allegedly Christian sources, as well as non-Christian ones.

A WITNESSING POWER

The apostle in his day evidently was concerned about the Corinthian church and especially how he should approach them. His resolve is surely the pattern for all who would present the gospel as God's power unto salvation. *"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."* (1 Cor. 2:4, 5) This points out the deficiency of much preaching today - it is in human wisdom, not in divine power. *"Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain."* (Psalm 127:1) This principle is true of all Christian endeavour.

The Gospel, as the power of God unto salvation, should then be freely working in all His people, assuring them in trial, developing them in character and in understanding, as they come more fully to comprehend the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine love and mercy. It should be revealing more clearly the richness of the provision which God has made, not just for themselves, but for all mankind. Indeed, anything less than this could not qualify as the blessing of all nations as promised in the gospel preached to Abraham or in the angelic message to the shepherds - glad tidings of great joy to all people. As we assimilate such a plan, we can understand the Psalmist's cry - "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it." (Psa. 139:6)

This precious gospel, in all its fullness, this gospel of which the beloved apostle was not ashamed, it is our privilege to proclaim, not only in word but in life and action. There can be only one foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as set forth in the Word of God. He alone is the only hope for the Lord's people of this present age, for all God's faithful ones of old, for His ancient people "Beloved for the fathers' sakes" and for mankind in general. His finished work alone assures resurrection of all in their graves, restitution of all things as foretold by all God's holy prophets, salvation and blessing for all mankind in His due time. This gospel, alone, is the power of God unto salvation!

So the apostle's words of our text challenge each one of the Lord's people today. Can we say with him - "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto *my* salvation"? Are we daily rejoicing in it? Are we seeking to proclaim it, as we have opportunity? Are we striving, in His power, to live it?

Peace

When the heart has found God's own peace, the peace which knows no explanation and surpasses all our dreams, it has passed beyond the pale of agony to the quietness of a strong repose. Peace is life plus God. It is God handling life for us: God dealing with our affairs for us: God interpreting life's experiences for us. Such peace is beyond our understanding, but not beyond our living.

Saved to serve

O Lord, I pray,
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From Thy command
Not to be served, but to serve.
This too, I pray
That for this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent
My good intent,
Not to be pleased, but to please.
And if I may,
I'd have this day
Strength from above
To set my heart
In Heavenly art

Not to be loved,
but to love.

Melchisedec - King and Priest

Three verses in Genesis (14:18-20) contain all that the Divine Mind has seen fit to record historically of this remarkable personage. Melchisedec, the King of righteousness, ruler of Salem, “priest of the Most High God”, appears in this incident for a moment then suddenly vanishes. In all ages, his name, which in itself commands respectful awe, and the silence observed respecting his origin or history, have been a favourite subject for speculation.

Around this personage tradition has gathered many legends which have no credibility in themselves and no foundation in history. The words of our record are these: “And Melchisedec King of Salem brought forth bread and wine, and he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all.”

The presence of Melchisedec, “priest of the Most High God”, in the midst of the probably heathen population of Salem, is perplexing. Who he was, of what family or nation, is left in utter obscurity. This illustrious personage comes forth in the page of history for one brief moment, and then his name is heard no more for a thousand years, when it is found in the Book of Psalms (Ps. 110); a thousand years more pass before it occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

CHRIST PREFIGURED

Though the historic account of this remarkable personage is very brief, it is not in the literal history, but rather in the inspired commentary upon the three verses in Genesis referred to previously, that much richness of detail in spiritual wisdom has been set before us; proving this meagre account to have been divinely recorded to preserve just the salient facts proposed, and even teach wonderful lessons in the deliberate omission of some details.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, one great subject is the priestly office of the Lord Jesus. Chapters 4,8,9, and 10 are mainly occupied with showing Him to be the great Antitype of the Aaronic Priesthood. But even it, with all its details and ceremonies, fails to show fully the glory of the priesthood of Christ. Therefore the prophetic allusion of Psalm 110 is taken up as a text, the burden of which is to exalt yet further the official glory of Christ by showing the superiority of the Melchisedec to the Aaronic Priesthood, and that Christ is a Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.

THE EXALTED ONE (PSALM 110)

This Psalm, where next we find Melchisedec mentioned, is wonderfully dramatic and impressive. From beginning to end it celebrates a single mysterious Hero. The Psalmist portrays Jehovah himself as addressing this great unnamed One, bidding Him to be seated at His right hand until He shall put His foes beneath His feet. That this Psalm is Messianic is a foregone conclusion by reason of the solemn quotation of it as such by Jesus himself.

But, apart from this, its very terms make it impossible to imagine such an honour as being invited to sit on Jehovah’s right hand applied to any other person. It is here in the description of the exaltation of God’s Son and His subsequent triumph over all enemies, that the significant statement is made in verse 4: “The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

At once, the brief history of Abraham’s superior assumes a new importance; so much so, in fact, that we find the entire 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews devoted to an exegesis of Abraham’s mysterious contemporary. Though the inspired and eloquent writer of this epistle our attention is called not only to the general resemblance between Melchisedec and Messiah, but to see the likeness of verification in a number of details.

A SUPERIOR PRIESTHOOD

Throughout this chapter, the argument is devoted to proving the superiority of Melchisedec’s priesthood to that of Aaron in seven particulars:

- (1) Because even Abraham paid him tithes.
- (2) Because even the yet unborn Levi may be said to have paid tithes in the person of Abraham.
- (1) Because it is the superior who gives the blessing, and Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec.
- (4) Because the Aaronic priests die, but Melchisedec stands as a type of undying priesthood.

- (5) Because the permanence of his priesthood implied the abrogation of the whole Law, on which the Levitic Priesthood was grounded.
- (6) Because it was founded on the swearing of an oath (Ps. 110:4), which was not the case with the Levitic priests.
- (7) Because the Levitic priests were necessarily many, requiring to be constantly replenished to fill up the ravages made in their ranks by death; but this priesthood, because of Christ's eternal permanence, is intransmissible; whence also "He is able to save to the uttermost those who through Him approach to God, seeing that He ever liveth to intercede for them."

SUCH A HIGH PRIEST

Having thus shown by these many particulars the immeasurable superiority of the Melchisedec Priesthood and thus teaching the important truth that this transference of priesthood involved the entire abrogation of the Mosaic system in due time, the inspired writer adds a weighty summary in the concluding words of the chapter: "For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, *which was since the Law*, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."—Hebrews 7:26-28.

PRIEST AND THE KING

In the second verse of this illuminating chapter, the name Melchisedec is shown to be more properly a title conveying two meanings, "King of Righteousness," and also "King of Salem," which is King of Peace. Thus in the combination in one person of the two offices of priest and king is shown the most prominent superiority of the Melchisedec over the Aaronic Priesthood. His was a "Royal Priesthood"

In Israel, the priest was of the tribe of Levi, the king of the tribe of Judah. Hence, so long as our Lord was upon the earth, He could not be a priest (Heb. 8:4; 7:13; 14). His priesthood began in resurrection. Death could not come in to interrupt even for a day this new order of priesthood; it is "after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16).

Thus in heaven, Jesus, the risen son of God, is invested with the new and surpassingly glorious order of priesthood, "a Priest upon his throne" (Zech 6:13). He shall one day be revealed as the "King of Kings" to sway the sceptre of universal dominion, whilst as the great Melchisedec, He shall come forth with all the blessings of the New Covenant-shadowed forth in the "bread and wine"-to comfort and to strengthen Abraham's ultimate seed, restored humanity.

That which appears most prominently in the Aaronic Priesthood is the offering of gifts *to* God; that which is presented in the Melchisedec Priesthood is the *bringing forth of gifts from God*. In both these characters our Lord Jesus appears. He is the true Aaron appearing before God in the presentation of the one offering which He accomplished on Calvary; but He is also the true Melchisedec bringing forth and dispensing to His people the fruits of His death and resurrection. He breaks the bread; He pours the wine. Ascended up on high, He received gifts for men, even for those now rebellious, and freely and gloriously did he lavish those gifts at Pentecost and after it, and will do so during his Millennial reign.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

It is significant, and attention is directed to the fact in Hebrews 7:2, that Melchisedec is *first* King of Righteousness and *after that* also King of Peace. This is always the divine order. It could not be otherwise, for "peace at any price" is not God's principle. Righteousness must first be considered, and all the claims of perfect righteousness owned and honoured before peace could be proclaimed. Thus the Gospel of Peace is based upon the righteousness of God.

The Lord Jesus, the true Melchisedec, in securing peace for guilty and condemned sinners, first "suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust." He "made peace by the blood of His cross." On the day of His resurrection, He greeted His trembling disciples with the glad salutation. "Peace be unto you," and having so said, as if to show the righteous ground of peace, as if to declare that first He was "King of Righteousness", "He showed them His hands and his side."

Thus it is written, "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17). "Righteousness and peace kissed each other" at the cross of Christ, and are eternally united for us in His glorious person as our Melchisedec priest. "Justice and judgement are the habitation of Thy throne: Mercy and truth shall go before Thy face" (Ps. 89:14). In accordance with this great divine

principle of righteousness being first, it is written: "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and *peace and joy* in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). So also "the wisdom that cometh down from above is first pure, *then* peaceable."- James 3:17.

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Melchisedec steps onto the stage, and steps off. Of what went before or of what came after, we are in ignorance; but while he stood there in the King's Dale, his holy city of Salem in the background, Abraham and his followers before him rendering willing tribute, and as he ministered bread and wine and raised his hands in blessing, he typified One who in the power of an endless life, abiding a priest continually, is abundantly able to save those who come unto God by Him.

The priesthood of Aaron was a dying priesthood, and it could picture only sacrifice and suffering, things which one day must pass away for ever. They could never rightfully picture the everlasting glory of Christ. "*But this man,*" triumphantly now, "*because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.*" The glory of this wonderful type will be fully revealed when Christ, the Prophet, Priest and King, accompanied by His glorified Church, comes forth to meet mankind, bearing bread and wine, and in the beautiful surroundings of the "King's Dale" gives them His blessing-the blessing of the Most High God.

Herald/BSM (adapted)