

'Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His Own Blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.'

Hebrews 13:12-14

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Theme for 2019 – Highlights in Hebrews

October 25th, 7pm

Subject: Sinai and Sion Contrasted (c 12:19-29)

Speaker: Richard Monteith

November 22nd, 7pm

Subject: Practical Godliness (c 13)

Speaker: David McMillan

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Representative in Australia: Mr Graeme McPhee, P O Box 346, Naracoorte, South Australia, 5271. (E-mail: graeme.mcphee@gmail.com). (Tel: 08 8762 2582; Mobile: 0421 028 040).

Representative in Canada: Mr Andrew Foster, 549 Johnson Crescent, Oliver, British Columbia, V0H 1T5 (E-mail: atcfoster@gmail.com).

Representative in New Zealand: Miss E R Wilson, 27 Walshs Road, Ashburton, 7700

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Watching and Waiting

LIGHT FOR PERILOUS TIMES

SCRIPTURAL

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Website: WWW.SGAT.ORG

Secretary: Stephen A Toms 1 Donald Way Chelmsford Essex CM2 9JB

(Tel: 01245 268815. E-mail: satoms@hotmail.co.uk)

The objects are:

1. To teach the nearing approach of our Lord's return. James 5:8
2. To hold forth the Truth and to expose and resist error. Jude 3
3. To note passing events in the light of 'the Scripture of Truth.' 2 Peter 1:19
4. To unfold the Word of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Acts 17:11
5. To encourage missionary endeavour, and all service for Truth. Acts 1:8
6. To comfort and strengthen those who seek to stand with the Lord, apart from abounding lawlessness. 2 Timothy 2:19
7. To call for separation from false ecumenism. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

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The Melchizedek Priesthood

(Hebrews 7)

By John Douglas

(This is the substance of a sermon preached at the monthly meeting of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony held on 24th May, 2019. The message was recorded and can be downloaded from the SGAT website. In this article, the name 'Melchizedek' has been spelt as given in the Old Testament).

We have a truly wonderful subject on which to meditate. Let us read from Hebrews 7:1-4. *'For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all.'* Perhaps I should just mention that we call that tenth part 'a tithe.' Abraham has set the child of God the example here. He proved God by giving to Him the tithe. The passage continues in verse 2 by speaking about Melchizedek, and saying, *'First being by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.'*

My heart warms to this subject. I am to speak about Melchizedek. As you see here, he is the king of righteousness; he is the king of peace; and he is the priest of the Most High God.

There is a high probability that Melchizedek, who first appears in the Genesis history, would scarcely be noticed at all by God's people except for the further mention God has been pleased to give him in the Book of Psalms and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Even now there is still a case for saying that Melchizedek has not come in for adequate studied attention on the part of many believers and some here might freely agree that in their years of attendance at the house of God they have heard little about him. He has been effectively passed over by large numbers of Christian people.

The Mysterious Figure of Old

I suppose that is because there is a kind of mystery about him. Melchizedek appears so suddenly in the Genesis record and then, when his dealings with Abraham ended, he disappears from view, just as suddenly and just as mysteriously as he came; and he is never heard of again until a thousand years later when David composed his psalms; and then only in one verse. Another thousand years rolled by (my dates are given in round terms) before the apostle Paul raises the subject as he does here in Hebrews. So, we are introduced in Hebrews 7 to *'this Melchizedek.'*

Look at the start of verse 1, *'This Melchizedek.'* Melchizedek is a real person. He is not an apparition. He does not appear in a vision or in a dream. He is a man of highest eminence. He is the only person described in Scripture in terms of these *three* titles,

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‘The King of Righteousness;’ ‘the King of Peace;’ ‘the Priest of the Most High God.’

So we think then, when we talk about Melchizedek, of *three* parts of the Bible. Firstly, there is the brief introduction that we have to him in **Genesis 14**, where Melchizedek stands in contrast to Abraham. Then we shift our attention to the **Psalms 110**, which brings to our view the heavenly majesty of Christ; and this Psalm 110 raises our subject to a new level for our Lord Jesus Christ is seen there long before He came into the world, He is seen there enthroned in majesty on high. Lastly when we come to **Hebrews** there is His prominence in the glory – ‘a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.’

There are three chapters in Hebrews which mention Melchizedek, chapters 5, 6 and 7. There Melchizedek is mentioned by name *nine* times. We have to keep all these Scripture portions in mind as best we can. Let me put it this way, in **Genesis**, Melchizedek is viewed in relation to **the past**; in **Hebrews**, our Lord Jesus Himself is presented in relation to **the present hour**; while in the **Psalms**, we move from the present into **the future**, and what a glorious future is foreseen there in Psalm 110! The words of the Psalm in relation to Christ are quoted with such effect in the New Testament by our Saviour in the gospels, and by the apostles in the rest of the New Testament.

We have interesting words in chapter 5:11 where the apostle stated concerning Melchizedek that he has ‘*many things to say*’ about him, even though, as we have been pointing out, quite a lot of Christian people would have to say by way of personal witness that they have heard little about him. Christians then, in recent times, may have little to say of Melchizedek, but Paul took a different line when he said he had many things to say about Melchizedek, and some of them ‘*hard to be uttered*.’ I take that to be a reference to interpretation, with some aspects of this teaching difficult to get a hold of, even for God’s people. It stands to reason that many of these things which were upon the mind of the apostle are put before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It may be there are some of those things hard to be uttered, hard to be understood, which are yet to be discerned.

I want particularly to give attention to Hebrews 7:4. This is a reference to Melchizedek. ‘*Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.*’ The Lord has given us counsel in this study to give consideration to a man from ancient time.

Consider How Great This Man Was

Let us begin with that word ‘consider.’ What does it suggest to you? Or to change the question, How is the word translated ‘consider’ used in other parts of Scripture?

It will be very helpful to see what lies in the background to this word ‘consider.’

(i) **Let us turn to Matthew 27:55** and look for a word which in Hebrews 7:4 is translated ‘consider.’ It has to do with seeing clearly, and the evangelist takes us to Mount Calvary. The verse speaks of the women who followed the Lord from Galilee, and the Scripture says that here at the cross, ‘*many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him.*’ These grief-stricken women came as near to the cross as they could but all the time their eyes were fastened on the Man of Calvary. We may be sure that, even if in comparison with others, they

were afar off physically, yet they were as near to the Lord then as they could be. Think of the scene. They could not take their eyes off Him, no, not for a moment. They could not think of anything else or anyone else. Their whole mind, their whole being is taken up with the Christ of the cross.

We have not managed to give anything like the attention to Melchizedek which those women gave to the Saviour and yet we have to take something on board out of this. When those women gazed upon the cross, set their eyes upon Christ, that was a look of recognition; that was a look of fascination; that was a look which engaged their whole being so their heart and soul was put into their look that day as they stood near to Calvary. That is how we should think of this word 'consider,' even if we do not match in attention the kind of approach those women had. We are to come to this portion with close attention so as to have our heart and soul absorbed by what we see of him. This is the first time the word appears in the New Testament.

(ii) **This word appears again in Matthew 28:1.** This time the two Marys were on the way to **see** the sepulchre. They did not approach the tomb with light-heartedness nor did they come casually, but they went to see the place where they thought the Lord was entombed. They had not grasped the great truth of the resurrection. We read, *'In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.'* Just think about that because we have there the same word which is used in Hebrews. When they approached the sepulchre in that hour of darkness in the early morning, they wanted to look upon the place. It was a look of recognition, a look of fascination that took their whole heart and being. The second time the word appears, it has to do with Calvary. It has to do with seeing Christ.

(iii) **Some other references.** Another time the word appears (not the third time), is **John 20**, and it is in the same context as it is used in Matthew's gospel, namely of Calvary and the resurrection. It is the word translated 'consider' in Hebrews. It is a fair question to ask, how are we to consider him? What does 'consider' suggest to us? We are trying to fill in the picture. In John 20, the word occurs in verse 6, in verse 12 and verse 14. In verse 6, *'Then cometh Simon Peter following him (following John the beloved apostle), and went into the sepulchre, and seeth.'* That is the word. He seeth the linen clothes lying there. How did he consider them? He recognized them for a start. That was the look of recognition. There must have been a degree of fascination there when he beheld the linen clothes. His very being, his whole heart and soul was moved by what he saw. It comes over very vividly.

Again, in the verse 12, we read of Mary's experience. Verse 11 tells us how she *'stood without at the sepulchre weeping.'* She knew the tomb was empty, *'and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels.'* There it is, the word 'seeth.' The picture that met her gaze was *'two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.'* How moving this experience was for her when she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and saw the place where the sacred head lay, the place there for His feet; and the tomb was empty; but there were two angels, one at the head and one where the feet of Christ had been placed. How did she look at what she saw? Certainly it was a look of recognition in this case. Certainly she was fascinated by what she saw and without a doubt her whole heart and soul was taken up with what she saw. Then in verse 14, she turned back

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in the garden and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was the Saviour.

So it is interesting to follow up this word which is translated 'consider' in Hebrews 7. '*Consider how great this man was.*' It is a fair question to ask, How are we to consider him? With what ardour, with what stirrings of heart are we to consider him? This is the chapter then we want to think about.

I could go on illustrating the word lying behind the translation here, 'consider.' It would be a subject in itself. There is often a degree of intensity in the occurrence of this word.

I will give you a few more references – **Mark 3:11**, which happens to be the third instance where the word occurs. This verse tells us of the demons falling down with loud cries when they saw the Lord. Was that not a look of recognition? Was that not a look of fascination? Was that not a look which stirred their whole being? Yes, it was. They gave attention to Him.

Stephen Saw the Lord at the Time of His Death

Or **Acts 7:56**; this is remarkable. The death of Stephen, a beloved servant of the Lord who suffered a cruel death and yet there, in the horror of it all, he was able to lift his head, look up to the heavens, and cry 'I see Jesus.' That is the same word – Stephen in his death saw Jesus risen, exalted, glorified. You may observe the closeness between that concentrated gaze and the subject in Hebrews. It is most moving.

I cannot leave out **John 17:24** where our Lord said in His prayer just before He entered Gethsemane, '*Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold...*' There is the word. How are you going to behold the glory of Christ in heaven? How will you gaze into His face? With what attention, with what stirring of heart will you see Him then? Remember Moses' great prayer, '*I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory*' (Exodus 33:18), and God in a great measure answered his prayer. These words from John 17 are like an answer to Moses' prayer even by extension, for this time we are not down at Mount Sinai but up in heaven with all the saints; not just one person, but all the saints will have this wonderful privilege of beholding Him in His Glory, on that Throne as stated in Hebrews. So it is relevant.

'*Consider how great this man was.*' We say to ourselves, now what does this word 'consider' suggest to us? How is it used elsewhere? I trust these word pictures from the Bible have brought home to your heart what it means to consider him. When you read Hebrews 7:4, it would be possible just to rattle on through the verse without hesitating, without sensing that you are standing on the threshold of the Holy Place. Now consider. Just stop here.

Behold him. Look at the glory of recognition with a holy fascination and with the stirring of heart you would naturally associate with the experience. Now consider how great this man was.

We would have to say, when we take on board these word pictures of the experiences of the disciples, that the thrill in our heart, as we study Melchizedek, does not quite match up to what they had. Nevertheless, we benefit because we can see here it is a step up to have the experience they had to look upon Christ as they did, and we can say certainly, Lord, show us our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

How should we consider the greatness of this man?

First of All We Should Consider His Titles.

They are given there – ‘*Melchizedek, King of Salem*’ (verse 1), and ‘*first being by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace.*’ We have these names interpreted by the Holy Spirit.

Bible names are important, particularly those names which are interpreted by the Holy Spirit. To many a reader however the meaning is clear but then for evidence, for back-up, for confirmation there is the testimony of the Holy Spirit Himself. Melchizedek, how do we understand that name? I know the Holy Spirit has interpreted it here. However, ‘Melchi’ is ‘my king.’ ‘Zedek’ is ‘righteousness (justifying righteousness).’ So you can see the picture of Christ here – my King of Righteousness; and also the meaning is ‘my Righteous King.’

Then, he is the King of Salem. This time the Holy Spirit of God has linked the word ‘Salem’ with ‘Shalom.’ I dare say everybody here knows the word ‘Shalom.’ It means ‘peace.’ So the reference here is to the King of Peace. He is the Priest of the Most High God. All these titles indicate his greatness.

Furthermore, from verse 2 you may get a little touch on the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture because we know that God gave the words of the Bible in their original form. In Matthew 5:18, Jesus speaks, for example, of every ‘jot and tittle.’ Every word, every letter down to the identifying part of the letter carries the stamp of God. And not only the words and the letters in the original Scriptures but **the order in which the words appear** is also inspired. You pick that up in verse 2, ‘first being by interpretation King of Righteousness.’ You say, how do you get that? Well! just by reading the sentence as it is – Melchizedek, king of Salem. By Melchizedek we can understand King of righteousness and then in due order following on after that the King of Salem, King of peace and the Holy Spirit of God draws to our attention even the order in which the words occur in the Scriptures. This is a high view of inspiration and maybe some of God’s children today have to learn to look at the inspiration of Holy Scripture in a new way so that they can keep pace with the apostle regarding the faith which we have in the written Word of God. We believe in the whole book – ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God. So, he is great. Consider how great he is, given the titles he possesses.

Then we can go on and say **he is to be considered in his greatness because, unlike the Levitical priests, his priesthood continues.**

There is a testimony to this in verse 3. He ‘*abideth*,’ he continues, he remains; that is the sense of ‘abideth’ here. He *abideth a priest continually*, all the time. We will see more of that a little later. In verse 8, ‘*it is witnessed that He liveth.*’ Our great High Priest is One Who is alive on high, there is witness of Him that He liveth, and He abideth. Oh, what force there is in these words! The priesthood of Christ belongs to His ministry on high. He entered into His priesthood when He ascended up into the heavenlies having risen from the dead. We consider His greatness because, unlike the Levitical priest, His priesthood continues.

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Melchizedek Blessing Abraham

Again, we may observe the distinction of this greatness which he possesses. You see him superior to Abraham. Now this is a thing that takes the heart. If you look at chapter 7, you see how Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Verse 1 tells us he *'met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him.'* Then in verse 6, he *'blessed him that had the promises.'* Once more, verse 7, *'without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.'* Three times in the chapter there is a testimony to this incident where Abraham was blessed.

It is worthwhile thinking about this because the information in verse 7 is stated to be *'without all contradiction.'* I think this means Paul expected contradiction because maybe it was a hard point for some to take in, that Melchizedek blessed Abraham when everyone would have expected that it would have been the other way round and Abraham would have blessed him. Perhaps even more so, given the fact that Abraham along with his companions had just returned from a war. He had travelled long, long miles. Now, we may say, he would be weary, he would be worn. He was met by Melchizedek, who refreshed him with bread and wine, symbols of redemption; and Abraham, in thankfulness, could have blessed the one who so refreshed him; but here it is stated that Melchizedek blessed him.

The Etymology of Blessing

That word 'blessing' is interesting. We are back to word pictures again. In the Old Testament, the word for blessing has to do with bending the knee. There you can see the suppliant at the Throne of Grace seeking God's blessing and in order to gain the best of the blessings it is necessary for him to bend the knee. It is on bended knee that you obtain God's best. Such is the picture here, and we are told the whole tribe of Levi, representatively of course, bowed the knee that day to Melchizedek; and this is an astonishment to us.

It must have had a powerful effect on those who were worshipping in the temple-mount in Jerusalem at the time to receive a message like that, namely the whole tribe of Levi representatively bowed the knee that day. They recognised in Melchizedek a superior priesthood. You can see (verses 8, 9 and 10) the evidence there of how this representation took place, *'as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.'* So Levi was represented there that day and he is the person who paid. The message eventually concerns the failure of the Levitical priesthood, where the imperfect priesthood gives way to the perfect priesthood of Christ. Remember we read in chapter 7:19, *'For the law made nothing perfect.'* This would have to be true of the whole Mosaic institution. The tabernacle, great as it was, was not perfect. The priesthood, even the priesthood of Levi, was not perfect. The sacrifices offered were not perfect. Those sacrifices never provided atonement. They never washed away a stain of sin. Those sacrifices, however well intended, fell short of perfection; and the worshippers were not perfect. All these things together have brought into view the statement, *'the law made nothing perfect.'*

Greatness in Perfection and Perpetuity

The message has to be, there is simply no salvation that way. We cannot be saved by good works. We cannot be saved by keeping the law because, as it was in the days of Moses, so even in our time the law makes nothing perfect, and for one to be accepted there must be **perfection**. That is why we need Christ as our High Priest. Perfection is found in Him alone. He is the perfect Saviour. We have in Him a perfect salvation. We have a perfect hope. Anything else by way of religion falls short of perfection and it is important for the Christian to see that.

The priesthood of Melchizedek was established by an oath and that gives it its perpetuity, without fail. Attention must be given to Hebrews 7:20-21, with its note of divine certainty. This is a priesthood established by the oath of God Himself, making it irrevocably, eternally secure, since it will abide for ever.' God has said, *'Thou art a Priest for ever...'*

Is There Not Something Else?

Those tithes brought representatively by Levi, from whom did those tithes come? Look at verse 5, *'Verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren.'* So **the tithes came from the brethren**. Who are the brethren? They were the rest of the tribes; the tribes of Reuben, Issachar, Naphtali, Judah, etc. All the tribes, as yet unborn, were represented then because they paid the tithes to Levi, and Levi representatively paid the tithes to Melchizedek that day. So all Israel then is represented here.

Consider how great this man is from the blessing which comes through him. You can say all the saints, all who are in Abraham representatively, in the New Testament, people like Peter, James and John, and others are also representatively identified here. This is precisely why Abraham is called the 'patriarch' in verse 4, he represents his whole family.

It was Melchizedek who blessed Abraham and the Scripture is saying this in verse 7, *'without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better,'* and in the other verses too, *three times in all*, this fact is emphasized. So if the tithe was given representatively by all the brethren, with Levi to the fore, then **the blessing which came to Abraham was also given to him representatively** and that blessing passed on to the rest. Thus we can say we are blessed in Him. We are blessed in Christ.

The Blessing of an Unchangeable Priesthood

It is a precious study and one has to say the priesthood of Melchizedek is an unchangeable priesthood, because the priests in the days of Moses, and those who followed in that long line of priests coming right down to the birth of Christ, all passed away. Each one suffered infirmity and eventually, in the course of time, he grew old and died. Somebody else came in to take the office of the priest, to take his place.

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Sometimes a less than good man was replaced by an excellent man. Sometimes it was the other way round; but they all showed the imperfection of the priesthood.

That Levitical priesthood only pictured the great priesthood to come, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, but in the priesthood of Melchizedek there is no change and there also we see the living Christ, the living Saviour.

Christ Seen in Psalm 110

Psalm 110 seems worth our attention particularly because the Holy Spirit of God has taken us in the investigation of the priesthood of Melchizedek to this psalm. *'The LORD (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (David's Lord, Adonai), Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.'* Rightly understood these are powerful words. They show us that David's Lord is Christ. In the New Testament these words are taken up in the Gospels, also in Acts, then in the Epistles.

Now, in the studies this year special attention has been given to the Epistle to the Hebrews and that epistle is like an exposition of Psalm 110:1. Ponder the first words of this psalm because you have Christ there. Some brother may regard himself as not much of a student but surely if he can see Christ in the prophetic Scriptures, as we do here in this psalm, our eyes are upon Him. Remember that look of recognition. Remember that fascination. Remember looking at Him so that heart and soul can be stirred.

'The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand.' This is like an epitome of the whole Epistle to the Hebrews put into its briefest form, for in Hebrews in place after place we see Christ risen, exalted, and in the glory. That is the whole emphasis in Hebrews (which links in the chain elsewhere in the epistles). Have you missed it? Have you read Hebrews right through from beginning to end? Have you looked for pictures of Christ there, the risen Saviour, our great High Priest, the priest after the order of Melchizedek?

A Recurring Theme in Hebrews

Turn to **chapter 1:3**, remember what we said that the whole Epistle to the Hebrews is like an exposition of Psalm 110:1. Allow me to read the latter part of the verse where our Saviour is seen *'upholding all things by the word of His power; when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.'* Does that not come to you as a reflection of Psalm 110, the sitting down on God's right hand?

Then look further at chapter 1:13, *'To which of the angels?'* Christ is not a mere angel. We do not teach the obnoxious doctrine of the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Divine Son. *'To which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?'* That is the second verse in this sequence, teaching Christ is risen. Our Saviour Christ is risen, exalted, glorified. It is right to say then that the Epistle to the Hebrews in its emphasis - the driving force of this imposing letter - is to see where Christ is NOW.

Next, chapter 8:1. At this point we are getting close to where we have been today. *'Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: **We have** (notice those words, 'we have') such an High Priest, Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,'* Can we go through Hebrews and not see the advantage of having a perfect Saviour, a perfect hope? See where He is now, this instant.

Chapter 10:12. We cannot leave this out, dealing with the Blood atonement, the cardinal message of the gospel, the sacrificial offering of Christ, **the Saviour Who died once and for all** for our sins. *'But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice (the high priest in Judaism was offering one sacrifice after another that could never take away sin) for sins for ever (this sacrifice of Christ needed no repetition), sat down on the right hand of God.'*

Then, Hebrews 12:2, *'Looking (that is not the same word translated 'consider,' but it is an equivalent) 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'* That is just like Psalm 110. Does that not stir your heart? Does that not do your soul good?

We Can Say, our Lord is Seated Now

In all the Levitical ceremonies the high priest could never sit down. His work was never done. If you have studied the tabernacle, even the furnishings of the tabernacle in detail, you will not have found any evidence of there being a seat there. It does not exist. No seat is provided because the work of the high priest was never done. But here, in Christ, we are looking at the finished work. That is the joy of tying in these Scriptures together – Hebrews with the Psalms. The psalmist wrote a long time before our Saviour was born at Bethlehem. It is a tremendous thing and it would take a separate day to go into Psalm 110 but I think we can just get the bones of it here. You will see that we have a glorious day still future when **the King will come – that great and glorious day of the Lord's return.** It hastens on and you will understand from verse 1 that it will be **a day of glorious victory which will be publicly demonstrated,** when God will make the enemies of Christ His footstool. You will see that David's Lord is identified as being Christ.

There are Two Days Mentioned in the Psalm 110

They are the Day of His power (verse 3) and the Day of His wrath (verse 5). The day of His power is, of course, for believers; the day of His wrath is for the enemies of the cross. In the day of His power God's people will be richly blessed; and then in the day of His wrath (notice the solemn words in verse 5), **He will 'strike through kings,' particularly the ten kings of the Roman earth.** Then, *'He shall judge among the heathen (or, the Gentile nations), He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries'* (verse 6). In the Hebrew text, the word 'heads' is in the singular. **He shall wound that person who is the head over many countries** in the Roman earth, the man of sin.

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We have these pictures of Christ and I have tried to condense them to go through them quickly in Psalm 110. There **in the middle verse**, that is verse 4, we have Christ, the *'priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.'* He has His rightful place, in the midst.

We started by saying we should consider how great this man is and I tried to show you the significance of that word 'consider;' how even in the first expressions in the gospels concerning Christ, the heart, the whole being was moved to see the Lord Christ. If their hearts were moved, certainly we want our hearts to be moved.

Christ is Our Great High Priest in Glory

How can I sum up for you the priesthood of Christ? How precious the word is! How blessed we are to consider Him Who at this very instant is our Great High Priest in heavenly places. Just let me put these points succinctly, speaking of the high priesthood of our dear Saviour, Christ the Lord:

1. Our Great High Priest ever lives for us at God's right hand on high, that is to say, He represents you and me; you can put your own name in there, you can think of yourself as a person, you can say He is in heaven now for me and He lives representatively for me. 'He has graven my name upon the palms of His hands' – the hands He lifts up in prayer, bearing the nail prints. That is wonderful.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as our Great High Priest, makes intercession for us as One Who is touched by the feeling of our infirmities, and One Who is fully able to succour them that are tempted. What a Saviour He is! Hebrews 2:18 says, *'He is able to succour them that are tempted.'*

3. He grants to us immediate access and immediate acceptance with God when we come to Him in prayer. He has opened up a new and living way. This is how the Christian can pray so that we can come to the mercy-seat and find grace to help in time of need.

4. He has entered into the Holiest of all with His own Blood (Hebrews 9:24-26). He is there as our Great High Priest. When we come to the Lord in prayer we come by the God-appointed, blood-sprinkled way to the throne of grace.

5. We can see what it means to have a Great High Priest Who is there all the time. In the Levitical period, the high priest alone had access to God. No one else had that right and even then the high priest could only enter into God's immediate presence once in the year. How infinitely better is the high priesthood of Christ for we can come to Him at all times.

Can you remember King Uzziah, who thought that he would enter into God's presence and that he had no need of the high priest who was there before him? I suppose he pushed him out of the way or almost got to entering into God's presence, in the holiest of all. The priests tried to stop him but they could not; but God stopped him, to demonstrate that there is no way whereby God's people of ancient time could freely come into His presence. But the Lord Jesus Christ suffering for us, suffering once and for all, has shown us that it is no longer only once in a year and it is no longer just for

the high priest. Everybody who is saved by grace can come now. We all have access to the Lord.

This is personal. **My Great High Priest is with me all the time.** He is with me for ever. If I lie down to die some day out in the street no one will have to rush off in desperation looking for a priest for me because I will be able to say I already have a High Priest. Even when we are passing from this earthly scene into the glory, that is the time He is there. I will not have to cross Jordan alone. You can see the superiority of the high priesthood of Christ. He is ever living, ever true.

Do you know the Lord today? Can you say because He lives, I live also? If there are unconverted people here today; perhaps sitting under the sound of God's Word for the first time, Hebrews 7:25 tells us about the high priesthood of Christ in these terms,

6. 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost.' He is able to save the guilty lost sinner, that man, woman or child who penitently and trustingly comes to Him. **He is able to save to the uttermost.** He is **able to save all who 'come unto God by Him.'** Christ is such a High Priest.

With these words rightly seen, our hearts will fill with joy, and we will say that this is the message of the gospel. This is the message of the Epistle to the Hebrews – Christ now risen, exalted, glorified. In Psalm 110 the voice of the Father is saying to the Son, *Sit Thou at My right hand* because the work is done.

Now, we await His coming again. May the Lord bless His Word today in your heart and even for His Name's sake. Amen.

The Book of Hebrews

By Adolph Saphir

(Continued from page 197)

Whoever is the author of this epistle, its value and authority remain the same. 'We may compare it to a painting of perfect beauty, which had been regarded as a work of Raphael. If it should be proved that it was not painted by Raphael, we have thereby not lost a classical piece of art, but gained another master of first rank' (*Thiersch*). But let us see how far the supposition of the Pauline authorship meets the circumstances.

The apostle Paul, according to his own testimony, which is abundantly borne out by his life and sufferings, cherished an affection for his brethren which finds its equal only in the devotion of Moses, and was surpassed only by the Lord, from whom all love descends into human hearts. Though he rejoiced in the calling and faith of the Gentiles, his heart was continually with Israel. It was no doubt a trial to him that Christian Hebrews regarded him with something like suspicion. Much as he desired to confirm and comfort them, he could not write to them as an apostle. We see how very modestly he justifies his writing an epistle to the Romans; in the same tone the author of the

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epistle to the Hebrews writes, 'I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.' Hence it appears natural that the apostle Paul should sink his individuality and apostleship as much as possible, and in harmony with the key-note struck in the first verse, 'God spake,' be to the Hebrews as the voice of one speaking truth and comfort to them in their hour of need and trial. In the concluding chapter it is difficult not to recognise the apostle Paul. A few expressions (as Hebrews 2:3) seem such, as could not have come from his pen, and it is not unnatural to suppose that some Tertius was entrusted with more than the mere mechanical writing, with the formal and verbal arrangement of the argument.

But when we think of the depth and breadth of the epistle, when we remember the wisdom given to the apostle Paul, when we bear in mind that on this special point, the relations between the old and the new covenant, none was so fitted and gifted to teach the church as he, we find it difficult to waver in our decision, especially as so many collateral proofs seem to point to the same result. We have referred already to the testimony of the apostle Peter (*see July, Watching and Waiting - Ed*). We notice also the concluding benediction-mark of all Pauline epistles. Neither the epistles of Peter, or John, or Jude, or James, conclude with words like these: Grace be with you all (2 Thessalonians 3:17). The tradition of the Church in the East, where the Epistle was first received, is unanimous in asserting the authorship of the apostle Paul. And thus we believe, that according to the word of the Lord Jesus, when He appeared unto this chosen vessel, the apostle Paul, after testifying to the Gentiles and to kings, last of all in this epistle unfolds to the children of Israel the glory of the Messiah and His kingdom. However this may be, the epistle is in full and striking harmony with all Pauline teaching; it is in full harmony with all other portions of the Scripture; for it is not the word of men, but written by inspiration of God.

It is an epistle that enters deeply into the truth which is in Jesus. It offers strong meat to them that are of full age; it goes on unto perfection. Let us approach this portion of the divine word with reverence, and with a deep sense of our dependence on the teaching and influence of the Holy Ghost. Our very weakness, and the peculiar trial of the present time, render this epistle more suitable to our need, and encourage us to hope that it will prove a word of exhortation to our hearts, establishing them in faith and love.

Above all, let us bear in mind that, as the true difficulty throughout Scripture is our unwillingness to deny ourselves and to take up our cross, so this epistle, throughout, bears the inscription, 'Outside the Camp.' Every step of true progress is a step 'outside the camp' with Jesus, who was crucified outside the gate. If we know the cross of Jesus, not merely as a doctrine, but a power of life, we possess the golden key which opens the treasures of revelation.

Jesus, the Son of God, exalted above all, infinitely high above us, and unspeakably near us in the power and sympathy of His High-priestly intercession, is set before us in this solemn and heart-stirring epistle. To look constantly and steadfastly unto Him, and with Him to be separated from the world, waiting for the glory of His second coming; behold, here is wisdom and the patience of the saints.

Habakkuk 3:2

A friend has raised a question about this verse in Habakkuk 3. It is a passage which has often been quoted when preachers have wanted to talk about the subject of revival. The prophet said, 'O LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years.'

The booklet on this prophecy of Habakkuk entitled, 'Faith is the Victory' by the late Mr Jack Barkey of the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel is considered to be very helpful. On this particular phrase, his comments are as follows:

'The prophet's prayer here is not for 'revival,' but for 'survival.' The margin correctly renders the verb translated in the text 'revive' by 'preserve alive.' This is a prayer for the faithful remnant in the nation in a moment of great trial. Prophetically viewed, this is certainly a prayer for the faithful remnant of Israel during the Great Tribulation. This remnant is the 144,000 seen by the apostle John, who are sealed for protection during the Tribulation (Revelation 7:3-8; see also Ezekiel 9:4). In Habakkuk's day too there was a threat to the whole nation, and it looked as though the righteous would perish with the wicked, and God's work halted. The prophet clearly believed in God's elective purpose for Israel, that they had been chosen as instruments for the carrying out of His great plan of world-wide blessing (see Genesis 12:3; 22:18; etc). If the whole nation were to be destroyed then the plan would be interrupted and God's work hindered. So Israel was preserved at that time and has continued to be preserved because God's plan has yet to be completed and Israel's part in it has not been fully accomplished. So even the Great Tribulation, when it comes, will not be able to exterminate them. 'Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but **he shall be saved out of it**' (Jeremiah 30:7). 'Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened' (Matthew 24:21-22). 'And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God' (Zechariah 13:8-9). When that day comes, many will pray Habakkuk's prayer: 'O LORD, keep alive Thy work in the midst of the years (*i.e. the years of Tribulation*), in the midst of the years make known.' It is worthy of note that in Isaiah 45:11 God calls Israel 'My sons ... the work of My hands.' Habakkuk's prayer might well be rendered: 'O LORD, keep Israel alive.'

'There is a very real sense in which we need to pray Habakkuk's prayer today as we watch godless and atheistic forces taking over power in large parts of the world. Have we not seen in many countries the light of witness put out, or suppressed by persecution? Do we not see godlessness sweeping onwards and threatening to engulf the whole world? Well may we pray, 'O Lord, keep Thy work alive.' And with our prayer for survival let us couple a prayer for revival, that the work that is preserved may be living, vital and energised by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Called Home

Mr Dave MacPherson of the U.S.A. passed away on 7th November, 2018, age 85. His calling was journalism and after receiving a B.A. in English in 1955, he spent twenty-six years as a newsman reporting and filming many notable events, persons, presidents and dignitaries. His father was Dr Norman S MacPherson who pastored churches in Otego, New York and Long Beach, California. Like his father, Mr Dave MacPherson took a lot of interest in the study of the prophetic Scriptures and travelled to Scotland and England researching the subject. However, he mainly studied the Bible and felt very strongly that the pre-tribulation, secret rapture teaching of J N Darby was not Scriptural. Consequently, he wrote various helpful books and articles on the subject.

Mr John B Robinson of the Isles of Scilly was called home on 22nd April, 2019, age 77. He was a man who loved God's Word and diligently sought to promote it even in the remote part of the British Isles in which he lived. He has been a faithful supporter of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony and Bible Spreading Union for many years.

Subscription Forms: When sending the last issue of the year, we usually include a subscription form with the magazine. We know that many of our readers have busy lives and do not find it easy to write letters, and the form is accordingly included for the use of such. Some friends have already sent, but if this is the case, the form can be used at a later date. We would again express our thanks to the many friends who give so generously to the Lord's work through the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony.

S.G.A.T. Meetings: Arrangements have been made, God willing, for meetings of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony to be held in 2020. The apostle Peter said 'God hath spoken by the mouth of all His Holy Prophets since the world began.' Consequently, for this coming year it has been arranged that our meetings should emphasise the fact that ALL the prophets spoke of Christ's Second Coming and the theme given is due to be 'By the Mouth of All His Holy Prophets.' We trust that friends will be interested in this chosen theme, and we would like to see others come to our meetings, which we expect to hold on the fourth Friday of each month except August and December. The Spring Conference is in April and the Autumn Conference in September, when we have afternoon meetings at 4.pm. in addition to the usual evening meetings. All evening meetings are at 7.pm. So that you can insert the dates in your diary and arrange to be present, we would mention that the suggested programme is due to be as follows:

January 24.....	The Testimony of Enoch.....	<i>Ivan Foster</i>
February 28.....	The Testimony of Job.....	<i>Philip Knowles</i>
March 27.....	The Testimony of Jacob.....	<i>Martin Humphrey</i>
April 24 (Aft).....	The Testimony of Moses.....	<i>Brian McClung</i>
(Even).....	The Testimony of David.....	<i>Brian McClung</i>
May 22.....	The Testimony of Nathan.....	<i>John Douglas</i>
June 26.....	The Testimony of Elijah.....	<i>Gordon Dane</i>
July 24.....	The Testimony of Isaiah.....	<i>Ian Shaw</i>
September 25 (Aft).....	The Testimony of Daniel.....	<i>Stephen A Toms</i>
(Even).....	The Testimony of Jeremiah.....	<i>Paul Toms</i>
October 23.....	The Testimony of Joel.....	<i>Richard Monteith</i>
November 27.....	The Testimony of Micah.....	<i>David McMillan</i>