

# THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

I. “Ministry” is the service rendered to God and to man on behalf of God. Ministry involves both who we are and what we do—it’s a matter of “person” and “work.”

a. Jesus had a ministry upon the earth. His ministry involved both His person and His work.

i. The apostle Peter summarized this ministry in his message to Cornelius.

*<sup>37</sup> you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. Acts 10:37–38*

ii. The earthly ministry culminated in the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins, and was concluded by His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God.

*<sup>22</sup> “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— <sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. <sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it... <sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. Acts 2:22–24, 32–33*

iii. Jesus’ earthly ministry is “finished” (John 19:30). Sin is taken care of. And Jesus has “sat down” at God’s right hand.

*<sup>12</sup> But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:12*

b. Many Christians do not realize that Jesus Christ continues to have a ministry, that is, service to God and to man on behalf of God. It continues to involve both His person and His work, and it is being carried out from heaven. Therefore, it is called His “heavenly ministry.”

*<sup>6</sup> But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. Hebrews 8:6*

i. Actually, His earthly life was not only for the carrying out of His earthly ministry, but to prepare Him for His heavenly ministry.

*<sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:17–18*

ii. When Christians don’t know this, it results in:

1. Spiritual boredom, leading to involvement in trivial or harmful things (eating regulations, miracles, politics)

- 2. Unfocused spiritual energy (zealous actions that have nothing to do with what God actually wants)
- iii. Christ is not doing random things today. He is focused and He is intentional, and there are practical ways the Bible tells us we can respond to His present ministry. Knowing what Christ is doing can direct our own Christian lives and endeavors

## II. The Heavenly Ministry

- a. For our progress in the spiritual life, Christ has become our Great High Priest

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- i. He made propitiation for our sins (Heb. 2:17). This is Godward.
- ii. He is able to help us in our temptation (Heb. 2:18). This is manward.
- iii. One of his priestly activities is to intercede for us. This is specifically linked to His priestly position in heaven.

*<sup>24</sup> but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* Hebrews 7:24–25

*<sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* Romans 8:34

- iv. Intercession is for the purpose of bringing us onward, just as Moses interceded for the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 9–10. They didn't even know what was happening on the mountain top, but their only way forward into the good land with God was because someone (Moses) was interceding for them on their behalf. It is the same with us today. Christ's intercession is "to save [us] to the uttermost."
- v. In response to the "Great High Priest," we should do two related things: (1) draw near to the throne of grace, (2) draw near to God through Him

*<sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Hebrews 4:16

*<sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* Hebrews 7:25

- b. For our enjoyment of His presence and our transformation into the image of the Son, Christ became a life-giving Spirit

*<sup>45</sup> So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* 1 Corinthians 15:45

- i. It is crystal clear from other verses that Christ and the Holy Spirit remain distinct.

*<sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* 2 Corinthians 3:14

- ii. At the same time, there is great preciousness in realizing that Christ, the exalted Lord, is also one with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>20</sup> *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Matthew 28:20

<sup>22</sup> *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.*” John 20:22

<sup>6</sup> *And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”* Galatians 4:6

- iii. In His oneness with the Holy Spirit, Christ is able to be with us always. We can enjoy Him and live by Him, and He is transforming us to bear His image, that is the image of the Heavenly Man.

<sup>18</sup> *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* 2 Corinthians 3:18

<sup>49</sup> *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.* 1 Corinthians 15:49

- iv. In response, we should enjoy the Spirit and behold glory of the Lord!

- c. He became the Mediator of the New Covenant, obtaining a ministry related to it. This means He is making it real, even to our subjective experience!

<sup>15</sup> *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.* Hebrews 9:15

<sup>6</sup> *But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.* Hebrews 8:6

- i. The New Covenant has the following items: (1) God’s laws written on our hearts and minds, (2) He will be our God and we will be His people, (3) Knowing God, (4) God remembering our sins no more.

<sup>10</sup> *“FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL  
AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:  
I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS,  
AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS.  
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,  
AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.*

<sup>11</sup> *“AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,  
AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’  
FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME,  
FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.*

<sup>12</sup> *“FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES,  
AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”* Hebrews 8:10–12

- ii. In response, we should (1) enjoy the items of the new covenant, made real by Christ being the mediator!, and (2) become a minister of that covenant, just as Christ is, and just like the apostle Paul was.

<sup>5</sup> *Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,* <sup>6</sup> *who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant,*

*not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2  
Corinthians 3:5–6*

- d. He is building His church! He clearly told Peter that this would take place in the future from His earthly ministry.

*<sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18*

- i. How He is building His church:

- 1. With the Word

*<sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32*

- 2. By giving gifted ones to equip the saints

*<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, Ephesians 4:11–12*

- 3. By walking among the churches (and talking to them)

*<sup>1</sup> “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: “The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. Revelation 2:1*

- ii. In response, we should “work properly,” with a view to building up the body of Christ. “Serving the Lord” can be very vague and hard to pin down. Having a view for the building up of the body of Christ should direct all our service.

*<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:16*

- iii. We should realize that the most substantial experience of His heavenly ministry today is experienced when you are in a local church; we may experience His work even more intensely as we join with Him to make the lampstand (the local church) shine. We have a part in the building work Christ is doing, and as we fulfill that goal, we are fulfilling the heavenly desire of our Lord.

### III. Conclusion

- a. Reminder of all the responses we should have to these aspects of the Heavenly Ministry of Jesus Christ.
- b. The earthly ministry of Christ was wonderful, for through it He accomplished redemption for us once and for all. The heavenly ministry of Christ is also wonderful, for through it He is fulfilling God’s eternal purpose.