

THE TASTE TEST
FOR

JESUS NOW

UNVEILING THE
PRESENT-DAY
MINISTRY OF CHRIST

FRANK VIOLA

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS JESUS DOING NOW?

There's a lovely little story about a skydiver who drifted over a hundred miles off course and landed in a dense forest. Strung up in the tree, tangled, and terrified of the fast-approaching night, he began to yell out for help. After a few minutes, a man who was out for a walk chanced upon the skydiver.

"Hello! I need help! Where am I?" called the man in the tree.

"You're stuck in a tree, with no way out. You're surrounded by a forest, and it's getting dark," the other man replied.

"Of all my luck," said the skydiver to him, "I get stuck with a minister as a rescuer!"

Hearing this, the passerby wondered aloud how the distressed man knew about his occupation as a religious teacher.

“Well,” the man in the tree said, “I just assumed you must be a minister, as what you’ve said is both utterly true and absolutely useless in helping me.”

When professional ministers hear this story, they usually get a chuckle out of it—in part because they can detect the grain of truth it holds. So much of our conversations about spiritual things, while perhaps good and even spot-on, are nearly devoid of relevant impact. It’s not only Christianity that gets targeted by this critique—most academic or philosophical movements also struggle to reach us where we really live.

One of the greatest concerns I have for the “good news” today is that we often present a gospel that is more true than useful. This is never more true than when we’re considering the subject and actor of our entire faith: Jesus Christ.

Think about it: The story is familiar to all Christians. The Gospels introduce us to the earthly ministry of Jesus. He was born in Bethlehem. He grew up in the ill-starred town of Nazareth, where He labored as an artisan. Around age thirty He was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, and He began His ministry.

Interestingly, Jesus’ ministry lasted less than four years. He was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem, rose again from the dead three days later, and spent forty days on earth in His resurrected state. He then ascended into heaven, taking His seat at the right hand of God the Father.

In our book *Jesus: A Theography*, Leonard Sweet and I retold the incredible story of Jesus' earthly ministry, using all the biblical material from Genesis to Revelation. We also discussed in some detail His preexistent state before creation and His promised second coming at the end of the age.

To my knowledge, few books have been dedicated to exploring the present-day ministry of Jesus. By "present-day ministry," I'm referring to what Jesus has been doing since His ascension and will continue to do until His second coming.

Herein lies the aim of this book. It's an exploration into the present-day ministry of Christ. And it seeks to answer the question, *what is Jesus Christ doing right now, and how is His present-day ministry useful to me?*

As we reflect on the Lord's earthly ministry, the following aspects stand out:

He preached the gospel of the kingdom.

He revealed His Father.

He healed the sick.

He performed miracles.

He cast out demons.

He fed the poor.

He befriended sinners.

He rebuked the religious.

He trained and sent disciples.

He went to the cross and dealt with the effects
of the fall.

He rose from the dead, ushering in the new
creation and becoming Lord of the world.

The Lord then ascended into heaven to take His place of authority and power. Yet Jesus Christ isn't sitting at the Father's right hand passively waiting to return to planet Earth. No, He is still active today. And the Man in the glory has a very specific ministry.

Concerning His personality, plan, and purpose, Jesus is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Concerning His ministry, however, it has changed somewhat from "the days of His flesh" (Heb. 5:7).

In this book we will explore the different aspects of the present-day ministry of Christ. We will find out what Jesus is doing now and its relevance to you and me.

Yesterday in Hebrews 13:8 has in view Christ's ministry before creation as well as His earthly ministry. *Today* has in view His present-day ministry. *Forever* has in view His ministry that moves into eternity.

Our focus in this book will be upon Jesus Christ's ministry today. Or to put it succinctly, *Jesus now*.

Let's begin ...

THERE'S A MAN IN THE GLORY

*There's a Man in the glory
Whose Life is for me.
He's pure and He's holy,
Triumphant and free.
He's wise and He's loving,
How tender is He!
His Life in the glory,
My life must be;
His Life in the glory,
My life must be.*

*There's a Man in the glory
Whose life is for me.
He overcame Satan;
From bondage He's free.
In Life He is reigning;
How kingly is He!
His Life in the glory,
My life must be;
His Life in the glory,
My life must be.*

*There's a Man in the glory
Whose Life is for me.
In Him is no sickness;
No weakness has He.
He's strong and in vigor,
How buoyant is He!
His Life in the glory
My life may be;
His Life in the glory,
My life may be.*

*There's a Man in the glory
Whose Life is for me.
His peace is abiding;
How patient is He!
He's joyful and radiant,
Expecting to see
His Life in the glory
Lived out in me;
His Life in the glory
Lived out in me.*

—*Mary E. McDonough, 1787*

CHAPTER 6

HEAD OF THE CHURCH

He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Colossians 1:18 KJV

Throughout the New Testament, there is a subtle distinction between the headship of Christ and the lordship of Jesus.

The *headship* of Christ virtually always has in view Christ's relationship with His body (Eph. 1:22–23; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19). The *lordship* of Christ virtually always has in view His relationship with His individual disciples (Matt. 7:21–22; Luke 6:46; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9, 13; 1 Cor. 6:17).

What lordship is to the *individual*, headship is to the *church*. Headship and lordship are two dimensions of the same thing. Headship is lordship worked out in the corporate life of God's people.

A believer may truly submit to the lordship of Jesus in his or her personal life. He may obey what he understands in the Bible. She may pray fervently. He may live self-sacrificially. Yet at the same time, these people may know nothing about shared ministry, mutual submission, or corporate testimony. To be subject to the headship of Jesus is to respond to His will regarding the life and practice of the church. Submission to the headship of Christ includes obtaining God's mind through mutual ministry and sharing, obeying the Holy Spirit through mutual subjection and servanthood, and testifying to Jesus Christ collectively through mutual sharing and corporate witness.

Submission to the headship of Christ incarnates the New Testament reality that Jesus is not only Lord of the *lives of women and men*; He is also Master of the *life of the church*. One of the examples in which this became strongly apparent to me was through the life of a young brother in Christ who visited one of our open-participatory church meetings. The young man was saved before he visited us. And from what I could tell, he had a strong devotional life. But he would show up once in a while for our meetings, and when he did show up, he was quiet through most of them.

He continued to visit our gatherings on and off for several months. Then he moved away to another city to attend college there.

Several months later, he returned. Through a series of poor choices, frustrating events, and personal convictions, he had ended his academic career. With a broken voice, he communicated that more than anything he simply missed being a part of the church. I found this interesting, as he wasn't exactly devoted to the group when he was in town, and he never really participated or functioned much.

The next week, however, he threw himself into the life of the church. If there was a practical need, he was helping with it. If there was an opportunity to pursue Christ with others, he showed up. If there was a decision-making meeting, he was there and he participated. He even started to function in our open meetings, and his contributions were edifying. Then slowly, we began to see his friends coming to the meetings. His friends were inspired by his story of redemption, faith, and community. And they were drawn to "come and see."

This young man's life was changed forever when he simply saw a group of people responding to a Jesus he didn't know too well. He was seeing Jesus in corporate expression. But it took his going to college, having a bad experience there, and coming back again to realize he needed Christ and His body. He was awakened to the fact that he needed face-to-face community.

This little story is so familiar and common that it can be multiplied by many who have been part of churches that are strong on intense community and mutual sharing. The young man's story is an example of what it means to make Christ head over one's life.

Interestingly, Paul said that when Christ's headship is established in His body, He will become head over all things in the universe (Col. 1:16–18).

Five Aspects of Christ's Headship Today

I. As the Head, Jesus Seeks to Express His Character and Nature through His Body

The purpose of a physical body is to express the life that's in it. It's the same with the body of Christ. It exists so that Jesus can express His personality in a visible way.

The local body of Christ is called to gather together regularly to display God's life through the ministry of every believer. How?

One of the normative ways in the New Testament was through open-participatory meetings where every member of the believing priesthood functioned, ministered, and expressed the living God (1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 10:24–25).

God dwells in every Christian and can inspire any of us

to share with the church something that comes from Him. In the first century, every Christian had both the right and the privilege of speaking to the community. This is the practical expression of the New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

The purpose of the open-participatory gathering is to edify the entire church and to display, express, and reveal the Lord through the members of the body to principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 3:8–11).

The Greek word for church that I've been using throughout this book, *ekklesia*, literally means "assembly." This meshes nicely with the dominant thought in Paul's letters that the church is Christ in corporate expression (1 Cor. 12:1–27; Eph. 1:22–23; 4:1–16).

From a human perspective, the purpose of the church meeting is mutual edification. But from God's perspective, the purpose of the gathering is to express His glorious Son and make Him visible.

Put another way, we gather together so that the Lord Jesus can manifest Himself in His fullness. When that happens, the body is edified. Note that the only way that Christ can be properly expressed is if *every* member of a church freely supplies the aspect of the Lord that he or she has received. The Lord Jesus cannot be fully disclosed through only one member. He is far too rich for that (Eph. 3:8).

So if the hand doesn't function in the gathering, Christ will not be manifested in fullness. Likewise, if the eyes fail to function, the Lord will be limited in His self-revelation.

On the other hand, when every member of a local assembly functions in the meeting, Christ is seen. He is made visible because He is *assembled* in our midst.

Consider the analogy of a puzzle. When each puzzle piece is properly positioned in relation to the other pieces, the puzzle is assembled. The net effect? We see the entire picture. It's the same way with Christ and His church.

2. As the Head, Jesus Continues His Earthly Ministry

Luke began the book of Acts with this remark:

The first account I composed, Theophilus,
about all that Jesus *began* to do and teach,
until the day when He was taken up to heaven.
(1:1–2)

Notice the word *began*. The “first account” Luke was referring to is the gospel of Luke. The implication of this sentence is that Luke's new volume, Acts, is a record of what Jesus *continued* to do and teach from His ascension onward.

Consequently, the theme of Acts is Christ's continuing presence, already found in the name *Emmanuel* ("God with us"), as a present reality.

No longer visibly present to the human eye, Jesus is still at work in His people by the Spirit. The story of Acts is the story of Christ's work on earth through His servants as they are energized and directed by the Spirit of Christ.

When Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He chose to express Himself through a body of believers to continue His life and ministry on earth. That ministry is spelled out in Luke 4:18–19 (NIV):

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the
prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

We meet it again in Acts 10:38 (NIV): "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and ... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."

Throughout His ministry, Jesus showed what the kingdom of God was all about by loving outcasts, befriending the oppressed, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, caring for the poor, driving out demons, forgiving sins, and so forth. If you peel back His miracles, the common denominator underneath them all is that He was alleviating human suffering and showing what the future kingdom of God looks like.

When Jesus did His miracles, He was indicating that He was reversing the effects of the curse.

In Jesus' ministry, a bit of the future had penetrated the present. Jesus embodied the future kingdom of God, where human suffering will be eradicated, and there will be peace, justice, freedom, and joy.

The church, which is His body in the world, carries on this ministry. It stands on the earth as a sign of the coming kingdom.

The church lives and acts in the reality that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the world today. It lives in the presence of the future—in the already-but-not-yet of the kingdom of God.

For this reason, the church is commissioned to proclaim and embody the kingdom now—to bring a bit of the new creation into the old creation, to bring a piece of heaven into the earth—demonstrating to the world what it will look like when God is calling the shots. In the life of the church, God's future has already begun.

This dimension of the church's mission has to do with how she displays the Christ who indwells her to those outside of her. It has to do with how she expresses Christ to the world.

Jesus fulfilled the mission of Israel in His earthly ministry (Gen. 18:18). But since His resurrection, He has commissioned the church to continue that mission.

Hence, the church exists to fulfill Israel's original calling to be a blessing to all the nations (Gen. 22:18), to bring good news (the gospel) to the poor (Isa. 52:7), and to be a light to the world (49:6).

The church stands in the earth as the new Israel (Gal. 6:16). And she shows forth that the Jesus who walked this earth is the same Christ who has taken up residence within her members.

3. As the Head, Jesus Directs Both the Church and the Work

Jesus is the Commander-in-Chief of His church and His work. Following are some examples of how Jesus directs both His church and His work by His Spirit as the head of each:

- The Spirit of Jesus led Philip to join a chariot where a man was reading Scripture (Acts 8:29).
- Jesus appeared to Paul and called him into apostolic ministry (Acts 9:1–10).

- Jesus appeared to Ananias in a vision and instructed him to help Paul (Acts 9:11–16).
- The Spirit of Jesus spoke to Peter about three men who were looking for him (Acts 10:19).
- The Spirit of Jesus told Peter to go see Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 11:12).
- The Spirit of Jesus showed Agabus the prophet that there would be a great drought coming to the world (Acts 11:28).
- The Spirit of Jesus instructed some men who were praying in Antioch to set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work (Acts 13:2).
- The Spirit of Jesus forbade Paul to preach the gospel in Asia (Acts 16:6).
- Jesus gave Paul a dream, directing him and his team to go into Macedonia (Acts 16:9–10).
- Jesus appeared to Paul in a vision and told him to speak boldly in the city of Corinth (Acts 18:9–10).
- The Spirit of Jesus witnessed to Paul in every city that he would be in chains and suffer afflictions (Acts 20:23).
- The Spirit of Jesus spoke through Agabus

the prophet about Paul's future in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10–11).

- Jesus appeared to Paul while he was praying in the temple in Jerusalem and told him to leave the city (Acts 22:18–21).
- Jesus stood by Paul when he was on trial, encouraged him, and told him what was to come (Acts 23:11).
- Jesus said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for [my] power is perfected in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).
- Paul received direction, reassurance, and encouragement from Jesus (2 Tim. 4:16–17).
- The Spirit of Jesus called and sent out workers (Acts 13:1–3; Gal. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:17; 12:7–11; Eph. 4:7–16; 1 Tim. 1:12).
- Jesus worked with the members of His church, confirming their message with signs (Mark 16:20).

In the book of Acts, we find the phrase “get up and go” repeated several times. Jesus said it to Ananias in Acts 9:11. He said it to Peter again in Acts 10:20. Ananias went, and so did Peter. As head of the church, Jesus still says, “Get up and go,” to His disciples today.

4. As the Head, Jesus Nourishes His Body

The way we feed our bodies is through our mouths. Jesus does the same with His body, of which we are a part.

Christ, then, is our Caretaker. He nourishes and cherishes His body:

No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church. (Eph. 5:29)

Christ the head feeds His body through the ministry and functioning of each of its members (Eph. 4:16). For this reason, it's important to be dependent on the body of Christ, allowing "every joint" to supply its portion to us.

In like manner, it's critical that we function also, feeding the other sheep in the Lord's fold.

5. As the Head, Jesus Is the Source of the Church's Life

Jesus supplies all that His body needs, and we derive our life and being from Him.

"Christ ... is our life," as Colossians put it (3:4).

The head in heaven dispenses His life through His Spirit, who empowers the members of His body on earth.

The Jesus of the Gospels may appear remote and unavailable, but He lives inside every believer by faith and is as close to us as is the breath of our mouths.

No longer I ... but Christ lives in me. (Gal. 2:20)

What Christ has accomplished through me. (Rom. 15:18)

I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13)

As followers of Jesus and children of God, we can live by His indwelling life. Jesus was “crucified in weakness” but now “lives by the power of God” (2 Cor. 13:3–4 *ESV*). He does this within His people.

The Eternal Purpose

The eternal purpose of God is centered upon making Jesus the absolute head over all things. God’s goal is the establishment of the complete sovereignty and supremacy of His Son.

His driving passion is to make His Son preeminent over everything. All of God’s activities are toward this end. Hence,

the chief work of the Holy Spirit in this age is to establish the headship of Christ in His body, to the uttermost.

Accordingly, the Holy Spirit will break down and devastate everything that opposes, obstructs, and hinders the Lord's sovereign rule in the hearts of His people. He will stand against all that gets in the way of God's ultimate intention of establishing the centrality and supremacy of His Son over all things. Strikingly, before Christ can be made preeminent over all things, He must first have the preeminence among His own people. Colossians 1:18 puts it this way:

He is the head of the body, the church ... that
in all things he might have the preeminence.
(KJV; see also Eph. 5:23)

The great need today in the body of Christ is to reinstate the headship of Christ. Tragically, all sorts of things have replaced Christ's headship. Church boards, committee meetings, church leaders, church programs, man-made rules and regulations, and so on, have often supplanted the headship of Jesus Christ.

Whenever there is a decision before us regarding the Lord's work or the Lord's people, the salient question should not be, "What do we think should be done?" or "What can we agree upon as spiritual leaders?" Rather it should be, "*What does the Lord want in this situation?*"

With respect to the church, when two people make a decision independent of the head, it constitutes conspiracy.

Christ alone has the right to rule His church—not any human or committee. It is His body, not ours. We all belong to Him. He has purchased us with a costly price, and thus He alone possesses full rights over us.

When Christ has His full and rightful place as head and absolute Lord over His people, then so many problems are resolved.

Consider the profound problems that the church in Corinth faced—carnality, divisions, envy, self-absorption, blasphemy, pride, immorality, strife, civil discord, and rivalry. Chapters 1–11 of 1 Corinthians paint a pitiful picture of the corruption in that assembly. What a tremendous burden for Paul—the man who planted and cared for that church. But what was his answer to it all? What was the all-inclusive solution that he shared in 1 Corinthians? It was simply this:

I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified....
For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (2:2; 3:11 KJV)

The answer was quite plain: that Jesus Christ be given His rightful place in the church. Can you see the force of that?

When God's people get ahold of the greatness of their Lord and put Him in His rightful place, all of their troubles are dealt with. When Christ is presented in power and life, our problems get resolved.

God's aim in this hour is for us to make Christ's headship a practical reality in our lives and in our churches.

Such a way, however, is costly. It is a hard thing to yield our rights to the Lord, to wait on the Lord, and to put the absolute rule, authority, and decision-making rights into the hands of the Holy Spirit.

It tests whether we are going to put our hands on things or yield all rights to Christ. We must understand, however, that if Jesus Christ will return to reign on this earth in His fullness, His people must first give Him the preeminence in their midst.

In God's plan, all things begin with the church. James told us that we are the "firstfruits of all he created" (1:18 NIV). That includes this business of Him reigning over all things.

Holding Fast to the Head

Make no mistake about it. Holding fast to the headship of Christ (as Paul put it in Colossians) is not something that we are to practice as a last resort. Too often the mentality among Christians is, "I will do whatever *I can*, using my own cleverness, gifts, and abilities, and only rely upon the Lord when

I cannot do any more.” This is foolish thinking at best. Our human ideas and philosophies cannot fulfill one fragment of God’s work.

A great deal of our ecclesiastical traditions and programs are nothing more than wood, hay, and stubble. The church is a spiritual organism. Only that which comes out of God’s indwelling life can accomplish His purpose.

Under the old covenant, Moses commanded that no oil be “poured on man’s flesh” (Exod. 30:32 NKJV). So, too, the Spirit of God cannot anoint that which comes out of our human fleshly ideas. Recall the words of the Lord Jesus: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5 NKJV).

All of this will meet nodding heads from most Christians. But is it a reality? Is Jesus Christ truly the head of your church, or is someone else? Does the structure of your church allow for Jesus Christ to lead and direct His people through His body, or does it prevent that from happening? And how about your life?

God desires to sum up all things in His Son. That which originates from fallen humanity’s ideas, traditions, and systems will not last. Only that which comes out of Christ can find God’s highest blessing.

Even now, the Lord is awaiting a people to give Him that place of preeminence. When God’s people put themselves under His direct headship, the result is unity (Ps. 133). One day

Christ will indeed be the “head over *all things* to the church” (Eph. 1:22 *ESV*), nothing excluded. His present-day ministry as head of the church is moving the world in that direction.

CHAPTER 8

JESUS CHRIST TODAY

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8 NIV

So who is Jesus today?

Is He someone we remember and try to emulate? Or is He someone who is living and active and has a specific ministry?

In the previous pages, we've seen that the ascension of Jesus marked the commencement of His present-day ministry.

In reaching His own destiny, Jesus reached it for us, too. Christ led us to the place that neither Abraham, Moses, Joshua, nor David could ever lead us.

Jesus presents Himself to God the Father as high priest, as both offerer and offering. Since we are in Christ, as the Father receives Jesus, He also receives you and me.

When Christ ascended into heaven, He did not drop his human body. He is still the human Jesus with a glorified human body. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul called the glorified body of Jesus a “spiritual body” (v. 44). This doesn’t mean that He was a ghost. It means that His renewed physical body was energized by the Holy Spirit after His resurrection. In His glorified body, Jesus could eat and drink physical food. He could also pass through walls (Luke 24:13–35; John 20:26).

Consequently, Jesus continues His incarnation after His ascension and receives our humanity into Himself. He didn’t dispose of our humanity but took it with Him into heavenly realms. Jesus penetrated the splendor of heaven wearing our flesh, bringing us to His Father.

Theologically speaking, the ascension reveals that Jesus’ incarnation continues, and the Father, Spirit, and Son have taken up our humanity into God’s bosom forever.

Jesus retains His humanity and His divinity and reigns over the world as the God-Man until all enemies are put “under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:20–28).

We, the collective people of God, are the continuing incarnation and presence of Jesus on the earth today.

Did Jesus Fail?

To natural minds, Jesus' ministry ended in failure on two counts: (1) a failure in Galilee when most of His followers turned away from Him, and (2) a failure in Jerusalem when His disciples deserted Him, and He was put to death on a cross.

But the work of Christ went on.

Jesus was raised by His Father and ascended to God's right hand (Eph. 1:20–22; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 7:26; 8:1; 10:12). But He didn't retire, nor was He detached from the world. Instead, He began His present-day ministry, where He became powerfully present with His followers.

His followers weren't to carry on Jesus' work in His absence. No, Jesus shared His ministry with them (Mark 16:19–20; Acts 1:1–2).

The work of God today is still the work of Christ. He carries it out in His enthroned state, withdrawn from visible sight but active in Spirit in and through His followers.

The book of Acts would be more accurately called “The Acts of the Risen Christ through His Apostles.”

While Christ is no longer visible to unaided human sight, He is still powerfully active through His disciples. Jesus doesn't operate us by remote control. He's present with us by His Spirit. He's not a clockmaker who sets the work going and then leaves it to go on by its own momentum. No, Jesus keeps it going Himself.

Jesus still *is*—present tense—the visible image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). When we see Jesus operating through His people, we see God. Jesus is still the human face of God.

True Freedom

As our mediator, Jesus carries our names on His shoulders and breast just as the high priest of the Old Testament carried the names of Israel on his shoulders and breast.

Christ's position of sitting at the right hand of the Father signifies *rest*—it denotes a completed and finished work. There's no more to be done. Jesus' blood was completely and eternally accepted by God the Father.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was once and for all, but His ministry of intercession is eternal. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man eternally.

As high priest, Jesus makes intercession on the basis of His own spotless perfection. It's as if He says to the Father, "Receive Me for them. Forgive all of their imperfections on the basis of My sinless perfection."

In the presence of God, the mighty perfection of Jesus is the answer for our sins. Hence, we don't come before God the Father in ourselves. We come to God in Christ, by Christ, and through Christ. And God is satisfied with us in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

For this reason, Jesus is the author of our eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9 NKJV).

So when we speak of Jesus interceding for us, Jesus isn't reminding the Father about what He did. (How could the Father forget?) Nor is He pleading His sacrifice before a reluctant God.

Christ's very presence in heaven as the Crucified One constitutes the greatest prayer and intercession. The wounds of Christ are the unceasing prayers of Jesus. By them, He has secured constant and free access to God's throne (Heb. 4:16).

A guilty conscience, a conscience stained by sin, cannot be purified by anything else but the blood of Christ. No other sacrifice for the sins of humankind is necessary. Jesus' death was a once-and-for-all sacrifice (Heb. 9:26).

Jesus has passed into a realm wherein we have access. We don't have to wait to die to enter it: eternal life begins *now*. The veil has been torn, and the way into the holiest opened.

More remarkably, our great high priest, Jesus, leads our worship "in the midst of the *ekklesia*." Through the Spirit, Christ comes into our midst and offers our praise and worship to a welcoming Father. Through the church, Jesus sings to His Father, leading our praises (Heb. 2:12; 8:1–2).

So Jesus is the perfecter not only of our faith but also of our worship.

This relates to our prayer life as well. We enter into the fellowship that the Son has with His Father (1 John 1:1–3;

1 Cor. 1:9). Jesus is not only the object of our prayers, but He's the means. As our high priest, Christ by the Spirit prays in and through us (Rom. 8:26–27).

According to the New Testament, prayer is in Christ, through Christ, and to Christ.

The Mighty Name of Jesus

In the Scriptures, the name of a person represents who that person is. Thus when the early Christians did something “in Jesus’ name,” they were doing it in the presence and the authority of Jesus.

Therefore, doing or saying something in Jesus’ name is like exercising a God-mandated power of attorney.

Jesus’ person is united to His name. For this reason, the New Testament uses believing in Jesus and believing in His name synonymously (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 1 John 5:13).

Before Jesus rose again and ascended, He told His disciples that they hadn’t asked anything in His name (John 16:24). But He told them that after His ascension, whatever they asked in His name (or His person) would be granted them by the Father (John 16:23; 14:13–15).

The disciples cast out demons and healed the sick in Jesus’ name (Mark 16:17–18; Acts 3:1–6, 16; 16:18; James 5:14).

Salvation is found in “no other name under heaven” (Acts 4:12). The name of Jesus stands above every other name, and at

the name of Jesus, “every knee will bow” in all three realms—
heaven, hell, and earth (Phil. 2:9–11).

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