

THE SAVIOR'S STILL SERVING #2

Heb. 7:23-26; John 14:1-3

We are in the midst of an election year. Both the Democratic and Republican national conventions have now concluded. When the year 2008 has concluded, we will have chosen a new President and as a nation. We are hearing a great deal about the candidates from various news sources, each claiming to be neutral and unbiased, but in reality carefully scripting every sentence and picture in order to present their chosen candidate in the most favorable light and influence public opinion. So we are going to have to be discerning, to listen to candidates for ourselves, to pray for God's wisdom, and to choose the candidate that we feel would serve our country best. And we will probably never hear about the dozens of eccentric self-proclaimed candidates who will fail to get enough votes in primaries to be placed on the national ballot - people like George Francis Train.

George Train ran for the Presidency in 1872. He did not win the election. It wasn't that Train wasn't an intelligent person. He actually was a man of many inventions. He was the first to put rubber erasers on pencils; he was the first to suggest that postage stamps be perforated for easier tearing. And Train was also a man of some significant accomplishments. He made a fortune financing the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. But he was just too eccentric for people to take seriously for the Presidency. George would always begin his campaign speeches in the same way: *I am that wonderful, eccentric, independent, extraordinary genius and political reformer of America, who is sweeping off all the politicians before him like a hurricane, your modest, diffident, unassuming friend, the future President of America - George Francis Train.* The American public did not share his opinion. He finished dead last, trailing even the feminist candidate Victoria Woodhull. So Train is not remembered today as a politician. He is not even remembered as an inventor or a businessman. No, George Train is remembered today because of the influence that he had on another gifted man.

You see, after Train lost the election, he decided to take a trip around the world. He had the money to take an extended tour. And his eccentric personality led him into some bizarre situations. He joined a revolution for a while in France; he was arrested on other occasions; he nearly faced a firing squad once, he went off of traditional tourist paths to see and experience many cultural oddities. And when he finally made it back home to his native soil, Train recounted his adventures in a series of newspaper articles that he wrote. A French novelist named Jules Verne became fascinated with both the eccentric Train and his interesting stories as he read them in the paper. So Verne decided to write using George Train as a model in a book that he

wrote. Because of his influence on the author, George Train became immortalized as Phileas Fogg in *Around the World in 80 Days*.

Most significant achievements in this world would never have happened were it not for the influence and help of somebody else. And if we are honest with ourselves, I think we would all admit that most of the achievements that we have accomplished in life would have never been made possible without some help from someone. Perhaps it was a word of encouragement, perhaps some helpful instructions, perhaps some planning behind the scenes, perhaps a positive example, but whatever the help, seen or unseen, it was indispensable to us for the accomplishment of the task.

It is a great encouragement to us to realize that in the spiritual realm we have a Savior who remains committed to doing whatever is necessary to help us so that we can reach the spiritual maturity that is God's will for each of His children. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi that they could be confident that the one who had begun the good work of salvation in their lives would be faithful to complete it (Phil. 1:6).

Two weeks ago, we began a brief series looking into 3 of the present ministries that the Lord Jesus Christ has on behalf of each of God's children. He has many more than just 3, of course, but we have chosen to limit our study to just these 3. This is something that we don't usually emphasize. We usually speak more of the past ministry that the Lord Jesus Christ has had for us – his coming to this earth to provide the perfect example of godly living, his substitutionary sacrifice on the cross of Calvary for our sins, his bodily resurrection from the tomb, the inception of the church that is his body to carry on his ministry here on this earth. And it is, of course, right and proper for us to emphasize these ministries of the Lord Jesus Christ because they are foundational to our spiritual life and faith. And we have just remembered again Christ's atoning death in our celebration of the Lord's Table. But the danger is that we can begin to think that all that Christ has done is in the past, that he isn't actively involved in ministry any more. And this would be far from the truth. For the Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry even to this day.

Last time, we looked at the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ as our defense attorney, as our advocate.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1,2)

Today, right now, the Lord Jesus Christ is appearing for us in God's presence as our advocate, as our defense attorney. Whenever the enemy brings an accusation against us before the throne of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ represents us because we have been cleansed by His precious blood. So we have the best defense

attorney possible – the very one who made the payment for our sins in full is now representing us to God the Father Himself according to God’s word.

We come now to a **second ministry that the Lord Jesus Christ is presently having on our behalf**. This is somewhat related to the first one, but as we will see is far different in approach. Not only is the Lord Jesus our defense attorney, but he is also a lobbyist on our behalf – he is one who intercedes for us. READ Hebrews 7:24,25:

But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

In contrasting the Lord Jesus as the final and perfect high priest to those mere human high priests who were of the lineage of Aaron, the author of this book speaks of fact that whereas Aaron and every other human high priest who ever lived eventually died, Jesus continues to live now and will live forever and that he always lives to make intercession for his people.

Now the word *intercession* here literally means *to meet with someone or to converse with someone*. In its noun form, this word is often used as one of the words for prayer in the Bible. In 1 Timothy 2:1, for instance, where we are encouraged to offer requests and prayers and intercessions and thanksgivings to God, this is the word that is translated *intercessions*. So the intercessor in this context, is one who prays on behalf of another, seeking to give help and strength and encouragement to the one who is in need.

As our defense attorney, the Lord Jesus Christ defends us against the accusations and attacks of the enemy. As our lobbyist, the Lord Jesus Christ brings up our needs, interceding on our behalf, before the throne of God so that we might be able to have the help and strength to live a life pleasing to God. We often associate an intercessory prayer ministry with the Spirit of God because Romans 8:26 tells us that the Spirit helps us when we don’t know what to pray for by interceding on our behalf, but we sometimes forget that the Lord Jesus Christ also has a very similar ministry as our high priest. So important is this matter of prayer that both the 2nd and 3rd persons of the Triune Godhead are actively involved in a prayer ministry for each of us.

There were 3 major ministries that priests had in the O.T. times. His major ministry, the one that we emphasize most often, was to offer sacrifices on behalf of other people. When someone was convicted of their sin during the O.T. times, they would bring an animal to the priest who would then represent them to God, offering a sacrifice to the Lord on their behalf. The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this ministry when He offered Himself upon the cross of Calvary as a sin sacrifice. Now, no other animal sacrifices are needed, because the final and complete sin sacrifice has been offered by our living High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Another ministry that the priest had during the O.T. times was to teach the people God’s truth. Levitical cities

were scattered all throughout the land of Israel. Priests lived in these cities and continuously taught the people about God and His laws. The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this ministry as He came to this earth as the perfect representative of God the Father. Jesus told His disciples that as they saw Him, they saw the Father. In other words, Jesus embodied the perfect teaching of God. His life was a great lesson in Theology. So if anybody wants to know how God would act in a situation or what God would think about any matter, that person only has to look at how Jesus lived and he receives his answer. This is one reason why there are 4 gospels of Christ's life looking from various viewpoints so that even today we can be taught by what our Savior did and said. But there is a third ministry of the priests in the O.T. that is often overlooked – that is the ministry of prayer. The priests were to pray for God's people. They were to be continually representing God's people to God in prayer. This truth was found in symbolic form in an article of furniture that God designed for the Holy Place. In the Holy Place of the Temple, there were 3 articles of furniture that God instructed to be placed there. There was a table of showbread representing the 12 tribes of Israel and the Lord Jesus Christ as the bread of life for them, there was a golden lampstand to provide light and picture the Lord Jesus Christ as the light of the world for His people, and there was the altar of incense which pictured prayers continually being offered for the people of God. As the smoke of the incense continually rose upward, so God's people were to be continually represented in prayer by the priests. The Psalmist wrote, *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice (Ps. 141:2).*

Now earthly priests failed at times. They just weren't able to be in prayer all the time – they had to eat and sleep. It was hoped that with the thousands of priests consecrated, at least one would be praying at all times, but that probably wasn't always the case. And priests could get sick. Eventually, of course, they all died. But we have a high priest today who never fails. He never sleeps, never gets sick, and will never die. So we only need one high priest today and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is seated at the right hand of God and he lives eternally to make intercession for us.

Campaign finance reform remains a hotly debated issue in our nation. It undoubtedly will be a subject of the Presidential debates that we will hear before the election. The real issue, of course, is influence. Everyone knows that money buys influence. And if you continually have a voice presenting your case in Washington, legislation is usually passed in your favor. That's the reason why there are hundreds of full-time, well-paid lobbyists roaming the halls of the Senate and House all the time. They are calling the President and Vice-President's secretaries, trying to finagle a way to make an appointment. They are badgering cabinet members trying to influence their decisions and policies.

How thankful we can be that we have the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of God the Father as our lobbyist. He is constantly praying for us as our High Priest. He is continually interceding on our behalf.

Even when we don't really know what is in our best long-term interests, He knows because He is omniscient. So we can have the confidence that we have all the help we need to reach spiritual maturity.

Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is our defense attorney and our lobbyist, but there is one more ministry that we want to conclude with this morning. At this time, the Lord Jesus Christ is also serving as **our general contractor in heaven**. For He has promised to build an eternal home for each one of his children. It will be a home specifically designed for each one. Listen to that promise given by Christ to his disciples in John 14:1-3:

JN 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Here Christ gives to us a brief, small description of heaven. Not many details are given of heaven in the scriptures. That is probably so that we don't neglect our work here upon the earth in longing for our future state. I like what the old country preacher, Vance Havner, said about the relatively few details given about heaven in the Bible. He said, *Its difficult to get your child to eat his vegetables if the desert is sitting down at the other end of the table*. God told us about the reality of heaven and gave us enough details for us to know it is a glorious place so that we might be motivated to get there, but he didn't give us so clear a picture that we would lose motivation to live here on the earth. But here in John 14 we have the beautiful picture of a host carefully preparing for the reception of his guest.

Whenever we have a special guest coming whom we respect and love, we take great pleasure in preparing for his or her reception. We make sure that there are clean sheets on the bed and clean towels for their use. We make sure that the room is clean. We might even gather flowers and set them on the table. We look over the room to see if there is anything else that might suggest itself to make our guest a little more comfortable.

So Jesus Christ is making a place for each of his children that will be tailor-made to their desires and needs. Heaven has been described as the place of 'no more'. We are told more of what will not be there than we are told of what will be there. In heaven there will be no more sin, no more pain, no more weakness of the flesh. In heaven there will be no more night, no more tears, no more sorrow, no more lack of anything that is good. The Lord Jesus Christ is building a place for each of his children right now. When the mansion is completed, he calls his child home to enjoy it forever.

As the Lord Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure, he spoke to them of a peace, a place and a person. He told them not to let their hearts be troubled, to believe in God and to believe in Him. He told them of the place that he was going to prepare for them. And then he reminded them that He was the

way, the truth and the life, that nobody could come to the Father and to that wonderful place called heaven except through him. So it is that each of us can have the peace of God in our hearts and a wonderful home in heaven if we know the Lord Jesus Christ personally as our Savior.

What is Jesus doing now for each of us as his children? He is a defense attorney for us, he is a lobbyist for us and he is a general contractor for us. Christ defends us against the accusations of the enemy, he intercedes on our behalf before the throne of God and he is building a special eternal home for each one born again into Gods family.