



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

**A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)**  
**Lesson 6.7.2.7 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)**

**Jesus' Intercession as Our High Priest**

Although Jesus, as our High Priest, completed our redemption by His total obedience (both active and passive) during His state of humiliation, He is still interceding for us as our High Priest. Intercession means speaking to God on behalf of others. Jesus is interceding right now for us sinners at the right hand of God. In His state of humiliation Jesus interceded for Peter in these words: **"I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail"** (Luke 22:32). Jesus interceded for those responsible for His crucifixion when He said from the cross: **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"** (Luke 23:34). On the night before His death, Jesus prayed for His disciples and for all who would believe in Him through their testimony – this includes us believers who are living today. Among His words were these: **"I pray for them (the twelve). I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours... Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me... I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one... Sanctify them by Your truth... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word... Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me"** (John 17:9, 11, 15, 17, 20, 24).

In a similar way to these prayers Jesus is interceding for us at this very moment. For it is written: **"It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"** (Romans 8:34). The apostle John calls Jesus our Advocate at the right hand of God. An Advocate is someone who speaks up for another, just as a defense attorney might speak up for and defend his client. **"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world"** (1 John 2:1-2). Notice that the basis for Jesus' intercession and advocacy is His propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus is saying to His Father: "You cannot punish these sinners, for I have already been punished for their sin. For My sake forgive them."

The letter to the Hebrews makes many references to Jesus' work of intercession as our High Priest. **"He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them"** (Hebrews 7:24-25). As the Old Testament high priests entered the Holy of Holies with sacrificial blood, so Jesus as our High Priest entered the true Holy of Holies, heaven itself, with His sacrificial blood. **"Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption"** (Hebrews 9:12). **"For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"** (Hebrews 9:24).

Jesus' intercession for us will continue until we are safely home with Him in heaven, for **"He always lives to make intercession"** for us (Hebrews 7:25). When the end comes, there will be no need for any further intercession, for all enemies will have been put under His feet, and **"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"** (1 Corinthians 15:26).

The Holy Spirit is also a kind of intercessor. While Christ is our Advocate at the Father's right hand, the Holy Spirit is a Helper within the hearts of the believers. On the night before His death, Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit in this way to His disciples: **"I will pray the Father, and He will give another Helper, that**

**He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth”** (John 14:16-17). The Greek word that is translated as “Helper” is *parakleetos* (παράκλητος), *paraclete* in English. A *paraclete* is an encourager, a counselor, a comforter, an advocate. As our *Paraclete* who is with us and in us, **“the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God”** (Romans 8:26-27). **“God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’”** (Galatians 4:6).

There is no Scriptural evidence that departed saints pray for us or intercede for us. Of course, while we are living as Christians here on earth, we pray for one other. We read in many places that Paul asked his fellow-Christians to pray (intercede) for him and his work. For example, Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica: **“Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified”** (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

In a previous lesson, we pointed out that the Old Testament sacrifices were of two kinds: propitiatory sacrifices to remove sin and sacrifices of thanksgiving. Christ made the one and only truly propitiatory sacrifice when He sacrificed Himself. The Old Testament propitiatory sacrifices were only symbolic. Any kind of sacrifice we make today to try to atone for our sin is totally unnecessary and such a sacrifice is, in fact, an insult to our Lord Jesus, for He has already atoned for all sin once and for all, totally and for eternity.

Nevertheless, all Christians today are called priests, and we can offer sacrifices to God – not propitiatory sacrifices to atone for sin, but sacrifices of thanksgiving. After presenting all the manifold blessings of the salvation accomplished by Christ, the apostle Paul called on the Christians in Rome to bring a sacrifice of their own: **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”** (Romans 12:1). God’s Old Testament people brought animal sacrifices to give thanks to their God. We today are to offer ourselves – our lives, our bodies, our talents, and whatever we have that can be of service to God’s work on earth – as our offering of thanks to God for the salvation He has given us.

The apostle Peter expanded on this point by saying that Christians are priests who capable of offering acceptable sacrifices to God. He wrote: **“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”** (1 Peter 2:4-5). **“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you of darkness into His marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Proclaiming God’s praises is one form of sacrifice that is especially pleasing to God when it is done by those who trust in Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews also refers to this kind of sacrifice: **“By Him (Christ) let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”** (Hebrews 13:15-16) Notice that a Christian life that brings forth the fruit of good works out of faith in Jesus is a sacrifice that pleases God. When Paul received support for his earthly needs when he was a prisoner in Rome, he thanked the congregation in Philippi with these words: **“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God”** (Philippians 4:18).

Only Christ could bring a sacrifice that could atone for our sins and the sin of the whole world. But we can bring sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God that are pleasing in His sight, because we treasure Christ’s sacrifice in our hearts and trust in Him and what He has done.

## Questions

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1. What is meant by intercession?
2. How did Christ intercede for others in the days of His flesh?
3. How is Christ interceding for us right now?
4. What was the Holy of Holies in the temple a picture of?
5. What kind of interceding does the Holy Spirit do?
6. Why should we not teach that the departed saints pray for us?
7. What kind of sacrifice can only Christ do, and what kind of sacrifices can we do?
8. What is meant by the priesthood of all believers in Christ?
9. Give some examples of sacrifices that we can make to God that are pleasing in His sight.