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CHRIST'S PRAYER FROM THE CROSS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
NUMBER 33
HEBREWS 5:7-8

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Jesus Christ was a High Priest. He was THE HIGH PRIEST. This scripture before us is to explain what he did in his office as High Priest. He did not occupy that high office without being fully conscious of the far-reaching implications of it. (Now we will see in this passage that Christ is said to have "cried" in his prayer from the cross. Let me head you off at the pass right here and remind you that in order to pray effectively you don't have to cry. This will be more fully explained a little later on.)

HEBREWS 5:7 "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;" The word "who" comes from "hos" and refers to Jesus Christ. "In the days of his flesh" takes us back to the beginning of his priesthood in the days of his incarnation. The days of his flesh refers to that time when the Son of God became a man and lived on this earth for thirty-three years. "When he had offered up" is an aorist, active, participle of "prosphero". This aorist tense zeroes in on this sacrificial prayer, and it precedes the action of the main verb. The main verb is given back up in verse five when we read "glorified not himself." Before he did not glorify himself he offered up these prayers. This is a constative aorist and refers to the cross. Now Christ did other things on the cross besides pray. He spoke seven times, he became sin for us and he breathed out his human spirit at the end. But this aorist tense here of "prosphero" is referring to his praying. The word for "Prayers" is "deesis" and it means a very intense kind of praying and we pick up the content of these prayers in several of the Psalms.

Psalms 69:13-15, Psalm 16:9-10 and Psalm 22.

Next we have the word "supplications" and this is from "hikteria." This word is derived from the idea of someone coming up with an olive branch as a gesture for making a peace treaty. We think of people displaying a white flag when they want a treaty, but in those days, they used an olive branch. This is the derivation of this word "hikteria." Jesus Christ was carrying an olive branch to God the Father concerning our sins and we notice this specifically in Psalm 22:22-31. And this is the passage which includes Christ's prayer for his resurrection.

The Gethsemane Prayer Was Different

This prayer on the cross and the Gethsemane prayer were entirely different. In Gethsemane he asked the Father to let the cup pass from him, but he hastened to say, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." But the prayer in Psalm 22 is a prayer for resurrection, for Christ knew that it was in the resurrection where he would continue his great work as THE HIGH PRIEST.

Thus far in this sentence we have this--"Jesus Christ, who in the days of his flesh (during the incarnation), having offered up both intense prayers and strong supplications."

The Screams From The Cross

Next we have "meta" meaning "with" and the word for strong crying is "krauge." Christ screamed out to God the Father and he screamed again and again, according to Psalm 22. He did not scream because he was in pain and could not take it. (Look at Isaiah 53:1-9 and Matthew 27:26-31.) Jesus didn't do any screaming until he was bearing our sins, during the last three hours on the cross. When the sins of the world hit him, then he screamed again and again.

Summary

1. This prayer is found again in detail in Psalm 16:9-10 and 69:13-15 and Psalm 22:22-31. The first part of Psalm 22 has to do with Christ bearing our sins. In that Psalm he says, "I am a worm" and it refers to those worms from which they extracted the crimson dye for dying the robes of the kings.
2. Christ was praying this "cross prayer" in the time when he was bearing our sins and when he was offering himself upon the altar of sacrifice. This altar would have direct effect upon the whole human race.
3. There were two priestly functions occurring simultaneously--
 - a. He was offering himself as a sacrifice for our sins.
 - b. He was praying for resurrection from physical death which would follow his spiritual death for our sins.
4. The physical death of Christ temporarily interrupted his work as THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST. It was interrupted for three days. You see, no priest can function as a priest after he is dead. In the Levitical priesthood when one died, then his son moved in and took his place and so it went from generation to generation.
5. God does not function as a priest. You have to be a man to be a priest, so the Priesthood of Jesus involves his hypostatic union. He never would have become a priest if he had not been born in Bethlehem.
6. The phase one ministry of Jesus was when he offered himself on the cross for our sins. The phase two ministry is as high priest when he makes intercession to The Father in our behalf. In order to be able to make intercession for us, he had to experience resurrection.
7. While offering himself on the cross, he was praying with great screams. (But you don't need to scream in order for God to hear you.) The screaming was related with him offering himself for sin and the praying for the perpetuation of his ministry so he could intercede for us. In order to do this, he would have to be raised from the dead.
8. Christ is a priest and he could not offer himself for us in physical death. We will have to die physically for ourselves. But he did for us what we can't do, he offered himself up spiritually and he bore our sins. So we must keep in focus the two deaths of Christ on the cross. His objective in coming to the earth was fulfilled. He must be raised up, he must ascend, he must be seated in the throne of power and from that vantage point he can intercede for us.

Two Kinds Of Praying

Let us point out here the two kinds of praying. We can pray for ourselves and for others and for great objects, but our praying is nothing to be compared to the praying he does for us. Jesus prays as great High Priest at the right hand of God. But the Holy Spirit also prays with "groanings that cannot be uttered." Therefore, we conclude from this passage that Christ prayed for resurrection so his priestly mission might continue.

This verse goes on to say "and tears." This is a descriptive genitive plural and really means "associated with many tears." The word for tears is "dakru."

Next we have "unto him" and this is "pros" plus the accusative of "autos" and it means "face to face with God." Even though God forsook him on the cross, his prayers were getting through to God, face to face with God.

Some Prayer Rules

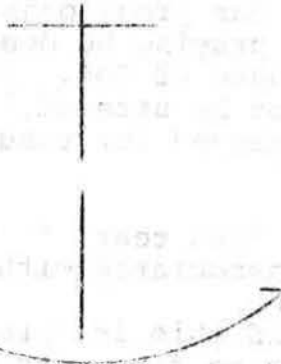
1. All prayer is addressed to God The Father. Both Jesus and The Holy Spirit addressed their prayers to God The Father. Here from the cross, Jesus directed his prayers toward God The Father.
2. This is the first principle of prayer. Ephesians 3:14
All prayer is addressed to God The Father, in the name of Jesus, in the power of The Holy Spirit. John 14:13-14, Ephesians 6:18
3. The Son of God as our High Priest offers prayers to The Father as in Hebrews 7:25. So does the Holy Spirit as in Romans 8:26-27
4. Therefore, the pattern for our priesthood is established. We are all (all born again believers) a kingdom of priests and we approach God through our High Priest who is Christ.
5. Prayers should be accurate and prayers fail more from stupidity than from carnality. All too often prayers illustrate the stupidity of people.

Next we have the words "that was able" referring to God. But it is more than that. This is a retroactive progressive present. This is a present, active, participle of "dunamai." It means something begun in the past and continues right up to the present. God has always been able to answer prayer, both then and now. So this actually says, "face to face with the one who has always been able and continues to be able." Next we have a present, active, infinitive of "sozo" and it really means deliver rather than save. This is the present tense of repeated action. This is the infinitive of God's purpose. It is God's purpose to answer Christ's prayer so Christ could pick up his priestly work on the other side of the grave and continue it in our behalf. In other words, we won't have a dead Christ but we will do business every day with the ever-living Son of God.

Look at the truth of this diagram

His prayer was offered on the "cross" side of his death.

God hears the prayer and the results are carried on over to life beyond the cross.



This is where Christ will function as a High Priest. He will do his great work for the human race as The Living Lord.

So look how this applies to you. You may be a weak Model T Ford as far as your prayers are concerned, but Jesus Christ is a Rolls Royce. It is also God's plan to make the resurrection a part of the strategic victory in the Angelic Conflict. This is what broke the Devil's back. God is glorified in giving you all that you make it possible for him to give. But you have to have a cup before he can pour.

Next in this verse we have the word "him" and this is the accusative singular of "autos" and it refers to Jesus Christ. The personal pronoun means "you" but the intensive pronoun means "You, yourself, and only you." This prayer is going to be answered and Christ will be raised up and will ascend and will be seated at the right hand of God and then in the right time will return--and when he returns, we will return with him and in resurrection bodies, we will be priests and will serve the Great High Priest.

Then we have "ek thanatos" and it means "out from death." It doesn't mean he will be delivered and not die, but it means after he dies he will be delivered out from death and this is resurrection. He didn't pray for resurrection so he would be aware of the implications of it, for he already perfectly understood the implications of the resurrection. But he prayed this prayer so we would understand the full implications of the resurrection.

God Heard Him

Next we have "And was heard" and this is an aorist, passive, participle of "eisakouo" and it means to accept someone's petition. "In that he feared" is from "apo" plus the genitive of "eulabeia." It really means to be careful and watchful in the sphere of respect for authority. It means reverence. A high priest must have respect for the person of God and for the plan of God. This statement means that Christ's prayer was answered because he had perfect respect for divine authority.

So this is what we have in this verse--

"Jesus Christ, who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both prayers and supplications associated with both screams and tears, face to face with the one who was able in the past and keeps on being able to deliver him out from death, his petition having been heard because of his recognition of divine authority."

Summary

1. There is no normal function of the priesthood apart from the super grace life. This is where prayer becomes effective.

2. Jesus Christ is a Royal High Priest. He is the King High Priest. He was effective in his prayer because of his recognition of the authority of His Father and His Father's plan.
3. Prayers that are effective demand concentration on who and what God The Father is, who and what his plan is. THIS CALLS FOR KNOWLEDGE OF DOCTRINE.
4. The petition for resurrection shows that Jesus was conscious of the fact that since he had started out on the salvation mission, he was determined to complete it.
5. In this way Christ paved the way for our victory in this dispensation. The super grace life is for royal priests.
6. "Eulabeia" recognizes God's attitude of absolute authority both in his person and in his plan. God's purpose and plan for the universe are to be carried out. Jesus recognized this in this passage. Jesus lived in super grace all the time and had perfect respect for the authority of his Father.
7. Blessings and happiness in life must be related to authority and to respect for authority.
The key to life is authority.
You can't be saved without it.
You can't learn doctrine without it.
You can't live the Christian life without it.