

Before the Throne of God Above

Hebrews 4:14-16

Theme: “The character and nature of Christ as our Advocate / Intercessor”

This might be a hymn that you're less familiar with as it was originally introduced in 1863 with the title “the Advocate” written by Charitie Lees Bancroft in Ireland. These powerful words were published in the baptist hymn and toon book for public worship in 1871 and were also included in Charles Spurgeon's our own hymn book in 1884. The hymn briefly rose in popularity during the 1870s then lay nearly dormant for almost 100.

The song's most recent revival came when Vicky Cook of sovereign grace worship wrote a new tune for this text in 1997. This new version was made popular from recordings by sovereign grace music featuring Kristin Getty as well as being included on Shane and Shane's 2009 album release “Pages.” The tune written by Vicky Cook is beautiful and easily grasped by today's congregations. We've enjoyed it here at Sunbury Bible Church.

The Biblical foundation of this song is rooted in sound doctrine as we read Hebrews 4:14-16. Here are quick points of truth that we can sing about and share with others as we sing of our faith and rest upon the finished work of Christ.

I. The Believer has an Advocate / Intercessor now before God.

A. Jesus is our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14) who has ascended the heavens and lives to make intercession for his people.

NOTE: While Hebrew priests made daily sacrifices for sin, every year, the high priest made a culminating sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, entering the Holy of Holies of the Temple to seek the forgiveness of the whole people (see Leviticus 16). To say that Jesus is our “great high priest” is to say that he is the one who enters the most holy place before God in heaven, to intercede for all his people.

B. Jesus gives us access to the mercy seat for new mercies every day.

NOTE: With Christ as our great high priest, the “Day of Judgment” becomes our eternal “Day of Atonement,” so that “while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart.” We receive mercy not justice from the throne of God's glory. And while Jesus makes intercession, there is no one or no power that can accuse us or take us from the grip of grace as long as Jesus stands in our place.

C. Jesus satisfied (fulfilled) the legal demands and those in Christ acquitted.

NOTE: The duplicity about Satan is that he will first tempt us to sin, minimizing the significance of our sin. But then, after we sin, he will flip the script and accuse us, maximizing the significance of our sin. Satan's method is to go from "it's not so bad" to "you are so bad!" However, before the throne of God above Satan is a liar and has no hold on God's forgiven child. Our natural response would be either defensiveness or despair, either a denial of our sin or acknowledgment and hopelessness. But in Christ the "sinless savior," we acknowledge our "sinful soul" yet believe we are "counted free." (Synonyms for counted free: Pardoned, Forgiven, Absolved, Justified, exonerated, and cleared of all charges.)

D. Jesus purchased eternal redemption proven by his ascension where my life is hid with Christ on high.

NOTE: The third and final verse offers an extended moment of beholding, acclamation, and worship. Here, Jesus is described as "the risen lamb," connecting the hymn directly to the depiction of Revelation 4-5. Paying close attention to the revelation of Jesus Christ described by John in 4:9-14 - One can readily see "The Lamb" before the throne of God above. In other words, the lamb who was slain now lives forever, his blood the eternal sacrifice for my sin. This imagery echoes the prophet Ezekiel 37:26-28 to be understood through Jesus' words in John 17:19.

MY, MY, MY....What a great salvation we proclaim and progress toward. Jesus is the final blood sacrifice; He has completed once and for all time our eternal redemption. We are **NOT** looking for another temple or another sacrifice. We are **not** looking for another High Priest or better terms and conditions. **HE HAS COME. HE HAS RISEN. HE IS REIGNING. HE IS RETURNING. WE WILL RISE. WE WILL LIVE IN THE NEW CREATION UNDER THE REIGN OF OUR GOOD KING.**

May we be amazed and encouraged at our common salvation,
Preston