

What Jesus Cannot Do

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Besides the points made in a previous article regarding the limitations of our Father, that is, the inability to lie, tempt with evil, etc., we ought to consider some limitations specific to the second person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ our Savior.

1. **On earth Jesus could not be our high priest.** “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens...For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law” (Heb. 8:1, 4).ⁱ

Please note *what* we have? We have a high priest! God’s new covenanted people are not left without a high priest but actually have a better, higher, and more holy high priest in Jesus the Son of God.

Please note also *where* He is seated? In heaven! Jesus serves as our mediator in heaven at the right hand of God. He has entered behind the veil by His own blood rather than the blood of another (Heb. 6:19, 20; 9:12; 10:19, 20).

Please note *why*? Why could He not be a priest on earth? The high priest on earth offered gifts according to the Law of Moses. Such priests were only to be from the tribe of Levi and specifically through Aaron’s lineage. But Jesus was from Judah, not Levi, a tribe which Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. Due to such silence, no person was permitted to serve as priest on earth (Heb. 7:13, 14). Yet it is evident that He is a high priest with a better gift, that is, His own blood rather than that of animals. Hence He also mediates from a better place—heaven!ⁱⁱ

2. **In Judah Jesus cannot reign as king.** “Thus says the LORD: ‘Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah’” (Jer. 22:30).

Not only can Jesus not serve as priest on earth, but He cannot rule as a king on an earthly throne. Our Lord came to fulfill all that was written in the Law, Prophets and Psalms concerning Him (Lk. 24:44). Certainly Jeremiah 22:30 qualifies as prophecy and is legally limiting to where the descendants of Coniah can rule and prosper (Coniah is king Jeconiah, Jer. 22:24, 28; 28:4; Matt. 1:11, 12).

Jeremiah not only limits the place of rule, but anticipates a different *nature* of rule. Jeremiah, 23:5, “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute

judgment and righteousness in the earth.’” Where Coniah would not prosper, the messianic King will. Jeremiah speaks of His humanity and royalty in that He is a Branch raised to David (cf. Rom. 1:3). He declares His morality and obedience in that He is a “Branch of righteousness.”

The prophet furthers this theme by saying, “In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6). Herein we can grasp two more qualities of this King! First, He is the *Jehovah our righteousness!* Clearly then He is not *only* human, but also divine, the Jehovah, the great “I AM.” We have here something different from all other kings which was overlooked by most first-century Jewish intellectuals; Messiah would be God and man. They viewed the Messiah as the son of David, a valiant warrior who would rescue Judah from her enemies, but they did not equate Him with being God to which Jesus called their attention, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord’” (Matt. 22:43). David would not refer to a mere descendant as “Lord.” He clearly recognized this One as his superior. Those who stood and opposed Jesus were opposing the Messiah. In opposing the Messiah, they opposed the Branch of David as well as the JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!

**Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS’” (Jer. 23:5, 6, NKJV)*

HUMANITY	DEITY	EFFECT
I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness	This is His Name by which He will be Called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS	OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS
Romans 1:3	Matthew 22:42-46	2 Corinthians 5:21

Second, we see that this King, unlike Coniah, or any previous king is “our” righteousness. He is not only righteous in His rule, but He is our righteousness in His work, that is, we become righteous through Him. Clearly the nature of His scepter, His throne and His deliverance is not carnal, but spiritual, to save us from sins that we might become the righteousness of God.ⁱⁱⁱ For these reasons, the Lord was very clear regarding the nature of His kingdom, “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would

fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (Jn. 18:36).

Finally, further consider that the roles of high priest and king are synchronistically achieved. Jesus reigns as king and priest. Notice again the force of Hebrews 8:1, “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, **who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty** in the heavens.” He is not only a High Priest, but He is our heavenly High priest seated at the right hand of the throne *in the heavens*. In fact, at the right hand of God in *heavenly* places is where He presently rules (Eph. 1:20-23). “At the right hand” is an expression of approved authority. Hence Jesus reigns with heaven’s authority endowed upon Him from the Father as *King of kings*, making peace between the office of king and priest. Zechariah is very plain when he wrote,

“Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zech. 6:13)^{iv}.

Jesus serves as priest while He rules on His throne. Both stations are tied together. If Jesus is not currently king, then He is not currently priest and we are all still in our sins having no advocate before God. If Jesus is king, then He is priest and built the temple and has glory in it as Zechariah predicted. “What temple did He build?” may be asked. He built the church which is the holy temple or house of God (see Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5).

The mighty angel Gabriel instructed Mary that Jesus would have the throne of David (Lk. 1:31-33). The apostles tell us where the throne is—in heaven! “Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22). Therefore, in accordance with prophecy, “...We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1).

3. **Jesus could not know when the end of time was.** “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mk. 13:31, 32).

After our Lord gave the disciples detailed informative material regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, He transitions into the end of the age, which was not to be connected with the end of the physical temple as the disciples likely thought. He changes from the events of “those days” (Mk. 13:17, 19, 20, 24) to “that day and hour” where there are no signs and where there are no hard fast clues to predict. By His own admission, He did not know when heaven and earth would pass away. Men have only made fools of themselves in their misguided effort to predict that day. In arrogance man has tried to elevate himself higher than Jesus in

asserting something on earth that even our Lord could not predict while He walked with us. Man’s ignorant pride ceases to amaze. Our Lord was clear that neither the day, nor the time of day (evening, midnight, or morning) could be forecasted. He rather admonished the disciples to always be ever watchful and prayerful lest they be unprepared.

Others have claimed that Jesus was not God or at least surrendered or severed His qualities of deity while on earth. But if our Lord’s lack of knowing the timing of the final day disproves the fullness of His deity, then it also disproves that of the Holy Spirit! Rather than questioning the *quality* of His deity, we should reverently realize and appreciate the distinct roles between the members of the Godhead. As the “head” of the Godhead and as Lawmaker, it is only upon the Father’s decision when the end will come. Being an executor and servant of that will, the Son, at that time, needed no knowledge of it.^v The *timing* is something left entirely to the Father’s discretion and in His time He will commission the Son to return upon which the world as we know it will end. Knowledge of such timing had nothing to do with our Lord’s first descent to earth as He came, not to judge, but to provide access to the great salvation for all who would love His appearing (Jn. 12:47; Heb. 2:3; 2 Tim. 4:8).

4. **The Son can do nothing of Himself.** “Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner’” (Jn. 5:19).

What does Jesus mean when He stated that He can do nothing of Himself? Some have been tempted to assert that such disproves the deity of Jesus. This misunderstanding again stems from the lack of understanding or the failed appreciation of the distinct roles between the Father and the Son. Jesus is simply asserting that what He is doing is not something that He designed or authored, but rather, the approved things which the Father commissioned Him. Jesus came as a faithful servant to do the will of the Father. “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (Is. 42:1; cf. Matt. 20:28; Phil. 2:7). Hence this does not affirm the weakness of the Son, but rather His complete competence and perfect harmony with the Father. Rather than denying or diminishing from His deity, the passage actually confirms such! Note carefully, “...the Son can do nothing of Himself, **but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.**”

The Son “sees” what the Father does. That is a claim to his deity. What mere mortal can make that claim? The Son not only sees, but does in “like manner” what the Father does. That further claims the equality of the Son to the Father! We should be impressed by what the Son cannot do “of” Himself is in fact the power “of” the Father exemplified!

5. **Jesus cannot save you if you do not obey.** “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He

became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:8, 9).

When Jesus came to the earth, He came with a body of flesh, a disposition of a servant and the relationship as a Son. As a Son who served His Father, He learned and experienced obedience in suffering as a man suffers. Until He came to the earth in His incarnation, He never suffered *as a man*. “**And being found in appearance as a man**, He humbled Himself and became **obedient** to the point of death, **even** the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8, emp. mine). Full obedience here on earth brought intense and direct suffering upon Him. In fact it encompassed Him in anguish and misery as Hebrews 5:7 speaks, “who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.”

The days of His flesh were filled with prayers, cries and tears. Indeed, He despised the shame of the cross, but loved to obey the Father (Heb. 12:2, 3). “Man of sorrows” was a title that was earned by the hostility that He patiently received from sinners!

Upon perfecting the will of God and ushering in the last era whereby He serves as our High Priest, He is fully willing and able to also save those who obey Him. We should not think it strange then, that in the days of our flesh, that we will also receive the same kind of treatment. The hatred and mockery of the world, the wounds of false brethren, the general opposition to truth and the times of sorrow that touched our Lord may uniquely befall on His saints.

When the world sorrows it often sorrows over what is temporary. Where the world sorrows over financial loss, the Christian mourns over spiritual bankruptcy. Where the world mourns the loss of a loved one, the saint also mourns over the loss of souls who are headed to eternity without out being prepared. Where the world mocks at sin, the Christian weeps knowing that such is what killed the Christ. Where the world gladly spends their time in frivolous pursuits, the Christian is weighted with the ideal of righteousness and the work of the kingdom. Obedience to Jesus will make you bear a cross (Lk. 14:27). It will lead you through moments of disconnect. It will take you through rivers of adversity often filled with loneliness. But Jesus will not leave those who are His (2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Tim. 4:17). However, Jesus will not save those who won't obey. There is not one example of Him doing so. He promises to save those who believe in Him with repentance and are baptized into His name (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; etc.). He likewise promises to grant a crown of life to those who with faithful continuance, press on till death (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10)! Jesus cannot go back on His word. He cannot deny himself. “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:12, 13).

ⁱⁱ Because of these facts, it is equally evident that the Law of Moses has become fulfilled, obsolete and done away (Heb. 8:13; 10:9, 10; Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14, 15). “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law” (Heb. 7: 12). The law authorized the priesthood and the priesthood affirmed the law. But if the priesthood has changed, then it is necessary that the law has also changed. One cannot change the priesthood without changing the law. Jesus changed the priesthood; therefore, Jesus changed the law by fulfilling it and abolishing it as the Spirit revealed, “Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments...” (Eph. 2:15). Consequently, Jesus cannot be a priest on earth and such would not be in our interest anyway.

ⁱⁱⁱ Compare, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). By becoming our sin-offering, we can become the righteousness of God in Him. No other king has given himself for the people in this way. But this King tasted death for everyone. His work in leading us to glory and sanctification made us one with Him (Heb. 2:9-11; see also Ps. 130:8; Hos. 1:7; Rom. 11:26, 27; Eph. 4:24 and Phil. 3:9).

^{iv} This peace is here established between the two offices of the rule of king as well as the service of priest seeing that Messiah is both on His throne. He is a high-priest who rules and a king who serves upholding heaven's law. In offering Himself, Jesus, fulfilled the righteous requirement of the Law of Moses as well as triumphed over His enemies.

^v “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3; see also, Ps. 40:8; Mk. 14:36; Jn. 6:39; 8:26; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 10:9; etc.).

ⁱ All verses are from the New King James Version unless noted.