

Looking Unto Jesus

Vision Baptist College

Looking Unto Jesus

Studies in Hebrews

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Chapter Eight – A More Excellent Ministry

Memory Verse – Hebrews 8:12

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Introduction

Since chapter five, God has been teaching us that Christ is a better High Priest than the earthly priests that served in the tabernacle and later in the temple in Jerusalem. Chapter eight will continue this discussion. So far, we have learned that Christ is our Great High Priest. However, He is not after the order of Aaron but rather after the order of Melchisedec. Much of the discussion thus far has been spent explaining this mysterious priest of the Old Testament. In chapter eight, Paul will move past Melchisedec and focus on the ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest. As we will see, He has a *more excellent ministry* of a *better covenant*, based on *better promises*.

This is the shortest chapter in the Letter to the Hebrews with only 13 verses.

Hebrews 7:25 – 28 transition us from the discussion of Melchisedec to the main point of Hebrews, which is the *better* ministry of the Lord Jesus.

I Christ is the Main Point (vs. 1 – 2)

The word “sum” (κεφάλαιον - *kephalaion*) means the chief or main point, or the principle thing. Christ is superior or *better* than any earthly high priest, and He ministers in a *better* sanctuary. These are the central verses of Hebrews and express in a few words the main theme of the entire letter.

Notice the phrase’ “such an high priest” here and back in 7:26 where we read “such an high priest became us”, meaning that He (Christ) is exactly what we need. The Old Testament high priest could never meet our need, but Jesus did.

A He is set on the right hand of God

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Hebrews 1:3)

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"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter 3:22)

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" (Hebrews 10:12)

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

Notice that Christ is sitting down because His atoning or sacrificial work is finished. There was no chair in the earthly tabernacle for sitting, because the priests' work of sacrificing was never completed.

Notice that Christ is on the throne. This is the fulfillment of Psalm 110:1:

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

Notice that Christ is exalted in the heavens. The place of His ministry is superior than any earthly ministry.

He humbled Himself on earth, but now He is exalted in Heaven:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
(Philippians 2:5-11)

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Ephesians 1:20-23)

B He is serving in the true tabernacle

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The earthly tabernacle and later the temple were mere shadows or types of the true temple in Heaven, "which the Lord pitched, and not man":

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;" (Hebrews 9:11)

Christ offered his perfect, sinless blood on the real mercy seat in Heaven. This thought will be developed more fully in chapter 9. (Hebrews 9:18 – 28)

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John 20:17)

When Christ met with Mary in John 20:17, He was our Great High Priest and was about to pour His blood on the mercy seat in Heaven, and that blood is still there to remind everyone of the price that was paid to redeem us from our sin. When the devil accuses us to the Father, Jesus can point to the blood and remind him that the debt was paid in full.

Wiersbe describes the true tabernacle in Heaven as revealed from The Book of Revelation.

In the Book of Revelation, where the heavenly scene is described, we can find parallels to the Old Testament tabernacle. John states that there is a temple of God in heaven (Rev. 11:19). Of course, there will be no temple in the eternal state, because the entire city of God will be a temple (Rev. 21:22). For example, there is a brazen altar (Rev. 6:9–11) as well as an altar of incense (Rev. 8:3–5). The "sea of glass" (Rev. 4:6) reminds us of the laver, and the seven lamps of fire (Rev. 4:5) suggest the seven-branched lampstand in the tabernacle.

Since Jesus Christ is ministering in the original sanctuary, and not the copy, He is ministering in a better place. Why fellowship with priests who are serving in a *copied* sanctuary when you can fellowship with Christ in the original heavenly sanctuary? It would be like trying to live on the blueprint instead of in the building itself!¹

The tabernacle and temple on earth were certainly beautiful and ornate replicas, but they were merely shadows of the reality in Heaven.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 305). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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II Christ is the Ministry Pattern (vs. 3 - 5)

Note – the earthly priests in these verses are referred to in the present tense, proving that this letter had to have been written prior to the destruction of the Temple, which took place in 70 AD.

Moses was commanded to build the tabernacle after a pattern or a blueprint that was revealed to him in Mount Sinai.

"According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. ... And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." (Exodus 25:9, 40)

J. Vernon McGee offers this description of the Old Testament Tabernacle and the ministry of the Levitical priests:

The tabernacle in its beautiful simplicity furnishes a type of Jesus Christ (which is almost lost in the complicated detail of the temple). The tabernacle was called a tent, the sides of which were upright boards, covered on both sides with gold. It measured thirty cubits long and ten cubits wide and was divided into two compartments. The first compartment was called the Holy Place. In it were three articles of furniture: the golden lampstand; the golden table of showbread; and the golden altar where incense was offered—no sacrifice other than incense. The lampstand was a type of Christ, the Light of the World. The table of showbread symbolized Him as the Bread of Life. The golden altar at which the high priest offered prayer, spoke of Christ, our Great Intercessor. Then on the great Day of Atonement the high priest passed through the separating veil to the inner compartment, the Holy of Holies, in which were two articles of furniture. (1) The ark of the covenant was a box made of wood, covered with gold inside and outside, in which were the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. The Ten Commandments speak of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law, and He is the only one who ever kept it in all of its detail. Then the pot of manna speaks of the fact that He is the Bread of Life even today. Aaron's rod that budded speaks of Christ's resurrection. (2) The ark of the covenant was covered with a highly ornamented top called the mercy seat. Crowning it were two cherubim of beaten gold. Once a year the high priest placed blood on the mercy seat, and that is what made it a mercy seat. That was God's dwelling place; that is, the place where God met with the children of Israel.

Around the tabernacle was a court, surrounded by a linen fence one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide. In that outer court were two articles of

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furniture. The first was the brazen altar where all sacrifices were made. The sin question was settled there, but since saints still sin, there was also a laver where the priests could wash, signifying the cleansing from sin.

Now, the Holy Place is where the priests served and where they worshiped. We worship God when we pray, feed upon His Word, and walk in the light of His presence, that is, in obedience to Him.

No one but the high priest (and he only once a year) entered into the next compartment, the Holy of Holies. But when the Lord Jesus died, the separating veil was rent in twain—torn in two—signifying that He had forever opened the way into the Holy of Holies and the presence of God. We might say that the Lord Jesus Christ took the tabernacle, which was horizontal, and made it perpendicular to the earth so that the Holy of Holies is now in heaven—because that is where *He* is. And we are going to find in the following chapter that the golden altar of incense, together with the ark of the covenant, are now in heaven. They are there because Christ Himself is there.

If you had been in the wilderness with Israel, you would have seen the tabernacle in the heart of the encampment, with the tents of the tribes camped all around it. You would have seen the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle by day and the pillar of fire by night. You would have seen the priests busily running to and fro carrying on their ministry of offering sacrifices and observing all of the ritual which God had commanded.

Now all of that was a shadow of a reality. The *reality* itself was in heaven. And today Jesus is there in the heavenly tabernacle functioning in behalf of you and me.²

Just as the earthly tabernacle was a model of the true tabernacle in Heaven, earthly ministers were supposed to follow the pattern of Christ. Their sacrifices were to picture the sacrifice of Christ.

A practical thought from this passage is that today, people who minister for the Lord should follow His example of holiness and humility, compassion and commitment. Christ “set [his] face like a flint” (Isaiah 50:7) in that He was wholly dedicated to completing what He came to do. We need to be equally committed, as well as passionate, to the will of God for our lives.

² McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 558). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

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III Christ is the Mediator of Better Promises (vs. 6 – 13)

Jesus is a better mediator (priest) with a “more excellent ministry” of a better covenant, founded upon better promises. Why did we need a New Covenant? Because there was a fault with the Old. Notice, however, that the fault was not with the covenant given by God, but rather with the people that He covenanted with. Notice the phrase in v. 8, “for finding fault with them”.

The Old Testament Law along with its sacrificial system could never save anybody. It could only point out our failure and drive us to the “better covenant”, which is in Christ.

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (Galatians 3:21 – 25)

Verses 8 – 12 were quoted from Jeremiah 31:31 – 34.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
(Jeremiah 31:31-34)

The new covenant was not based upon man’s performance; but instead was based upon Christ’s perfect blood and precious promise.

Notice v. 12 – “...their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”

The New Covenant is better because it offers eternal forgiveness of sins, rather than the temporary appeasement of the Old Testament’s sacrificial system.