

The Main Point Hebrews 8:1-6

Jeremiah 31:31-40

Colossians 3:1-17

Responsive Psalm 135: 1-6

This morning we are going to start diving in to chapter 8 of Hebrews, As we read our passage that we are going to be studying this morning right away in verse 1 the Author here reveals that what he is going to be talking about now is what he has been building up to, we have now come to the main point of his arguments. So let us read this morning starting in verse 1 of chapter 8, and reading through verse 6. So as you can notice we we read through these verses here this morning, he is not really setting up anything new then what we have already started to discuss. Which is is That Christ is the great High Priest, and now that he has come the necessity of the old has faded.

The old system even though it was imperfect and temporary as we had talked about last week, it serves its purpose effectively, and perfectly. The 2 main aspects of the old system that was established by God through Moses was how it shows that mankind is incapable of being righteous through the following of God's law, for mankind is incapable of doing so, therefore needed a system of atonement when he would fail which was one of the purposes of the sacrifices, it taught that atonement was brought by the way of sacrifice and substitution. As we know it was to point to not only the need for, but the hope in the fulfillment of the coming Messiah. As Abraham told his son when they were walking up mount Sinai that God will provide for himself the needed sacrificial lamb.

This new High Priest, this Greater High Priest that we have in Christ is ours, as the author says here in verse 1. We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. As was mentioned in chapter 7, the levitical priests were like the law, imperfect and temporary, being mortals they would die so there was always a need for a successor, but in Christ, who is eternal there is no change of priesthood, he is the last, and the greatest of high priests who sits at the right hand of the throne of God making intercession for all of those who believe. The idea of Christ sitting at the right hand of God is interesting because it plays into the mystery of the trinity, the idea that God is one, in 3 persons. I am not going to spend a lot of time on this, because honestly I believe that it is a mystery that we are truly not able to understand in our finite human minds, but I bring it up because I don't want anyone to get an idea that Christ is subservient in his intercession for us. In other words, he is not begging the father, but rather sits at a place of authority, at the right hand can be understood as someone with an equal power and authority of the king themselves. When the right hand of the king speaks, it is with such authority it is as if the king himself has spoken. I think that is what is meant by the expression here of Christ sitting at the right hand of the Majesty most high.

We have such a high priest, who not only has the authority of God, is in fact, himself God. The mystery of the trinity, separate, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, yet equals, and one. And that is the main point, that Christ is OUR High Priest sitting at the right hand of God a Minister of the sanctuary and true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. Elevated to this position of eminence, our ever living high priest is a minister in the sanctuary built by God. Again, we see another aspect of Christ's eternal priesthood being superior to the old. The old priesthood served in the tabernacle, which was built by man, it is imperfect, and perishable. But Christ serves in the eternal temple, not made by mankind, but made by God himself. IT is the true sanctuary, the true holy of holies. Again the wilderness sanctuary, and the temple of Jerusalem were nothing more than shadows of this greater, true sanctuary.

Unlike the Levitical priests who would once a year offer sacrifices and enter into that holy of holies, Christ upon his death and resurrection entered into the very presence of God. It would seem that these Hebrews that this book was written to, much like the Galatians and others were focused on earthly things, it is theorized that they were being influenced by the Dead Sea Sect, which is where the Dead Sea Scrolls come from, whose followers were intent on restoring the old pattern of life, with its structures and observances such as the wilderness experience of the Israelites. And because I can not sum this all up better than Phillip Houghes, I will just quote him “ There is indeed a sanctuary, but it is not on this earth as he is saying to them, and a priesthood, but is fulfilled by Christ our glorious high priest of the order of Melchizedek. They are not the fix their expectations on mundane shadows but on the heavenly reality. Jesus our forerunner has opened for us the way which was previously barred to us, into the sanctuary of God's presence and favor. The eternal rest which the Israelites in the wilderness failed to achieve belongs to us who trust in him. For he who is now enthroned above is still ours. His ascension is indeed a return to the glory from which he first descended but it was a return with a difference. He left as the Son of God, he returned both as the Son of God and also, by reason of the incarnation, as Son of man. He left as Lord, he returned both as lord, and also as minister on our behalf in the presence of the Father. He left as King, he returned as both King and also as High Priest and intercessor for those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren. He left as Sovereign, he returned also as Savior. He who sustains the whole of creation is now also the poineer and guarantor of our redemption.

Verse 3 here is really a reminder, or a retelling of chapter 5 verse 1. Which says, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin. But here in chapter 8, we see that this is applied to Christ. The main role of the priests was to offer gifts and sacrifices to God, therefore if Christ is to be our high priest then he to much offer such gifts and sacrifices, otherwise he is not truly a priest. And this is the importance of the incarnation, for Christ offered up himself, a man, to be a sacrifice for mankind, flesh for flesh as it where. As we discussed earlier, the blood of lambs and bulls could never atone for man's sin, they were animals and not a true worthy sacrifice for mankind, but Christ who was unstained by sin offered himself to take the punishment of the sins of his people. Becoming the perfect sacrifice, and the perfect High Priest. And as we had mentioned before, because of the perfect nature, and fulfillment of Christ's sacrifice it was as he said on the cross, finished. There is no longer anymore need for further such sacrifices for he has completed it, Christs ministry in that true sanctuary is not one of offering sacrifices like the levitical priests, but one of intercession for his people.

Verse 4 says, “For if he were on earth, he would nto be a priest,since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law.” Again arguing for the superiority of Christ's priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary as opposed to the earthly priesthood of the levitical priests. If Christ's eternal priesthood was on earth, he would not be a priest at all, which is based on the fact that there are priests who offer gifts and they do so according to the law. The author here as already been explaining why there is no place for another earthly priest, for that has already been fulfilled by the order of Levi as required by the Mosaic law. But as we know Christ did no belong to the order of Levi, he was from Judah, from the lineage of David, And as we have seen in verse 14 of chapter 7, which says, “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.” There were no priests from the tribe of Judah, only the Tribe of Levi were the ones who were appointed to be priests. So here we have Christ, who is called the Great High Priest from a the tribe of Judah who had no priests. So, logic..and scriptures would follow that Christ's priesthood belongs to an order that is not earthly.

The fact that Jesus came from the Tribe of Judah in no way lessens his priesthood though, in fact it is quite the opposite. Coming as the incarnate Son of God so that he might offer himself up as the sacrifice needed to reconcile humanity to God through the cross which is exaltation of himself to the glory which is now his. Christ who came from heaven, is the one who first left heaven who has now returned glorified, in the presence of God on our behalf. His priesthood is heavenly, and eternal it is greater, it is better, because not only because of its eternity, but because it is the fulfillment of God's promises, it is the fulfillment of God's word to the prophets, and it is the fulfillment of God's law requiring a sacrifice for sins. I have said it before, and I will say it again...our focus and gaze should be upon this exalted risen Christ who sits at the right hand of the father, who is eternal, who is both the just, and justifier, the beginning and end of our faith. We look to him who stands eternal, our hope is in his intercession, in his priestly ministry, not in the law, not in the prophets, but in Christ. Now that Christ has fulfilled all of this, we no longer look to the shadows and examples that had come before, they have served their purpose in God's salvation plan and we look to Christ for all things.

But, we must remember that even though the Author here is arguing that Christ's priesthood comes from another, in the likeness, and order of Melchizedek, that does not mean that there are not ties to the levitical priesthood as well. I always find the study of type and anti-types fascinating, and is probably one of my favorite things to study, for it shows God's sovereignty, it shows him laying down and working out his plan which was from the beginning and how all of the cogs and moving pieces fit together over 1000's of years and generations. And that is the case with Melchizedek, which was a shadow, a type of the Christ who was to come, along with the wilderness temple, the sacrifices, the priestly system, the law, all of it. Verse 5 speaks of these shadows talking of the earthly levitical priests of the old covenant law, "who serve the copy and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle, for he said See that you make all things according to the pattern I showed you on the mountain. So this shows that even the very details of that which is to point to something even greater mattered. The construction of the wilderness temple was directed by God himself for it symbolized in every aspect the messiah.

But the levitical priests served the shadow, and not the substance. Interesting side note here, notice that the Author here uses the present tense when he addresses these priests who serve, who are currently serving the copy and shadow. It is just interesting to note for it dates this book sometime before AD 70, for since the priests are still serving, the temple in Jerusalem has yet to be destroyed. But as we see throughout the new testament, the ministry of these priests has become futile, and it is because they are so focused on the shadow, they failed to see the substance when Christ arrived. One example I was reading about type and anti-types, or shadow and substance is the example of a drawing or blueprint of a building. The temple was a copy, in the same way that a blueprint is a copy of the building, it corresponds to the scale and representation of the building, but itself is not the building. It is a 2 dimensional diagram explaining, and showing the building and is appropriate for instruction and guidance but is not the building itself, nor can it ever be the same thing as the 3 dimensional structure that it represents. Or even a scale model of said building is insufficient, for it is not comparable to the reality and splendor of the completed building but just a small representation of such splendor.

The blueprints or diagrams and models of a building are a shadow of the substance, in the same way an actual shadow itself is literally, a shadow, an empty representation of the body which cast it. And this is the important part that was missed by the Levitical priests and the religious leaders of Jesus time. They were focused on the shadow, not on Christ who is the substance of that shadow. Again, showing the importance of our focus as new testament Christians should be on Christ himself, not on the shadows and the things that came before such as the law, but on the one who fulfilled that law!

Which brings us to the next point here, which is the idea of the continuity and discontinuity of the order of Levi, and the order of Melchizedek. The new priesthood in Christ, not only replaces, which is a discontinuity of the law and order of Levi, but he also fulfills it, which is the continuity of the law and the order of Levi. As was mentioned when we were finishing out chapter 7, you have the example of Melchizedek which came before the levitical priesthood and the law, hinting and teaching in progressive revelation of the Messiah to come, and then you have the law given by God which condemns all those who are under it, for it shows that no one is just or righteous before God, nor can anyone ever be of their own power. And both of these, connect, they come together in Christ who is the one who has fulfilled both. He has come and established a new covenant, and wrote a new law on the heart of all those who believe, but in the flesh fulfilled all the requirements of the old law so as to be the perfect and holy, just, and righteous Son of God who then in turn offered himself as a spotless sacrifice for our sins, becoming the author and finisher of salvation, our glorious lord and savior, the king of kings who rules and reigns on high.

Which brings us to our last verse today, which says, “but now he has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as he is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. We can see here this fundamental difference that we have been talking about all morning between the old shadow covenant, and the new covenant of substance. IT says that Christ obtained this ministry, it was not something handed to him, or passed down like the priesthood of the levitical order, but rather he obtained it he took it. His earthly ministry being completed, having fulfilled God's purpose and plan he was given the ministry of the true sanctuary in heaven. Having become perfected through suffering as the Author wrote in chapter 5, verse 7-9 which says, “ who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to him which is able to save him from death, and was heard because of his godly fear. Though he was a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered and having been perfected, (as James says trials, persecution and sufferings bring us closer to perfection) He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him.”

The Mediation of Christ and the new covenant, is superior to that of Moses and the old covenant simply because it is established on better promises. Therefore this change in priesthood, by necessity requires a change in the law as we studied in chapter 7. Again, now that the substance has come, now that the high priesthood of Christ has been established in heaven for all of eternity, the old has faded, its purpose is fulfilled and we must be wary that we as Christians are focused upon Christ, our high priest in whom is the only salvation and mediation between God and man, and not on the shadows like the religious leaders of old. IN Christ is all things, if you are his, then you are bound in him in his new covenant which he promises is eternal, and unailing. Your salvation is not based on your righteousness, or your ability to maintain a holy life and follow a physical law, but rather it is bound in better promises, that is the righteousness of the holy Son of God attributed to us through faith. This better promise, is the promise given to Abraham, not the promises given to Israel, the promises given to Israel were given as it were to reflect back on the promises given to Abraham, to point to the promised seed who was to come and bring salvation to God's people.

This new and better covenant established the blood of Christ, is not without its law. It is not as thought we are a lawless people, or that we are the ones who determine the law, or what is right and wrong. But rather, in the same way that Christ is superior over Abraham, and over Moses, and that his covenant is superior to the old, it is the same with the new law which is written on our hearts. It goes to the very heart of sin, not the physical act as the old law did, but to the very heart, and desire, and thoughts of the heart. And a heart which has been renewed by God will strive to please God

This is the new and better covenant, which is established on better promises foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, which we read this morning, chapter 31-31-34. "Behold, the days are coming says the Lord, when 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 lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them says the lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts and I will be there God and they shall be my people. Christ has come, he has fulfilled this promise, he has fulfilled all things and has established a new covenant and anew law and has become the high priest of our salvation. MY challenge for you to day if you have listened to this, is to be sure that you are focused upon the substance and not the shadow. My your heart and mind be upon Christ, and not the idea of gaining favor through simply living a holy life, for as the bible teaches, this is impossible, and we need something better, something more which is Christ, and it is only in him that we can be sanctified. Put your faith in this High priest, not in the law and the covenants, but in him who fulfilled them. Do not put your focus on the shadows, but rather on the substance which is Christ Jesus, the high priest and King, the author and finisher of our faith.