A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY

**DATE: 4/2; 4/9/14 Wed.**

**TEXT: Hebrews 8:1-13**

**INTRODUCTION**

We now come to **Chapter 8**

This chapter looks back at the preceding discussion on the priesthood and looks forward to some new contrasts

It begins ***– “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum”***

Two major comparisons showing the superiority of Christ have already been given –

- A Better Position in **4:14-16**

- A Better Order in **5:1-7:28**

3 more are to follow –

- A Better Covenant here in **8:1-13**

- A Better Sanctuary in **9:1-11**

- A Better Sacrifice in **9:12-10:18**

The word ***“sum”*** means *head*

It’s used only one other time in the NT

In **Acts 22:28** were it refers to a sum of money

In this context, the term refers to the Main Point or Key Feature of the Present Discussion …

Namely the Seated Christ Serving out of a Heavenly Tabernacle and Ministering the Benefits of the New Covenant

Everything the writer has said up to this point serves as a foundation for what he is about to say

As he comes to the Main Point, the writer moves from the Person of our High Priest to His Ministry

Beginning in chapter 1 the writer presented Christ as Greater than the prophets, the angels, Moses and Aaron

… in His Person

Now he begins to show Christ as Greater

… in His Ministry

Christ's Ministry is shown to be Greater because it is –

- Based on a Better Covenant (chapter 8)

- He Ministers, in a Better Sanctuary (chapter 9)

- He offered a Better Sacrifice (chapter 10)

So, as we continue our study of this Blessed Book

Let’s look at **Chapter 8** and this Thought

***“A More Excellent Ministry”***

***~~~Prayer~~~***

**I. OUR “PRIEST” – vs. 1b, 2**

***“… We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;” “A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”***

We have already looked at the first half of **v.1**

Now let’s move on to the second half

Here we see our High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary

The writer draws upon this imagery to teach us several important truths

First, we see that -

**A. He’s ‘Seated’ – v. 1b**

***“We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;”***

The word *“****set”*** means *to seat down, to sit down, to settle in*

In **1:3** we are told that After He purchased our salvation

Jesus - *“...* ***sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”***

The priests who ministered in the earthly tabernacle and the temple never sat down (No chairs in the Tabernacle)

**10:11 – *“And every priest standeth daily ministering”***

Their work as priests was continual

But Jesus' work is finished

**John 19:30 – *“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost”***

Jesus Christ fully satisfied the righteous demands of the law

And as our Great High Priest ***“is now set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”***

The word ***“Majesty”*** was a Jewish term to refer to God without invoking His name, thereby avoiding any unintentional breaking of the commandment to not misuse the name of God

Jesus sitting down at the right hand of the Father signifies the total completion and perfection of His sacrifice

The work of atonement is forever finished – Amen!

**He’s ‘Seated’**

**B. He’s ‘Serving’ – vs. 2, 3**

**v. 2 - *“A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”***

Jesus is further described as a Minister of the Sanctuary and the True Tabernacle

The word ***“sanctuary”*** speaks of a sacred place, the holiest (of all), a holy place

The ***“true tabernacle”*** is a reference to the Heavenly Tabernacle

The Earthly Tabernacle in the wilderness was a copy of the original Heavenly One

- **Hebrews 9:11 – *“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 9:24 *–“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:”***

It refers to the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Tabernacle which the Earthly Tabernacle was patterned after

**Revelation 11:19 – *“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament...”***

Jesus is described as a Minister of the Sanctuary, and of the True Tabernacle

A Minister is a Servant

The High Priest of the Levitical order was a servant

His work was to offer sacrifices on behalf of sinful men

Jesus Ministers in the sense that He still saves the lost and maintains the salvation of His people

Jesus sat down because His atoning work was finished...

**Hebrews 9:12** says – ***“by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”***

He doesn't have to keep going to the cross and offering Himself over and over

Praise God, though Jesus is sat down, He still Saves and Sustains

**v. 3 – *“For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer”***

There is a contrast made here between the Earthly High Priest and the Eternal High Priest

The very ministry of the High Priest was to offer sacrifices

It was the job of the Levitical priest to stand before God on behalf of sinful man

If the Levitical High Priest had such an important purpose,

How much more the Eternal High Priest

**OUR “PRIEST”**

**II. OUR “PATTERN” – vs. 4, 5**

***“For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:” “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount”***

In **vs. 4 & 5** the writer expands on the marvelous truth that Jesus Christ today Ministers in the Heavenly Sanctuary

The reason for this discussion is not difficult to determine

His readers knew that there was a Real Temple in Jerusalem, and that in that Temple there were priests offering gifts and sacrifices

How easy it would be to go back into the traditional Mosaic system!

After all, how did they *know* that the Lord Jesus is Ministering in the Heavenly Sanctuary?

Has anyone actually seen Him in His high priestly work?

Good questions—and there are good answers!

**A. The Genealogical Answer – v.4**

***“For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest,***

***…seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:”***

We saw this truth back in **Hebrews 7:11-14**

As *far* as His human ancestry is concerned, our Lord came from the tribe of Judah

God had promised that the Messiah would come from the kingly tribe of Judah

**Genesis 49:8-10** – Jacob blessing his sons

But the priests had to come from the tribe of Levi

Therefore, if Jesus Christ were still on earth, He could not function as a priest

But He can serve as High Priest in *heaven* because He is after the order of Melchizedek and not after the order of Aaron

Again, the argument is sound

David prophesied that Jesus Christ would be a Priest

**Psalm 110:4 – *“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”***

Jesus' earthly birth into the tribe of Judah would not permit Him to be an earthly priest;

However, He would be a Heavenly Priest

He would not be accepted in the Earthly Sanctuary,

So He must be serving in the Heavenly Sanctuary

**The Genealogical Answer**

**B. The Typological Answer – v. 5**

***“Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount”***

A *type* is an Old Testament picture of a New Testament truth

Each *type* is identified as such in the New Testament,

So we must not try to make every Old Testament person or event into a *type*

The word ***“pattern”*** here is talking about a *type*

The priests then serving in the temple were actually serving in a Sanctuary that was ***“the example”*** / copy of the Heavenly Sanctuary

The Writer is actually referencing **Exodus 25:40 –**

***“And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount”***

This refers indirectly to the Heavenly Sanctuary

Moses saw this ***“pattern”*** on the mount and was directed to duplicate it in an Earthly Tabernacle

This does not mean that the Heavenly Tabernacle is necessarily made up of skins and fabrics

It is the basic Pattern and Meaning of the Sanctuary that is emphasized here

The True Sanctuary is in Heaven; the Tabernacle and Temple were but imitations or copies of the True

This was a telling argument for reminding his readers to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and not to go back to Judaism

The earthly priesthood and sanctuary seemed quite real and stable, and yet they were but *copies* of the true!

The Old Testament system was but a Shadow

**Colossians 2:17 – *“Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ”***

The Law was but ***“a shadow of things to come”***

**Hebrews 10:1 – *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect”***

The Light of the World is Jesus

So why go back into the shadows?

In the Book of Revelation, beginning in **Chp. 4** we find ourselves in Heaven

John states that the Temple of God is in heaven

**Revelation 11:19a –** ***“And the temple of God was opened in heaven,”***

We can find many parallels to the Old Testament Tabernacle in these verses

For example –

- There is a brazen altar

**Revelation 6:9-11 …**

- As well as an altar of incense

**Revelation 8:3-5 …**

- The ***“sea of glass”*** reminds us of the laver

**Revelation 4:6 – *“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal:”***

- The seven lamps of fire suggest the seven-branched lampstand in the tabernacle

**Revelation 4:5 –** **“*and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne,”***

Since Jesus Christ is ministering in the original sanctuary, and not the copy,

He is ministering in a Better Place

Of course, there will be no Temple in Eternity, because God Himself will be the Temple

**Revelation 21:22 – *“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it”***

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!

The writer has now given us two evidences of the superiority of the New Covenant -

- It’s ministered by a Superior Priest, Jesus Christ

- It’s ministered in a Superior Place, Heaven itself

**III. OUR “PROMISE” – vs. 6-13**

***“But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” “For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:”***

The connective words ***“But now”*** form the transition from the preceding section to this one

A contrast between the present ministries of Christ and the temple priests will be given

There is also a distinction between what Christ could not have on earth with what He presently enjoys in heaven

**A. He Is the Mediator of a Better Covenant – v.6**

**v. 6a - *“But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the Mediator...”***

The word ***“mediator”*** means a *go-between*

A *mediator* is someone who stands between two parties and arbitrates to bring them together

Jesus Christ is our *mediator*

**I Timothy 2:5 – *“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”***

Jesus brings God and man together in reconciliation

**v. 6b – *“... a better covenant, which was established upon better promises”***

The ministry of Jesus is a More Excellent Ministry than that of the Levitical priests in the Old Testament …

Because, God has established Jesus' ministry on *“****better promises”***

The old system depended upon the promise of man toward God

God challenged Israel at Sinai through Moses –

**Exodus 19:5 - *“...if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people...”***

The response of Israel was clear

**Exodus 19:8 – *“All that the LORD hath spoken we will do”***

Israel had to obey if it wanted to receive the divine blessings

On the other hand, the new covenant stems from the unconditional promises of God toward His people

They would receive His blessing because of Grace

The ***“Better Promises”*** are based on *Unmerited Favor*

**B. The Old Covenant had to be Replace – v.7**

***“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second”***

The first covenant was not *“****faultless”***

This in no way insinuates that God made a mistake in giving the Law

The idea here is that the Law could not perfect man

Man could not be saved by the keeping of the Law

God never gave the Law to *Save Man*

In fact the Law was designed to *Teach Man* that he couldn't be saved by works

Instead the Law pointed man to Christ

**Galatians 3:24 – *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”***

**C. The Description of the New Covenant – vs. 8-13 …**

God found fault with the children of Israel, not with the Law itself

**v. 8a – *“For finding fault with them,”***

They disobeyed it continuously for 900 years

Their rebellion is characterized from the time of Moses

right thru to their dispersion into Babylon

Jeremiah prophesied during the final days of the Jewish kingdom

Through him, God announced that He would make a New Covenant with His people

**Jeremiah 31:31-34 …**

Those promises are repeated in their entirety in **vs. 8-13**

**1.** The New Covenant was not established in the time of Jeremiah; it was only predicted

The writer uses the phrase in ***“the days to come”***

The promise was given in a prophecy that assured the Jews of future restoration

Jeremiah ministered during the closing years of the nation's history,

Before Judah went into Babylonian Captivity

At a time when the nation's future seemed completely destroyed,

God gave the promise of restoration and blessing

**2.** The New Covenant was made with the entire nation of Israel in mind

**v. 8 – *“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:”***

After the death of Solomon, the United Kingdom was divided into the northern kingdom of 10 tribes, called Israel, and the southern kingdom of 2 tribes, named Judah

Israel was ruled by a series of family dynasties, all wicked and devoted to idolatry

Judah was reigned over by the family of David

Some of the latter kings were godly, whereas others were evil

The temple was located in Jerusalem which was a part of the southern kingdom

The 2 kingdoms existed beside each other for 200 years, often in conflict with one another

Israel was conquered by the Assyrian in 722 B.C.

Judah survived until its defeat by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

**3.** The New Covenant is different in essence from the covenant of the Law given through Moses after the Exodus

**v.9 – *“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the LORD”***

The Old Covenant was Conditional

Contingent upon the obedience of the people for the reception of divine blessing

The problem was the repeated historical fact that the Israelites ***“continued not in my covenant”***

Their sin brought the chastisement and displeasure of God – ***“I regarded them not”***

The New Covenant is based upon God's purpose to change a person's spiritual position and practice

**4.** The New Covenant will be inscribed on the Heart, not upon stone

**v. 10a - *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord;”***

God Promises to make a New Covenant w / Israel

The moral absolutes for national Israel were written upon two tables of stone, but God promised –

**v. 10b - *“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts”***

**5.** The New Covenant produces an eternal, living relationship between God and His people

He states – ***“I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people”* – v. 10c**

In this entire description, the performance of the covenant rests exclusively with God

Note the frequent usage of the intention of the first person - ***“I will”*** (5x’s)

The Old Covenant stressed what man could do for God

Whereas the New Covenant focuses on what God will do within man

**6.** The New Covenant emphasizes the divine instruction and illumination of each believer

**v.11 – *“And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying,***

***…Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest”***

**Isaiah 54:13 –** *“****And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of Thy children”***

**John 6:45 – *“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me”***

There were saved and unsaved who functioned within the framework of the Mosaic covenant

But only the saved will receive the blessings of the New Covenant

All these will know God through Jesus Christ

**7.** The New Covenant produces eternal forgiveness of sins

**v.12 – *“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”***

Under the old system, the ***“unrighteousness”*** of men brought the judgment of God upon them

The Old Covenant was a ministration of death and of condemnation

**II Cor. 3:7, 9 – *“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly***

***… behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:”***

***“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory”***

It demanded total conformity all of the time, and it required a penalty for only one violation

For all have sinned and the wages of sin is death

**Gal. 3:10 – *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”***

**James 2:10 – *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”***

Under the provision of the New Covenant, God is ***“merciful”*** toward the unjust

The word ***“merciful”*** is related to the theological word ***“propitiation”*** found in …

**I John 2:2 – *“And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”***

**I John 4:10 – *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”***

**Romans 3:25 – *“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare***

***… His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;”***

It is also the word for the ***“mercy seat”*** found in …

**Heb. 9:5 – *“And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly”***

God could be merciful toward sinners because Jesus Christ *satisfied* or *propitiated* the divine demands for the penalty of sin

**I Peter 3:18 – *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”***

He ***“suffered for sins, the just for the unjust”***

Christ Himself declared that He would establish the New Covenant in His blood

**Luke 22:20 *– “Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you”***

The result is – The Father’s satisfaction with the death of Christ for the total removal of all types of sins

God promised – ***“...their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”***

**8.** The establishment of the New Covenant caused the Mosaic Covenant to become old

**v.13 – *“In that He saith, A New Covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away”***

The time of the first system ended with the Gospel

The system continued to function within Judaism for forty years, although God was through with it

The coming destruction of the temple by Titus and the Romans in 70 A.D. is indicated by the declaration that the old system was ***“ready to vanish away”***

Since that horrific event in the history of the nation,

Israel has not reintroduced the sacrificial rites with a functioning Levitical priesthood

**CONCLUSION**

**OUR “PRIEST”**

**OUR “PATTERN”**

**OUR “PROMISE”**