

Hebrews Chapter Eight

Hebrews 7 emphasises the *superiority* of the **Person** and **Priesthood** of the Lord Jesus. Hebrews 8 speaks of the *superiority* of His **ministry** in relation to the new covenant. The chapter divides into two main sections:

- **8.1-5:** The **Minister** of the Sanctuary (Place)
- **8.6-13:** The **Mediator** of a Better Covenant (Provision).

The Minister of the Sanctuary (vv.1-5)

1 Now of the things which we ~~have spoken~~ (are speaking) this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; **2** A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The writer has been clearly and logically unfolding the truth of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus. He now comes to his 'chief point' ('sum'). This is not so much a summary of what has gone before, but rather the key statement with regard to what follows: our Great High Priest has sat down in the place of honour at God's right hand in heaven. As 'set' or 'seated' He contrasts the high priests of old whose work in relation to offering sacrifices for sins was never finished. The 'right hand' is a place of pre-eminence, privilege, status, affection, honour and authority (see Psalm 45.9). The Lord Jesus is recorded as being seated on four occasions in Hebrews. On two of these occasions He is seated on the right hand of God (1.3, 10.12). This is divine acceptance of a **finished work** (in relation to *sin*). On the other two occasions He is seated on the throne (8.1, 12.2). This is divine administration of a **continuing work** (in relation to the *saints*). What is the work He is continuing? He is a 'minister' of the 'sanctuary' or 'holies' (a reference to the heavenly holy place **and** holy of holies, called 'holy, holy', see 9.2-3) and 'true tabernacle' in heaven of which the earthly tabernacle was but a picture. The heavenly tabernacle was 'pitched' by the Lord (in contrast to 'made with hands', 9.11) and is 'true' or 'genuine', **not** in contrast to that which is *false*, but in contrast to that which is a mere *copy* or *representation*. Note. The Lord Jesus is the true **Light** (in contrast to John the Baptist, John 1.9, 5.35), the true **Bread** (in contrast to the Manna, John 6.32) and the true **Vine** (in contrast to Israel, John 15.1, Isaiah 5.2). The word 'minister' means one who 'works on behalf of others' in a public or official capacity. It is used of the service of the Levitical priests in the LXX (Nehemiah 10.39) and of Paul's service for the Lord Jesus (Romans 15.16). The Lord Jesus is serving on our behalf today (7.25).

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have (had) somewhat also to offer. **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: **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.

In a continuation of thought the readers are reminded (cf. 5.1) that every high priest offers both 'gifts' (to please God, i.e. for His pleasure) and 'sacrifices' (to propitiate God, i.e. for man's need). As the Lord Jesus functions after the *pattern* of Aaron, He must also have gifts and sacrifices to offer. The once for all (not continual) sacrifice of the Lord Jesus has already taken place at Calvary where He offered Himself to God (see 7.27, 9.14, 25, 28). Having now entered into heaven the Lord Jesus presents the abiding value of His work ('freshly slain Lamb', Revelation 5.6). There is, however, a sense in which the Lord Jesus still offers gifts. He takes our worship, praise and prayers and, having added His own sweet incense, makes them acceptable to God (Revelation 8.3-4). If the Lord Jesus had remained on earth and not passed through the heavens, 'he should not be a priest'. According to the law, the earthly sanctuary is filled with priests after the *order of Aaron*, but our Great High Priest is **not** of this order. He sprang from Judah (7.14), not Levi, and is after the *order of Melchizedek*. His ministry therefore belongs in the sanctuary of the true tabernacle in **heaven** and is thus 'more excellent' (8.6). Those earthly priests only served in the 'example' (an imitation or copy) and 'shadow' (imperfect outline or representation) of the reality in 'heaven itself' (9.24). *FW Grant: If He, the Minister of the sanctuary, were on earth, He would not even be a priest, seeing that there are priests of another order fulfilling that office as to the sanctuary on earth.*

Note. Moses was divinely 'instructed' or 'warned' to make the earthly tabernacle exactly according to the 'pattern' (a visible form made by a blow or impression) he was shown at Sinai (Exodus 25-30). *The importance of every single detail lay in the fact that each particular of the tabernacle on earth portrayed a spiritual reality of the true tabernacle in heaven.* In Exodus 25-27 (God's instructions to Moses) there are **98** verses. In Exodus 36-38 (Moses' instructions to the people) there are **98** verses. Everything was carried out according to God's commandments; after all, it was His house. Today, the local assembly is the house of God (1 Timothy 3.15). We are all responsible to build according to the divine pattern given to us in the Word of God. Moses could not make adjustments or modifications as he saw fit and neither can we (1 Corinthians 3.9-15).

The Mediator of a Better Covenant (vv.6-13)

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry (than Aaron's), ~~by how much also~~ (even as) he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. **7** For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. **8** 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 principal teaching of vv.6-13 is that the ministry of the Lord Jesus is 'more excellent' than that of the Aaronic priesthood because it is related to a 'better covenant'. This of course is synonymous with the 'new covenant' (8.8), 'second' covenant (8.7) and 'eternal covenant' (13.20). His ministry is 'more excellent' because *'it is heavenly not earthly, spiritual not temporal, reality not shadow.'* WHG Thomas. In addition, His ministry is related to the 'better covenant' of which He is the 'Mediator'. A mediator is 'one who stands between two parties' with a view to producing peace (cf. Job 9.33). As Mediator it was necessary that the Lord Jesus should possess the nature and attributes of those towards whom (God) and for whom He acts (mankind), see 1 Timothy 2.5. As **Mediator** He has established the new covenant in His own blood. As **Surety** He guarantees its eternal effectiveness. The covenant is better because it is of grace, not works, depending entirely upon God, not men. It has been once and for all legally established at Calvary through the death of the Lord Jesus (9.15-16) and contains 'better promises' (vv.10-12). The promises connected with the old covenant were largely physical and temporal (Deuteronomy 28). The better promises of the new covenant are largely spiritual and eternal in character. If the first covenant was 'free from defect' or 'faultless' then there would be no need for a second. Although the law was just and good (Romans 7.12) it was 'weak through the flesh' (Romans 8.3), not providing the means by which mankind could meet its requirements. *It was faulty inasmuch as it did not sufficiently provide against mankind's faultiness* (see vv.8-9). As noted last week, this covenant was established at Calvary but will be formally 'consummated' with the nation of Israel in the millennium. Believers today enter into the spiritual blessings it provides through our association with the Mediator Himself. Note. Second covenant (8.7), second veil (9.3), second sanctuary (9.7), second coming (9.28) and second sacrifice (10.9). Why so many second things? *1 Corinthians 15.47: The first man is of the earth, earthy: the **second** man is the Lord from heaven. The things of the first man have passed away. The things of the Second Man are eternal!*

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. **10** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: **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. **12** For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

The **new** covenant is **not** like the old. Under the old covenant, Israel was like little **children**, being taken by the hand and taught object lessons through the shadows of the law. They needed this initial, temporary training to guard and guide until Christ and the establishment of the new covenant. Believers today are **adult** sons (Galatians 3.24-26). There are **seven** blessings under this covenant which fall into **four** categories:

- **Regeneration** (v.10). An *internal* transformation whereby God's will is written into **mind** and **heart**. The law was *external* tables written in stone and placed into the **hand**. This is a new people created from the inside, out. The Spirit of God illuminates our understanding of the Word of God (mind) and creates a genuine desire within to please Him (heart). See Ezekiel 11.19-20, 36.26-27. What evidence is there in our lives that God has written his word on our hearts? What effect does it have? How far has it directed the details of our daily walk?
- **Relationship** (v.10). God is not ashamed to be called our God (11.16, cf. 2.11). We are His people and should ever live to His praise and glory. See John 20.17, 2 Corinthians 6.16, Revelation 21.3. This brings **dignity** but also **great duty** (1 Peter 2.9-3.15).
- **Revelation** (v.11). Under the old covenant there was general ignorance of God (Isaiah 1.3, Jeremiah 4.22) and any knowledge they had was progressive and obtained through learning (*ginosko*). Under the new covenant all shall be taught of God (John 6.45) and know Him instinctively and comprehensively (*oida*). Even the youngest infant in the family of God knows the Father (1 John 2.13). Do we rely on others to teach us of God, or are we seeking to be taught of Him? We have divine provision for an intimate knowledge of Him (1 John 2.20).
- **Remission** (v.12). The preceding blessings are based upon the fact that our sins are forgiven! God has been 'merciful' or 'propitious', withholding the judgment we deserve on the ground of **the** sacrifice. Under the old covenant, sins were brought to mind every year through the repeated sacrifices of the Day of Atonement (10.3). Now God deliberately chooses to 'never never' (double negative) remember our sins again.

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.

In saying 'new' (Jeremiah 31.31), God had permanently 'antiquated' the first covenant. It is 'old' in point of use, 'worn out' and 'outdated'. As such, it was about to 'disappear out of sight' or be 'snatched away' (AD70).