

## Hebrews Chapter 8

### A Minister in the True Tent

**Hebrews 8:1-2**, *Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.*

The here offers a summary of the preceding arguments regarding Jesus' High Priesthood and also introduces some new topics to speak about. He wants to show the superiority of Jesus' "ministry".

- **Now the point** – summary. It is the word "*Kephalaion*", a term used for the main argument or fundamental question of a law case.
- **...we have** – possess. It is a favourite expression of the author. It points to a possession that the community has as a free gift and indicates the author's pastoral concern to rebuild the community's shattered world. For they now they can not see this and are doubting their confession.
- **...such** – of such a kind. They have a high priest of such a kind as this. The author wants to highlight just what kind of high priest they have! **First** the author points to the exalted status of their high priest. **Second** the author points to the ministry of their high priest.
- **...seated at the right hand** – is an idiom. To seat at the right hand of someone as an expression of assigning special importance or high status to such an individual. This is in the "aorist tense", it has happened.
  - **Seated** – Priest's never sat down, they had to perform all their work standing up. For a priest this shows his work is finished completed!
  - **The right hand** speaks of a position of extreme authority, dignity privilege, and honour.
    - The one who sat at the right hand of a ruler is the one who represents the ruler, acts in the name of the ruler, and possesses all the power and authority of the ruler.
- **...of the throne of the Majesty** – shows who he is sitting next to, revealing his special importance and high status.
  - **Majesty in heaven** stresses God in all of his greatness. It can be translated "the one who is truly great/wonderful".
    - The royal/exalted status of Jesus is in view. All of the might and majesty of God is exercised by Jesus Christ. This speaks of all His sovereign authority as the reigning Lord.
- **...a minister** – servant. A person who renders a special service. In the LXX this term as well as the related term "ministry" were used to speak of priestly service in the temple. "To minister" seems describes the activity in the sanctuary (Exod 28:35; 29:30).
  - Thus the fact that "we have... a minister" initiates the comparison between the work of Christ and "Every high priest" who stood "ministering" in the earthly tabernacle.
- **...in the holy places** – holy. Some choose to translate it "holy places" or "sanctuary" but it can also be translated "God's people". The focus is not on a particular state of holiness but of the special relationship with God.
  - Thus the high priest who is exalted with all rule and power also is the high priest who serves God's people.
    - Jesus serves? Kings don't serve they are served. Serving is an expression of his own eternal nature. God as servant is an expression of his own divine love. Putting himself as it were in the vulnerable position all the while maintaining his royal dignity. Who goes after Adam and Eve? Who comes to us in human flesh? It is his nature to serve, that is in the NT the terms servant is a statement of dignity.
      - The ascended Christ serves you. It is true. Jesus Christ serves you in all of his royal dignity. Chapter 7 tells us that Jesus is able to save completely those who come to God through Him because He always lives to intercede for them. ==> no lapses, always interceding on your behalf. Jesus lives to serve you.
- **...in the true tent** – true speaks of "genuine/authentic". Tent goes back to the tabernacle that was built in the wilderness. In keeping with the wilderness imagery (3:1-4:13; 12:18-24), the exposition consistently places the work of Christ in the tabernacle (8:5; 9:11; 13:10) rather than the temple. What makes it different from the one in the wilderness? This tent was **set up** by the Lord, not man. He anticipates his claim in 9:11, 24 that Christ entered a sanctuary "not made with hands".
  - The author is introducing a contrast between the ministry of the earthly and heavenly tabernacle which he will develop in chapter 9.
  - Notice that the work of Christ as the High Priest is placed within the heavenly tabernacle. The author has linked Jesus' exaltation and his priestly status already, and now he is showing the greatness of his priestly ministry in the heavens.

- Thus the author in **vs1-2** has accurately summarises the preceding argument, recalling the claim, based on Ps110:1, that the exalted Christ is at God's right hand (1:3, 13; cf. 12:2) and has “passed through the heavens” (4:14) after experiencing the trials that the community now faces (4:15; 5:1-10). But in speaking about his *heavenly ministry in the heavenly tent*, the author has introduced topics which he will explain in the coming chapters.
- The exaltation of Jesus has set him apart from the other high priests.
  - **(1)** That unlike any other priest, His sacrifice completed the work of offering sacrifices, shown by His position “seated”.
  - **(2)** That He unlike any other priest, He has a royal dignity, shown by His place “at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven”.
  - **(3)** That unlike any other priest, the place where He serves is “in the (true) sanctuary”.

### A Copy of the Heavenly Tent (8:3-5)

**Hebrews 8:3**, *For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.*

The author here shows the necessity of Jesus presenting something in heaven/the real tabernacle. The job of a High Priest is to present something, so Jesus as a High Priest must also present something. In saying this he is getting ready to show that Jesus presented his own blood, or resurrected life to God. But he is also highlighting for us the difference between Jesus' offering and that of the Levitical priests.

- **For** - indeed! Marking emphases.
  - **Appointed** – passive, the High Priest is appointed by God (Chapter 5).
  - **to** – in order to offer, the purpose, intent of being appointed is to offer something.
  - **Offer** – present, often involving actual physical transport of the object in question. Here the verb tense is “present” meaning an “ongoing action”.
  - **Gifts and sacrifices** – “both gifts and sacrifices”. Could be referring to all gifts and sacrifices under the Old Covenant. Here the nouns are in the “plural” form. Many gifts and sacrifices.
    - Thus, the OT high priests were appointed by God for the purpose of continually offering both many gifts and many sacrifices. ==> It is the continual, unending nature of their work that is being stressed here.
  - **Thus** – that is why, because of the unending nature of the Levitical priests ministry *it is necessary...*
  - **Necessary** – necessary/indispensable. Jesus has been appointed by God a high priest, God appoints for the purpose of offering both gifts and sacrifices, therefore it is indispensable that Jesus must also have something to offer.
  - **Something** – something. The noun is singular.
  - **To offer** - sounds identical to “appointed to offer” but is different. It is the same verb “meaning to present/offer, often involving actual physical transportation of what is being presented. But here the Greek tense is in the “aorist” which indicates a snapshot action, a once and for all event.
    - Because Jesus has been appointed a High Priest by God, and because of the unending nature of the Levitical priests ministry, it is necessary that Jesus must have a thing to offer!
      - We have 2 things here. A necessity based on Job description. High Priest were appointed to offer/present, Jesus must also then offer/present something.
      - A comparison between Levitical offerings and Jesus' offering. Their work was unending, continual with many gifts. Jesus work is once with one thing.
        - Jesus in His one presentation, ended the need for continual presenting of both gifts and sacrifices, and *sat down*. Unlike any other priest, His presentation completed the work of offering sacrifices, shown by His position “seated”.
        - Now, what does this mean? What did Jesus offer in the heavenly tabernacle in his exaltation? What did he physically take with him and present before God? ==> His body, His blood, His life.
          - Jesus is the eternal sacrifice. His sacrifice lasts, His blood, His life is forever. He ended the need for any other offering by resurrecting from the dead and sitting at God's right hand.
1. That He unlike any other priest, He has a royal dignity, shown by His place “at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven”.
    - **Majesty in heaven** stresses God in all of his greatness,
    - **The right hand** speaks of a position of extreme authority, dignity privilege, and honour.
      - The one who sat at the right hand of a ruler is the one who represents the ruler, acts in the name of the ruler, and possesses all the power and authority of the ruler.
        - The royal status of Jesus is in view. All of the might and majesty of God is exercised by Jesus

Christ. This speaks of all His sovereign authority as the reigning Lord. Why is his royal dignity important? Vs4 shows us.

**Hebrews 8:4**, *Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.*

- **On earth... would not be a priest.**

- Jesus never claimed the right to minister in the temple. ==> Wrong tribe. If He did not rise from the dead, being crowned with glory seated at the right hand of the father, becoming the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, we would not be forgiven, we would not have any one to intercede for us, we would be dead...
  - *Because of his royal dignity (rose from the dead), He is able to serve you in the heavenly holy of holies forever.* No other priest could do this. ==> chapter 7, thus He is able to save completely all those who draw near to God through Him.
    - The author is emphasising that unlike any other priest, the place where He serves is “in the (true) sanctuary”
      - The writer wants us to understand that Jesus serves us in the authentic holy of holies, not the man made one. Why does this matter? Vs5

**Hebrews 8:5**, *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."*

- **They** = Levitical priest.
- **Copy and shadow** = things that reflect something that is real.
- **For** – just as. The author is giving Moses as an example and explanation. His work was based on what God showed him.
  - The tabernacle's value was in the fact that it reflected the heavenly. Moses could not come up with his own tabernacle, it had to be like the heavenly, God set out the details specifically. This is why he was warned to make it according to the pattern shown to him.
    - The amazing thing is that the tabernacle was to be a shadowing of the real thing, and now we see that Jesus has not come to serve us in the replica but in the original.
      - Jesus is in heaven, the real holy of holies and that is why His ministry is superior to all of the priests that had come before Him.
        - For listeners who worship in house churches and see only threatening forces around them, this vision of Christ ministering in the heavenly sanctuary points to realities beyond what they can see, indicating that they may now place their trust in someone who is above this creation. Christians have not placed their confidence in something in the material world but in the ministry that is abiding and unshakable. This is the anchor of the soul for the community..

### **Mediator of a Better Covenant (8:6)**

Verse 6 concludes His point while introducing the New Covenant.

**Hebrews 8:6**, *But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.*

Jesus ministry is different because it takes place in the true tabernacle in heaven. The extent of the difference is emphasised by the words “better”. The New Covenant is better since it has been established on better promises. Therefore Jesus as a Mediator has a different ministry, a better one.

- The greatness of the covenant shows the greatness of Jesus ministry. **Enacted = given as law.** The promises are the basis of the covenant, they have established the new covenant. They show the greatness of the covenant over the old.
- The author shows the close relationship between the “ministry”, the “covenant” and the “promise”, three of the major themes of the homily, all of which are introduced by the comparative “more excellent” or “better”.
  - Throughout the homily the author defines Christian existence as faithfully waiting on the promise (4:1; 6:12-17; 10:36; 11:9, 13, 17, 33). The Christ event is God's oath and promise (6:16-20); the establishment of the covenant (9:15-22) guarantees the ultimate fulfillment of the promise. Thus the author demonstrates in 8:1-10:18 that the community which continues to endure hardship, has received the guarantee that the promises will ultimately be fulfilled. The “more excellent ministry”, as the author indicates in 9:1-14, is a present reality that guarantees the future.
    - Vs10-12 show us how the New Covenant is better than the old by its promises. But first we have the question, how do we know the old was bad, and a new one was needed? ==> vs7.

**Hebrews 8:7**, *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.* He is getting ready to show them the fault of the Old Covenant.

- **Faultless** – blameless/faultless.
- Using the familiar argument that the later passage cancels the earlier one (4:8; 7:11), the author concludes, **for if that first (covenant) were faultless, there would have been no occasion to seek a second one.** A similar argument appears the conclusion of this section in 10:1-10 **“he takes away the first in order to establish the second”**. That is, just as the announcement of a high priest after the order of Melchizedek indicates the imperfection of the levitical high priesthood (7:11-19), the announcement of a new covenant implies that the first covenant was not faultless. Using the language “first” and “Second” without using the word covenant shows not only a contrast and superiority of the new, but that the first has been replaced.

**Hebrews 8:8-9**, *For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.*

- God gave this promise in Jeremiah 31:31-34,
  - Israel had been divided into 2 nations. Israel had been taken into captivity, Judah was soon to be taken. Dark days ==> this is when God had spoken this promise. What was wrong?
  - This situation shows us what was wrong. The people were disobedient.
    - Quite simply the problem was it was a gift with no batteries. It did not give the power to obey it.
      - Here the author shows us what the new covenant will not be like. It will not be like the Old Covenant. Because God found fault with it. How do we know God found blame with the Old Covenant? Because he blames the people when he says He will give them a new one. Why did God blame them? Because they did not persist in His covenant. (**persist = continue in it**). In other the words, the fault was not with God or with His promises, but with them. They wouldn't stay in the covenant. The result was that God disregarded them. (**disregard = not to pay attention to**). With this language we are reminded of the wilderness Generation and the curse, as well as the exile from the promised land.

In verses 10-12, the author shows us 4 promises that define the new covenant.

(1) Promise of a new heart vs10. (empowered) (2) Promise of exclusive relationship vs10. (3) Promise of personal intimacy vs11, (4) Promise of thorough going forgiveness vs12.

**Hebrews 8:10-12**, *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."*

- **“I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts”**
  - Some feel that “law” is being used in the broad sense of God’s Word and is referring to the Gospel itself. “I will put my Gospel into their hearts,” is what they feel God is saying. God will bring people to faith in Jesus. He will change their hearts.
  - Others feel that “law” is referring to God’s immutable will, the moral law. “I will bring people to faith and change them inwardly so that they will gladly subject themselves to My Law. My Law will become a part of them,” is what they feel God is saying.
    - In either case the new covenant promise will do what the old covenant demands could not – give man a new heart and move him to want to obey God’s Law.
      - The old covenant demanded perfection and gave no batteries, the new promises a new heart and gives it.
- **“I will be their God, and they shall be my people”**
  - God will be theirs. Every blessing that God has is given to them. He becomes their provider, redeemer, loving Father, close brother, comforter, their power, their wisdom, their redeemer... All of the blessings that come from Him are theirs.
  - They shall be His. The people become God's own, His chosen ones, His inheritance, His beloved, His apple of His eye.

- **“They shall all know me”**
  - To know the Lord is to have saving faith. “This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).
  - Know the Lord, not book reading knowledge, but “Adam knew his wife and she conceived”... it is the knowledge of personal intimacy. Everyone who is in this covenant is brought into a personal intimacy with God.
    - How? Through Christ. He is the perfect revelation of God the Father. To see Him, to trust in Him, to follow Him, is to know the Lord.
- **“I will remember their sins no more”**
  - This promise is really the basis for the others. Forgiveness of sins is the promise of the New Covenant. (Luke 22:20).
    - Because of Jesus' death God will never call to attention our sins, never again.

**Hebrews 8:13**, *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

- Conclusion. Now that the new has come, the old is obsolete. You don't need the shadow when the person is next to you. It is ready to vanish away. Look to the new, trust in Christ.