

I. Review

- A. In our last session we continued upon the theme of Jesus being made the high priest in the order of Melchizedek, of the new covenant, by the eternal oath of the Father. The author has explained to us the reason God intended to annul and change the old covenant was because of its “weakness” or inability to transform the heart.
 - 1. This weakness was in part based upon the vast imperfections of the priests of the old covenant. They lacked the ability to effectively minister to the fallen heart, they lacked the character necessary for perfect compassion, and they were hindered in continuing forever by death.
- B. In contrast, the author shows how Jesus was made the high priest of the new covenant by the Father’s oath, based upon his surpassing perfection in perfect and eternal ability, character, and compassion. In this light, the author tells us that He is the high priest who is “fitting for us” or necessary in order to truly save.
- C. The author then begins to list the various other qualifications or qualities of Jesus that prove His surpassing perfection as our high priest.
 - 1. Holy - Without fault in His actions and plans.
 - 2. Harmless - Without guile or fraud.
 - 3. undefiled - Incorruptible.
 - 4. Separate from Sinners - Fully human yet without sin nature.
 - 5. Become Higher than the Heavens - Full acceptance and validation of His substitutionary death and resurrection.
 - 6. Offered Himself - Highest and holiest possible sacrifice.
 - 7. Once for all - His sacrifice only had to be offered once for all time.

II. Verse-by-Verse

- A. The original language of verse 1 in chapter eight strongly suggests a pinnacle point, not a summary point. Through chapter seven we were ascending the mountain of the beauty of Jesus in His identity as eternal high priest. Here in chapter eight, we have reached the summit.

“Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this” American Standard Version

B. The transition we have made, as we will discover in a moment, is that we have moved from the surpassing perfection of Jesus as high priest in His qualifications to the actual authority and position in which He serves. Unless those qualifications are given authority in which to function, He will remain ineffective.

1. Seated - There are two realities in view concerning the fact that our great high priest is seated in heaven. The first reality is the full authority that Jesus has; to be seated at the right hand of God in Jewish thought is to be equal to God. As high priest, Jesus carries the full authority of the Godhead over all creation. The second reality of the fact that our High Priest is seated speaks of the completeness of His work and sacrifice. In all the furnishings of the earthly copies God instructed man to build, there are no seats for the Levitical priests as their work is never done. (Ps. 110:1; Mt. 26:63-68; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3)
2. True Tabernacle that God built - The original and the shadow - There is undeniable biblical evidence that a real structure exists in the heavens that was built (not created) by God himself. The evidence suggests that God built this structure on the earth from earthly materials. At some point, the city of God and His dwelling place was separated from the earth and ascended above the earth. It is called His dwelling place, the heavenly tabernacle, the throne room, etc. It is one of the many structures in the city of God but is the pinnacle structure and the home or place that God has chosen to reside. In the age to come the city of God will descend back to the earth and be joined with it again forever. (Rev. 21:1-3)
 - a. The City - Biblically, “heaven” is a great city in which every structure was built by God himself. It is laid out on a mountain (the heavenly mount Zion) which is roughly 1500 miles (Denver to New York) long, wide, and high. This city is what Abraham was looking for, and the place of the believers true citizenship which we are to ache for. (Jn 14:2; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 11:9-10, 12:22, 28, 13:14; Rev. 21:1-27)
 - b. The Temple - At the summit of His mountain city, He built a temple in which He dwells. We do have a few glimpses and suggestions of its layout and design in the scriptures. These mostly are found in the blueprints that Moses and Ezekiel were given concerning the building of earthly temples which were replicas of the original. (Ex 25:8-9; Eze. 40-43; Rev. 4-5)

In Heb. 8:1-5 the primitive Christian confession of Jesus as seated at God's right hand (Ps. 110) is reinterpreted in the light of the theme of heavenly sanctuary and liturgy. The development of this theme, which dominates the argument from 8:1-9:28, is clearly the central and most distinctive aspect of the writer's theology of the saving work of Christ. - D. Pentecost

3. Priests offer sacrifices - The writer makes the point that the priests according to the law were commanded to offer sacrifices in the earthly temple as a copy of the true temple and priesthood in God's temple. Though the writer does not go into the sacrifice Jesus offered in detail at this juncture, the point is clearly the superiority and precedence of the heavenly priesthood over and above the earthly.
4. If He were on earth, He would not be a priest - The writer once again points out that Jesus is not, and legally cannot be, a priest and mediator of Torah or Law because He is not of the tribe of Levi. Those Hebrews who desire to be under the authority of the earthly Levitical priesthood have disqualified themselves from the heavenly priesthood and work of Jesus in the order of Melchizedek.
5. The Mosaic tabernacle and priesthood serves as a shadow - The writer declares that the tabernacle and priesthood of the Mosaic covenant are a shadow of the true tabernacle and priesthood. The point is that a shadow serves the original, comes after the original, and points to it. Therefore, the shadow is inferior in every way to the original. The shadow is not to be ignored or dismissed by any means, but rather, held in right perspective and honor in light of the original.
6. But now, He has obtained a more excellent ministry - His more excellent or superior ministry is such because it is a superior or better covenant built on better or superior promises. It is important to understand that this better covenant, and His high priestly position in it, was promised and understood by Him before the old covenant, but not instituted until His ascension; thus, the writer says, "But now".
 1. Shadows in the Feast of Passover and Firstfruits - The Passover lamb was killed at 3 P.M. in the afternoon on the Thursday before Passover, which started at sundown. This is the same time Jesus gave up His Spirit and died.

2. At sundown on Thursday, Passover started and they ate the Passover lamb supper together and could do no work from Thursday evening until Friday evening. From Friday evening until Saturday sundown marked a normal Passover for the Jewish people, when no work was to be done.
3. On Sunday morning the Feast of First Fruits would begin as the priests would meet a great number of people (thousands) outside of the city of Jerusalem and make their way to the temple with great rejoicing, music, and dance. The priests would then take the loaves they had made, along with the offerings of the surrounding fields, and present them to the Lord.
4. Our resurrected Lord, in the same moment, ascended to the Father and presented Himself as the First Fruits and great high priest of the new covenant, unto the global harvest from the earth. He, as the high priest, lifted himself up (heaved) and presented himself (waved) in the heavenly temple to the Father, thus fulfilling the Feast of First Fruits as the representative sheaf of the entire harvest of people from the earth. (Jn 20:15-18)