

Hebrews 8:1-13

“A More Excellent Ministry”

As we enter in to Ch 8 we're still following along and falling back into the flow of the exaltation of Christ as our Great High Priest over any earthly/priestly order, specifically over the order of the High Priesthood of Aaron through the Levitical Law. and By simply targeting (that is) comparing and contrasting the High Priesthood of Christ with the High Priesthood of Aaron the author single-handedly overshadows and overpowers any argument regarding any other earthly order of priesthood. Because the priesthood according to the order of Aaron is the one that God Himself ordained to be the means by which man would relate to Him from the time of the giving of the Law until the time the Messiah would complete His work of redemption. and What I mean by that is that there has been no higher order of priesthood on this earth outside the order of Aaron's. with the exception of 1, and what order was that? The order according to *Melchizedek* which predates the law (historically speaking) by over 400 yrs and *that* is the order under which Christ officiates as the High Priest and Overseer of our souls.

So the author here has been systematically exploiting the weaknesses and the unprofitableness of the old covenant and the priesthood under which it functioned, why? That the reader might be encouraged to plant themselves firmly and immovably in *Christ*. That they not turn away *from* Christ, but rather that they would continue to press on *in* Christ. Because he's writing to a group of believers who are weary, they're worn down; they're catching a lot of heat because they're following Christ. and Yet there doesn't seem to be any tangible substance to it, there's no "rules" no rituals, no earthly order of priestly service to report *to* or be served *by*. Meanwhile everyday there in the city of Jerusalem they're seeing people going through the motions, they're seeing and smelling the sacrifices as they're being burnt on the altar, and they know that life would be a whole lot easier if they'd just go back to that.

Now, today we don't struggle with what's going on in Jerusalem (there are no sacrifices going on in Jerusalem) we don't wrestle with the Levitical law and the priestly order therein. But there arises occasionally nonetheless the temptation to just give up, to give in and retreat to our former lives because it would just be a whole lot easier and we wouldn't catch near the heat. and It does our heart good to be reminded of who we have in Christ, what He's done *for* us, who He is *to* us, and it spurs us on, gives us proper perspective and encourages us to go the distance, regardless of the cost. We're reminded of the reality that served as an anchor for the apostle Paul when he said, "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" Rom 8:18 So regardless of how small your stress, or how great your pain, it's all going to pale in comparison to the glory that God will reveal *in you* on that day. There's never a sufficient reason to turn away from Christ, no amount of temporary suffering can compare with the eternal weight of glory that God has in store for you. The bible tells us that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him.

Paul told the Corinthians, “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” 2 Cor 4:17-18

Well, as we enter into Ch 8, the writer brings up at least 5 additional points to show *to us* and share *with us* the *more excellent ministry* of Christ.

If you're a note taker you might just want to write them down, “THE MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY OF CHRIST”, #1 HE'S A SUPERIOR HIGH PRIEST, #2 HE MINISTERS IN A SUPERIOR SANCTUARY, #3 HE OFFERED A SUPERIOR SACRIFICE, #4 HE'S THE MEDIATOR OF A SUPERIOR COVENANT, and #5 HIS WORKS REST ON SUPERIOR PROMISES.

Vs1-2

Now I don't know about you but when I run across words like, “This is the main point,” my ears perk up. It's as though he's saying, “I've been saying a lot, I've been seeking to show you a lot, but this is why, here's what I want you to catch and be confident of, *we have such a High Priest.*” Now in order to catch the context of that statement you have to take back into account all that we've soaked in and soaked up from Ch 7. As he was demonstrating the magnitude of the ministry of Melchizedek and showing us how Christ serves according to *that* order, not Aarons weak and unprofitable order.

Way back in Vs 4 he began to speak and say, “Now consider how great this man was...” and He took the time to show us how that God had never intended the Levitical order to be the be all end all of priestly service. Because perfection could never come through the law, but rather God had ordained another order according to the power of an endless life, eternal in nature (as opposed to the temporary life of the high priesthood under the order of Aaron). God had appointed a priestly order that *could* grant us positional perfection and (ultimately) practical perfection when we're not only saved from sins penalty, or sins power, but from sins presence when we see Him for then we'll be like Him. The Levitical Priesthood inherited their position not through moral or spiritual purity but on the basis of physical lineage and verifiable ancestry. Jesus has been “sworn into office” as our Great High Priest by God Himself, He's the surety, the guarantee of a better covenant. The law could never bring life, it could only bring death, Jesus came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly. and Because He lives forever, He intercedes for us eternally which means we're saved eternally, He'll never *not* be there for us; He's always in the gap on behalf of us. He's able to save *to the uttermost* (always and forever) those who come to God through Him. The law could never save anybody.

Vs 26 of Ch 7 says, “Such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy (meaning completely pure), harmless (or free from deceit or self seeking motives), undefiled, separate from sinners (oh He was the friend of sinners, yet never led a life tainted *by* sin, He led His life set apart to God the Father completely, in totality) and has become exalted higher than the heavens.” and Since He had no sin He didn’t need to offer up a sin offering for Himself like the high priest of the Levitical order before he offered up a sacrifice for the sins of the people, because the law appoints as high priests men who have weaknesses, but the word of the oath (God swore into office) the Son who has been *perfected forever*. Now Vs 1 of Ch 8 “We have such a High Priest.”

“Able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.” A High Priest who is holy and exalted higher than the heavens, One who has “signed His name on the line” on your behalf and my behalf who has Himself guaranteed and delivered the purchase price of our salvation. and Not with corruptible things such as silver or gold, but with His own precious blood as of a Lamb with out spot and with out blemish. One who has no weaknesses but rather has been perfected forever...Listen, this *your Jesus*, the High Priest and Overseer of your soul, of my soul.

I want you to notice that this High Priest that we have is “seated” at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Why do we point out that He is “seated”?

Because as we’ve pointed out before of all the furniture that you might find in the tabernacle, or in the temple, one thing you’d *never* find is a seat. Why? Because the work of the priest was never done, he might sacrifice 100 sin offerings in the course of a single day, his hands would look like prunes from all the washing he’d done. But then as the sun came up the next day and he began to set his day in order the work would continue, more sacrifices, and more sacrifices, because the blood of bulls and goats was insufficient to take away sin. It only made for a sin *covering*, it never made for a sin *cleansing*. But when Jesus offered up Himself *once for all*, He cried out, “It is finished.” He doesn’t need to offer Himself again and again, He did more than temporarily cover your sin, He *took away* your sin completely, there’s no more work to be done, it’s finished. Therefore He is *seated* at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. How much of your sin do you suppose Jesus atoned for? 72%? 85%, maybe 99.99%? No, He atoned for 100% of your sin, so listen believer when something is going wrong, going bad in your life and you begin to think, “God must be making me pay for such and such a sin” hey, perish the thought, Jesus already did that He atoned for it, He *paid* for it, 100% of it. God doesn’t need you to pay for it, you *couldn’t* pay for it; Jesus did. Oh, you sow and you reap that much is for sure, there are ramifications to choices we make, but don’t be deceived the penalty for your sin was paid for through the blood of Jesus Christ and It was paid *in full*, therefore He’s *seated* at the right hand, (that place of power and authority) of God, in the very Holy of Holies of Heaven.

He's at rest, now we spoke last week of the fact that one can't offer what one doesn't have. The priesthood under the law could never offer endless life (they didn't have endless life) they could offer rest (they didn't even have a seat in the sanctuary) Jesus offers both, endless life (eternal life) and rest for your soul. He said, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Matt 11:28

"He's a Minister (Vs 2) of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected and not man." We'll visit this idea again in Vs 5 but suffice it for now to say that the tabernacle in the wilderness that Moses had built wasn't the original, it was a copy. and Who wants a copy of anything when they can have the original? I mean as ornate and incredible as a copy can be, or a miniature scaled model can look, it's nothing compared to the real thing. If I had a picture of a painting perhaps by Leonardo Da Vinci and I offered it to you, you might look at it and think, "Man this is pretty cool, sure I'll take it." But then if I said, "Well, I have the original back in my office if you'd rather have that..." What fool is going to say, "Nah, the picture's good enough." You'd completely abandon the copy if you could apprehend the original, and that's the point he's seeking to communicate here, "You're saying, ah the copy is good enough" when you have the original right there in your grip. Your High Priest is the One who serves in the *true* tabernacle, not the copy on earth, He serves in the tabernacle that He erected in Heaven, not the one made on the earth.

Vs3

Now he's working his way around to the cross here. He's been talking about the Lord, the superiority of His priesthood, the superiority of His sanctuary, but what about His sacrifice? Because it's imperative that every high priest offer a sacrifice for sins. The priesthood wasn't a real glorious calling on a practical level, the work of the priesthood was all about blood, and we just talked about this back in Vs 1. Their work was never finished, they were constantly, continually offering up sacrifices for sin, shedding the blood of bulls and goats that a covering (however temporary it might be) could be made for the sins of the people.

If Jesus is going to serve as our High Priest it's essential that He offer a sacrifice as well. But since Jesus officiates as a superior High Priest under a superior order, in a superior sanctuary it stands to reason that He should offer a superior sacrifice. and He did; Himself.

Perhaps you remember the 1st day that Jesus and J.B. met. Oh not the *very* 1st day they were around each other because that was in the womb of Elizabeth (J.B.s' mom) and the womb of Mary (Jesus' mom) and you recall that when Mary and Elizabeth met one another that J.B. leapt in the womb of Elizabeth. But lets fast-forward about 30 yrs or so from that point and there was John, and he was out there teaching and preaching, making straight the way of the Lord, preparing His path before Him, the voice of one crying in the wilderness. and There were the multitudes all gathered around him and as he was exhorting them unto repentance here comes Jesus making His way through the crowd. Do you remember what John said when he saw Jesus? He said, "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" John 1:29

Now I have a question for you, how *did* lambs deal with the sin situation? How did a lamb take away sin? Was it by having their wool shorn (or shaved)? Was it through some sort of trained, or technical process? No, it was through sacrifice, through dying a bloody death. If you're anything like me we often read those words uttered by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of J.B. and we sorta see them as *poetic*. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" It just sounds...spiritual...poetic...profound, there's almost a rhythm to those words. They have a nice ring to them. and Because of that we can completely lose the reality of what's being said and the weight with which those words must have crashed down upon that crowd that day. Because what he was saying was, "Ladies and gentlemen here stands the Man who is going to die a bloody and brutal death in order to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind." I mean, not a real glamorous way to be enlisted into the ministry, but that's what he was saying, and that's what Jesus would do. He offered Himself (a superior sacrifice, for your sin, and for my sin. Paul told the Eph, "*And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*" Eph 5:2

Vs4-5

Now Vs 4 lets us know that this letter was written before 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed because he tells us that Christ didn't qualify to serve as a priest under the law (which we've already discussed a couple different times) but he says that there are priests who offer sacrifices according to the law. That means they were busy about that as he wrote this letter. But the key that he wants us to grab hold of regarding it is found in Vs 5 where he says that they (that is the priests under the law) are serving the *copy* and the *shadow* of the heavenly things. The idea again (referring back to Vs 2) that Jesus serves in the *true* tabernacle, a superior sanctuary whereby He administered the blood of His superior sacrifice upon the altar satisfying the payment demanded by our sin.

But this goes back to the idea of the ludicrous nature of wanting a copy over the original. God was very clear with Moses that He had a plan, He had an agenda that Moses was to walk in and there wasn't to be *any* deviation from that, God gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle. and Of course you find that in Ex 25 and everything in it, and everything about it was fashioned after the true tabernacle, the heavenly temple and it all spoke *of* and pointed *to* Jesus Christ and It was comprised of 2 compartments, the holy place, and the most holy place, (or the holy of holies.) and There were 3 articles of furniture in the holy place, and they were the golden lampstand (of course the gold speaking of deity) but it pointed to Christ as the light of the world, the lamp unto our feet, the light unto our path. Then there was the table of showbread which pointed to Christ as the bread of life. and Finally there was the altar of incense which spoke of Christ as our intercessor (incense pointing to prayer in the scriptures).

When you went beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies you would find the ark of the covenant, and in the ark was the table of the law (10 commandments) of course in Christ the law was fulfilled. You would find a jar of manna (again pointing to the nurturing body of Christ, the bread of life) and Aaron's rod that budded, which spoke of the resurrection (out of death came life). Upon the ark was a lid fashioned for it known as the "Mercy seat" and it was from that point, from that place that God said He would meet with the people, from above the Mercy seat and we know that we meet up with God at our mercy seat, Jesus Christ He is where we meet and have fellowship with God.

It was all a foreshadowing, pointing to a fulfillment to be found in Christ. Everything, in the volume of the book it is written of "Me" (Christ). Time forbids us but trust me when I tell you that all of it, the tabernacle, the sacrificial system, the various offerings that were made, the Sabbath rest, the feast days, they all spoke of and were fulfilled *in* Christ. Remember Paul told the Colossians, "*So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*" Col 2:16-17 What is a shadow? It's nothing other than a testimony that substance is coming, right? So, the entire gist that revolved around the tabernacle, the design of it, what was in it, what took place around it was like a foreshadow that was testifying of substance to follow, and Christ was the substance. Now, If Christ is the substance why cling to the foreshadow? Why try to relate to God on the basis of "do" and "don't" rather than "Believe and receive"? Why settle for the lesser when you could have the greater, why go for that which only finds fault when you can have that which will find you faultless?

Vs6

I'm certain you know what we're looking to point out here. Christ has obtained #1 A more excellent ministry, #2 He's the Mediator (the go between) of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. Everything about Christ is more excellent, it's better, it's better. and Everything in this letter has been building to this point, Christ is greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than Joshua, greater than the Levitical Priests, He has obtained a more excellent ministry. There's no earthly priest that could take away sins, Jesus did, He has a more excellent ministry. Now the law was glorious, we've discussed that in the past, however the letter kills, the Spirit gives life. and If that which was passing away (the law) was glorious, how much more that which remains, is eternal, how much more the new covenant. Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant. A covenant of grace, not works, a covenant of believing and receiving, not earning and deserving, a covenant of life, not death, a covenant frees us from sin, rather than simply finding the fault of our sin. and It was established on better promises, promises of a loving relationship rather than a legal relationship, promises of an internal work of the Spirit rather than an external regimen of the law, promises of putting away our sin rather than pin pointing every one of our sins, promises of victory in the Spirit rather than bondage to the flesh. He's obtained a more excellent ministry, He's the mediator of a better covenant, which has been established on better promises.

Vs7

So there's a pointing out of the obvious here, if everything would've been peachy with the 1st covenant, then there would be no need for a 2nd. Or as it's stated in Gal 3:21, "...*if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.*" So there was fault to be found with the 1st covenant, what was it, was there something wrong with the law?

Vs8-9

Now he's quoting here from Jeremiah Ch 31 where the Lord just spelled it out. "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah..." (The reason God mentions both Israel and Judah here is because this prophecy was given after Israel divided into 2 kingdoms, Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. and God is saying I'm going to make a new covenant with Israel overall, the whole nation). Why? Why a new covenant, what was wrong with the 1st one? Was it the law? No, the law is holy righteous and good, the fault wasn't in the law, it was in the heart of man, there in Vs 9 He says, "...because they didn't continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them."

The 1st covenant given to the nation of Israel was at Mt Sinai and it was predicated upon man's obedience. The 1st words of the covenant, you find them in Ex 19:5, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice, and keep My covenant, then..." and God made a covenant with them that was based upon their ability to obey it, and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do..." and So Moses took some blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words." The problem was, they didn't keep the covenant, they *couldn't* keep the covenant, was the fault with the law, no, it was with the people, we can't keep God's standard of holiness. All we can do as we look at the law is stand hopelessly guilty as charged, in desperate need of a Savior. and So God said, "...the days are coming when I'm going to make a *new* covenant."

Vs10-12

Hey, there's a couple things we need to see here about this new covenant, 1st of all it has *nothing* to do with man, it's completely predicated upon God's ability and in no way is it predicated upon man's; therefore it's impossible that it should fail, it can not fail. The 1st words of the old covenant, "If you will..." Here in Vs 8-12 as he's quoting Jeremiah you find the Lord saying, "I will" 6 times and the words "you will" aren't stated once. This is all about God's doing, it's in no way shape or form related to man's doing. 2^{ndly} We note that it's an internal work of the heart rather than an external work of rules and regulations. He says, "I will put My laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts." Translation, "I'm going to do an inward work." When you come to Christ, the Spirit comes and takes up residence in you, in your heart, in your mind and changes you from the inside out.

I was talking to my buddy Bernard (Nigerian Pastor) he was asking me about how people who were coming to Christ but didn't have a bible would know what to do. and I told him that they may not know Ch, Vs, but when the Spirit indwells you there are things that you just know that are, or aren't pleasing to God. You know stealing is wrong, you know you should respect your parents, you know Jesus is your highest priority, now that doesn't dismiss our responsibility to study the word, or get a bible at the earliest chance we can. But God will put His law in your mind, He'll write it on your heart. The 1st covenant was written on cold stone, the new covenant is engraved on your heart. So that someone calls themselves a Christian yet they have no godly convictions, no conscience that spurs them on to righteousness and/or integrity, I would have to question the validity of their encounter with Christ. Why? Because I'm so holy? No, because the new covenant is earmarked by an inward work in the heart and mind of the believer, it's earmarked by intimacy with God, "I will be their God, they shall be My people."

The 1st covenant was sealed with the blood of an oxen, the new covenant with the blood of Christ. So that when Jesus was instituting the Last Supper and He took the cup, and He said, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

The 1st covenant may've *covered* your sin temporarily, the new covenant *cleanses* you of sin completely (Vs 12) "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Now when God speaks of not "remembering" our sin, that doesn't mean that God get's amnesia, but that He chooses to forget about it and not bring it up, hold it over you, or bring to account for it. Because Jesus paid the penalty for it, you confess your sin, repent of it, and He puts it away, as far as the east is from the west, it's gone. What's it mean when we forgive someone? It means we choose to put it away, not bring it up, not hold it over them, or make them "pay" for it, it's gone, forgiven. and As far as the record is concerned, "Forgotten." God's forgiveness is on the basis of grace and mercy, not earning and deserving, so to with you and so to with me.

Vs13

That's exactly what it did in 70 A.D. and So thorough was the Roman's destruction of the temple that some 1937 yrs later it still lies in ruins, obsolete, vanished away is the old covenant, the sacrificial system, the law. God has established a covenant of grace, there's no negotiating, the terms have been extended and we can accept them or we can reject them, but to enter in to God's covenant He demands unconditional surrender. Why try to earn God's acceptance, His favor, His blessing, why retreat to the principle of law, it's obsolete, out of the picture. Walk in the grace of God, on the basis of the finished work of the more excellent ministry of the Son of God, Jesus Christ

Prayer Points:

Father, we're overwhelmed at the work You've accomplished through the person of Your Son. and We thank You for the more excellent ministry of Jesus Christ the better covenant that He mediates, the better promises it's established on. We thank You that this new covenant is based upon You and Your ability, and has nothing to do with our ability so that our eternity is secure in You. We thank You for writing Your law upon our hearts, placing it with in our minds, now may we walk in obedience to You that we might lead lives pleasing to You, and may Your grace abound to our ever in need lives, be glorified in us.

If God is knocking on the door of your heart I want to extend the terms of God's covenant to you this morning. God loves you with an everlasting love, Christ has laid down His life for you, has been made sin for you that you might become the righteousness of God in Him. But that's where it's at, it's about being found in Him, not trying to work things out on your own. and God will receive you today by grace through faith on only 1 condition, unconditional surrender. You have to come to God on His terms and His terms only, and His terms bring you to Him, *in* Christ. The terms are laid out on the table, will you accept them, or will you reject them?