

WE HAVE SUCH AN HIGH PRIEST

TEXT: HEBREWS 8:1-13

Introduction:

1. Back in Hebrews 5:6 we read, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (cf. Psalm 110:4).
2. The argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews in support of the superiority of Christ to the Aaronic priesthood is based on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec.
3. Melchisedec in type brings out the fact that Christ is superior to the priesthood of Aaron; and that His priesthood is eternal (He had no successors, and no beginning or ending); and unchangeable (Hebrews 7:24).
4. Christ in His sacrifice offered a final sacrifice for sin once for all instead of a daily sacrifice (Heb. 7:27).
5. As Aaron ministered in the earthly sphere, Christ ministers in the heavenly (Heb. 8:1-5).
6. Christ served realities rather than shadows (Heb. 8:5).
7. The Lord Jesus Christ administered a new and better covenant rather than the Mosaic covenant (Heb. 8:6).
8. In all these things Christ fulfilled what Aaron anticipated.
9. There are also many similarities. Like Aaron, Christ ministered in sacred things (Heb. 5:1), and was made a priest by God Himself (Heb. 5:4-6, 10).
10. Aaron was a mediator between men and God (cf. Numbers 16:44-50).
11. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is our only true Mediator. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5).
12. The Aaronic priesthood was designed to portray in type what Christ was as priest and what He did.

I. CHRIST IS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST (8:1).

1. "This is the sum" (8:1) means, "This is the focal point" of the entire epistle -- the Lord Jesus Christ is seated on the right hand of God the Father (cf. 1:3, 13; 10:12; 12:2).
2. Referring to Stephen, Acts 7:55, 56 says, "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

3. All of the other references say our Lord is seated on the right hand of God, but I think our Lord stood up to welcome Stephen into heaven.
4. Referring to Christ's intercessory work, Romans 8:34 says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (cf. Hebrews 7:25).
5. Ephesians 1:20 says, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."
6. Colossians 3:1 says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."
7. First Peter 3:22 says Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."
8. There was no chair in the tabernacle for the priest to sit down because their work was never finished (cf. 10:11, 12).
9. The priests needed to offer up daily sacrifices. As soon as the high priest brought the blood into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), some one was committing another sin. Therefore his work was never finished and he could not sit down.
10. But the Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all these Old Testament types and shadows, and His work is finished.
11. Therefore He sat down.
12. "The right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (8:1) signifies a place of great authority and power (cf. Rev. 5:6-8).

II. CHRIST IS THE MINISTER OF THE TRUE TABERNACLE (8:2).

1. The tabernacle in the wilderness was temporary, and it was patterned after "the true tabernacle" in heaven (8:2, 5).
2. Hebrews 9:11 says, "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."
3. So the tabernacle in heaven is referred to as "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (8:2) and the "greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands" (Heb. 9:11).
4. Revelation 11:19 says, "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament."

5. Revelation 15:5-8 says, "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."
6. Revelation 16:1 says, "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."
7. Our Lord's work on the cross is finished, and now He is "ministering" in the true tabernacle in heaven (8:2).
8. This "excellent ministry" (8:2, 6) refers to his intercessory work as our great high priest (8:3). His excellence is based upon His perfect sinlessness, His perfect atonement, and the superiority of the new covenant ("New Testament").
9. H. A. Ironside wrote, "But it is blessed to know that nothing reaches God that is not perfect. Our Great High Priest takes out of our prayers and praises everything that is unholy or of the flesh, everything that is contrary to the nature of the God we adore. Then to what is left, He adds His own infinite perfections and thus presents all to the Father on our behalf" (*Hebrews*).
10. The author of this epistle (probably Paul) wrote, "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..." (8:4, 5a). This was written about AD 64 and the temple in Jerusalem was still in operation.
 - These verses are emphasizing the heavenly character of our Lord's priesthood (8:4-6).
 - The tabernacle in the wilderness was a movable tent. It is a picture and type of Christ:
 - It was built with shittim wood and overlaid with gold.
 - The tabernacle was divided into two compartments: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies where only the high priest was allowed to enter -- once a year on the Day of Atonement.

- There was a beautiful veil (curtain) separating the two compartments. This veil "was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51) when our Lord died.
 - In the Holy Place there were three articles of furniture: (1) the golden lampstand -- a type of Christ, who is the Light of the World. (2) The golden table of showbread -- a type of Christ, who is the Bread of Life. (3) the golden altar where incense was offered -- a picture of Christ as our Intercessor.
11. In the Holy of Holies there were two articles of furniture: (1) the ark of the covenant, covered with the mercy seat. The very same Greek word translated "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5 is elsewhere translated "propitiation" (cf. Romans 3:25; I John 2:2; 4:10).
 12. The golden article of incense and the ark of the covenant are now in heaven (cf. Rev. 8:3; 1:19).

III. CHRIST IS THE MEDIATOR OF THE BETTER COVENANT (8:6).

1. The word "better" is the key word in this epistle. It appears 13 times.
2. The old covenant was conditional and temporary. The new covenant is unconditional and permanent.
3. The old covenant offered God's blessings to those who kept the law (Exodus 19:5, 6).
4. The New Testament (new covenant) makes it clear that no one except Christ could keep the law, and that the law was done away with at the cross.
5. "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious" (II Cor. 3:11).
6. Second Corinthians 3:13 says the law has been "abolished."
7. Galatians 2:21 says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."
8. Colossians 2:16 and 17 says the law with its rituals and dietary restrictions, and holy days, were a "shadow of things to come."
9. W. H. Griffith-Thomas said, "The (new) covenant is 'better' because it is absolute, not conditional, spiritual, not carnal, universal, not local, eternal, not temporal, individual, not national, internal, not external. The promises (8:6) are

'better' because they have reference to things spiritual and not to a mere earthly inheritance" (*Let Us Go On*).

10. Obviously, the first covenant was not "faultless" (8:7). That is why there was a need for "the second" (8:7).
11. The fault was not in the law itself, but in man's inability to keep the law. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."
12. "For finding fault with them" (8:8). "Them" refers to Israel. The fault was with them, not God, and not the law of God. They were unable to keep the law's requirements and so God promised a "new covenant" (8:8; cf. Jeremiah 31:31).

CONCLUSION:

The description of the new covenant indicates it will not be completely fulfilled until during the millennial kingdom (8:10, 11).