

The Superiority of Christ's High Priestly Ministry
Hebrews 8:1-6

The world believes God is accessible to them. They believe that they can waltz into God's presence at any time and He will receive them.

But we as Christians know better. We know, that if it were not for our faith in Christ and His finished work on the cross of Calvary, that made it possible for us to be brought from death to life, we would never have been able to gain access to Him and His throne. We know this.

And because we know this, whenever we approach God and His throne of grace, for whatever reason, we should be very mindful of Christ, not only mindful of the role that Christ has played but is continuing to play in our ability to approach God and to have what is on our hearts relayed to God through Christ our great heavenly high priest.

So I would hope that as this subject comes alive to us as we return back to our study of Hebrews that God will use this study to bring even greater honor and glory to Christ. So ...

STUDY

Having set forth the superiority of Christ to prophets, to angels, and to Moses the author then set out to show the superiority of Christ's priesthood over all other **priesthoods** (Hebrews 5:1-10:18).

This lengthy section of scripture can be divided into two main segments.

The first segment we entitled: The Son's appointment as high priest according to the order of **Melchizedek** (Hebrews 5:1-7:28). It started in **Hebrews 5:1** and concluded in **Hebrews 7:28**. This segment was designed to establish the superiority of Christ's priesthood over that of Aaron's priesthood and thus to all other priesthoods. This is the segment that we just completed.

The second segment, that we are just beginning, we will entitle: Christ's superior high priestly offering (Hebrews 8:1-10:18). This segment was not meant to establish the superiority of Christ's priesthood but rather it was meant to establish the superiority of His ministry, which would then in turn support the superiority of Christ's priesthood, for if Christ's high priestly ministry is not superior then how in the world could His high priesthood be superior?

This segment can be divided into three parts of unequal length:

- 1) The superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry (Hebrews 8:1-6)
- 2) The superiority of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:7-13)
- 3) The superiority of the New Covenant Offering (Hebrews 9:1-10:18).

This morning we will begin with the first of these three parts. And what is that first part? It is this: The superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry (Hebrews 8:1-6). This particular part will extend from **Hebrews 8:1** through **Hebrews 8:6** and will serve as an introduction to the larger segment that we will be continuing to examine in the months ahead that will be dealing with the same theme but in a far more expansive way.

So now let me read these verses for you. And this is what they say, **“Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, (2) a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. (3) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices so it is necessary that the high priest also have something to offer. (4) Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; (5) who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle, for, ‘See,’ He says, ‘That you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.’ (6) But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.”** So do these verses in fact appear to be emphasizing the superiority of Christ's high priestly MINISTRY rather than the superiority of Christ's PRIESTHOOD? I believe they do. And hopefully this will become very clear to us this morning as we examine this passage.

So how was the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry initially introduced by this author? The superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry was initially introduced with a **transitional** statement (Hebrews 8:1-2).

So let us now read these two verses and see if this is not so. And this is what they say, **“Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, (2) a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.”**

So did this author use a transitional statement to initially introduce the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry? Yes! I believe He did. So how did this author begin this transitional statement?

The transitional statement began in Hebrews 8:1 with the author pointing his readers back to what he had said earlier about Christ's superior priesthood in **Hebrews 5:1-7:28**. So now let me read for you **Hebrews 8:1** and see if this is not so and this is what it says, **“Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”** So did this author in this verse point his readers back to what he had said earlier about Christ's superior priesthood in **Hebrews 5:1-7:28**? Yes, I believe he did.

When the author told his readers **“now the main point in what has been said is this”** the readers would have immediately thought back to all that he had just said about Christ's superior priesthood in **Hebrews 5:1-7:28**.

Why would they have immediately thought this? Look at the very next phrase within the verse, **“We have such a high priest.”** What kind of high priest? It would have been the very kind of high priest that the author had just described in **Hebrews 5:1-7:28**.

And even more specifically the very kind of high priest that the author had just described in **Hebrews 7:26-28** or in other words, a sinless high priest, who because of His sinlessness was able to offer up a once for all sacrifice for all sin, for all people, for all time.

This is the kind of priest that this author wanted his readers to know that they had based on all that He said in **Hebrews 5:1-7:28**.

And what was the last thing this author told his reader in **verse 1** about this priest? This is what he said, **“who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty (or in other words the throne of God) in the heavens.”** And what did this emphasize? It emphasized the effectiveness of Christ's once for all atoning sacrifice that made it possible for Him to sit down at the right hand of God's throne for there was no further blood sacrifices for sin needed.

So after the author in this transitional statement in **Hebrews 8:1** had pointed his readers back to what he had said about the superiority of Christ's priesthood in **Hebrews 5:1-7:28** what then did the author do?

The author then ended his transitional statement in Hebrews 8:2 by pointing his readers forward to what he was preparing to say about Christ's superior ministry in **Hebrews 8:3-5**.

So now let us look at **Hebrews 8:2** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, **“a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.”**

So how do we know, based on this verse, that this author is now changing the focus of this passage from the superiority of Christ's priesthood to the superiority of His ministry?

We know this because the author is now focusing on Christ as, **“a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle”** rather than on the nature of Christ's priesthood itself as he had been doing earlier.

So how did the author describe the heavenly sanctuary in which Christ is now serving as **“a minister”**? He described it as **“the true tabernacle.”**

The word "true" is not being used here as the opposite of false. The word "true" is referencing that which is "real" rather than that which is unreal or in other words that which is just a **shadow** of that which is real. And this is

an important distinction to make in terms of what this author will be seeking to communicate in the coming verses.

When Christ was here in this world and passed by the earthly temple which was the replacement for the former earthly tabernacle, He was not passing by a false temple, rather he was passing by something that was unreal or in other words just a shadow of that which was real, which was the true temple, the very temple in which Christ is now ministering as our high great heavenly high priest.

And what did the author then go on to say about this true sanctuary or in other words this true temple, in which Christ is now ministering? This is what he said: **“which the Lord pitched, not man.”**

So if Christ is ministering as a minister in a heavenly sanctuary, which was pitched by God and not man, what does this imply? It implies that Christ not only has a superior priesthood but also a superior ministry.

So after this author in this transitional statement in **Hebrews 8:1-2** turned his readers focus away from the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to the superiority of His ministry, what did the author do next?

After the author introduced the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry he then began to **expand** on the superiority of that ministry in Hebrews 8:3-5. So how did he begin this expansion?

The author began to expand on the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry by establishing the **necessity** of His high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8:3).

So let me read for you verse 3 and what does it say? It says this, **“For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices so it is necessary that this high priest (or in other words Christ) also have something to offer.”**

So what is the author's point? This is the author's point. It is true that Christ is a priest of a different order or in other words the order of Melchizedek, which is a superior priesthood. But even so, Christ is still a high priest and high priests do what? They minister and what do they minister? They

minister “**gifts and sacrifices.**” And can Christ do anything less? No! This is the author's point.

Note the reference to “gifts and sacrifices.” This is a very important reference. The author's reference to “gifts” referred to the meal offerings and the author's reference to “sacrifices” referred to the “blood” offerings.

The **meal** offerings were offered up by the priests on behalf of the people to represent personal dedication, commitment and thanksgivings to God.

The **blood** offerings, on the other hand were for “cleaning from sin.” The priests were responsible for offering both and no one other than the priests could offer up these offerings.

So what about our high priest, is He presently offering up offerings on our behalf to God in the heavenly sanctuary in a similar way, as the former high priests of Israel, offered up offerings to God on behalf of the people of Israel in the earthly sanctuary? Yes!

So what offerings is He presently offering up? Is He offering up blood offerings? No! Why? When Christ offered up His blood on the cross of Calvary as a sin offering, His sacrifice or in other words His blood offering was so effective, that it was a "once for all" sacrifice. In other words it paid the debt that was owed to God because of sin for all people, for all time, which is the reason why this author, after speaking of his once for all sacrifice in **Hebrews 4:27** then went on to describe Christ, in the very next verse in **Hebrews 8:1**, as having sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

But that still leaves “meal offerings” doesn't it? Or in other words all those offerings of praise and thanksgiving, all those expressions of love and devotion, all those expressions of remorse and contrition that would naturally flow from one who knows God to God.

No person can bring anything to God that will be received by God unless they go through Christ our Great heavenly high priest.

Therefore it should be clear to us that though Christ might be sitting at the right hand of the throne of God in terms of His finished work of atonement

He is still very busy on behalf of all true believers in bringing their offerings of praise and thanksgiving, their offerings of love and devotion, their offerings of remorse and contrition to God as their heavenly high priest. Why? It is necessary because that is what a high priest does whether on earth or in heaven.

So then what happened? The author then continued to expand on the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry by showing how the former high priests and their ministry in the earthly sanctuary were merely shadows of Christ and His heavenly Ministry (Hebrews 8:4,5) We will see the author expanding the superiority of Christ's ministry in this way in **verses 4&5**. So how did the author do this?

The author began by showing how God, the giver of the Mosaic Law, had never **intended** for Christ to minister as an earthly priest in an earthly sanctuary (Hebrews 8:4).

So let me read for you **Hebrews 8:4** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, **“Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law.”**

So what was the author's point? The author's point in **Hebrews 8:4** was this: Though Christ is presently ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, he would never have been able to minister as an earthly priest in the earthly sanctuary for if He had been on earth at the time of the writing of this epistle He would have been prevented from ministering in the earthly sanctuary by the Mosaic Law, which God Himself had given to Israel. He would have been prevented from doing so because He was not of the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron, as the Law stipulated.

This of course means what? God never wanted Christ to minister as an earthly priest in an earthly sanctuary? Why? This is why. The earthly sanctuary and the earthly priesthood were not the reality, they were false or in other words they were simply shadows of the true reality or in other words they were simply shadows of Christ and His heavenly sanctuary. And God the Father had no desire for Christ to mix with the shadows.

So how else did this author continue to expand on the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry by showing how the former high priests and their ministry in the earthly sanctuary were merely shadows?

The author continued to show that the former high priests were merely shadows of Christ and His heavenly ministry by clearly stating it and then illustrating it by using Moses (Hebrews 8:5).

Let me read for you **Hebrews 8:5** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, “(Referring to the priests who ‘offer gifts according to the Law’ it says) **who serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things** (This is the clear statement that former high priests and their ministries were simply being shadows of Christ and his ministry. And then what did he go on to say about Moses? He said this...) **just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle, for, ‘See’ He says, ‘that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.’”**

So what was the author's point to his readers? This was the author's point. When God was giving direction to Moses concerning what he wanted Him to erect in the wilderness as a tent of meeting God showed Him a “**pattern**” of the heavenly sanctuary and He warned Moses not to deviate from that pattern. Why? The pattern of the true sanctuary represented what was true or in other words “**real**” and the tabernacle that Moses was to erect would simply be the shadow of that reality.

So after the author having expanded on the fact the former high priests and their ministry in the earthly sanctuary were merely shadows of Christ and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary in **Hebrews 8:3-5** what did the author do in order to build on this theme?

The author having established the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry then used it as **evidence** of a better covenant enacted on better promises (Hebrews 8:6)

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 8:6** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, “**But now he has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.**” So did this author after

having established the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry by showing how Christ and His high priestly ministry were the reality and the former high priests and their ministries were the shadows that reality go on to use as this evidence of a better covenant enacted on better promises? Yes! I believe he did.

And why would he do this? He is opening up the door to expand much further on the better covenant that had been enacted on better promises, which in turn will strengthen the main point that he will be developing in this section. And what is that? The Superior ministry of Christ!

CONCLUSION

The world believes God is accessible to them. They believe that they can that waltz into God's presence at any time and He will receive them. But we know this is not true.

No one can come to God nor bring anything to God accept through Christ our great heavenly high priest. So know this, that any time you are pouring your heart out to God, bringing Him various offerings, those offerings will not be delivered to God except through Christ.

So the more offerings we bring to God through Christ the more glory and honor we bring Christ for it places His high priestly ministry on display.

May we by God's grace **honor** Christ by continuously taking advantage of the opportunity He has afforded us to be continuously bringing offerings of praise and worship to His Father through Him.