

Hebrews 8 (2014)

- We've concluded our study of the order of Melchizedek priesthood
 - We learned that Melchizedek is a title given to the priest of God Most high
 - This priesthood predated the Levitical priesthood
 - And it continued concurrently with the priests of the Law
 - Until it was inherited by Christ, Who came in the form of man, specifically to enter into this order
 - I know this teaching challenged many of us, as the writer himself indicated it would
 - I've heard from some of you and, I've received email from those who listen on the Internet, that the study of Melchizedek was not what they expected or had heard in the past
 - I get that, since I too, was surprised by what I learned
 - It's not uncommon for Bible students to approach our studies with certain assumptions that may ultimately prove incorrect
 - And when our assumptions run squarely into the revelation of the Spirit in the Word of God, we should expect a bit of a shock from time to time
 - That reminds me of the story of an elderly man who lay dying in his bed

When one day, death's agony was suddenly pushed aside as he smelled the aroma of his favorite homemade chocolate chip cookies wafting up the stairs.

Gathering his remaining strength, he lifted himself from the bed. Leaning against the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom, and with intense concentration, supported himself down the stairs, gripping the railing with both hands. In labored breath, he leaned against the doorframe, gazing wide-eyed into the kitchen.

There, spread upon the newspapers on the kitchen table, were literally HUNDREDS of his favorite chocolate chip cookies! Was I in Heaven? Or was it one final act of heroic love from his devoted wife, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man?

Mustering one great final effort, he threw himself toward the table, landing on his knees in a rumped posture, one hand on the edge of the table. The aged and withering hand quivering, made its way to a cookie near the edge of the table; feeling the warm, soft dough actually made the pain of his bones subside for a moment. His parched lips parted; the wondrous taste of cookies was already in his mouth; seemingly bringing him back to life.

He reached for another cookie. When suddenly, his hand stung with a sharp pain, causing him to drop the cookie and recoil in surprise. He looked up to see his wife, standing over him, holding the spatula she had just used to smack his hand.

“Stay out of those cookies!” she said, “They’re for your funeral!”

- So if your assumptions about the order of Melchizedek were rudely dismissed, then please forgive me
 - But I stand convinced that this is the point of the writer’s teaching
 - And as we move ahead in the teaching, I think you will see that it is this revelation of Christ, acting as part of another priesthood, that is so important to understanding the rest of the author’s teaching
- So we’ve established Christ as our High Priest in a better order, one that predated and preempted the Aaronic priesthood
 - And as all priests are called to do, Jesus performed the work of a priest in offering sacrifice to God on behalf of men
 - But in Jesus’ case, He gave Himself as a perfect sacrifice once for all
 - And now, He has seated Himself at the right hand of God, having performed His priestly duties
 - For unlike the priests working for the Covenant of Law, Jesus has no need to repeat His sacrifice
 - But if Jesus has served as our High Priest in performing service to the God Most High, then where did He perform this work?
 - For every priest officiates before an altar
 - And we know Jesus was not a member of the Aaronic priesthood

- So He never officiated at the earthly tabernacle, because He wasn't qualified to do so, according to the Law
 - Therefore, where did Christ officiate in His capacity as our High Priest?
- That question begins a three-chapter section that explores the implications of having a High Priest Who belongs to a different order than the Aaronic order
 - As he said, Jesus wasn't a priest in the order of Aaron, so then He must have come under a different Law
 - For where there is a change in priesthood, there is by necessity, a change in Law also
 - And if He serves under a different Law, then He must also have had a different tabernacle in which to serve
 - Since the earthly tabernacle was instituted under the Law
 - And likewise, the sacrifice that Jesus offered must have been different than those offered under the Law
 - So let's move forward with the writer into Chapter 8, where he begins with the question of where Jesus served and under what covenant?

[Heb. 8:1](#) 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,

[Heb. 8:2](#) a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

[Heb. 8:3](#) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer.

[Heb. 8:4](#) 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;

[Heb. 8:5](#) 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."

- Take note of the way the writer begins this chapter: "Now the main point...is"
 - That opening phrase refers back to all we've been learning about Melchizedek in Chapter 7
 - And we've learned a lot about the order, the fact that Jesus inherited it and serves perpetually in this order

- That He holds it forever, because He will never die again
- And since this order predated the Aaronic order, even the Levitical priests recognized the superiority of the Melchizedek order
- Which the writer proved, when he reminded us that Abraham, the great-grandfather of Levi, gave tithes to Melchizedek
- But even after we've learned all this, the writer now tells us that we haven't heard his main point as yet
 - In other words, understanding Jesus as the fulfillment of the order of Melchizedek is foundational to understanding the rest of the writer's arguments
 - In fact, after we're done examining this entire epistle, we're going to see that getting Chapter 7 right is central to understanding most of the chapters that follow
- And the main point is this: Jesus is a priest appointed to serve as a minister before the Living God in a Heavenly tabernacle
 - The writer calls this tabernacle a "true" tabernacle
 - And it's not the tabernacle established by the Law given to Moses and Israel
 - It's the one built by God, not man
 - It's the tabernacle where true worship and true sacrifice take place
 - It's the one that God truly occupies
 - This is the place where Christ serves as a High Priest
 - Notice in v.3, the writer says that every High Priest is appointed so they can serve God in the context of a tabernacle, by offering gifts and sacrifices
 - And since the Father calls Jesus our High Priest, then it must be that Jesus would perform the duties of a priest at an altar in a tabernacle
 - And as the writer says in v.4, Jesus had no claim to serving in the earthly tabernacle

- According to the Law of Moses, Jesus was not qualified to serve as a priest, since he wasn't born of Aaron's family – He was born of Judah
 - He was disqualified from offering gifts and sacrifices
 - But it was never the Father's intent that His Son would be a priest under that earthly system
 - Jesus was designated to be a priest of a different order, as we read in Psalms 110
- Now we start understand the importance of Jesus' priesthood having a different origin than the Law given to Moses
 - Being part of a different and better order, means everything associated with the priesthood must be different as well
 - The Law of Moses established the Aaronic priesthood and it established the tabernacle where they served
 - So if Jesus serves as a different priesthood, then He must be serving in a different tabernacle
 - And if He is serving in a different tabernacle, then the earthly one must be inferior to the one that receives Jesus' sacrifice
 - And so the writer says in v.5, that the tabernacle on earth was merely a copy, or shadow, of the Heavenly things
 - A shadow is the illusion, or suggestion, of something – but not the substance of that thing
 - In fact, when the Lord gave Moses the design of the tabernacle, He told Moses to be especially careful to follow the Lord's instructions exactly
 - Because Moses was building a tabernacle according to a pattern

Ex. 25:9 "According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.

Ex. 25:40 " See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.

- If the earthly tabernacle is built according to a pattern, then there must already exist another tabernacle from which this earthly tabernacle gets its design

- You may have seen an architect prepare small scale models of shopping centers or skyscrapers before they begin construction
 - You haven't seen the real thing yet, but you can get a sense of what to expect when you look upon that small model
 - That model isn't the real building, but it's built upon the pattern of the real thing
 - And once the real building is in place, the model has little value, except as a curiosity
 - The majesty of the real thing far surpasses the glory of the model
- So it is with the earthly tabernacle, as compared to the Heavenly one
 - God gave Israel an earthly model of the Heavenly structure
 - It's inferior in every way to the Heavenly one it's patterned after
 - For a time, it served to give Israel, and the world, a sense of what God would accomplish on our behalf in His heavenly tabernacle
 - So until the High Priest of that Heavenly tabernacle appeared, the scale model had to suffice
- But when it was time to reveal that greater Priest, then it meant it was time for the Heavenly tabernacle to become the focus for men
 - Once the real skyscraper is finished, we stop staring at the model
 - Instead, we stare up at the much more impressive building that the model pictured
 - Likewise, now that the true tabernacle is operating with our High Priest installed at the right hand of the Father, so God's children are directed to ignore the earthly model
 - Instead, look up
- Even though the real tabernacle has entered into operation, we still can't see it, obviously
 - The Bible says one day, it will appear when we see the New Jerusalem appear in the New Heavens and Earth
 - But until then, we have a model of our own to help us see the glory of the one in Heaven

- It's a picture, so it doesn't take priority over the Heavenly tabernacle
- But still, it serves a good purpose in helping us to appreciate the power of God to unite us with Himself through the work of the intercessor, Christ
- As Paul explains in Ephesians

[Eph. 2:19](#) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

[Eph. 2:20](#) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

[Eph. 2:21](#) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

[Eph. 2:22](#) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

- Today, all members of the Body of Christ, all believers born-again by the Spirit, are the temple or tabernacle of God on earth
 - We are a "building" built on a foundation of God's Word, which was delivered by the prophets and apostles
 - And of course, Christ Himself is the cornerstone of this building
 - The Spirit in us is "fitting" us into one another, like stones being worked by a mason until all the sides and corners match up perfectly
- In our case, the Spirit is the One conducting the molding process in our spirit, knocking off the rough edges of our nature
 - Wearing away sin and fashioning us into men and women who reflect the glory of Christ
 - Collectively, we are being made into a building worthy of the King of Kings to indwell
- But no matter how mature and holy this building may become, it still pales in comparison to the glory and holiness of the true tabernacle in Heaven
 - For now, we serve as a reminder of the glory to be revealed
 - As we look around and see the changes taking place inside us and among us, then we gain hope for what we'll see in Heaven

- If God can take this fallen, sinful body and turn it into something useful, then what will He do with a tabernacle not constructed by human hands?
- And similarly, if God's dwelling place is intended to reflect glory upon Himself, are we setting our goal to use our bodies, our very lives for that same purpose?
- We absolutely should
- As Paul tells us

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- Now, if the inauguration of a Heavenly tabernacle with a better High Priest offering better gifts and sacrifices means the earthly tabernacle has been rendered irrelevant and unnecessary...
 - Then what does that mean for the Old Covenant that established that earthly model?
 - That's the question the writer wants to explore for the next three chapters
 - The writer already said in Chapter 7, that a new priesthood means a new Law
 - And now he's said that a new priesthood means a new tabernacle is operating
 - So what else is new?

Heb. 8:6 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.

- Answer? We must have a new and better Covenant
 - The ministry of Christ is more excellent in every way, when compared to anything that was given to picture that ministry
 - It's an undeniable truth: a picture or a model can't begin to compare to the glory of the real thing it represents
 - A picture of a diamond can't compare to the beauty of an actual diamond

- A baby doll is nothing compared to a real baby
- And anything given to picture Christ is meaningless, when compared to Christ Himself
- So the arrival of Christ inaugurated a new and better Covenant with better promises than the one that preceded it
 - Just to be clear, the comparison is between the Old Covenant given to Israel through Moses
 - And the New Covenant promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31
- The writer says that Jesus is a priest or mediator in a better order, in a better tabernacle, under a better law and with better promises
 - A covenant is basically a promise
 - It's the biblical mechanism through which someone makes a promise to someone else
 - The Lord began making promises to men in the Garden
 - And He has continued to operate throughout history by way of a series of promises
 - This is always how God works within His creation: by a Word of promise
 - God states in advance what He will bring, and then it depends on men to have faith in that promise
 - The Old Covenant mediated by Moses contained certain promises for Israel
 - But the writer says those promises weren't as good as the promises the Lord grants us through the New Covenant Christ mediates
 - And it's because those earlier promises were insufficient, that God saw fit to plan for another covenant
 - And to make that point, the writer reminds the readers how God announced the New Covenant in Jeremiah

[Heb. 8:7](#) For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

[Heb. 8:8](#) For finding fault with them, He says,

“BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD,
WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT
WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;

[Heb. 8:9](#) NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS
ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND
TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT;
FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT,
AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

[Heb. 8:10](#) “FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL
AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:
I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS,
AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS.
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,
AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

[Heb. 8:11](#) “AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,
AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’
FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME,
FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

[Heb. 8:12](#) “FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES,
AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”

- The writer introduces the text of Jeremiah with a simple, logical observation
 - If the first covenant was faultless, then the Lord would never have spoken of another covenant
 - He calls the Old Covenant the “first” covenant, not because it was literally the first covenant God gave men
 - Instead, he is simply calling the Old Covenant the first, because it came earlier than the New Covenant
 - But back to his point, if the Old Covenant were perfect in all respects, then it would have been the last word on covenants
 - But many years later, the Lord spoke to Israel through Jeremiah about the need for a new and better covenant
 - One that would replace and improve upon the one given through Moses in the desert
- The quote the writer gives us in vs.8-12 is from Jeremiah 31:27-34

- This is the high-point of Old Testament prophecy
 - It's the point when Israel was suffering under great misery for their sins under the Old Covenant
 - And it's in the midst of their well-deserved suffering that the Lord announces that He intended to bring Israel a solution
 - A New Covenant that wouldn't lead them into further misery for sin
 - But instead, it would have the power to rescue them from that sin and the misery it brought to the nation
- The writer quotes the Lord in v.8, declaring that this new set of promises would be different than the ones God delivered to Israel's fathers in the desert
 - That older Covenant contained promises that were conditional
 - They offered the nation the opportunity for great blessing under God's hand
 - But those blessings were contingent on Israel's performance in keeping the Law
 - Unless they kept the Law perfectly, then they forfeited the blessings
 - And incurred curses instead
- It's not God's fault that His promises in the Old Covenant weren't very advantageous for Israel
 - It was the inability of sinful men to keep God's Law that made those promises so unattractive
 - But that's exactly why the Lord saw fit to establish new promises in a New Covenant
 - Notice in v.9, the Lord says the people did not continue in His Covenant
 - By their inability to continue in the Covenant, they suffered greatly
- Now compare the promises of the Old with the promises God gave Israel in the New, beginning in v.10

- First, the Lord will put His Law into their minds and on their hearts
 - He means that those who enter into the New Covenant will receive a supernatural understanding and appreciation for God's Law
 - The righteousness of God will literally be infused into their very nature
 - It won't depend on their ability to keep the Law in their own efforts, as did the first Covenant
 - The effect of this New Covenant will be to literally produce righteousness, without which, no one will see the Lord
 - The Old Covenant said: here's what it is to be righteous, and if you can achieve this standard, then you can have these blessings
 - The New Covenant says: You don't have the hope to become righteous on your own, so I'm going to give you the righteousness required, then you can receive all the blessings
- Notice at the end of v.10, that the effect of this "writing in the heart" is that those in this Covenant will be God's people and He will be their God
 - In v.11, the Lord says that no one in this Covenant will teach another to know the Lord
 - Because all will know Him
- Under the Old Covenant, Israel had prophets exhorting the nation to know and follow the Lord, because not all those in the Old Covenant knew Him truly
 - That's the weakness of the Old Covenant
 - The Old Covenant belonged to all who were born into Israel, but being born into Israel is not the same as becoming a child of God
 - Many born physically into Israel were never born-again into God's eternal family, because they never possessed the faith that saves
 - Because that Old Covenant didn't have the power to create faith in the heart
 - It merely set standards that revealed the sin of the people

- But the New Covenant is an instrument that brings a promise of faith to every member of the Covenant
 - It promises that all will know the Lord and all, one day, will obey Him
 - And it brings the promise that God will extend mercy to everyone in the Covenant
 - And He will not hold their sins against them
 - If we're honest, we'll realize that we're not really doing a good job in obeying Him – we see change and progress
 - Now we know the Lord and see the difference between sin and righteousness – we see the difference between the Heart of God and the heart of man
 - Understand that the promise hasn't been completely fulfilled yet, there is still that part of the promise that we will be resurrected and have a body glorified like Christ's
 - But there will be a time when all those promises written in Jeremiah will be fulfilled for all those in the New Covenant
 - These are wonderful promises, promises that are far better than anything in the Old Covenant
 - Where the Old made promises contingent on human performance, the New is based exclusively on God's power and faithfulness
 - Where the Old led to condemnation, the New leads to righteousness
 - That's why the writer says the New Covenant brings much better promises
- And this New Covenant is the one that establishes Christ as our High Priest and sacrifice for our sins
 - The arrival of Christ in the order of Melchizedek means that the time has arrived for the New Covenant to come into effect
 - And as the writer says in v.13:

Heb. 8:13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

- The Old gives way to the New
 - You can't put new wine into old wineskins, as Jesus says
 - We can't fit the framework of Christ into the Old, we can't fit them together in some way
 - Like a scale model, it has become obsolete now that our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek has been revealed
- The promises of Jeremiah 31 are not fully reality yet for all of Israel, or even for Gentiles, because we have yet to be fully glorified as God has promised
- But one day in the future, they will become true for Israel
 - And that arrival of Christ, in the appearance of the Priest that goes in the order of the New Covenant, means that God was ready at that point to bring the New in and turn the Old off
 - By faith in Jesus Christ, we enter into this new and better Covenant
 - Next time, we consider how the "scale model" of the Old served to teach men about the greater glory of the New