Introduction:

This week we visit Chapter 8 in the Book of Hebrews. In the first few Chapters (1-3) of Hebrews the writer is explaining the superiority of the Son to Angels, Moses & Aaron and then he explains that Jesus is a better position & a better priest (Chapters 5-7). But now in Chapter 8 the writer wants to talk about a better Covenant. Next week in Chapter 9 we’ll talk about a better Sanctuary & a better Sacrifice.

**But Chapter 8 is all about Covenant – the New Covenant in Christ.** It’s the third contrast showing that the New Priesthood is superior to the Levitical Priesthood. The Mosaic Covenant was temporary, but the new Covenant is eternal.

*Let’s read through Hebrews Chapter 8 together*

Let's pray ...

> Gracious God & our Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the New eternal Covenant through Jesus which you have written on the inside of our hearts. Teach us today. Speak to us about how much you loved us by instituting this new covenant. Let our heads and hearts align with you as we learn. May our lives be ever more loving and filled with your grace because of your Word today. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen
The High Water mark ... Chapter 8 of Hebrews

If we look back to Chapter 7 and verse 25:

“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

We see this is one of the high water marks, the key verse of this section. The emphasis is on the fact that the Lord Jesus is not dead but living. He’s not on a cross ... He died there. They put Him in a grave, but He’s not there either. He rose from the dead and the emphasis is now upon the living Christ. He’s alive up there.

He goes on to say that such a high priest is what we need, and He’s ALL we need. He’s holy & harmless; Holy in His relation to God – no question. There would always be some question though about men down here. He’s harmless. He never does anything to harm you. He never moves by anger. He’s undefiled and free from any moral impurity. He’s separate from sinners in His character, but He is right down here among us and He wants us to come to Him.

He’s higher than the heavens – that means He is in the presence of God. The value of his sacrifice is stated in verse 27 of Chapter 7 of Hebrews:

“Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”

His sacrifice was not of goats or bulls, He offered up himself – there is no greater sacrifice than that. His redemption is more precious than silver or gold or anything.

Chapter 7, verse 28 – you don’t put your confidence in a man when you put your confidence in Jesus. You put your confidence in the God-Man. He’s a man because He can sympathize with you. He’s able to meet your need down here. He’s a royal priest. He’s a righteous priest, a peace promoting priest. He’s a personal priest. He is for you personally. He didn’t inherit the Office. He’s an eternal priest. He wasn’t of the line of Aaron – he didn’t inherit it.

Now here in Chapter 8 we are told He ministers in a superior sanctuary by a much better covenant, built on better promises.

Verses 1-4
We have first of all in Chapter 8 the true Tabernacle. This is the high water mark in Hebrews. It's the chief/main point as the writer tries to summarize.
1 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.

Now He did something that no priest in the Old Testament ever did. There is no priest in the line of Aaron that had a chair in the Tabernacle where he sat down. He’s on the run all the time. Why? Because you just have to keep moving – all these things are just shadows pointing to a finished sacrifice. Now when Christ died it is all fulfilled. There’s no need for any more running around. You don’t have to act like a chicken with your head cut off in the religious world and so many act like that. All you have to do is turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He sat down because He finished your redemption and He asks you to accept Him. So we move into this area where He is the superior priest – the best. We’re told in verse 2 that He ministers in the true Tabernacle – one not made by man, but set up by the Lord.

Now Bezalel (Exodus 37) made the beautiful items of furniture and copper and the ark with its mercy seat, the golden lampstand - very ornate & beautiful and made out of gold. Man-made but the Holy Spirit led him in all of it. It took a man with a gift that the Holy Spirit had given him. But the Lord Jesus ministers in a Tabernacle that He himself has made in heaven.

Now when we look at verses 3 & 4, it is evident that the Temple in Jerusalem was still in existence and that priests were still functioning there.

Verse 5 – when Moses made the Tabernacle God gave him a plan for the true (meaning = genuine) Tabernacle. The later Temple was fashioned after this, but it became a complicated thing with all its complexities. But you have simplicity in the Tabernacle itself. It was called a Tent (The Tent of Meeting) – boards that were put up, very ornate and covered with gold – 20 cubits long & 10 cubits wide, divided into 2 compartments. One compartment was called the Holy Place, which had 3 articles of furniture – a golden lampstand, a golden table of showbread and a golden alter where incense was offered. No sacrifice other than incense.

The lampstand speaks of Christ – the light of the world. The Table of Showbread speaks of Christ as the Bread of Life. The Golden Alter speaks of prayer. He is our great intercessor – this is where the High Priest went to pray.

But then on the Day of Atonement he went back behind the veil to the second compartment in the Tabernacle – the Holy of Holies. In here there were 2 articles of furniture – the Ark of the Covenant made from wood covered in gold both inside and
outside. Inside the Ark were the tablets of stone (10 commandments) and a pot of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded. The 10 commandments speak that Jesus came to fulfil the Law. He not only fulfilled it, but He was the only one who ever kept it in all of it’s detail. The pot of manna speaks that He is the Bread of Life (even today) and then Aaron’s rod that budded, which speaks of His resurrection.

On top of the Ark of the Covenant was a mercy seat (it was the top for the box), ornamented by two cherubim that looked on the top. The High Priest went in there once a year and put sacrificial blood down there for the nation. That’s what made it a mercy seat, because God dwelt there, not His permanent dwelling place, but that’s where He met with the Children of Israel.

Around the Tabernacle there was a court/fence 100 cubits long & 50 cubits wide. In this court (known as the outer court) there were 2 articles of furniture - the brazen alter where all sacrifice was made and where the sin question was settled. Then there was a laver where you came for washing. So when the sin question is settled in the outer court, you move into the Holy Place and that’s the place where the priest served, and it’s the place of worship where they prayed to God. It’s the place where they walked in the light of His presence in obedience. That’s worship.

No one got into the Holy of Holies, but when Christ died that veil was rent in two, and the way was opened up into the Holy of Holies. Jesus took the Tabernacle that was once horizontal to the earth and made it perpendicular – the shape of the cross. Jesus died down here on earth – that’s where we make confession of sin. The Golden Lampstand – we walk in the light of His Word. The Golden Alter is no longer there, it’s in heaven where Christ has gone. The rest of this is all up in heaven today.

You know how I said about getting meat not milk a week or two ago. This seems so simple – just a few articles of furniture. Yes it is simple! But it is still Porterhouse steak and I hope you can grab what is being said here.

If you had been in Israel and in the heat of the camp, you would’ve seen that that Tabernacle was functioning - the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night. Priests running to and fro like ants/termites. Sacrifices being offered & incense being offered. Rituals being observed.

But this was just a shadow of a reality. In heaven there is the reality. The rest of the reality is that Jesus is there in heaven functioning for you and for me. Now are you ready for the beef steak. It's cooked and I want to put it down before you.

I want to ask a personal question – is He real to you right now?
If you still like to run around in a ritual and have a nice beautiful service, there’s nothing wrong with that (don’t get me wrong), but you think that’s worship, and you think you’re serving God because you’re teaching a Sunday School class or singing/playing in the worship team, then I have news for you. That is not what He is talking about here. He’s trying to get through to you to tell you that Jesus is up yonder in heaven for you – right now this very moment.

What does it really mean to you?

Come on – don’t get choked on this steak. Don’t ask for a glass of milk. Don’t start running around doing these little things. Let the pots and pans alone Martha. You don’t need to be handling those now. Let’s just sit at Jesus’ feet. Let’s have Him as a reality in our lives, He’s not just a shadow anymore.

When you left your house this morning did you leave with Him? Were you conscious of His presence? He’s up there serving for you. He’s your intercessor. You go to Him to make confession of your sin. Why is it that you’re worrying your Pastor – going for counselling – isn’t Jesus real to you today? *(Don’t get me wrong – I am always available for counselling, but let me tell you that Jesus is ALWAYS the answer).*

Why keep drinking the milk? Why are we being babies all the time needing to be burped? Just grow up! This is the meat/steak in Hebrews. Grow up and come in to the presence of a living Saviour today. Here’s what the writer of Hebrews is saying. May God take the veil from our eyes, and may He reveal Jesus in all of His power, and all of His salvation and all of His love, and all of His care for you, and all of His reality. The real Tabernacle up yonder in heaven is real. Many Israelites might have told you that the Tabernacle down here was real. They’ve been up to the fence and touched the linen. I stood by the alter – that altar’s real. But have you been into the Holy of Holies and understand that we have an intercessor who is real in heaven?

Don’t misunderstand me, but please stop the baby talk. Don’t talk to me about receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit or some other theological stuff. I want to know IS JESUS REAL TO YOU?

Has the Holy Spirit taken a hold of you and made Him real to you today?

I’m not talking about going to Church and singing hymns or the doxology or I’ve been to Church and I feel better. I hope you do feel better and I hope you’ve got something for your souls, but are you still drinking milk? Is that what you had for dinner? Is Jesus real to you – that’s the important thing.
Up yonder there is a real tabernacle and I want to feed on a living bread. I want to walk in the light of His presence. When I preach I am trying to get people into the presence of the living Christ. I’d like you to see the reality of Christ.

Many people want me to preach against alcohol or drugs or some other thing on their agenda. But I just want to preach Christ, and when people see the reality of Christ all these things fall into their correct place. What I said earlier – the answer is always Jesus!

If you are walking with Him in the light of His presence, then every time you walk down the street, He goes with you. Wherever you go, no matter how difficult, He goes with you. That’s the reality of knowing Christ. So when we are conscious of the presence of Christ, our conduct is affected. Things change because of His daily presence and as we walk in His presence. He is the living intercessor!

He’s alive. It’s wonderful to read about Jesus and all the things he did in the Gospels. I love to read the stories about his ministry around the Sea of Galilee. But let me remind you that He’s not at the Sea of Galilee now. He is at the right hand of God. He finished my redemption. He says to me, ‘Marshall, you’re sort of a problem child, but I want you to come to me.’ And so I’ve been coming to Him. I try and take everything to Him.

I hope I am getting through to you today. This is what is meant when it said earlier of the Hebrew audience, that we are ‘dull of hearing’. All of us are. Have you heard Him? Have you seen Him? Has God made Him real to you? In your heart?

We’re at the high water mark today. We’re treading on the mountain tops today. This is the meat of the Word. This is a wonderful section of Hebrews.

We now look at verse 6 about a better covenant. The Tabernacle down here is the shadow. Christ is the reality. He’s the one who keeps us saved.

Everyone asks me can you lose your salvation? Well I have a confession – I’d lose mine before the sun went down today if He wasn’t up there. Man, how we need Him today. He’s the mediator of a better covenant.

6 But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

The Throne of God is a throne of grace and we are invited to come in great confidence and great assurance that He is there.
This is the thing that we need to pray above all other things. “Lord I believe, help my unbelief”. I don’t know about you but some days my unbelief is bigger than my belief. We need to come by faith. There is no other way. He is a reward of them that diligently seek Him.

We need the reality of Jesus Christ in our lives. Your inner eye and ear that only faith can speak to, makes Him real to us today.

**Verse 6** – He is a better mediator of better promises, known as the New Covenant or New Testament. In contrast to the Old Covenant/Testament. No one in the Old Testament under the Law was made perfect. No one said ‘See God, I’ve kept all your laws/ways – I’m perfect.’ No, they were always bringing sacrifices to deal with sin.

The Law actually revealed that they had come short of the glory of God. That was the system in that day – a shadow of the reality of the ministry of Christ. A better High Priest and a better sacrifice and a better Tabernacle and it all converges at the brazen alter. Jesus is all three. He offers his blood for your sin and my sin. The Tabernacle is God’s portrait of Christ. Jesus offered his literal blood in heaven, that’s why He asks Mary to touch Him not, He said He was on the way. He was a High Priest on the way offering his blood in heaven. It will be there through all eternity – His precious blood – reminding me & you through all eternity of the price that was paid for our salvation.

This is all established upon better promises (v6). In the Old Testament when they broke the Law they brought their sacrifices. God dealt with man differently in different ages. Think about Noah and Abraham etc. This New Covenant though is based on better promises, better than anything else in previous ages of mankind. You & I are made a part of it today, but God is not through with the nation Israel. God makes it clear that these better promises are going to be fulfilled in the future.

Look at Jeremiah 31 – He’s returning for the land. v8 – He’s gathering them from all parts of the earth. He that scattered Israel will regather them and redeem Jacob. This is yet to come for Israel. Look at verse 31 – this is what the writer to the Hebrews is talking about when he says there are going to be better promises on a better covenant that God is making with this people.

“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors

**Book of Hebrews Chapter 8 –A New Covenant ... In blood!**
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,
and I turned away from them,
declares the Lord.

10 This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel
   after that time, declares the Lord.
I will put my laws in their minds
   and write them on their hearts.
I will be their God,
   and they will be my people.

God wrote it in black & white on a cold hard stone ... and they couldn’t keep it. But now He says I’m going to write it on the fleshly tablets on the inside of the heart. In other words, it was external before, but now He’s going to do a work in their hearts, which He has not done up to the present as a nation.

God’s going to make it good.

11 No longer will they teach their neighbour,
or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’
because they will all know me,
   from the least of them to the greatest.
12 For I will forgive their wickedness
   and will remember their sins no more.”

That’s what the writer to the Hebrews is talking about here – a better Covenant established upon better promises.

If there had been nothing wrong with that Old Covenant, then why would we need a better Covenant? Some have said that the first covenant was wrong, but that’s not right. Look at verse 8 – ‘finding fault with them’ – not the Covenant.

The problem was never God’s Law or His Covenant. The problem is with you & me – we can never keep it or measure up to it. We’re not under the Mosaic system any longer thankfully. God says now it’s old. An old model. He’s brought in a new model. Through the Lord Jesus Christ we have a new Covenant, better promises, ones that are eternal, all about the heart, not about external rituals anymore. Not because there was anything wrong with God’s Covenant, but because there is something wrong with us. We go back to drinking the milk. People talking about keeping the Sabbath day and going back under the Law. That’s the Mosaic Law. We can only ever come short in this system.
But if you come to God today He is gracious. The Lord Jesus is at God’s right hand. You can come to Him and He WILL receive you.

Illustration – lady puts a roast on, and then the telephone rings. It’s a friend and she has some gossip. She’s talking for over an hour and all of a sudden she smells the meat burning. She opens up the oven door and smoke every where. Puts a fork in but it keeps falling out. So she goes and gets a spatula and puts it under the meat to get it out. There’s nothing wrong with the fork, the problem is with the roast. It’s over-cooked.

So what the Law couldn’t do because it was weak through the flesh, God has now sent the Holy Spirit. We have a New Covenant. It is based on better promises. And that promise is that He has given the Holy Spirit and Jesus is in the Tabernacle as our High Priest to help us.

Milk is good for your diet, but if you want to get off the spiritual milk diet and get into the meat, then we need to put the emphasis on the living Christ, his Ascension and His intercession in heaven for you & me today. When we understand and grab hold of the Living Christ, we can’t go any higher in this life.

Next week we will look at Chapter 9 of Hebrews dealing with a better sanctuary. Your homework for the next week is to read Hebrews 9.

COMMUNION

We are going to conclude our time today with Lord in communion. Everything we have been learning in Hebrews points to Jesus as our Great High Priest. Everything we have learnt culminates around the empty cross, the empty tomb, and the ascension into Heaven of our Saviour & Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Covenant in Christ is what this simple ‘feast’ is all about. Why do we call it a feast? Because every day we feast on what the Lord has done through His Holy Word. There is more than enough. There is room for every sinner at the Table of the Lord. And yet, like the Tabernacle, it is simple. Just the Bread and Cup. Two simple symbols that encapsulate everything that Christ has done ... and is still doing at the right hand of God, as our Great Intercessor right now for your sin & mine.

Yes, the price was paid on the cross. Yes, the victory over the power of sin and death was won after He burst through the grave on the third day, but we now have a Great High Priest who offers to us a new Covenant – one that God rights on the inner parts of our hearts. New promises of eternity through Him.
We are asked to remember Him as we have Communion. What are we remembering? Hopefully, not just the history or the story. Yes, that’s important to know, but what we are reminded to remember is more than that. It is meat. It is that we now no longer have the shadow … we have the reality which is Christ risen and in heaven for each one.

As I said earlier we need the reality of Jesus Christ in our lives. Is He real to us? Right now? We celebrate this simple meal to remind us of this question – How real is He to you right now. Your sin cannot be dealt with on your own. If you lived in the Old Testament you would have to haul an animal to the temple to pay for your sins each day. But that didn’t perfect you. You would have to do it again the next day & the next.

But now, through Jesus, we have a better sacrifice, a better Priest, better promises, a better New Covenant. We have Jesus, the Son of God, the perfect Lamb of God, who invites us into the presence of God. Through faith all we have to do is to accept this wonderful offer for salvation and redemption.

12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Let’s pause to give thanks that God has provided the way for our salvation through Jesus. There is no other way to the Father. He has offered up His blood so that our sins will be remembered no more. This is a celebration. I can’t think of a better way to celebrate today than to give thanks to God for paying the price of my sin.

Let’s give thanks for the finished work of Jesus, for His body & His blood.

Prayer for Bread & Cup.

Bread & Cup served & drink together.

Prayer

Closing Song ~ Standing on the Promises
Hebrews 8 (New International Version)

The High Priest of a New Covenant

1 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.

3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” 6 But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said:

“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. 9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord."
This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.