

## Hebrews 8:1-13

I don't think we need much introduction today as we start with a pretty clear statement.

*<sup>1</sup>Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, <sup>2</sup> a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*

Now the point I'm going to begin with might seem like more of an obscure note, but it fits perfectly with a larger theme we covered last week. As the author notes that *this is the main point of the things we are saying*, the "*we*" refers to the preacher and the other believers. More than 50 times in this letter he does this very thing because he is not lecturing them as though he is superior to them but rather **identifies with them together as followers of Jesus**. He is acknowledging that together they held these truths. That's the way it should be.

And I personally have been captivated with this title of God the Father as *the Majesty in the heavens*. This only occurs two times in the New Testament (1:3 and here). Now it's listed as **an attribute** of His numerous times (1 Chron 29:11, Psa. 93:1, Isa. 24:14), **but here it's the definite article- He is the Majesty**. And that seems so wonderfully descriptive to me. It takes me back to the worship song "Majesty", which really helps us gain proper perspective of who He is. **He's not a benevolent being, a higher power, a source of enlightenment... He is the Majesty.**

- But why has this been reserved for this instance? Or maybe we could ask if I am reading into this more than was intended by the Holy Spirit (because He is truly the Author). I don't believe I am **because of the very fact it's here makes the point that this is exactly where He was intending to take us**. God does not mince, waste, or misuse words.
- So, I would propose it's here to show the exalted position of Jesus without diminishing the Majesty of God. We have already seen in this letter that Jesus position was elevated above angels, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Aaron (and therefore the whole of the priesthood), and everyone else who has ever lived.
- And to this day, we see even among those who have placed their faith in Jesus, that there seems to be some real confusion about the true identity, nature, and even deity of each of the members of the trinity. So such a statement was clearly needed in that day and in ours.

Now, after addressing God the Father as *Majesty*, we find God the Son identified here as *a Minister* (our minister- with many other roles also...). And I find that equally wonderful, because we need Him to minister to our needs (and folks, we have many needs we cannot meet ourselves). It's interesting to think of all the places we have tried to go in the past to find ministry for our needs. And to be fair, some of those things might have offered some temporary relief (kind of like the sacrificial system for these Jewish believers). **But not a single one of those could offer a permanent solution.** **And I'm betting that coming to that reality is what brought each of us to place our faith in Jesus.**

- I'm also imagining there are times each of us can remember where we came to Jesus with such a sense of urgency, requesting Him to make intervention for us. And in His perfect time, He has responded. **But is that the only time He is doing so (when you come petitioning for help)? I think not.**
- Which begs the question, **how often is He making intervention for us?** Although I don't know all the particulars, I do know **it's every time intercession is needed**. Even when we don't know it's needed.
- But what is also wonderful in these verses is the mention of the location and reality of the sanctuary (holy places) and true tabernacle (meaning "the genuine" or "true dwelling place"). Now hold on to that for just a minute because we will come back to it in **verses 4-6**.

*<sup>3</sup>For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.*

Now, **as gentiles we often misunderstand** what is being said here, for we tend to think of the sacrificial system as only being a place to make atonement for sin. But as you begin reading **Leviticus**, you find that **each of the first five chapters covers one of these offerings** (1) the burnt offering, (2) the grain offering, (3) the peace [fellowship] offering, (4) the sin offering, and (5) the trespass offering). At the individual level **only the sin and trespass offerings were 1) required and 2) related to sin** (although the burnt offering was incorporated for both of these [the sin and trespass offering]).

- The first three were **free will offerings** (gifts) given as a way to **"draw near"** to God; to have communion with Him. So we need to understand what is being said here is (1) not only did Jesus offer Himself to atone for our sin (the necessary first step), (2) He also gave Himself as the offerings that draws us near to God so that we can have intimate fellowship with Him (9:8)!

- Eph. 5:2 sums this up well, saying “*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*”. That piece of being a sweet-smelling aroma is only mentioned as being a part of the first three freewill offerings and not of the sin and trespass offerings. The result is the offering of Jesus, which filled Gods nostrils, **1)** not only covered the stank of our sin, **2)** but also made **us** a sweet-smelling aroma to the Father (2 Cor. 2:15).
- And when we come to 10:6-8 we will find that God has no desire for any gifts or sacrifices made apart from us being in Jesus. Which means that human attempts to give something to God apart from the offering of Jesus are **undesired** and **unexcepted** by God the Father (“but this is how I...”).

<sup>4</sup> For if He (Jesus) were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law (gifts which are no longer accepted by the Father since Jesus coming); <sup>5</sup> who (the earthly priests) serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He (God) said, “See that you (Moses) make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” <sup>6</sup> But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Now the Mosaic covenant was not only **1)** patterned after **copies and shadows** of the true High Priest (Jesus) and the offerings which would find their fulfilment in Jesus (9:23-24), **2)** but also copies and shadows of the heavenly **true tabernacle** where this **better covenant**, with **better promises** was mediated (9:12). This is why the specifications of the **tabernacle** that were given to Moses were so precise (Ex. 25:9 & 40), because they were a **replica on earth** of the true tabernacle, which is above now, and will be coming in Rev. 21:1-2.

- So we see that Jesus ascended into heaven to take His position (verses 1-2) in the eternal tabernacle that will one day descend to the earth as His place of reign for the millennium. And then the eternal state.
- Jesus has not, nor ever will make gifts according to the law (7:13). Those gifts and offerings would not only **1)** fail to forever resolve sin, **2)** and did nothing any longer to facilitate **fellowship** with God the Father, **3)** they also became obsolete (verse 13) when Jesus became the fulness of every offering we could ever desire to make before the God of heaven and earth (Acts 17:14).
- Again, this was so important for these Jewish Christians who were considering not continuing with Jesus because of external pressures. Because what they thought they would do is simply go back to the law. But the **Holy Spirit knew what they didn't**. And that is the temple they now had was not long for this world. Within about five years it would be completely erased from the face of the earth. **It was no longer needed because the fulfillment of all it was pointing to had come.**

Now I want to state the obvious here and that is that **1)** Heaven clearly existed first, **2)** will change location, and **3)** yet remain of the same pattern, **because it is perfect.**

- And here is something I hope we all can take hold of that is **secondary to the point being made here, and yet still significant**. The **colors** we have are patterned after those in heaven. The **materials** we have are patterned from the realities which proceeded them in heaven; **wood, stones, metals, oils, plants** (providing flowers, fragrances, dyes), **shapes, a throne, dishes, pans, bowls, pitchers, tables, thread, woven material, patterns** (and therefore artistic design), **fashion...** All of which are found in Ex. 25 where God tells Moses the very precise materials and construction of **the earthly tabernacle** which is to be a representation of **the true tabernacle in heaven which preexisted the earth.**
- And might I just point out the reason we should consider such things is this is another reality check for those who believe we will be floating around on clouds through eternity in a disembodied state (2 Cor. 5:1-4). The word of God, for those who really study it, dispels man's misunderstandings and fears, replacing them with Gods **Majesty (1:3)**, and the joy which will be ours as we spend all eternity with Him **in heaven**. Because many of the things people think will be absent in heaven existed long before the earth. The reality is there will be more of the good things and none of the cursed.

<sup>7</sup> For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. <sup>8</sup> Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—<sup>9</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

The fault with the first covenant was not on God's side, **but on the side of Israel**. For it tells us here the *fault* was with **them** and that **they did not continue in God's covenant**.

- Meaning **they kept drifting from the promises they had made with God** when Moses brought them God's proposal to be their God, and they in return would be God's people (Ex. 19:5-8).
- If you remember back in **Ch. 2** that was the first warning given in this book- the **warning not to drift**. Which was something the **Old Testament makes clear to us was a continual problem**, for they repeatedly drifted away. And God repeatedly sought them out to draw them back.
- After nearly 1,000 years of this, God spoke to the prophet **Jeremiah** in **31:31-34** and gave him **this prophecy we have recorded again for us here in verses 8-12** where God states that due to their rebellion, He **"disregarded them" for a time**. Which means **He put them on the shelf for a season** (Dan. 9:26), **but in no way meant He was done with them**. For God had in mind all along to bring in a **new covenant** with them that was **not dependent on their performance, but rather on their receiving Jesus**.

And being that we are also human and have certainly done **some of our own drifting**, we should be every bit as thankful for the realities of the New Covenant, and God's pursuit of us in our drifting.

*<sup>10</sup> 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 in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>11</sup> None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

Now **when will this happen?** The text says **"after those days"**; which days? Well, we know that upon Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, **anyone at any time could come into the New Covenant of grace through receiving Jesus as their savior; both Jew & Gentile had the same access**.

- But as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, we must remember there is also a **specific covenant God has with the nation of Israel**. Later (in Jer. 50) we see the nation will return to the Lord at the end of the tribulation (comprised of those who trust in Jesus), where God will then place them once again in the position He has promised them in the kingdom under this New Covenant, **which they have still to enter into!**

But of great significance in these verses is **one simple, one letter word- "I"**, speaking of God. For as we already mentioned, **the reason this New Covenant was so much better was it entirely depended on God**.

Whereas the **Mosaic covenant** was conditioned on their keeping it (Deut. 28).

- And with the first covenant, the Jews needed to remember the laws **written externally on stone**, and then obey and perform all of them. As you can imagine, that was a real challenge because **they were, at a minimum, 2<sup>nd</sup> party recipients**. For when Moses received the law, **Ch. 12** tells us the people were so freaked out they **"begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore"**.
- **They wanted Moses to go get the words** of the law from God and bring it back to them. And as we've seen, that impersonal and legalistic handling of the covenant on their part **1)** not only caused them to fear God, **2)** but also fostered no real desire on their part to enter into intimate fellowship with Him.
- But in this New Covenant, where God will **put His laws in their mind and write them on their hearts**, it becomes very personal, taking this to a **firsthand relationship** between every one of them and the Lord.

Now, before we move on, there's something here for us of great importance, for **there are a lot of 2<sup>nd</sup> party Christians** in the church at large. **Those who hear the word from others, but rarely seek firsthand intimate relationship with the Lord**.

- This is such a shame, for although God, in the future, **will put His laws in their mind and write them on their hearts**, for everyone who has trusted in Christ, **He already has** placed it in our hearts when He sent His Holy Spirit to reside in us (both Jew and gentile). Meaning, **God has already given the believer the ability to commune with Him**; knowing Him at a deeply personal and internal level.

*<sup>13</sup> In that He says, "A new covenant," He has (past tense) made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

He might have said the old (first covenant) is becoming **obsolete** even though by this time Jesus has instituted the new covenant in His blood, and ascended to take His proper place in heaven, **because the temple was still standing** in Jerusalem. But within a few years that would no longer be the case. In 70 AD the Romans would

erase it from the face of the earth. And **the sacrificial system demanded a temple**. Without it there was no place to make the required sacrifices and offerings.

- So (very literally) **this religious leftover was now standing in the way of their relationship with God, giving the illusion of its ability to make a way to have fellowship with Him**. So it needed to go! And go it did.
- To this day the Jewish people have no temple. But one is coming. And this next one will be more in the way than the last.
- As a matter of fact, Antichrist will use it for his own purposes (2 Thes. 2:1-4, Isa. 14:13). And it will bring epic loss to the Jewish people (Matt. 24:15-22, Zech. 13:8-9, Rev. 12), **because it can do nothing but be the in the way of the relationship God has offered to them through Jesus**.

Folks, what religious relics are keeping you from entering into the relationship Jesus has made possible for you? Some of those might be classified by you as **1**) injuries, **2**) the dead faith of others who claimed to be in Christ, **3**) hypocrisy, **4**) lovelessness... **Because I believe many of us have experienced such things by those who themselves do not have an intimate, but rather religious approach.**

- For others those icons are **1**) the way things used to be, **2**) surrendering a relationship for the traditions of man, **3**) the architecture and art (often acquired by covetousness and pride), **4**) or even the real relationship an older family member had with Jesus (trying to live vicariously from their walk with God while resisting entering your own).
- Then there's the group who might be able to relate with these believers who really had come to Jesus **but then were beginning to drift back to unfulfilling and hollow attempts**.
- Folks, my prayer for each of us as we close out today's study is that we would **1**) walk away from such things before God has to tear them down for us. **2**) But also, if we do not, that He would. God wants us to have new life, through the new covenant, to a new level of intimacy with Him. Let His majesty and grace enrapture and keep you. Everything else is at best a shadow that has been cast by Him. He is the substance.