

Hebrews 8:1-6 A High Priest in Heaven

- I. Hebrews 8:1-6: Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent[a] that the Lord set up, not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.” 6 But as it is, Christ[b] has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.
- II. I want, over the next two or three weeks, to talk to you about the heavenly high priesthood of Jesus Christ, especially as our minds turn toward Easter and the bodily resurrection and visible ascension of

Jesus Christ. I want us to focus on heaven, where Christ is, and understand how he serves us in heaven at the right hand of God, as a high priest in the heavenly temple dwelling of God.

- A. The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is our high priest in heaven. Look at verses 1-2 with me.
- B. Expressing the heart of the matter, the author says in verses 1-2 quite explicitly that Jesus Christ, as ascended into heaven and seated at God's right hand, serves the church as a minister and a high priest: "Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man."
 - 1. Let us relate this to what we looked at last week, when we talked about the death of Christ.
 - a. Let me give you the picture, so that it is clear in our minds.
 - b. The offering of Jesus Christ on the cross is the climactic fulfillment of what was enacted yearly on the day of Atonement.

2. Let me describe how this is the case.
3. Scapegoat (Lev. 16: First, Jesus offers himself like a scapegoat when he gives himself on the cross.
 - a. What did Aaron as high priest do on the day of atonement, according to Leviticus 16:20?
 - (1) He placed his hands on the head of the scapegoat, and as he pressed his hands upon the goat, the sin of Israel, confessed by a high priest, were placed on that scapegoat.
 - (2) That goat bore on itself the sin of Israel.
 - b. Surely this is the background for the author of Hebrews saying that Jesus “put away sin.”
 - (1) Sin was “put away” because it was put on him as a substitute.
 - (2) Where was sin “put away” but in the sacrifice of himself for his people.
 - (3) So, just as the scapegoat bore away sin, so also Jesus put sin away, once for all, in his self-sacrifice.

- (4) So, Jesus death is clearly the fulfillment of the scapegoat, as he bears the guilt of the people's sin.
- c. But not only did the scapegoat bear the guilt of sin, he bore its consequence: the judgment curse of God against that sin.
- (1) He was led out of the camp, out into the wilderness, *away from the presence* of God in the most Holy Place.
 - (2) That scapegoat was unfit to enter into the presence of a Holy God, because he bore the reckoned guilt of Israel.
 - (3) So, that scapegoat must be forsaken. He is led outside of the camp, away from the dwelling of God in mercy, as he symbolically bears away that *judgment curse* against the sin of God's people.
- d. So likewise Jesus (vs. 27 "judgment") who is himself is the new covenant scapegoat who bears the judgment of God for the sin of his people.
- (1) In his death as a substitute and

scapegoat on behalf of his people, he faces the judgment curse of God.

- (2) As Jesus bears the sins of God's people, pressed upon him in his suffering and death, he undergoes the judgment curse of God in his death on a cross.
 - (3) Jesus did not open his mouth or defend himself. He was led to Golgotha, the place of the curse, where he would die for those whose sin he bore.
 - (4) He was led away from the merciful presence of God to die with his tongue sticking to the roof of his mouth, just as the scapegoat would die of thirst in the desert.
 - (5) But this leads us to the other offering that shows us Christ in Old Covenant types and shadows.
4. Goat of the Sin Offering:
- a. It is the cross itself that shows Jesus to be not only the scapegoat, who bears sin and wrath, Jesus is also the "goat of the sin offering" (16:15).

- (1) The scapegoat was not a sin offering, but a sin *bearer*.
 - (2) This is important to note: the sin offering is the Israelite looking to an offering that represents the sinner being brought into the presence of God through a sacrifice.
 - (3) The sacrifice is an “offering” to God that represents the sinner who brings it.
 - (4) On the day of atonement a single sin offering was given on behalf of all of Israel.
- b. The “goat of the sin offering” is consecrated to God to the point that its life—the life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11)—is poured out in total consecration to God.
- (1) It is in and through the blood of the sin offering that Aaron enters into the most holy place, where God dwells to be worshiped, as he is surrounded by the cherubim who guard his throne.
 - (2) Aaron offers worship to God

according to the requirements under the law.

- (3) He gives glory to God as he represents the people in blood to God.
- (4) And God is pleased to accept that blood—blood that not only cleanses the most holy place, but cleanses a people, represented by Aaron, for ongoing worship of the living and true God.
- (5) This goat's blood is poured out in service to God on behalf of the one giving the offering: all Israel through Aaron give a sin offering so that through it they might continue to be consecrated to the worship of God in his glorious presence.
- (6) This goat is offered up entirely to God, with its life blood being poured out before God, so that through this offering of blood all of Israel might worship and serve God as His glory dwells in their midst.

- c. So, when the goat pours out its blood to consecrate a people to the presence of God for worship, it opens the path to fellowship with God in the most holy place.
- 5. Here is a summary way to put it all: on the day of atonement, Aaron entered the most holy place through a sin offering whose blood consecrated him and all of Israel to the worship of God.
 - a. Aaron appears as a high priest who enters into the presence of God with a sacrifice of blood.
 - b. And having entered into that most holy place through blood, he made intercession for the people of God, so that God's glory, the "cloud of his presence" might continue in their midst.
- 6. So, on the day of atonement, sacrifices did two distinct things:
 - a. The scapegoat bore away the sin, guilt and curse of God, and the movement was away from God in the most holy place (into the wilderness or desert—the typological hell-furnace).

- b. The sin offering reveals one who gives his life up to the point of shedding blood in order to consecrate a holy people in the worship of God, who dwells in the most holy place on earth.
7. All of this is true especially when you look at Leviticus 16:2: “2 The Lord said to Moses: ‘Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.’”
- a. The glory of God, whose throne is in heaven, descends to fill the Most Holy place with an earthly form of that heavenly glory.
 - b. Notice well what verse 2 says at the end: “I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.”
 - c. God himself is with his people in the glorious cloud over the atonement cover.
 - (1) All of Israel, represented by Aaron through blood, meets with God,

whose glory dwells in the earthly most holy place.

(2) I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. God himself dwells in his glory in that earthly place.

(3) And God himself, present in that cloud, has fellowship with Israel through the obedience of Aaron who enters into God's presence through blood as a high priest in service of God.

8. That "cloud" of God's glory in Leviticus 16:2 is the same glory of God that Moses saw in the tent of meeting—the place where God would dwell to meet with Moses in Exodus 33.

a. Moses in Exodus 33:7-11: "7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. 8 Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people

would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. 9 When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. 10 And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. 11 Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”

- (1) As God renews the covenant of grace under Moses, he dwells with Moses atop the mountain as a friend dwells with a friend.
 - (a) And he does so in the cloud of glory.
 - (b) In fact, verse 10 makes it appear as though the pillars are vast legs, where God in his glory stands guard over his people, as their Lord and Friend.

- (2) Standing with Moses is the glory of the Lord in the cloud that “stands” with its vast pillar legs swearing on oath to protect Israel, so that Israel can worship the Lord in the splendor of his glory, as that glory dwells in the tent of meeting.
- b. And please note this, if you are looking at Exodus 33.
 - (1) Only Moses went to that tent of meeting, where the glory of the Lord descended in pillar-like form that stands at the entrance to that place of worship (vs. 8-9).
 - (2) But, and please hear this, when Moses went into the most holy place, all Israel stood and worshiped the Lord in light of Moses entrance into the cloud of glory to worship the living and true God as his Spirit filled that place with the glory of the living God.
9. Israel, on the day of atonement, through Aaron’s blood offering, come to that glory—the luminous glory of God that stood

in the tent of meeting with Moses, and then that same glory surrounded Moses atop Mount Sinai, causing Moses face to shine with its glory.

- a. Israel, through Aaron and the sacrifices he offered on the day of atonement, came to that glory in its Old Covenant, earthly form and rose and worshiped the Lord on the day of Atonement.
- b. And on that day, each Israelite worshiped God for the sake of his own glory, as he sat enthroned in the most holy place on earth, receiving the worship of his people.

C. But how does the book of Exodus end?

1. Exodus 25-31 are the fiats and commandments of God concerning the completing of the tabernacle.
2. Exodus 35-40 contain the fulfillment of that work, climaxing in the finishing of the tabernacle and the coming of the Spirit to dwell in its glory.
 - a. Exodus 40 ends with the coming of God in such glory that Moses cannot bear it.
 - b. This shows us from Exodus itself that

there is a coming glory that Moses cannot attain—a fullness of glory of which Moses is a mere type.

- c. Exodus 40, the end of the book, gives us a foretaste of a glory too great for Moses to bear, and in this way points us toward the one greater than Moses, the one greater than Aaron, the one who bears the fullness of the glory of God so that we might worship God in heaven.
- d. Christ is the a high priest of the heavenly glory.
 - (1) Listen: Exodus 40:34-36 “34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”
 - (a) The glory of God’s friendship comes and “filled” the tabernacle with such fullness that it excluded Moses—Moses had to flee.

- (b) Moses could not stay.
 - e. “36 Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.”
 - (1) But by the sovereign promise and protection of God, that glory that stood at the tent of meeting (Ex. 33:11) and filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:35), that glory continued with Israel.
 - (2) God’s redemptive presence will abide with his people through the one who offers himself in blood in perfect consecration to God.
- D. This brings us right up to the point where we can see so clearly this truth: Christ offered himself on earth in blood in order to open up not a copy of heaven, but heaven itself for his people.

1. We have a high priest, who has entered not into a tent made with hands, a part of this creation.
 2. And he has done so by his own blood, so that we, in him, might be brought into the heavenly presence of God for worship and adoration.
 3. He has offered himself in blood on earth, and he has been translated in life into heaven.
 4. And the main point of Hebrews is that it is *there, in heaven*, that he serves as a high priest, and a minister who serves the church as he is in the process of bringing her into his presence at the right hand of God in heaven.
- E. We will look at that glory next lesson.