

Two Official Glories

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BEING NOTES OF READING ON HEB. 8 AND 9.

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Hebrews 8

In this chapter we have the Lord presented in two of His official glories; first as the Minister of the Sanctuary, then as the Mediator of the better Covenant. As the Minister of the Sanctuary we learn that Christ has gone in to God. Then as the Mediator of the better Covenant, He prepares us to go to God. The service of God in the heavenly Sanctuary, is surely the great theme of this wonderful epistle.

In the former part of the epistle the priesthood of Christ is viewed more on the side of from God to man than from man to God. He is set to carry His people through the wilderness and right through to Glory as seen in the tenth verse of the second chapter. For this, He has every provision, for every need for every one of His people; (1) for sin without as in Heb. 2: 18; (2) for pressure within as in Heb. 4: 15; (3) for the difficulties of the pathway as in Heb. 7: 25. For the first we have ministered to us, "Succour"; for the second, "Sympathy"; for the third, "Salvation." He will carry His people right home to Glory, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Now we read in Heb. 8: 25, of those who "*come to God*". In the former part it is rather those who get through the wilderness, but Heb. 8 is more occupied with coming to God. It is with this in view that our thoughts are led on to contemplate Christ as the High Priest who is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He has gone in, in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, that is, into heaven itself (Heb. 9: 24). He is there as the High or Chief Priest and this involves a company associated with Him there, for while we are never directly spoken of as priests in this epistle, yet the thought of a company to which He is High priest, runs through Heb 8, 9 and 10.

Verses 3 and 4 speak of Him as having "something also to offer." But we must notice here it is not now from God to man but from man to God. As of old the offerings of God were brought by His people to the House of God and the priestly function was to offer them, so now Christ has the place of pre-eminence over the House of God (Heb. 3 to 6). He is there to offer the spiritual gifts that are brought to God today. Surely this carries our thoughts back to such verses as Heb. 2: 12. "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises." He is in heaven, it is there He sings as taking up His Priesthood in resurrection. He is at God's right hand, the true Melchisedec Priest, the fulfilment of Psalm 110.

In the New Covenant we have the conditions stated for our standing and fitness for going in to God. The New Covenant is mentioned in three particular places in the New Testament. (1) 1 Cor. 11. Here it is the witness of the love of Christ. (2) 2 Cor. 3. Here it is seen as the ministration of righteousness from the glory, to form us like Christ, so as to be able to present Christ in the gospel to

men. (3) Heb. 8, 9 and 10. Here it is to prepare us for approach into the presence of God, with a view to presenting Christ to God. Hence the two outstanding effects of the New Covenant mentioned in Hebrews 8 are — the knowledge of God and the forgiveness of sins. If we did not know God we *could* not approach Him. If our sins were still on us, we *dare* not approach Him. As the fruit of the New Covenant we both know God and know that our sins are forgiven. Hence with holy boldness we come consciously into the presence of God to worship Him intelligently. Christ has gone in and we can go in in association with Him, that we might take up, under His direction, the service of God in the Sanctuary. This is more fully opened out in Heb 9 and 10 to which we might turn later if the Lord will.

Hebrews 9

In following on a little our consideration of Ch. 8, we come now in this magnificent discourse to the consideration of the sanctuary itself. To this end, in the first ten verses we have a reference to the tabernacle of old, and most of the furniture contained therein. The first thing we must note is that the tabernacle was divided into a first place and a second.

The first is called the Holy, and the second the Holy of Holies (vv. 6, 7). Into the first the priests (plural) had always access, but into the second the high priest (sing.) went *alone* once every year. The sons of Aaron never went at any time into the second place. The reference in this verse is to the great day of atonement when Aaron went alone into the presence of God once every year, to sprinkle the mercy-seat with blood. The second veil barred man from entering the presence of God. We are not left in any doubt as to what this meant for we read in v. 8 — "the Holy Spirit shewing this, that the way of the (holy of) holies has not yet been made manifest while as yet the first tabernacle has (its) standing."

Two reasons are given in the Ch. as to why man could not go in to God. Sins were not put away and consequently the potential worshippers never knew what it was to have a perfect conscience (v. 9), or a purified conscience (v. 14). Until the question of sin was settled, God could not have man in His holy presence. Moreover, until man's conscience was cleared he could not stand in peace in God's holy presence. The result was that access into the presence of God could not be his experience so long as the first tabernacle "had its standing." As to the system connected with the first tabernacle it was "only in meats and drinks and divers washings, ordinances of flesh, imposed until the time of setting things right," (v. 10).

This is the most obvious teaching of these first ten verses. A less obvious point, but of the utmost importance, is found in the enumeration of the holy vessels. *The Golden Altar is not mentioned* yet special reference is made to the *Golden Censer*. They are both vessels of approach. One in the first place and the other in the second. We seem to have this Golden Censer mentioned only in Lev. 16. Here, on the great day of atonement, Aaron is told that he must take that Censer full of burning coals from off the Brazen Altar and his hands full of sweet incense. The cloud of the incense covered the mercy-seat all the time he was occupied in sprinkling the blood upon the mercy-seat and seven times before. This was the only occasion on which Aaron entered the presence of God and the censer was taken by him. It was a vessel which obviously belonged to the Holy of Holies. Only in Hebrews are we told that it was *golden*, possibly because all in that place was made of gold. There is no mention at all of this vessel in the instructions given to Moses when God gave him instructions concerning the holy vessels. Would not this suggest that here is something that has been definitely reserved for Christianity? While the first tabernacle was standing, approach was limited to the Golden Altar in the Holy place. Every morning and every evening, Aaron burned incense thereon when he dressed the lamps and lit them. From the Golden Altar in the Holy place, the cloud of incense ascended for the

pleasure of God. To-day the cloud of incense ascends from the Golden Censer in the Holy of Holies! Now that the time has come for worship in the immediate presence of God, the Golden Altar is passed over and the Golden Censer is introduced in its place.

"His deep perfections gladly sing
And tell them forth to Thee."

As we pass on to vv. 11-14, we read how the second place and the system connected with it is brought to pass. At once our thoughts are turned to Christ. He is presented as the high priest of good things to come. These *good things to come* are connected with the *world to come*, yet meanwhile they are all available for us in Christianity in the power of the Spirit. We have them now, in association with Christ in the inside place. At this point, I call the attention of bible students to a very interesting point of doctrine. Do these verses teach that Christ has become *high priest* "by his own blood," or that *He entered in* "by His own blood"? First, a reference to the footnote in the N. Tr., will shew the force of the preposition "*dia*" here. As all can look this up we leave it. We add a quotation from the pen of E. Dennett, on this very passage which is well worth thinking over. He was writing against a doctrine that purported to prove that Christ took His blood into heaven to sprinkle the heavenly mercy-seat.

"According to the punctuation of this passage in the Authorised Version, Christ is made to enter the holy place by His own blood', and this having been commonly accepted, many different interpretations of these words have been offered. But a closer inspection of this Scripture shows that this punctuation is based upon a misconception; *viz.*, upon a supposed correspondence between the entrance of the high priest of old into the holiest with the blood of the sin-offering, and the entrance of Christ with His own blood into heaven. And yet the very words employed might have indicated the mistake; for the phrase *dia tou idiou aimotos* (by His own blood) is peculiar, and could not be translated by either 'with' or 'in virtue of His own blood'. The question then is whether the words 'by His own blood' are necessarily connected at all with the word 'entered'. We unhesitatingly answer in the negative; and as confidently affirm that they are connected with the commencement of verse 11. To shew this we leave out, for the moment, the intervening words; and it will then read thus; 'But Christ being come . . . neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption'" (*Christian Friend, Pg. 232, vol. 1888*).

We are assured in verse 12, that before He entered in, He found an eternal redemption. "For us" is better left out. We judge it was more for God, even if on our account. Redemption has been resolved by the Godhead. All three Persons are mentioned here. This takes our minds back to Ch. 1, where we read, "when He had by Himself made purification for sins." Not by Moses nor by Michael but "*by Himself*", *i.e.* the Son in Manhood. In other words, God has met His own claims in the person of the Son, who became Man to carry out the work of redemption perfectly for the Glory of God (Ch. 1: 3, and 2: 9). The result is stated in v. 14, *viz.* a purified conscience from dead works (Judaism) to worship the living God! Hence the service of the living God has begun in a company with a purified conscience, who with peace in their hearts about the question of sins, are fitted to give worship to God in the Holy of Holies, ascending like the incense from the Golden Censer and not now from the Golden Altar.

It is here that we can see the need of the New Covenant a little more clearly. It bears out what we said in a previous paper, that it is a necessity to prepare us to go in to God. As soon as we have mention of serving the living God, the New Covenant is again brought before us, called by a more suited word here, "testament." Without going over it again, we must notice the one outstanding fact connected with it. *It was inaugurated with blood.* We have before seen Christ presented as the Minister of the Sanctuary and the Mediator of the better Covenant, Heb. 8. We have now in this chapter the fact that

both His High Priesthood and the Covenant have been inaugurated by His own blood. They are presented in Heb. 8 to shew the greatness of Christ. Here we see the foundation of them. We read that it necessitated the death of the Testator. This would teach us that both the service of the Sanctuary and the New Covenant could only be brought to pass after Christ had died. Neither were effected in His life. It meant the end of the old system in His death and the beginning of the new in His resurrection. By the Cross, He both met the failure of the old and laid the foundation of the new. The old system on earth has passed away and the new system in heaven has taken its place. Not only have we mention that His priesthood and the Covenant have been inaugurated by His own blood, but the whole heavenly order has come under the efficacy of the same precious blood (v. 23). Here is the complete answer to the typical work of Aaron in Lev. 16, when after sprinkling the blood upon the mercy-seat for God, he then brought the whole tabernacle under the power of that same blood, (Lev. 16: 33).

So in our last section (vv. 24-28), we read that Christ has gone into heaven itself, the place of the New Sanctuary, and He has gone there representatively for US. Here we have the answer to Aaron in his garments of Glory and Beauty with the names upon his breast and on his shoulders. Three times the Lord is spoken of as appearing in these verses and in each case it is different. He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. That is past. He appears in the presence of God for us now. That is present. He shall appear apart from sin unto salvation. That is future. Of the first two we have already got the gain. For the last one we are waiting. A reference to Lev. 9: 22-24, will shew this in type. Aaron, after offering the sacrifices lifts up his hand and blesses the people. With Moses he then goes into the tabernacle and comes out again to bless the people. The Glory of the Lord appears and all the people fall down in worship on the ground as the sacrifice is accepted by the Lord. So Christ has lifted up His hands and blessed the people after His great sacrifice. With hands uplifted He has gone into heaven (Luke 24: 50). We wait the moment when He shall appear to bless His people on the ground of the acceptance of His offering. With Him shall come in the Glory of the Lord and all will bow in worship to God. Israel will then get the blessing of the New Covenant and in that day both the heavenly and earthly companies will take up the service of God. Needless to say in that day we shall be in heaven but this is not taught in Hebrews. It is not our going to heaven that is the point in this epistle but Christ coming out; the true Melchizedec to sustain the whole scene for the pleasure of God.