
Words of Truth

Hebrews 8:1-6

By: Brian A. Yeager

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:1-6).

This chapter starts off summarizing the things taught in the previous chapters concerning Jesus as our High Priest. Jesus is set on the right hand of the throne of our Heavenly Father (Mark 16:19, Acts 2:32-33, Acts 5:30-31, Colossians 3:1, and Hebrews 12:1-2). Our Father is referred to as the “Majesty in the heavens” which is basically the same as the earlier reference in this letter to Him being the “Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). First century Jewish Christians needed to grasp the fact that the office of the high priest was no longer an earthly office. Jesus died and is risen again to intercede for us as He sits at the right hand of our Father (Romans 8:34).

The true tabernacle is not on earth. In the next chapter we find these words: *“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building... For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:11; 9:24).* While Jesus was on earth He attempted to teach people away from looking for “holy places” (so to speak) on earth. In a conversation with the woman at the well, we read this: *“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:20-24).*

The work of the high priests included offering gifts and sacrifices for sins (Hebrews 5:1). This was known among the Jews. It was taught in their Law (Leviticus 4:1-35). What Jesus did to get to the right hand of our Father was far greater than what priests of old did. Jesus offered Himself (I Corinthians 5:7 and Ephesians 5:2). Later in this letter we will read this: *“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”* (Hebrews 10:9-12).

The point was made that Christ could not do what He has done and what He is doing if He were on earth. Our Lord came from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14). He would have no right under the Law of Moses to offer sacrifices as a high priest (Numbers 16:40, Joshua 18:7, and II Chronicles 26:18-19). Secondly, those earthly sacrifices were an example and a shadow of heavenly things. To understand this, consider words we shall read later in this letter: *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:1-4).

Moses did not err in the establishment of the earthly tabernacle. He was given a pattern to follow by the Lord (Exodus 25:40). When Solomon constructed the temple in Jerusalem, he too followed a pattern given to David by our Lord (I Chronicles 28:10-12). However, those things of old were only a shadow of the things to come in Christ (Colossians 2:14-17). In Christ, there is the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is Heavenly, rather than earthly (Hebrews 9:1-11). The hard thing for those loyal to the Law of Moses to accept was that Jesus brought in a more excellent way. The more excellent way in Christ was established upon better promises. Instead of the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey (Leviticus 20:24), the promise of Christ is eternal life (I John 5:20). You would think that a logical person would see that and choose the greater. However, sometimes people are not very logical.

Think back to Cain and Abel. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than his brother Cain did (Hebrews 11:4). If you will recall, Cain killed Abel because of that (Genesis 4:1-12). Like Cain, people sometimes cling strongly to something even when it is not good for them. That mindset then leads to further error. Don't miss that point. We read about Cain and Abel for more than one reason. This reason applies here. Later in this letter, the point will be made that Jesus offered a sacrifice that speaks better things than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:24). A student of the Scriptures of old should have put all of that together and learned to accept the better things that Jesus offered which the old law could not.