

• *An obvious question - what kind of sacrifice does this unique high priest offer and in which kind of tabernacle?*

• *In summary – a new high priest; a new sanctuary; a new offering*

**Who is Jesus?**

**Where is Jesus?**

• *In the heavens*

• *Seated, because the first stage of his work is finished*

**What is Jesus doing?**

• *Ruling and reigning*

• *In the true tabernacle*

Hebrews chapter 8 is the start of a new turn of thought within our letter to the Hebrews. So far our writer has pointed to the greatness of Jesus<sup>□1</sup> and to his plan for ‘bringing many sons to glory’<sup>□2</sup>. He has spoken of Jesus as the ‘builder’ of God’s people as Moses was the builder of the tabernacle<sup>□3</sup>. At Hebrews 4:14 he began to point us to the priesthood of Jesus, asking us to live on Jesus as our high priest. Jesus’ work as our high priest is the fulfilment of the Levitical priesthood<sup>□4</sup> but Jesus has a high priesthood of his own, in the order of Melchizedek, that does not come from the Mosaic law at all<sup>□5</sup>. Now the obvious question is: **what kind of sacrifice does this unique high priest offer and in which kind of tabernacle?** The old high priest worked in a system of symbolic worship in a symbolic tent. But what kind of ministry does the new high priest have?

First the writer summarizes his main point in all that he has said so far. We have a new high priest<sup>□1</sup>, working in a new sanctuary<sup>□2</sup>, with a new offering<sup>□3</sup> which is the basis of a new covenant with new promises<sup>□4</sup>. <sup>1</sup>*Now the main point of what I have been saying is this. We have such a high priest who sat down at the right hand of the throne of God’s majesty in the heavens.* There is nothing new in Hebrews 8:1–6. He is repeating and summarizing what he has said so far, before moving on to some further matters he wants to explain. The focus of all he has to say is Jesus.

**Who is Jesus?** He is a high priest. That is, he is the leader of a vast people who all desire to approach God. He helps them to approach God by offering a sacrifice for sin on their behalf.

**Where is Jesus?** He is ‘in the heavens’. For the moment we cannot see him in the way people saw him when he lived in Israel on planet earth, more than two thousand years ago. The man Jesus, the human-but-divine Son of God, is not visibly and tangibly present in this world. We have to know him by faith and by the Holy Spirit. Our writer says he is ‘seated’. That means at least two things. One stage of his work is finished. He has been busy living in this world, living the life we should have lived. He deliberately set his face to go to Jerusalem to die as a sacrifice for sins. But that stage of his work is finished. The price-paying for our sins has been done. In the tabernacle there was no chair. The priest’s work was never finished. He could never sit down. But the first stage of Jesus’ work has been achieved. It is not the finish of everything. Jesus is still ruling and reigning. He still has to bring many sons and daughters to glory. But the atonement for sin has been accomplished. The gospel message is, ‘Come, for all things are ready’<sup>□1</sup>.

**What is Jesus doing?** The ‘sitting down’ of Jesus is important in another way. It means that Jesus is enthroned as king. He is ruling and reigning until all of God’s enemies are defeated. He is enthroned ‘at the right-hand of the throne of God’s Majesty’. It means he does his ruling and reigning on behalf of the Father. He is fulfilling the Father’s will.

Our writer tells us also that <sup>2</sup>*He is a minister in the holy places, in the true tabernacle, which the Lord made and which was not made by any human being.* Heaven is the dwelling-place of God. The Israelite tabernacle was a symbolic representation of it. But the **true** tabernacle (as opposed to the **symbolic** tabernacle) is the heavenly realm, the place from which Jesus rules as king. It is pictured as being like a room in heaven, like a tent in a piece of land. The true tent is set up by God himself. It is picture-language. I suppose. but it is God’s way of helping us

□1 1:1-14

□2 2:5-14

□3 3:1-6

□4 5:1-10

□5 7:1-28

□1 8:1

□2 8:2

□3 8:3-6a

□4 8:6b

□1 Luke 14:17

• Making decisions and interceding

• Presenting his blood to the Father

• Levitical priests – a model and a shadow of the heavenly things

• Jesus the fulfilment – a mediator between God and man

• We approach God through Jesus



to picture his rule in his kingdom. The earthly tabernacle was a copy of it.

Jesus is ministering there. He is making decisions on behalf of the Father. He is interceding. He is giving eternal life to whomever the Father has chosen<sup>1</sup>.

He is applying the blood of his own sacrifice. It does not mean that he is dying in heaven! But, in some mysterious manner, he is presenting his blood to the Father. He is fulfilling all of the symbolisms of the Mosaic law. He is the whole burnt offering, the grain-offering, the peace offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering. Everything that was foreshadowed in the institutions of the law is being fulfilled or is being presented as already fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>*For every high priest is appointed for offering gifts and sacrifices. So it is necessary that this person should also have something that he may offer.* The heart of being a priest is to offer a sacrifice. So what is Jesus' sacrifice? Jesus did nothing 'Levitical' when he was on earth. He never went inside the earthly holy of holies in Jerusalem's temple. He was never an earthly Levitical priest. <sup>4</sup>*If he were on earth, he would not be a priest –because there are already people who offer gifts according to the law.* God never ordained two earthly Mosaic systems, only one. Jesus does not qualify as a Levitical high priest, since he was not from the tribe of Levi. So his priestly ministry has to be taking place in the heavenly realm.

The Levitical priests were only shadows of something entirely heavenly. <sup>5</sup>*They serve as a model and a shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For it says, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you in the mountain.'* Moses was given exact instructions. The tabernacle was to be very carefully made so as to represent what the Son of God would do as the Saviour of God's people. But now the fulfilment has come. <sup>6</sup>*But now Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry, and it is more excellent just as he is the mediator of a better covenant, which is legally based on better promises.* The word 'mediator' occurs here for the first time in Hebrews. It means a 'go-between', a person who stands between two other people so as to bring them together. God does not relate to men and women directly. Men and women cannot approach God directly. God approaches us through Jesus; and we have to approach him through Jesus. The new relation between God and his people has better promises than were to be found in the law. The law had some promises. National stability came when there was a high level of morality in the land. But Jesus has altogether greater promises. They are obtained as we come to God through him.

<sup>1</sup> John 17:2

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