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*“The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light”*

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*Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD*

union will cease to exist, and the whole of Christendom will come together under the leadership of Papal Rome. Its power will be so great that it will for a time control the State, but the Beast and his ten confederate kings will turn upon the whore and "shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire". This will be the end of Christian profession. The way will then be clear for the open worship of MAN, with its centre, not in Rome, but in Jerusalem. 2 Thess. 2:11-12 shows that God will send the religious multitudes "a strong delusion" that they should believe "*the lie*." The truth is today near to them and they do not love it, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. It is a terrible thought that the empty religionists of our time who "profess and call themselves Christians" will eagerly embrace the new religion, and, like the demon-possessed swine of Gadara, will rush downwards to perdition (Mark 5).

Let us not miss the moral lesson of the foregoing. All evil is attributed to self-will. "The king shall do according to his will" (Dan. 11:40; cf. vv. 3 and 16). Our blessed Lord, when coming into the world, said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). Our path is to follow Him; God's Word our study, His will our joy. To souls perplexed and tried the word comes, "You have need of patience, that after ye have *done the will of God*, ye might receive the promise, for yet a very little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry". (Heb. 10:36-37).

(*To be continued*)

## NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

### Chap. 8: 1-6a \*

*Verse 1.*—*Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this:*—The writer is doing more than summing up what he has stated about Christ (as is indicated by the A.V., "sum"). He is not merely gathering up all the glories of Christ as a High Priest. That is so in one way, but what is meant is that the "chief point" is that Christ is "a minister of the sanctuary, and

\* See Analysis of these verses in last issue.

of the true tabernacle." Of this he is about to speak more particularly in this chapter and the ninth. In these first two verses he is both retrospective and prospective.

*We have such a High Priest*,—One, that is, who embodies in himself all the glories of Deity and all the perfections of humanity, One who is almighty in power and infinitely tender in sympathy. He not only knows our every need and feels with us in our sufferings, but has power to succour and sustain us, comforting us in our afflictions and carrying us right through them. As the antitype of Aaron He has been perfected through sufferings; as the antitype of Melchizedek He is enthroned in His rightful position of exaltation, a royal Priest, whose priesthood is both perfect and unchangeable, who is able to save to the uttermost and is entirely suited to us.

*who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*,—At the opening of the Epistle He was said to have "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," a simpler description than the one now given. There the object in view was to describe the dignity of His Person and position. This present statement indicates both His dignity and His authority. He is in the place of sovereign power as the Father's co-equal.

The right hand is not only the place of honour and majesty, it is also the place of affection. In Psalm 45 it is spoken of as the position of the queen beside her royal bridegroom (cp. 1 Kings 2:19 and Neh. 2:6). There the earthly king delighted to place his bride. In that position in Heaven the Father has been delighted to place His Son. Just as the husband is the head of the wife, and the wife on her part is his glory, so God the Father is the Head of the Son (1 Cor. 11:3), and the Son is His glory. The Father delights in Him, not only because of His intrinsic glory and excellence as being one with Him in the Godhead, but especially because He has accomplished the work of Divine grace and redemption on the Cross for us, having fulfilled the work which He had given Him to do. He Himself said, when speaking of those for whom as the Good Shepherd He was about to lay down His life, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again (John 10:17). What gives peculiar value to His position in the eyes of the Father is that His Son is there on behalf of those whom the Father has given Him in virtue of His atoning sacrifice.

The Throne of the Majesty would of itself be a place of dread for unregenerate man; he could contemplate it only at a distance, and with feelings of terror. It is different with the believer. The One whom God has seated there on our behalf is not ashamed to call us brethren. In the counsels of Divine grace He has partaken of flesh and blood in order that by the efficacy of His Death and in the power of His Resurrection life He may fulfil the eternal purposes of God in associating us with Himself. We are "accepted in the Beloved" and "seated with Him in the Heavenly places." The Throne, therefore, is not a place far distant from us, but that to which in our earthly experiences of need and suffering we draw near with reverence and yet with filial love, with holy awe and yet with boldness.

How comforting, in the trials and difficulties of our life and service, to bear in mind that we have such a High Priest, and that He is in the place of absolute authority on our behalf!

The Throne of the majesty is "in the heavens:" this is introductory to a description of the Heavenly sanctuary as contrasted with the earthly.

"The heavens," as referred to here, has a different significance from that in chapter 4:14, where it says that Christ "passed through the heavens." There the regions of the created universe were in view. Through these the Lord passed on the day of His Ascension when He took His seat at the right hand of God. He "ascended far above all the heavens" (Eph. 4:10), was "made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 8:26): they are the works of His own hands (1:10). Here in the eighth chapter the word is used in its higher sense to denote the eternal dwelling-place of God Himself. That is the place of His glory, and the Psalmist distinguishes it from the heavens of the natural creation when he says, "Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory upon (or above) the heavens" (Psa. 8:1). So in Psalm 13, "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above upon the heavens" (v. 4); cp. Ps. 148:14. The word is used again with the same significance in Heb. 9:23, and in the same contrast to things created. There is our eternal possession (10:34) and there our names are written (12:23; cp. Luke 10:10).

*Verse 2.—a minister of the sanctuary,*—The word rendered "minister" is *leitourgos*, one who serves in an official capacity,

whether civil or spiritual, in Scripture the latter. It is frequently used for the service of the priest in the sanctuary (e.g., Neh. 10:40). The association of this ministry with the priesthood is beautifully set forth in the Millennial prophecy concerning Israel, "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers (*leitourgoi*) of our God" (Isa. 61:6). So, again, God calls the Levites "the priests, my ministers" (Jer. 33:21). In the civil affairs of Greece the *leitourgos* served the state at his own cost. At what a cost has our Heavenly Minister entered upon the exercise of his High-priestly service on our behalf! The efficacy of His precious blood gives value to His work above. The marginal reading, "minister of holy things" is possible. The text itself is, however, to be preferred.

*and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.*—It is called "the true Tabernacle," not as in contrast to a false one, but as that which is abiding and real in its spiritual significance in contrast to the temporary and figurative tabernacle in the wilderness. Further, the heavenly tabernacle is the true one as being that which was originally designed in the eternal counsel of God, and is thus contrasted with that which was the work of human hands.

*Verse 3.*—"For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this High Priest also have somewhat to offer."—The Lord Jesus officially took His position and entered upon His service as a great High Priest when, having offered Himself in atoning Sacrifice on the Cross, He sat down "on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." For this position and service He had been "made perfect" officially by reason of His sufferings in the days of His flesh.

Yet while the order of His Priesthood is not Aaronic, He was in a special way the antitype of Aaron. On the day of atonement Aaron, having offered the sacrifices on the altar, entered with the blood into the holiest within the veil, and with the incense, which he put on the fire before the Lord, so that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat. In like manner, antitypically, the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself on the Cross, and having been raised from the dead, entered into the Heavenly Sanctuary, there to present, in all the fragrance of His perfect earthly life, the memorial of His atoning Death. His presentation of His Person,

and His ministry in the sanctuary, derive their value and efficacy from His finished work in sacrifice. Thus His offering on the cross was a priestly act (cp. 2:1-4).

That "it is necessary" that Christ as High Priest "should have somewhat to offer," does not mean that He is always offering, but that He remains as the Offerer. This He is by being for ever the Priest who had offered Himself, and who now dispenses the gifts and blessings based upon His sacrifice. 'He hath somewhat to offer,' in the sense that he has for ever the qualification of being an Offerer who, having executed that function, now bears to all eternity its character.

*Verse 4.*—*Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all.*—This refers to Christ's present ministry in the Sanctuary, and not to what He was or did on earth.

*seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law;*—That is to say, the priests on the earth were of the family of Aaron, and Christ does not belong to that line of succession. Their office passed from one to another. His abides eternally.

The superiority of the ministry of the Lord Jesus is now set forth in two respects: (1) it has to do with the reality and substance of what before was only "a copy and shadow;" (2) in His ministry He is "the Mediator of a better Covenant" (verses 5-13). As to the first, His ministry requires a Heavenly Sanctuary. The earthly priests served that which was only of a representative and illustrative character.

*Verse 5.*—*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.*—The pattern was intended to convey spiritual truths in a preparatory way. It was for "a testimony of those things which were afterwards to be spoken." The earthly sanctuary was itself derived from a heavenly original. God designed it, but Moses was appointed to set it up. Of the true tabernacle, the heavenly and spiritual, God is both Designer and Framer.

*Verse 6.*—*But now hath He obtained a ministry the more excellent.*—That is, since He is a priest in the Heavenly Temple, He has an office more exalted than that of the earthly priests; and this because the covenant under which He holds the office of Priest excels the covenant enacted by Moses, in the blessings it ensures.

## Analysis of chap. 8: 6b to 12

*A Better Covenant*

i.	Its basis: Enacted on better promises	...	...	...	6b
ii.	Its character faultless	...	...	...	7
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	1. Evangelical instead of legal	...	...	...	10
	2. 'I will' "		'Thou shalt'	...	10
	3. Internal "		External	...	10
	4. All shall know		Someone to teach	...	11
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v.	Its permanency	...	...	...	13

by how much also He is the Mediator of a better Covenant which hath been enacted upon better promises.—There is a contrast between the argument of the present passage and that of 7:22. In that chapter the superiority of the better covenant was shewn to be derived from the greatness of the Priesthood. Here the greater excellence of the Priesthood is measured by the superiority of the Covenant. The point in the seventh chapter is that, inasmuch as His Priesthood was established by an oath, "by so much also hath Jesus become the Surety of a better Covenant." Here in the eighth chapter His ministry is seen to be the more excellent because He is the Mediator of a better Covenant. In the seventh chapter it is the character of the Priesthood which gives superiority to the Covenant; in the eighth it is the superiority of the Covenant which adds dignity to the Priesthood.

Thus, in the seventh chapter, Christ is described as the *Surety* of a better Covenant; in the eighth He is described as the *Mediator*. In each respect His priesthood is superior to the Levitical Priesthood. He is the Surety of the Covenant because He is Himself the pledge of its fulfilment. As the Mediator He is the One through whom its terms are carried out. In the seventh chapter the superiority of His Person as a High Priest was in view; in the eighth the superiority of His ministry is before us. In chapter 7 His Suretyship is based upon the oath of God; here His Mediatorship is of a Covenant enacted upon better promises.

*Verse 7.*—For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.—"Faultless" here denotes free from defect. The Mosaic covenant had not positive faults or errors, but it did not in itself contain all the provision necessary for the pardon of sin, and for rendering the conscience peaceful (cp. 7:19). Accordingly the Law was designed to be preparatory to the gospel.



*Verse 8.*—*For finding fault with them,*—If this is the rendering to be taken, the “them” means the Israelites; but the rendering maybe, “For finding fault He saith to them,” and this is borne out by the preceding context, which declares that the first covenant was not free from fault. Moreover the ensuing passage from Jeremiah is characterized by promise and consolation and not by finding fault, and it shows that the former covenant was defective, in not accomplishing the fulness of the Divine design.

*He saith, Behold,*—an exclamation, not a verb.

*the days come, saith the Lord,*—or rather, ‘days come,’ pointing to a time indefinite, i.e., ‘at some future period.’

*that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,*—That is, with all the twelve tribes. The “new covenant” is of the character of a promise, an unconditional arrangement made by God, as what follows shows.

*Verses 9–12.*—*Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land Egypt; for they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more.*—The promise connected with the Old Covenant was conditional upon the fulfilment of its terms by the people. It offered life to those who kept the Law. The promise of life could not be fulfilled, because they continued not in God’s Covenant. The promises of the better Covenant are absolute. God assumes Himself the entire responsibility of fulfilling its terms. Because Christ is the Mediator of this Covenant, He will unfailingly carry out its conditions. This is one great feature which gives superiority to the ministry of Christ.

*Verse 13.*—*In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away.*—All this description of the superior excellence of the New Covenant is given in order that we may value and appreciate the more the present ministry of our Lord

Jesus Christ on our behalf in the Sanctuary. The more we learn of the glories of His Person and of the value which His Sacrifice on the cross gives to His work in the Sanctuary, the more shall we appreciate what His presence in the Sanctuary means for us. It is good for us to meditate, in communion with God, upon the virtue of the precious blood of Christ, and the majesty and power of His heavenly ministry, so that we may apprehend more fully its effects in our hearts and lives and in our changing experiences and circumstances here below. Do we not often fail to remember that both our deliverances from danger and our experiences of joy, as well as the disciplinary experiences of sorrow, come by reason of what Christ is doing in the presence of God? We owe, indeed, everything to the immediate operations of the Holy Spirit, but what the Spirit does is inseparable from the ministry of Christ in Heaven.

## THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

By ALEX SOUTTER

### II. Abraham the Intercessor

In a former paper entitled *The Tent Door*\* we dealt with the first part of this Theophany. Abraham's aloneness with his Lord, his act of worship and his lavish hospitality were there considered. We now pass on to the second part of Gen. 18 (v. 16ff.) which portrays the Friend of God engaged in the holy art of intercession on behalf of sinful Sodom.

The Lord—the central Figure of the group of visitants from heaven—had just pledged His word that a son would be born to Abraham and Sarah. The promise was based on a question that incorporates a challenge and a bond. God's word was His bond, and no power or authority in the universe could take up the divine challenge, even though nature's laws must needs be suspended to fulfil it. It is to be noted that the very words used in the LXX here, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord," are also used in Luke 1:37 in Gabriel's message addressed to Mary.

\* In the issue of October 1950; which is separate from this series.