

## ***Know whom you have in Jesus Christ*** (Hebrews 8:1–6)

Mere tradition and human ritual cannot produce spiritual results, not even those God-given rituals of the O.T., which were not intended to do that. It is the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in heaven upon which we must rely. He is the superior High Priest with the superior ministry. If you have drawn near to God through Christ, He is your High Priest. Know whom you have in Jesus.

### **I. *You have a High Priest who is exalted (8:1–2).***

#### **1. *He has an exalted position (8:1).***

He is in a position of authority and honor, at the right hand of God the Father, exalted above angels, Moses, Joshua, and Aaron.

Unless Levitical priests, He is seated, implying that His work of sacrifice is done, a truth made explicit in 7:27 and 10:12.

#### **2. *He has an exalted service (8:2).***

He is a minister (servant) of the “true tabernacle”, though in a position of honor and authority. He serves our needs on behalf of God as priest, having offered Himself, and interceding for us.

His place of ministry, the “true tabernacle,” is the heavenly, “original” holy place. (“True” refers to genuine as opposed to something derived or copied. Cf. John 1:9; 6:32; 15:1.)

Show that you know that you have an exalted high priest by not settling for anyone or anything less.

### **II. *You have a High Priest who has a superior priestly ministry (8:3–6).***

#### **1. *His ministry is superior because He had a better offering.***

The heart of the priestly ministry was bringing offerings and sacrifices to God as required by law (cf. 5:1; 8:4b). Therefore, Jesus as High Priest also had to have something to offer, but His one offering of Himself was done once for all, not to be repeated. Cf. 7:27; 9:11–14; 10:1–15.

#### **2. *His ministry is superior because He ministers in a better place.***

The law ruled out for Jesus any earthly ministry as priest (cf. 7:13–14). Therefore, He had to minister somewhere else, which the author points out is heaven, in the true tabernacle (8:2).

The earth-bound priests serve “a copy or shadow” of the heavenly, true tabernacle, which can be seen in the instructions given to Moses (Exodus 25:9, 40). That which casts the shadow is better than the shadow (cf. Colossians 2:17) and the model derives importance from the lesson or truth to which it points (cf. James 5:10; 2 Peter 2:6). Therefore, those who minister in the “copy” have a lesser ministry than He who ministers in the “true” tabernacle.

Attempts today to copy outward forms of O.T. worship, as if that were necessary for “better” worship, misses the change that has occurred in Christ. The spiritual realities are important, not the forms.

#### **3. *His ministry is superior because He mediates a better covenant.***

The mediator works to establish agreement between two parties, representing each to the other. The “old” covenant was mediated by Moses at Sinai (cf. Galatians 3:19; Exodus 19ff) and contained obligations for the people. The “better” covenant (cf. 7:22; 8:7–13) is mediated by Christ and contains God’s promises to do what the people were unable to do. God is pleased in the ministry of Jesus and His ministry benefits all who believe. It is a ministry superior to one that could not affect the necessary change in man.

When you have Jesus, you have a High Priest whose ministry is superior to all others who would claim to represent you before God.

There is no reason to rely upon rituals and external forms to obtain or maintain a right relationship to God. They are ineffective and counterproductive. Jesus introduced a change based upon His superior ministry. If you know whom you truly have in Jesus Christ, you will rely fully upon His ministry.

### ***Further questions for reflection and discussion:***

- Protestant evangelical Christianity is not devoid of its forms and rituals upon which some might be tempted to rely. Good (and even commanded) practices are no replacement for the work which only Jesus can do in us. How might the following practices become ritual or form upon which people rely rather than relying upon what Jesus would want to do through those practices? –daily devotional time; –attending Sunday worship; –sharing in the Bread & Cup; –helping the needy.

- Spiritual disciplines are important. Some are commanded. How do we best practice them yet avoid letting them somehow replace the ministry of Christ? How can you best guard your heart to constantly rely solely upon the superior ministry of Jesus? How can we help one another?