

Our glorious High Priest

Hebrews 8:1-6

In the Netherlands we remember today the end of world war 2 and the German occupation of our country. In order to free Europe from the German occupation many people died. We can still see that in various grave yards.

According to Matthew 1:21 the Lord Jesus Christ also came to set people free, as the angel tells Joseph that the son that would be born of Mary would save His people from their sins. And He did so by shedding His blood, dying and being resurrected from the dead.

The title of this sermon points to the fact that He, as the High Priest, is ultimately more glorious than any human high priest.

At the same time, He is also our example for living our life to the glory of God, so let's go to the first verses for today.

Hebrews 8:1-2

- Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at 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 erected, and not man.

Of all the human high priests that there have been, none can say of himself the three important things we see in these 2 verses:

- None of them has been seated at the right hand of God
- None of them has ever served in the true tabernacle in heaven
- None of them has been in the presence of God continuously.

This already shows the big difference there is between all the human high priests and our final and glorious High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let's go to the next verses.

Hebrews 8:3

- For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer.

Like any other High Priest also the Lord Jesus Christ had to offer a gift and a sacrifice.

The things He brought were much more valuable than everything the human High priests had brought.

We see that in the next verses from Hebrew chapter 10.

Hebrews 10:8-9

- Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*" (which are offered according to the law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

As the Lord Jesus Christ was praying in the garden of Gethsemane just before He was arrested, He again confirmed that the will of God was the most important thing of all to Him. Therefore He said: Not my will, but Your will be done!

To do the will of God has always been much more important than any offering that was brought according to the laws of the Old Testament. We see that for instance in the verses from 1 Samuel chapter 15 on the next sheet.

1 Samuel 15:22

- Then Samuel said: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.

As king Saul came back from a war against the people of Amalek and was met by the prophet Samuel, Samuel found out that Saul had not obeyed the commandment of the Lord with regards to the life stock of their enemies.

King Saul tried to justify his disobedience by saying that the people wanted to use all those animals for bringing a sacrifice to God.

Then the prophet Samuel replied with the words from this verse. These words make it very clear what is more important to God, a lesson we always must keep in mind.

But let's continue

Hebrews 8:4-5

- For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

It is important to realize that all the beautiful things Moses made according to the commandment of God were only a copy of the real things in heaven.

The verses on the following sheets make it clear that Moses really followed the instructions of God in making the tabernacle and all the things that belonged to it.

Let's go there.

Exodus 26:30

See also Ex. 25:40 and 27:8

- “And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain.

This is already a part of the instructions Moses got from God.

And he obeyed those instructions as we also see on the next sheets.

Numbers 8:4

- Now this workmanship of the lampstand *was* hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it *was* hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

So, Moses did not make the design of all those things, God did.

When you read the story of preparing all those things in the books of Moses, you'll see similar statements like the one in this verse several more times.

But Moses was not the only one to receive instructions from the Lord regarding building things.

Even though king David was not allowed to build the temple for God, he indeed got the plans for that temple from God and handed them to his son Solomon.

We see that in the next verses.

1 Chronicles 28:11-13

- Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things; also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the articles of service in the house of the LORD.

While David was not allowed to build the temple, God still used him by revealing His plans for that building to him.

David confirms that very clearly in the verse on the next sheet.

1 Chronicles 28:19

- “All *this*,” said David, “the LORD made me understand in writing, by *His* hand upon me, all the works of these plans.”

As we can see here David acknowledges God as the designer of all the plans for the temple. And later on, Solomon used those plans for actually building the temple.

The same thing is true for the church, the Body of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12:18 we read the following:

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

None of us can decide for himself which position he should have within the Body of Christ; it is God who decides that. For that reason, the appointment of elders etc. always should be embedded in much and serious prayer.

But let's continue.

Hebrews 8:6

- But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

God made a covenant with the Jewish people at mount Sinai, confirming them as His chosen people and giving them His laws to live by. He also promised to bring them to the promised land. However, they still were the same people, they had not been changed inwardly and we see that already in their attitude as they traveled from mount Sinai towards the promised land.

Under the new covenant people are not only freed from their slavery to sin, but they also become a new creation, receiving a new heart and a new spirit. In addition to that the Holy Spirit comes to live in them. So, it is fair to say that Christ is indeed the Mediator of a better covenant, based on better promises.

But there is even more to it as we see in the following verses.

1 Peter 2:4-5

- Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

While many people may think about a building when they hear the word church, in the Bible it actually means an assembly of disciples. As such they can meet with one another in basically any place.

But at the same time, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ form a spiritual home, being both living stones as well as a holy priesthood.

So, whenever there is a gathering of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in His name, there the Lord is also among them and people can have an encounter with Him. Together as disciples they can build up one another in the faith and encourage one another.

Ephesians 2:17-18

- And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.
- For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

In Christ we have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit.

And as we see in the next verses from this letter to the Ephesians we're also build into a spiritual building.

Ephesians 2:19-22

- Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

From these verses it also becomes clear that we, as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, together are becoming a building, a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, while the Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone that holds the whole building together.

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we should be true members of that community. None of us is supposed to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ just by himself. God wants us to be a community that strengthens one another and helps one another as we live our lives unto the glory of God, preaching the Gospel both in word and deed.

Let's go to the last sheet.

Ephesians 4:1-6

- I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

When we confess to be followers of one Lord we also should act as being all members of one body, the visible body of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

That should have a big impact on the way we live our lives. As true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we have the responsibility to continue His mission in this world.

It especially should have a major impact on how we look at other disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just think about how Satan has used the differences between denominations to destroy the unity within the Body of Christ.

Christ didn't want many bodies; He wants one united body.

Therefore He, and only He, must be the head of each church, just as He is the Head of the worldwide body of Christ.

Do we actually dare to pray for that unity to become real?