

THE BETTER MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne:

Hebrews viii. 3-6—"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."

I tried to show you last Sabbath-day two things from these words.

1st. What was the use of a high priest. I showed you that every high priest was ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. Before there was any sin there was no high priest. Adam before he fell, and the holy angels, needed no high priest, because their praises and their adorations went up to the throne of God untinged with sin : But when sin came into the world, there was a great chasm made between God and the sinner, and here came the need of a high priest. A high priest is one who comes in between God and sinners.

2dly. I showed you, in the second place, That of necessity Christ must have something to offer. I showed you, if he is to be a high priest, he must offer up gifts and sacrifices : He must stand between the sinner and God.

Now to-day, I mean just to follow on in nearly a regular manner, in opening up something more about this high priest.

I. What it was that God gave to Moses.—"See," saith he, "that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the Mount."

II. To show you what was the use of this, verse 4.

III. To show you that Christ has a more excellent ministry, for he is not on earth, but in heaven.

I. Let us inquire what it was that God gave to Moses.—Read from the middle of the 5th verse—"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." Now, brethren, you will remember, when the children of Israel lay at the foot of the rocks of Sinai, that God called Moses up two times to the top of the Mount with himself. Now, some of you will ask, why was Moses twice forty days and forty nights in the Mount ? Suffice it so say, as far as I can see, that the first purpose was, to reveal the law, and then to show him the gospel. You will see this Exodus xxxi. 18—"And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." And again, the second time God did nearly the same thing. You will see this in the 34th chapter, 28th verse—"And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." This was the reason why Moses was in the Mount with God : He wrote the law on two tables of stone, to show that it was durable ; and he wrote it with his own finger, to show that it was his law. O, brethren ! what a view Moses would get, then, of the evil of sin! He would get a view something like that of Paul when he said, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Brethren, pray that you may see the holy law of God. I observe that you do not like to see the holy nature of the law. Dear brethren, if you have any wish to be saved, do not rest with slight views of the law. But there was a second purpose in Moses being taken up to the Mount—it was to discover to him the glorious gospel ; and this he did in two ways. First of all, he showed to him the pattern of the Tabernacle he was to make. He gave him the pattern of all that was to be in the Tabernacle—the ephod for the high priest, his garments for glory and for beauty, &c. The second way was by proclamation. He proclaimed before him, "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Ah, brethren ! these were two glorious discoveries that God gave him. Some of you will ask, what God gave him—what it was he let him see. This is mentioned in Exodus xxv. 8,9—"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." Verse 40—"And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the Mount." And then, 26th chapter, 30th verse;

27th chapter, 8th verse. From these you will see, that over and over again, God commanded Moses to make the Tabernacle as was showed him in the Mount. Now, what was the pattern ? The most common idea is, that God showed him it all as it were in a vision. Now, it appears to me, as far as I can see it, that this is not the meaning ; for he had the measurement of it already ; and it does not appear to me what use it would be to give him a visionary view of it, when it was but a shadow of what was to come. Look at the 8th verse—"For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." And then the next chapter, 24th verse—"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." And then the 10th chapter, 1st verse—" 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." Now, observe, brethren, that if God had only showed to Moses the shadow, he would have showed him a shadow of a shadow, and therefore I cannot but believe that what God showed to Moses was that which was to come. I believe that God showed him the true candlestick, which is the church of the redeemed. I believe that God showed him the true Lamb that was to be slain. I believe that God showed him the reality, as he did to John in Patmos. God opened a window in heaven, and showed John the realities of the eternal world. He saw the throne and him that sat upon it. And so God, on the craggy Mount of Sinai, showed Moses heaven, the throne, and him that sat thereon, &c. And this brethren, is why he staid twice forty days and forty nights—this is the reason why God was so careful in desiring him to rear the Tabernacle—"See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." Brethren, it is a sight of the realities of the heavenly kingdom that make a willing workman—it is thus that makes the people bring so willingly their offerings for the building of the Tabernacle. Brethren, it is the same with us : When a soul gets a view of the heavenly kingdom, then he is willing to work for Christ. It is this that makes willing parents, willing to teach their children, when they have a sight of glory. It is this that makes willing Sabbath-school teachers, when they have been on the Mount with God. Is it thus with you ? Ah, brethren ! has God made you to see this ? Has he revealed the way into the holiest of all ? You will not be a willing workman till then.

II. I hasten to the second point ; and that is, to show you what was the use of the Jewish priests.—Verse 4th—"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." The use of the high priest under the law was to serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, but the priest also was a shadow of heavenly things. That was the true meaning of it. He was a shadow in his dress : Every part of his dress—the ephod, the girdle, the robes for glory and for beauty—these were a shadow of good things to come. And then the jewels on his breastplate were a shadow of Christ bearing his people's names, when he went into the holiest of all. And not only the dress, but the character—he was Aaron their brother. And then the actions when he offered atonement, they also were a shadow of Christ's sacrifice for us. And when the high priest went in once a year into the holiest of all, he remembered all the people—he had their names on his breastplate. This was a shadow of our high priest going into heaven and there appearing for us.

From this I would have you learn this lesson,—that it is our duty to serve God in whatever way we are placed. I can imagine a priest wishing he had been a gospel minister—wishing he had been a minister of the reality, and not of the shadow. But every true priest would be content to serve unto the sample and shadow of heavenly things. Learn you the same lesson. He is the happiest who is content to serve God in whatever way he is placed.

III. The better ministry of Christ. Verse 6th—"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry." Now I cannot stop to open up all the excellencies of Christ's ministry. First, this is the substance—that was the shadow of good things to come. He was the substance—all that the dress of the high priest represented was in Christ. When he came, he had in him all the fulness of the Godhead. And then he had the names of his people on his breast—he had not jewels on his breast, but he had his people's names on his heart. And not only the dress, but all the character was found in him. Aaron had a little compassion : He could say, "Come unto me, and I will show you where you will find rest." But Christ could say, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." The high priest offered up sacrifice—Christ offered up the true sacrifice. Brethren, have you gone to this high priest ? Every Jew that ever was saved came through the shadow to this high priest. Brethren, why do you despise him ? Is there any other ? Go round the universe, you will not find another that receives sinners. Go round the universe, and you will not find another that washes out sins. Brethren, why do you not go to him ? There is none other can save you. There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby you can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. This will seal the perdition of many of you.—Now, just one word more. Christ's is a more excellent ministry, because it is in heaven. Christ was of the tribe of Judah, and therefore he could not be a priest, for of that tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. But he is a priest in heaven—he offered his sacrifice, and now he appears in the presence of God for us. I fancy sometimes that it

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would have been joyful if Christ had remained on earth ; but this is but a dream. It is far better that he is in heaven, for we know that he will plead our cause. Ah ! can you say, I have a priest in heaven ? Some of you can perhaps say, "I have a father, or I have a mother in heaven." But it is far better if you can say, "I have a priest in heaven." When old companions, old lusts, and sins crowd in upon you, and when you feel that you are ready to sink, what can save you, sinking sinner ? This alone—I have a high priest in heaven, and he can support in the hour of affliction. This alone can give you peace—I have a high priest in heaven. When you are dying—when friends can do you no good—when sins rise up like spectres around your bed—what can give you peace ? This—"I have a high priest in heaven." Dying sinners ! how little do you know that which you have so much need to know, that there is a high priest in heaven—the only high priest that can take away sin—that can receive sinners ! May the Lord bless his word ! Amen.