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SHADOWS OR REALITY, WHICH?

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
NUMBER 58
HEBREWS 8:4-5

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Let us get a corrected translation of the first three verses of this chapter before we study verses 4 and 5. "Now the main point on what is being communicated is this--We have such a category of high priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the holy places and of the tabernacle, that is the real one which The Lord put together and not man. For every Levitical High Priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: therefore it is considered necessary that this one also have something that he might offer."

HEBREWS 8:4 "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:" "For" (this is an affirmative particle rarely used this way) from the word men. This is quite common in attic Greek but rarely used in New Testament Greek. Used as it is here (and is so used 182 times in the New Testament) it should be translated "indeed." Now in the first three verses we have been told enough to let us know that Christ is superior to any high priest that has ever lived or ever will live. He is unique and is eternal God and cannot change. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. He is perfect humanity and perfect deity and will remain that way forever. Our object for living on this earth is to reach the place of occupation with Christ. (We ought to constantly check on all those things which keep us from having occupation with Christ.) Everything else in life should be subservient to this. We have the Greek word ei to introduce a second class condition. So thus far, we have, "If indeed, but it isn't." Next we have the imperfect, active, indicative of eimi (Christ would produce the action of the verb, but it isn't so that he is on the earth). Next we have epi plus the genitive of ge. So this really means, "If he were functioning on the earth, but he isn't." The next phrase is "He would not even be a priest."

Next we have "seeing that there are" and this is a present, active, indicative of eimi. Remember this was being spoken and written down here in 67 A.D. and the Levitical priesthood was still functioning in Jerusalem. It should have ceased in 30 A.D. when the Church Age began, but here it is still going on. The writer here is setting up the contrast between the Levitical priest on the earth and the function of Christ at the right hand of the throne of God. These priests were illegally functioning on the earth while he was legally functioning in heaven.

Next we have "While there are priests which keep on functioning on the earth" and this is a present, active, participle of prosphero. The legitimate high priest had taken over and they were out, but still they kept on functioning. They had been functioning for almost 40 years illegitimately. But this illegitimate function is about to come to an end, which it did in August of 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed.

A New Priest For A New Dispensation

You can't have the old priesthood for the new dispensation. With the coming of the new, the old had to go. Born again people had been to the cross and they didn't need to go back to the altar again.

Summary

1. The interruption of the Jewish Age by the coming of the Church Age had set aside the Levitical priesthood and had set aside the Mosaic Law as an authorizing agency.
2. However, the Levitical priesthood, without any authorizing agency, was continuing to function in Jerusalem and was leading astray many weak and reversionistic believers. (Hebrews 5:11 through 6:6) (Even Paul got caught in this trap when he offered a vow in the temple.)
3. Two points of superiority are not in this context.
 - a. Christ functions in heaven in contrast to the Levitical priests on the earth. Heaven is superior to the earth.
 - b. Christ functions in heaven under the eternal decrees, while the Levitical priests function under the authorization of the Mosaic Law, which had been abrogated and annulled.
4. The interruption of the Jewish dispensation set aside the Mosaic Law as an authorizing agency.
5. The annulment of the Mosaic Law nullified the Levitical priesthood.
6. Therefore, Christ functions legitimately in heaven under the order of the divine decrees. The Levitical priesthood was functioning illegitimately under a defunct law.
7. A revoked priesthood is inferior to an established priesthood.

Now get a corrected translation of this verse--"If indeed he were on earth, but he isn't. He would not even be a priest (The Levitical order had been disestablished) while there are ones offering the gifts according to the law of Moses.

This next verse will discuss the superiority of reality over shadow.

HEBREWS 8:5 "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 Levitical priests were functioning in the Church Age illegitimately. They were dabbling in shadows after the reality had come. The reality was Jesus Christ. The cross had already been accomplished and he had ended it with the words "It is finished." One of the things that this meant for those Jews was that animal sacrifices had been finished forever. The accomplishment of the cross had been vindicated by his resurrection, his ascension and his being seated at the right hand of God. Every piece of furniture in that Tabernacle and later on in the temple showed the reality of Christ. This reality had occurred.

Blindness of Soul

The activity of the priests in offering sacrifices after the supreme sacrifice had been made on the cross, indicates the blindness of their souls. Those Levitical priests were so blinded by their own ritual and forms of worship that when the Lamb of God came to Jerusalem they passed him by. (For a moment we might look at Luke 18:31-19:10 and think of how Jesus passed by.) Many never recognized him as he passed by.

5th verse begins with the nominative plural of hostis and refers to a category of priests appointed to serve. The word "serve" is a present, active, indicative of latreuo. This refers to the work they kept on doing day after day as they served in the office of priest. They wore certain clothes, they killed certain animals, and they went through with certain ritual in every sacrifice. All of this pointed to the Lamb of God. But all they did was a shadow of the coming reality. So this phrase says, "Who were such a category of priests performing worship service." The words "unto the example" really mean "as a model." The Greek words are hupo deigma and means "As a model, as a copy."

Shadows

Next we have the word "shadow" and this is the dative singular of skia and is a shadow in contrast to the reality. The model and the shadow was given to them to teach them doctrine. This is the way they were to learn of Christ. Even David, himself, learned a great deal about doctrine in the field of Christology by watching these Levitical priests perform their ritual. This is the way David came to be occupied with Christ.

Ritual A Teaching Aid

All the ritual they performed was used as a teaching aid. Today we learn doctrine through the teaching of the Word of God. They learned it by ritual. This was the way teaching was done until the ritual was replaced by the reality. It was a shadow of heavenly things. Christ ministered in regard to heavenly things while their priests ministered in copies and shadows of heavenly things.

The Doctrine Of Shadows

1. Shadows were used in many different ways in Scripture. The shadow of a tree or the wall of a house was used to represent hospitality. (Genesis 19:8) Here we see love and a relaxed mental attitude that offers hospitality to a stranger.
2. Shadows are used to contrast earthly life to eternity. (2 Chronicles 29:15, Job 8:9) The shadow of this life is nothing to compare to the amazing life with God in eternity. We all live in anticipation for the glory of the life that is coming to us with God in eternity. Life at best is a shadow.
3. Shadows are used for dying grace. (Psalm 23:4) Dying is just a shadow for the believer.
4. The shadow is used as a protection from God. We face known and unknown dangers in our lives. (Psalm 17:8, 36:7, 51:1, 63:7, 91:1) This was David's wonderful testimony as to how God cast his shadow over him in all circumstances of life. David had super grace confidence that The Lord was protecting him.
5. The shadow is used as a contrasting thought. It is empty, superficial, disasterous type living. (Psalm 144:4, Ecc. 6:12 and 8:13) Superficial living and the misery that attends it.
6. The shadow is used as the protection of right man over his right woman. (Song of Solomon 2:3) A woman can bask under the shadow of the love of her right man. But we bask under the shadow of The Lord Jesus Christ.

7. The shadow is used for instability. (James 1:17) A shadow keeps moving. You can't pin a shadow down. It is in one spot one moment and then in another the next moment.
8. The shadow is used in Scripture to describe bad foreign policy. (Isaiah 30:2-3) The shadow of national decline and future downfall now hangs over this nation. (Illustration--when we allowed Cuba to come under the hand of Russia.)
9. The shadow is used for pressure destroying the normal functions of life. (Job 17:7, Psalm 102:11, 109:23)
10. The shadow as in our passage is used for a ritual in the Old Testament which was entirely legitimate in its time. But the shadow has no place left for it when the reality has arrived. (Col. 2:17, Heb. 8:5, Heb. 10:1)

This 5th verse goes on to say, "As Moses" and the word for "as" is an adverb from kathos and the meaning is "since." Next we have "Moses was admonished" and this is a perfect, passive, indicative of chrematizo and it means to receive instruction. So this phrase says, "Since Moses had received divine instruction." This is an intensive perfect and means Moses had received the finished product.

Next we have "when he was about" and this is the present, active, indicative of mello which shows the intention he had in his mind. "To make" is the present, active, infinitive of epiteleo and means "to construct." It hadn't occurred yet, but it is so certain to occur it is put in the present tense. Then we have the word skene which means a large tent, or tabernacle.

Documentation

Now we will have a quote from Exodus 25:40.

The words "For he says" is the present, active, indicative of phemi and not lego. This word is used to picture God speaking to Moses. Next we have the present, active, imperative of horao. Horao means more than see, it means to see and understand what you see. "Thou shalt make" is the future, active indicative of poieo and this is an imperative future. He is commanded to make all things "according to a pattern" and this is kata tupos. This means "according to the blueprint." The next word "shewed" is the aorist, passive, participle of deiknumi and means "having been explained to you." Then we have en oros which means on the mountain.

Now get a corrected translation of this verse--

"Who, perform worship service as a copy and pattern and shadow of the heavenly things, since Moses had received divine instruction when he was about to construct the Tabernacle, For God communicated (Quote from Exodus 25:40). You shall make all things according to the blueprint, having been explained to you on the mountain."

Summary

1. This verse is a contrast between the copy and the original, between the shadow and the reality, between the earth and the heaven.

2. In each contrast Christ is our High Priest and he is superior.
3. Christ is the original and the reality and he now ministers for us in heaven.
4. Furthermore, Christ provides the doctrinal information and authorizing information for Moses.
5. Once again Christ is infinitely superior to any aspect of the Levitical priesthood.

The ritual of religion is one of the cruel things which detours many people. Just use good common sense and stay with Christ. People who are enamored with ritual and religion have a hard time ever knowing the reality from the shadows.