

Hebrews 8:2 in the Navajo Bible

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Ts'ídá aláahgo hodiyingo haz'áagi éí níbaal bii' hodíłzinii t'áá aaníinii, éí diné doo niiní'áanii nidi Bóhólníihii niiní'ánígíí biyi' góne' naal'a'í nilí. (Hebrews 8:2)¹

[A]nd who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. (Hebrews 8:2)²

Introduction

In Hebrews 8:2 we read that Christ "serves" in the sanctuary. This is not talking about any of the models of the sanctuary here on earth, but the real sanctuary that those models were all based on and designed to reflect. The English word is a verb: "serves." We read this without thinking about it. Christ "serves" in the sanctuary – the real one in heaven.

But the Navajo places this in a different light. There Christ "is a servant" (*naal'a'í nilí*) in the heavenly sanctuary. What He does there is done by way of serving someone's needs. Whose needs are those?

Discussion

The one thing we can be sure of is that Christ is not serving His Father's needs in the sanctuary, because His Father does not need anything.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. (Acts 7:24-25)

So whose needs is Christ serving as He ministers in the sanctuary in heaven? Whatever He does there is done to meet our needs. He came here to serve and He went there to serve – not to retire. He didn't serve here for thirty-three plus years and then go off and leave us to think how good it is that He helped us in the past. No! He's helping us now, too. The work Christ does in heaven – at the Father's side, surrounded by angels who love to do His will – is still done as an act of service. His work in heaven now has the same purpose as His earlier work on earth. And so Paul tells us,

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8)

Here NIV says that Christ – the Glory of heaven – "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7). That's when He came here to the earth as a human baby. And then? Paul continues:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

The Father "exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name" (vs. 9). That's one part of it. The rest is that in heaven, just as on earth, Christ continues to serve – to be a Servant – ministering the benefits of His sacrifice on our behalf.

One reason why the book of Hebrews was written in the first place is to show where Christ is now and what He is doing. When He was on earth people saw and heard Him for a number of years, but then He went away. Why? And what is He doing now? This passage (Hebrews 8:2) answers the question. He did not go to heaven to retire. He went to heaven to continue serving, meeting human need. He did this here and has not stopped thinking of us and working for us in heaven. His work has taken a different form, but it does not have a different motivation. What He does there is done for us, just as what He did here was done for us. He has not forgotten His bonds to the human family.

Conclusion

This is an amazing picture of Christ and one that we badly need to understand. We picture Him enduring thirty-three plus years of hardship on earth and then, at last, He goes to heaven and it's all behind Him. Now He sits at the right hand of the Father in glory. Well, yes and no. He does sit at the Father's right hand (see Acts 2:33; 7:56). But what He does there is done for the purpose of meeting human need, just as His ministry here on earth did. He's not just sitting there enjoying the beauty of heaven. He's working in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf.