

Lesson Thirteen — A Better Covenant

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Last week we studied the differences between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek. We saw that while Jesus is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary after the priesthood of Aaron, He is seated at the right hand of the Father, waiting for the time when He will come as King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek. This week we are going to see the some other comparisons the author of the Book of Hebrews makes.

Day One — The Main Point

The author has brought us to a point where he feels the need to summarize what he has told us up to this point. (Thank you very much!)

With what you have learned up to this point, your understanding should be becoming clearer and clearer. Read with confidence, knowing that God wants to teach you these things. As you pray for continual understanding, also be praying that you will live according to the standard to which you have attained (Phil. 3:15-16).

After praying, read chapter eight. Then we'll look at the various passages of this chapter. Read the chapter in its entirety now.

Now the main point in what has been said is this: We have such a high priest...

Such a High Priest as *what*? Look back at 7:26-28. These three verses describe our High Priest:

Hebrews 7

26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; **27** who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did this once for all when He offered up Himself. **28** For the Law appoints men as high priests

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who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

Make a list of the description of our High Priest, and how He is different from the other high priests:

Then the author goes on to say:

Hebrews 8

1 Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. 4 Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; 5 who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “SEE,” He says, “THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.”

Let's deal with a few questions just to make sure we have clarification here.

What does the author say is the main point of all this (Heb. 8:1)?

Where does he say our High Priest is right now (8:1b, 2)? Do you understand what the significance of this is? If so, what?

What is the difference between the sanctuary in which our High Priest ministers and the sanctuary in which the Old Testament high priests used to minister (8:2, 4-5)?

There is good reason why the Lord could not minister in the sanctuary on earth. The answer is found in a couple of different places in our text. Read Hebrews 7:12-14, comparing it with 8:4-5. Why could the Lord not minister in the earthly sanctuary?

We see that every high priest had to offer gifts and sacrifices. Let's talk for a moment about the work of the priests and high priests. They ministered on behalf of God's people in things pertaining to God (2:17), in order to offer gifts and sacrifices sin of the people (5:1). Remember the sins for which they were offering gifts and sacrifices was the sins of *God's people* — people who had already been redeemed. The same is true with our High Priest Who is ministering in the heavenlies right now. He also had to have something to offer (8:3). But He could not offer His gifts and sacrifices in the earthly sanctuary, because He was not from the tribe of Levi. This High Priest is from the tribe of Judah, *a tribe which reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests* (7:14).

Let it be known that the whole of Scripture points to some facet of the work of Christ (Lu. 24:27). Not only does the work of the priests and high priest point to the work of Christ, but also the sacrifice itself. Hence, Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice. In His one offering, He became the Passover Lamb for those who have need of redemption, **and** He became the sacrificial lamb for redeemed people who have need of cleansing from sin, **and** He became the scape goat, Who takes away the confessed sin of the people. In addition to all of this, He acted as High Priest in performing this once-for-all sacrifice.

When Christ offered Himself as the blood sacrifice, He fulfilled all aspects of the law pertaining to sin. But He fulfilled more of the law than just the blood sacrifice. He also fulfilled the law concerning the work of the high priest, but not in the sanctuary on earth built by men, but in the heavenly sanctuary. The earthly sanctuary was only of copy of the sanctuary which was pitched by God in heaven. Jesus entered the very sanctuary which served as the pattern given to Moses on the mountain. It is upon the Mercy Seat in the heavenly sanctuary, which Jesus placed His own blood. And because He is the perfect High Priest, the perfect sacrifice, His blood being placed on the heavenly Mercy Seat, He has taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High. His sacrifice was once for all. Now there is no longer a need for daily or yearly sacrifices. Having completed His work as the high priest according to the order of Aaron, in the heavenly sanctuary, at the Father's request, He sat down at His right hand. Now He is waiting.

It is spoken of the priesthood according to the order of Aaron, that these priests *stood* daily ministering at the altar (10:11). Their work was never done. They never sat down in their ministry. Yet it is said concerning Christ that He *sat down*, signifying that He had completely fulfilled the law concerning the gifts and sacrifices. The work of the priests according to the order of Aaron had been completed. All that was necessary for sin had been done, once for all.

Christ has completed His work in relation to His present ministry in the Sanctuary insofar as the application of the blood is concerned. But He continues a work for us as High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary, on the basis of His blood placed on the Mercy Seat in the heavenlies. This is for the on-going cleansing of our sin as we repent and confess (I John. 1:9). Also, He has *already been appointed* King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and has all power (Mt. 2:2; 28:18). But He has yet to exercise any of this ministry.

We'll cover the idea of a better covenant with better promises tomorrow. As you close today, please read through Hebrews chapter eight one more time. And just see how much you are learning! Have a good day.

Day Two — Comparisons

Be sure to pray today.

You may or may not have noticed that much of the text in the Book of Hebrews is text which compares one thing to another. The chapters which we are considering presently have several comparisons. One thing ***is better than*** another. Over and over again you can notice these comparisons throughout the Book of Hebrews.

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Below is a list of passages found throughout the pages of this epistle wherein the author makes these comparisons. Read through these passages and make a note of the things being compared. We'll draw a conclusion at the end of the list.

Hebrews 1

3 When He made purification for our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 6

7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. 9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 7

18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 7:22 so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

There are two areas of comparisons. What are they?

Hebrews 9

22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. 23 Therefore it was necessary for the

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copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 10:34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 11:35 Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection;

What is being compared?

Hebrews 11:40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

What is being compared?

Hebrews 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

What is being compared?

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Compare this previous verse (12:24) with Hebrews 11:4, printed above. What similarities/differences do you see?

What do you think is the implication from all these comparisons?

With this in mind, reread the first portion of Hebrews chapter eight.

Hebrews 8

1 Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, **2** a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. **3** For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. **4** Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; **5** who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “SEE,” He says, “THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.”

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. **7** For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

Compare what is said of the tabernacle on earth and the tabernacle in heaven. What are the differences:

Besides the comparisons of the tabernacles, the major comparison in chapter eight is the comparison of the old and new covenants. The old covenant was that which was enacted at Mount Sinai, the new covenant is that which will be enacted with Israel in the coming age. And the very thing which allows the old to be put aside and the new to be enacted is the perfect sacrifice and the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. He is *seated* now, waiting for the time to be fulfilled.

Jesus fulfilled the Law completely when He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice on Calvary. But He could not offer the blood of this sacrifice in the Holy of Holies on earth, because He was not from the priestly tribe. He offered the blood of this sacrifice in the Most Holy place in the heavenly sanctuary, which was the very pattern for things on earth. This action on the part of Jesus Christ fulfilled the very thing which the Law pointed toward. All the previous sacrifices ever offered in the earthly sanctuary pointed to this very sacrifice. This was the perfect sacrifice; the sacrifice which would end the need for all future sacrifices. And this sacrifice is the one which allows the new covenant to be put into place. Yet, having completed this work, Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father and is waiting.

The author of Hebrews speaks clearly of this in the first half of chapter ten. Turn in your Appendix to Hebrews chapter ten and read the first 18 verses. Hebrews chapter nine really seems to be parenthetical within the text.

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While we will cover chapter nine on Day Four of this week, we do want to see clearly what the main point is being made here in these chapters. So read Hebrews 10:1-18 now, paying particular attention to the last sentence in v. 9.

Now compare what physical position the priests are in as they daily offered the sacrifices in the temple (Heb. 10:11) with the position Jesus assumes at the right hand of the Father (v. 12). What is the comparison?

An added note, for your information. Christ can minister as a priest today, though not be from the tribe of Levi, because those to whom He ministers are not associated with the covenants of Israel. However, once Israel is brought back into the picture, the priesthood will have to change. That is to say that Christ cannot minister after the order of Aaron in the camp of Israel, and not be from the tribe of Levi. Hence, we see a change in the priesthood, when Israel is reestablished.

As we close for today, write out what you think is the point being made by the author. You will discuss this in your class discussion this week.

Day Three — A New Covenant

Pray first.

Today we will begin with a few thoughts from some passages we have previously covered.

Hebrews 7

11 Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. ...

...15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is witnessed of Him, “THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” 18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. 20 And inasmuch as it was not without an oath 21 (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, “THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, ‘THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER’”); 22 so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

There is a bringing in of a *better hope*... (v. 9). Have you come to understand what the better hope is? What is it?

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Jesus *has become the guarantee of a better covenant* (v. 22). Do you know what the better covenant is? What does it mean? When will it be enacted?

The author of Hebrews is ready to describe the *better covenant*. In the last half of chapter eight, he quotes the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, clearly indicating that the new covenant was planned all along.

Hebrews 8 (Remember the caps indicate that an O. T. passage is being quoted.)

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. 8 For finding fault with them, He says,

“BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH; 9 NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

10 “FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM UPON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. 11 AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR ALL SHALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. 12 FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”

13 When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Here are some questions to draw answers out of the text —

In v. 7, what is the implication about the first covenant? In other words, why does a new covenant need to be effected?

With whom will God make this new covenant?

When will He make the new covenant?

When did God make the old covenant with Israel?

But what happened in the old covenant?

When He effects this new covenant, what will be characteristic of the people?

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How will God respond to Israel in the new covenant?

Now, write v. 13 in your own words:

It is important to note that in as much as the old covenant was effected with Israel, so will the new covenant be effected with Israel. Israel had rejected the offer of the kingdom when Christ appeared the first time. Israel was set aside for a dispensation. The Book of Hebrews draws attention to the fact that after Jesus made purification for sin, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and He is waiting until the time for His enemies to be made His footstool. When that time comes, God will effect a new covenant with Israel, and will write on their hearts His law, as opposed to writing it on stone. That is the point being made in the last half of chapter eight.

That's it for the day. Tomorrow we will look at Hebrews chapter nine in preparation for next week's study. Have a good day.

Day Four — The Tabernacle

Pray first.

I am not quite sure why there is a chapter division between chapters eight and nine. The thought very definitely flows. So we will simply continue from where we left off yesterday. As you find Hebrews chapter nine in your Appendix, also look for the drawing of the tabernacle and have it in front of you. Refer to it as you read through chapter nine.

Hebrews chapter eight opens with a comparison between the heavenly sanctuary and the earthly sanctuary. The author makes the point that the earthly sanctuary is simply a copy of the heavenly one, and that the heavenly one was pitched by the Lord, not man. (Interesting thought!) As we come to chapter nine, the author writes a little more about the earthly one. Let's see what we can learn about this tabernacle. It helps to keep in mind that the ministry of the priest in any part of the Tabernacle was always on behalf of saved people. Never was there any ministry in the Tabernacle on behalf of unsaved people. And as it was in the Old Testament in the earthly sanctuary, so it is at the present time in the heavenly sanctuary. Our High Priest also only ministers in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of Christians. Keep that in mind as you read through this text.

Read through chapter nine a couple of times then place detail concerning both areas in the appropriate column.

The Holy Place
(The outer part of the tabernacle)

The Holy of Holies
(The inner part of the tabernacle)

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Did you notice an interesting comment the author made at the end of 9:5? Since that comment was inspired by the Holy Spirit, I think we will follow suit.

Be sure to note the comparisons being made here. These comparisons are with purpose. The old covenant and all its regulations pointed to something new, something better. Remembering this will also aid you in understanding.

Notice the last phrase of v. 15. What is the passage dealing with?

Do you remember that the inheritance is what the Book of Hebrews is dealing with throughout — the inherited salvation which is yet future? Relate this passage with v. 28. What similarities do you see?

Now relate this to Hebrews 1:14. Any similarities?

Throughout this entire chapter, the author compares the old way with the new way. And not that God changed His mind. From the beginning, He had planned the first to be set aside to be replaced by the new. (Note the appearance of Melchizedek prior to the giving of the law.) Christ's death fulfilled the whole law, and made way for the new covenant to be enacted. His sacrifice was once for all. And now He ministers on behalf of Christians until a coming time — that time when He comes after the order of Melchizedek.

That's enough to chew on for the day.

Day Five — See What You've Learned

We have covered much material in the past couple of weeks. Some of it has been difficult material — things which have to do with the Word of Righteousness. This material is difficult to teach and difficult to grasp. I have prayed for you. And I know you have prayed for your own understanding. Today I would like for you to feel encouraged. I believe that you will be very encouraged if you would simply read through the first ten chapters of Hebrews and see how you have grown in your understanding. There is nothing comparable to reading God's Word. In it is Life itself. Read and drink in His Life for you.