

The New Covenant, Part 1

Hebrews 8:1-13

1619

Tonight we come, in our continuing study of Hebrews, to the eighth chapter. And, if you have your Bible, I'd like to ask you to turn to the eighth chapter. It's amazing to me how the Spirit of God dovetails our studies. And, as we've been going through Acts and Hebrews, we've found ourselves being paralleled on several occasions. And I think it's generally on those occasions that are somewhat difficult that the Spirit of God gives us kind of a double dose so that we really kind of let it sink in.

Now, in the Book of Hebrews, as we first began its study, I mentioned to you that it is not an easy book. There are many difficult things about the Book of Hebrews. Most of its difficulty comes from the fact that we cannot see it in the light of a Jewish mind. We cannot see it in the context of Judaism, not really having been raised in Judaism as those to whom it was written. Some of you who are Jewish believers, who've spent a portion of your lifetime in Judaism, find the Book of Hebrews speaking perhaps a little more directly, and at some points more clearly, to you than to Gentile believers or Jewish believers who have no religious background.

And so we have found it somewhat difficult at certain points, and yet how the Spirit of God has thrilled us and blessed us as we have studied through particularly the last portions on the priesthood of Jesus Christ. But as we come tonight, we want to be reminded that the theme of the epistle is the absolute sufficiency and superiority of Jesus Christ. And the point of the letter is to tell those Jews in that community that they can put everything on Jesus Christ, that they can put all of their confidence in Him, all of their hope in Him and all of their trust in Him and drop entirely all of the old features of Judaism, for Christ is superior and He is sufficient.

That is the message of this book, that they do not need a combination of both the old and the new, that they dare not hang on strictly to the old, but that they come to Christ, who is everything they need. And as we have studied the comparisons in the Book of Hebrews, we have seen how the writer says that He is better than angels, that is, Jesus is, He is better than Moses, He is better than Joshua, and so forth and so on, showing that Christ is superior to all those connected with the old covenant.

But the primary issue, and the key to the covenant, the old covenant, is the priesthood. What dominates the Old Testament is the priesthood. That was the agency by which God and man were brought together. And so the priesthood becomes the key, and if Jesus is to introduce a new covenant, and if He is to be superior to all of those connected with the old, then He must be a superior priest as well.

And, starting from chapter 4, verse 14, the writer of Hebrews begins to talk about the priesthood of Jesus Christ. And in verse 14, He says, "We have a great high priest, Jesus, the Son of God." And

from there He goes on, clear through 5, 6, 7, 8, even into 9 and 10, He is still talking about the priesthood of Jesus Christ. This becomes, then, the great crux of the Book of Hebrews. For, really, the old covenant was based upon a functioning priesthood, and so the new covenant must be based on a functioning priesthood, and if it's better, then He must be a better priest. And so the writer belabors His point to render the fact that Jesus is a superior priest.

Now, His priesthood is superior, primarily, as we have studied, because it is a priesthood after a different order, the order of Melchizedek, which was introduced to us at the beginning of chapter 5, in verse 6. Now, the priesthood of Melchizedek, being a superior priesthood, and having been prophesied to occur, from the Psalms, really indicates that the old priesthood would pass away and be replaced. If there is a superior priesthood, certainly it'll come into view at some time, and David directly prophesied that indeed it would.

So the writer uses the argument of prophecy to prove that the old priesthood would be set aside and a new one instituted, and the new one is after the order of Melchizedek. That is, the account of the man in Genesis 14 becomes the picture of the new priesthood. And we saw in our study, and just a quick review, we saw that the Melchizedek priesthood was superior, first of all, because it was a priesthood forever. There was no beginning or end. But Aaron's was bounded by time. The Levitical priesthood was only involved with time.

Secondly, the priesthood of which Jesus Christ is a priest is better because it was confirmed by an oath, and we studied the fact that when God makes an oath, that is a permanent confirmation, an eternal confirmation. God never made an oath with the Aaronic priesthood. It was always intended to be temporary. Thirdly, we saw the priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior because it is a priesthood founded on personal greatness, whereas the Levitical priesthood was founded upon racial heredity.

Then we saw that the priesthood of Christ is better because death can't interrupt it. Jesus Christ lives forever, whereas death kept continually interrupting the Levitical priesthood. Those priests kept on dying all the time. We saw not only that but that Jesus' priesthood is better because it offers one sacrifice only, not an endless repetition of sacrifices. Next we saw that Jesus' priesthood is better because it was so pure that He needed to offer no sacrifice for His own sins, and thus it was a holy priesthood in a way that the Levitical priesthood was not, since they had to offer sacrifice for their own sins before they could do it for anybody else.

Next we saw that it's a superior priesthood because it can take men into God's presence and anchor them there forever, something the old priesthood could not. There was always a veil. But in Christ, there is full access. And then we saw lastly, as closing out chapter 7, that it is a priesthood that saves to the uttermost, totally and forever, something also Levitical priests could not do.

And so in all of this that we've studied from chapter 4 through chapter 7, the Word of God has clearly presented to us the fact that Jesus is a priest, a high priest, superior to every other priest or high priest in the old economy. And not only is He superior, and we don't want to get only that idea, He is not only superior and far beyond us, but, at the same time, He has been touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He senses what we sense. He has in all points been tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is compassionate and personal. And so, though He be the superior priest, though He be loftier than any other priest who ever lived, He is, at the same time, condescending and compassionate. That is our high priest.

And all of that leads up to the beginning statement in chapter 8. "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have such an high priest." That's about all He can say to wrap it up. Such a high priest. You know, the Bible chooses amazingly simple adjectives. I've often thought, in I John chapter 3, verse 1, John says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us." Now, if I was writing that, I would say, "Oh, that 'what manner.' That doesn't even say it. 'Behold, what manner.'" I would say, "Behold, the fantastic, unbelievable, supernatural, glorious, stupendous, monumental love." And John says, "And I tried all that, and it all didn't make it either, so I just put, 'Behold, what manner of love.'" See?

Or you go to Ephesians and he says that He has redeemed us because of His great love. And you say, "Oh, Paul, oh, not only just great. I mean, that, we use that so flippantly." But when the Word of God uses a word, it means it in its purest sense. It cannot really deal with the problem that we have through the etymological process of language where it soon deteriorates so that words that used to mean something mean nothing and we have to invent new ones.

"We have such an high priest," who is superior in every fashion to all the old economy. What a message this is to the Jew. This is Jesus Christ. You don't need any of that stuff. It's all second rate, second class. "We have such an high priest," who can do everything that no other priest could ever do.

And then He goes on to say this. "We have such an high priest, who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Down in verse 6, He says He has a more excellent ministry. In verse 6, He has a better covenant. In verse 6, better promises. And then He goes on to talk about that.

We have received the priest that is more excellent than any other. His ministry is more excellent. His covenant is more excellent. His promises are more excellent. Just think of the wonder of the Hebrews as they read this section when they received this letter. All their lives they had, generation after generation, trusted in these priests. They had been instructed from early childhood to venerate the Levitical system and to venerate the Aaronic priesthood. There was nothing higher than that in their minds except God Himself. But here comes the Word of God to them and says, "Listen, we've got a high priest to turn to now who surpasses all the others, so that all the others are replaced, not added to, but thrown aside, and Christ is substituted for them. And a far superior priest He is."

And the one who now comes to God must discard the entire old economy, must drop it altogether and come to Christ. It's a similar problem, you see, to the problem of the Galatians, to whom Paul wrote and said, "Don't go back and get entangled again with the yoke of bondage that Christ released you from. Have you begun in the Spirit? Are you so foolish that now you're going to walk in the flesh?" They were trying to go back to legalism. Drop the entire old economy and come to Christ. That's His message.

Now, the Spirit has said very much about the priesthood of Christ, but very much more needs to be said. It's as if 8:1 is just a peak. We've been going up, and now we're going to hit the peak, and then we're going to come down. And there's a lot of good stuff left. This is just the capstone.

Now, in this chapter, and we'll try to get through it, there are 13 verses, but we're not going to hurry

too fast. In this chapter, He gives us three more salient points indicating Jesus is a superior priest, and they are fantastically important things. Three more points proving He is a better priest, superior: His seat, His sanctuary and His superior covenant. His seat, His sanctuary and His superior covenant.

Now, I realize that to the Gentile mind, and even into my mind, were it not for the fact that I think with a Jewish mind, almost, from spending so much time thinking through the Word of God, that these things don't always just drill into us. But let's let the Spirit of God be our teacher tonight and see what it is God would teach us. And perhaps, if these things are not directly applicable to our problem, they shall be to those of Israel whom we are called to share Christ with.

Now, first of all, He is a superior priest because of His seat. I just love this. "Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have such an high priest who is seated," stop right there. "Who is seated." Now, your Bible might say "set," but the word means to sit down. He is seated. Now, that's a fantastic statement. And just to make that statement to a Jew, a Jew would go, "Oh. He must get up quick." You see? "He can't sit down." No priest, no time ever sat down.

Christ has been presented as our great priest, and now He comes to the sum. Now, I want you to watch this. "We have spoken...this is...of all that we have spoken, this is the sum." The Greek word means the chief point. This is the apex. We've said a lot of great things. Here is the most important of all. The most important feature about our priest is that He's sitting down. You say, "I don't get it. Is that so important, that He's sitting down?" It's very important.

The highest proof of His superiority is that He's sitting down. He's seated. Now, the Levitical priests never sat down. I want you to just listen to Hebrews 10:11. It says this. "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But this man," verse 12, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down."

You see, the thing is, no priest ever finished his work. He could never sit down. The job was never done. He just kept offering more and more sacrifices, because the sacrifice you offered was only as good as the time until you committed the next sin. And it just kept going and going and going and going. And no priest ever sat down.

Do you know that I've studied the Tabernacle and I've studied the Temple and there aren't any seats in there? In the holy places there's only one seat. That's the Mercy Seat. And no priest is going to prop himself up on the Mercy Seat. That would be the absolute epitome of blasphemy, to jump up and sit on the Mercy Seat. Because the Mercy Seat, you see, represented the Throne of God, and the Mercy Seat was the place where the Shekinah Glory dwelt between the wings of the cherubim. And that's where God was.

Now, the priests would go in there in fear and trepidation and a sense of awe once a year on the Day of Atonement and sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat, turn around immediately and get out of there. That's the only time they could ever go into that place. There was never any sitting down. Least of all could anybody ever sit down in the only seat there, the Mercy Seat. That was God's throne, and nobody would dare be blasphemous enough to prop himself up on God's throne and sit with God.

And so no priest ever sat down. But Jesus came along, offered one sacrifice, said, "That's it. It is," what? "Finished," and sat down. Now, that is some kind of priest. That is accomplishing what the entire Levitical system never could accomplish. And that's why the writer says, "And this is the chief point. This is the locus crucius. This is the key. He sat down." What a fantastic thing it is. He did it all in one sacrifice.

The writer of Hebrews says, "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." In other words, He brought men unto God through one sacrifice, and it was the sacrifice of Himself. Christ did it all. The work is finished. As far as your salvation is concerned, beloved, He is sitting down. He doesn't need to move a finger. That is finished. There is nothing to add to it. And people are still trying to add to the simple pure grace of God and salvation by faith, but it doesn't need anything added to it.

And what an especially joyous truth this could've been to the Jews who heard it. Imagine, a final sacrifice, a finished work, so that a high priest sat down. Fantastic. And if that's not enough, look where He sat. It says He sat down "on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens." Now, God's got a big throne. And it's the very same throne that God is on. It's just that He sat on the right side of God.

Now, you don't want to split hairs about that. They're all one and the same anyway, so it's kind of hard to understand. But whatever it means, it means, it's trying, by saying "the right hand," to emphasize that the right hand was always the seat of honor. It was always the seat of exaltation, as well as the seat of power. It signified royalty, honor, as well as power, the right arm being the symbol of power. Jesus Christ sat down, as it were, acknowledged and exalted, made royal by God. And God was, in effect, approving of His work.

But there's another marvelous thought in this. The idea of sitting on the right hand of the throne brings to mind the expression related to the Sanhedrin. Now, you remember that in Israel there was a ruling body of 70 men known as the Sanhedrin. These men were responsible for making the judgments. They were technically the Jewish house of judgment. They were the ones who were executing justice whenever justice was being executed in the land.

And there were always two scribes before the judges of the Sanhedrin. One scribe sat on the right hand, and the other scribe sat on the left hand. And it was always the business, watch this, of the scribe who sat on the right hand to write the acquittals. And it was always the business of the scribe on the left hand to write the condemnations. The Bible says that Jesus came, in John, chapter 3, verse 17, not to what? "Condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Hence His place is never on the left hand, but always on the right hand, where He writes the pardons for His own.

What is it saying to us? It is saying that Jesus Christ has been given the place of honor. He has been ushered into the Holy of Holies. He has been seated with God on God's throne. Now, to a Jew, that's very hard to handle. To an Orthodox Jew, that smacks of terrible blasphemy.

But let me go a step further. I want to tell you something else. If that didn't blow you up, listen to this one. Oh, do I love this. You know the first thing I'm going to do when I get to heaven? I'm going to get up on that throne, too. You're saying, "Oh." Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Revelation 3:21 says this.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." Aha. See?

You say, "What is an overcomer?" It's one who overcomes the world. Read I John. "What is it that overcomes the world? Even our," what? "Our faith." Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ are overcomers, and all of us who are overcomers can just get up there and crawl right up on the throne. You see, that is something provided for us by Jesus Christ that no priest could even do himself. And Jesus says in Revelation 3:21, "You come up on my throne as I have come up on the Father's throne."

Boy, that is just exciting, isn't it? That's why the...that's what the Bible means when Paul said to the Corinthians, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." We're one with Jesus Christ. Where He goes, we go. And so it is that Jesus Christ is a priest who has every right to sit on the Mercy Seat and sit on the throne of God, and not only that, but to bring us to sit with Him there.

Now, it's a special throne in a special place. It's not the throne in the Temple and it's not the throne in the Tabernacle. It's the throne of the Majesty where? In the heavens. Now we're getting out of the world a little bit here. This is going past the natural course of things. In the heavens speaks, of course, of Christ's ascension. "Having ascended into heaven, He was seated," right? "With the Father." This is chapter 1, verse 3. In chapter 4, verse 14, it says, "He passed through the heavens," and so forth.

So Jesus Christ, having accomplished His work, finished it, passed through the heavens, the stellar heavens, atmospheric heavens, entered into God's heaven, sat on the throne. What a high priest. The emphasis in the Book of Hebrews is repeatedly on the fact that Christ is at the right hand of God. And I think the purpose of it is to assure those who were deprived of the Temple services in Jerusalem that they didn't need to worry about what was going on on earth, in the shadowy realm, because they had a real priest in the real Holy of Holies in the real heaven of God who was there for them, ministering and interceding.

So the crowning argument for the superior priesthood of Jesus Christ and His exaltation to heaven to sit with the Father. That is the glorious sum of everything else that shows us He is indeed a superior priest. And that leads us to the second feature of the chapter. Not only is He superior because of His seat, but secondly because of His sanctuary.

Since He is a superior priest who has ascended to heaven, He ministers in a superior sanctuary. He doesn't fool around in a skin tent like the Tabernacle. Nor does He minister in a physical building on earth. Those temples have all crumbled long ago. His temple is in heaven. He ministers in the real Holy of Holies.

Now, I want you to kind of screw your brain on a few minutes, because we're going to dig into these next few verses, and I think you'll find it exciting, and see what God wants to teach you through it. Verse 2. "A minister of the sanctuary." What sanctuary? "Even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Aha. Now, Jesus isn't a priest in the earthly Tabernacle or the early Temple. He is a priest in the true one, which the Lord pitched and not man. God's got His own Holy of Holies. He functions as a priest, but not in the earthly temple, but in the heavenly dwelling place of God. That's where He sits.

An interesting note comes to my mind here. In Acts 7, isn't it verse 55, we have an occasion...some people have argued about the finished work of Christ because of Acts 7:55. I love this. You know, this is dear Stephen, who preached and got stoned for it. They heard the message that he gave. He must've been a powerful preacher. You know, it's a wonder to me sometimes that God lets some of His most powerful preachers only live a short time. All we know about Stephen was really one sermon.

"And when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth." He got a reaction. Don't you like this? Listen to this next one. "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus," sitting? Jesus what? "Standing on the right hand of God." His redemptive work is finished. As far as redemption is concerned, He is seated. But every time one of His own gets into trouble, He stands up, because He has something to do. His power and His energy is activated in the behalf of His own. That's His mediator's work. He is seated in His redemptive work. He is active as our mediator. What a tremendous promise.

Now back to Hebrews 8. And it says He is a minister. This comes from two Greek words which have to do with...one word means belonging to the people, and the other means to work. And He is one who works for the sake of the people. He is one who ministers for our sake. It's a fantastic thing.

You know what? I constantly am reminded of this truth and yet find it so hard to really grasp, the fact that Jesus Christ, in all of His glory, in all of His magnitude, in all of His exaltation in heaven, is still preoccupied with ministering to me. Unbelievable. He is always serving. He condescends even in His glory now, on the throne of God, to stand up and minister in my behalf when I have needs. He never received His majesty as something to be selfishly enjoyed. It is in Jesus Christ that majesty and service are perfectly met together.

Now, notice the word "sanctuary." It's a simple word. It's based on the word hogios. Hogionis this form. It simply means "the holies," a minister of the holies, which would be a combination of the holy place and the Holy of Holies. What is this? This is heaven itself. Did you know that heaven itself is God's holy place, God's Holy of Holies? In 9:24 of Hebrews, it says, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven," and there heaven is synonymous with the true holy places.

God's holy place is heaven. And if you want another cross-reference, check out Psalm 102:19, which calls heaven God's sanctuary. And so it is that God has a holy place in heaven, and that's where Jesus ministers. Notice, He calls it the true Tabernacle. And the word "true" is not here used in an opposite sense from false. He is not saying the true Tabernacle as opposed to the tabernacles of the heathen, or the temples of the heathen idols. He is using the word "true" in contrast with something that is shadowy and unreal, the difference between a typical shadowy temporary thing and the true one. The true one is abiding, solid and real.

Now, chapter 9 really details this. And let me read just a little bit of chapter 9. "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and an earthly sanctuary." The first covenant had an earthly sanctuary. "For there was a tabernacle made, the first, in which" the lamp stand and the showbread, and it goes down to talk about that, and the veil, and then the holy place and the golden censer, the Ark of the Covenant, verse 4, etc., etc., etc., all the way down.

Then in verse 9, He says, "This was a figure for the time then present." That's all it was. Only a figure "in which were offered gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service," what? "Perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, which stood only in foods and drinks, and washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation," or regeneration. It wasn't until Jesus came and began to minister in the true Tabernacle.

Then, verse 11, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect," what? "Tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building," and so forth. Christ ministers in the heavenly sanctuary, the Holy of Holies where God is. He doesn't minister in a shadowy temple on earth. So many people think that He ministers in the local church, in the building. Not so.

Now, let me give you an illustration that might help you to grab this. The Greek philosophers had an interesting and a very dominating thought. In the class I took in European philosophy, ancient and modern, in college, I remember studying in detail this particular subject. And the Greeks always thought in terms of two worlds. One was the real world, and the other was the unreal.

And you may have studied about Plato, and you may have studied a little bit of the Aristotelian polemic and some of the things that had to do with philosophy in those days, and you probably ran across this kind of a dual concept, especially that was the basic doctrine of Plato. But Plato always said somewhere there was a real, and that what we saw was only the unreal. This world of space and time was a world of shadows. It was a world of copies, pale copies, at best, a world of unreal reflections. But somewhere there was a real world.

And he talks about the universal horse, for example. And that all other horses are only a shadow of somewhere in some place there is the true horse. Or the true chair is somewhere, and everything else is only a shadow chair. Now, this was a kind of a Greek philosophy. This is only a shadow world. Somewhere there's a real world, and in that real world, there is the universal horse and the universal chair and the universal tree and the universal whatever. That was an attempt to explain things.

Now, the writer of Hebrews is saying very much the same thing. He is not a Greek philosopher. He is speaking the revelation of God. But in a very real sense, the Greeks weren't too far off. There is a real world. This is not the real world. In terms of God's revelation of the old covenant, it was shadows and types and pictures and reflections, all from the pattern, which is heaven, you see.

The earthly Temple, the earthly Tabernacle, is a place that is only a copy of the real temple of God. Earthly worship is only a remote reflection of real worship when we get to heaven. The earthly priesthood is only an inadequate shadow of the real priesthood. In fact, if you go back to Exodus 25:40, and it'll be quoted for you down in verse 5 in a minute, you'll find that when Moses received the instructions about the Tabernacle and all of its furnishings, that God had said to him, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the Mount." The pattern is heavenly. All the earthly things are only pictures of the pattern.

So Jesus is superior to Aaron, number one, because He's seated, and, number two, because He serves in a superior sanctuary not pitched by men, but pitched by God. He serves in the real sanctuary. Tremendous truth.

Now, in verse 3, He begins to pursue His argument from the general to the particular. Now, let's stay with this, because there are some great things here. "For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices." The question could come up at this point, "Well, if He's finished His work and He's up there in heaven, what has He got to do?" Well, every high priest is appointed to be ministering. Right? If He's a legitimate high priest, He'll be busy. He'll be ministering in the area of gifts and sacrifices.

"Wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." If it is a standard commodity for priests to do it, then He will do it, because He is the perfect priest. You see, the Jew at this point could say, "Well, that's no priest at all. You don't have any priest at all. He may be just up there sitting around. He hasn't got anything to do. There's no ministry there. He's not a true priest." And so the writer simply says this. "Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, so it is necessary that this man do it as well."

Did Jesus Christ offer sacrifice? Yes, He did. He offered the sacrifice of Himself. But notice the term "gifts." Now, we studied back in chapter 5, verse 1, the statement there that "every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices." And the gifts idea simply divides sacrifices into the two kinds that are in Scripture.

Remember, there were two kinds of sacrifices. The first kind of sacrifice was the meal offering. Right? And in the meal offering, there wasn't any bloodshed. You merely brought the meal offering as it was. The other kind were the sacrifices of blood, and that's the distinction right here. He is simply saying every priest is involved in both kinds of offerings, bloodless meal offerings, gifts, and blood offerings, sacrifices for sin. So Jesus, if He is a true high priest, will do both of these.

You say, "Well, I understand that He did the first, the sacrifices of blood, when He offered His own blood upon the Mercy Seat, when He offered Himself as the sacrifice, but what about gifts? Is He still ministering in the area of gifts? And what were they?" Let me take that for a moment and explain it to you.

In the Old Testament, all of the meal offerings had to do with thanksgiving and dedication. When a man brought a meal offering, he was thanking God and dedicating his life to God. It was an act of dedication. It was not atonement for sin. It was personal dedication, personal commitment. And what he's doing is praising God and thanking God and acknowledging God in his life and committing himself to live for God. That's what those sacrifices or those offerings meant.

And so we see that Jesus even is continuing to do this. For none of us, now watch it, for none of us can praise God, can dedicate ourselves to God, can truly worship God or truly thank God unless we do it through whom? Through Jesus Christ. We always come to God by Him, don't we? And so, in a sense, Christ continues even now to minister gifts to God, our gifts.

As we bring the thanks and the praise and the worship of our hearts and the dedication of our lives to present them to God, Christ takes those gifts of our thanks, praise, worship and dedication and offers them to God. So He still ministers in the area of gifts. He no longer ministers in the area of sacrifice. Only needed to do it how many times? One time. And so He says, in effect, in verse 3, He is a legitimate priest who ministers.

Verse 4, He goes on to talk about the fact that He's a heavenly priest. "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest." Now, why wouldn't Christ have been a priest if it were an earthly priest...if He had designed to be an earthly priest? What's the one thing that would have withheld him from the priesthood? He was from the wrong tribe, wasn't He? He could not qualify to be a priest, because He was not born of Levi, and thus disqualified.

So He simply says...the Jew may have said at this point in his mind, "Well, if He's a priest, then what's He doing up there? Why doesn't He come down here where we need Him?" He can't be on earth ministering, "seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." In other words, God has set a certain ceremonial law in motion. That priesthood exists on earth. And God does not need other priests to do what that priesthood does.

It's interesting that God never confuses the substance with the shadow. He never mixes the two. So Jesus Christ cannot be an earthly priest for the very fact that He's from the wrong tribe. He must minister somewhere else. And the point is, He does minister somewhere else, in a better place, which makes His priesthood a better priesthood.

Verse 5, He goes on to talk about the priests "who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Those priests in verse 4 who offer gifts according to the law are examples and a shadow of the heavenly things. "As Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle." This is Exodus 25. "See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount." In other words, even Moses must've known that this was not the real thing, but only the shadow, because he saw the pattern that was heaven.

So Christ must be a priest of a superior sanctuary. He cannot be one in the earthly priesthood. He's in the wrong tribe. And there doesn't need to be a confusion, because there are already earthly priests doing that they've been set up to do. But they are only examples, they are only shadows of the heavenly priesthood and the heavenly temple, the heavenly holy place. It was first. It was the pattern on which the other was built. And the Jew always thought that the Aaronic priesthood was the first thing. Not so. It was only a pattern of the true priesthood which existed in heaven.

The word "example" means sketch, outline or copy. It's translated "figure" in chapter 9, verse 24. This was only a copy of the real. This whole economy, this whole system of priests in the Old Testament, was only a copy. The second word is a wonderful word, "shadow," schia. It says exactly what it means, a shadow or a silhouette.

Did you know that a shadow has no independent substance, or independent existence? It has no existence at all. It exists only as proof of the fact that there's a reality somewhere. Right? When you see the shadow, you look around and you say, "Oh, something is making the shadow." The shadow has no independent existence at all. And that is true of the Aaronic priesthood. It has no independent existence in itself. It is merely a shadow of the real, which is heavenly.

And so, simply stated, Jesus is a better priest because He has a superior sanctuary, one in heaven, which is the real, and not the copy. And, as well, He is seated, which no priest ever, ever thought of doing, for his work was never done.

Then He moves in verse 6 to make a transition to His final point. "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." What's He saying?

Let's just take the first part. "Now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry." What a tremendous statement. That's the climax. He is a better priest all the way down the line. He is seated. He is in the true sanctuary, the sanctuary of heaven. Therefore, He hath obtained a more excellent ministry.

What is this saying? This is saying to the Jew, "Why would you fool around in the shadows when you can come to the reality?" You see? He's saying to His reader, "Why do you want to dawdle away in these things that are only copies and pale reflections, when you can come to the truth in Jesus Christ, and you can have a priest who is in the Holy of Holies in heaven, not just in the shadow down here?" Tremendous message to Israel.

Then in 6 He says, making His transition complete, "He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which is established on better promises." If He is superior, if His sanctuary is superior, then His covenant is superior, and that's the third point. He is superior because of His seat, His sanctuary and His superior covenant. And that we see in verses, really, 6 through 13. This is primarily a quote from Jeremiah, and we don't have to study it in such great detail, but let's look at it.

Verse 6, "He is the mediator of a better covenant, which is established on better promises." Tremendous concept just in the concept of the word "mediator." We know the apostle Paul said to Timothy that we have one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. The word used here for "mediator," interesting word, m-e-s-i-t-e-s, mesites. From mesos, which means in the middle. The mediator is the one who stands in the middle between two and brings them together.

In Galatians 3:19, Paul uses the word "mesites" to speak of Moses, and he says Moses is the mesites of the old covenant. He's the one who brought God and man together under the old economy. Here, the writer says, "Jesus is the perfect mesites of a better covenant. All that Moses couldn't do because of human weakness, Jesus does." He brings God and men together perfectly, providing access, where the old economy couldn't. The covenant is better, because He is better.

And it is also better, look at the end of verse 6, because it's established on better what? Promises. Now, all covenants were made on the basis of promises. God would promise to do something. That's what a covenant is. And what the promises are of the better covenant are clearly outlined in verses 8 to 12 of this chapter, because that's a direct quote out of Jeremiah 31:31 and following. And we're going to look at that as we go. But it's based on better promises. The whole new covenant is better.

Now look at verse 7, and we'll get to the better promises in verse 8. Verse 7, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." And at that point, if I was an unbelieving Jew, I would say, "That's exactly right. So why are you giving us all this baloney about a second one? Why are you doing this? Are you saying the first one has got faults and problems? What gives you the right to say that? What gives you the right to tell me that there needs to be another covenant? What gives you the right to say that the first one had a lot of faults and there's another one coming along? Who says so?" And so the writer says, "God, through Jeremiah, your own prophet." Zap.

In verse 8, "For finding fault with them, He saith," who saith? God saith, through Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant." Oh, is...that's in Jeremiah? That's not new. Your own word says to you that the old covenant has problems and God's going to have to get another one.

And, you know, there are Jews today who are hanging on tenaciously to the old covenant, and they despise the truth that is preached about the new covenant. They detest that truth. And they're not willing to acknowledge that it is their own revelation, their own beloved and dear prophet Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, who said, "God is going to write a new covenant." And He did.

The first covenant was not faultless. It was weak in the flesh. Right? Galatians 3:21. It was excellent for what it was meant to do, point men to Christ, but it couldn't bring men to God. It was the sign. It wasn't the train that got them there. Paul said to the Galatians that the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. There needed to be a better covenant. And the Jew says, "Who says?" And so the writer says, "God says, by Jeremiah." God prophesied in His own words. Jeremiah quotes God directly in verse 8, "For He saith." God said it, recorded by Jeremiah. "I will make a new covenant."

Now, from there, Jeremiah launches, in the very words of God, God is speaking, and God tells us how the new one is better, or its distinctions. They're not always different than the first, but put together they make it different.

Let's begin with the first one. Why...what is the first feature of the new covenant? God is the author. (A) That's God is the author. That's the first feature. "For finding fault with them, He saith, behold the day is come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant." God said, "I'll make a new covenant." God is the author of it.

Now, the word for covenant is fascinating. Deafece. Now, deafece, it's not too fascinating just to say it, but when we get to it, we'll see. Now, the normal Greek word, any time you made an arrangement with anybody, the normal Greek word was sunfece, sunmeaning with, on an equal basis. And normally, in any kind of an agreement, sunfecewould be the correct word. It was the word for a marriage covenant. It was the word for all ordinary contracts between two people on an equal level. Deafeceis not used for an agreement like that. Deafeceis reserved for wills, for making a will.

You say, "Well, why does the Spirit choose deafecewhen it says, 'The Lord will make a new covenant?'" The reason is this. Sunfecededescribes an agreement made by two equals. God at no time considers Himself an equal with men. God does not make equal covenants with men. God and man, now, watch this, this is a critical understanding, God and man never enter agreements on equal terms. God doesn't come to us and say, "Look, here are my terms," and we say, "Here are my terms," and we all give a little and we get together. No.

You can never, and I say it again, you can never, no time, no way, under any circumstances, bargain with God. It is not possible. You can never argue the terms of God's covenant. You can never say, "Well, look, God, listen, if you'll give a little bit on this thing, I'll adjust a little." You can't do that. God makes the covenant. You either accept it or you reject it. You don't change it. True? Thank you, both of you.

Now, the best illustration of this is a will. And that's why deafeceis reserved for a will. A will is not

made on equal terms. Right? No, not at all. It is made by one person, and the other person either accepts it or rejects it. You don't have anything to say about it. You can't bargain with a will. That's why the word is deafece. Our relationship to God is based solely on God's terms, never on our terms, but on God's. He is the author. And that's why I say, the first feature of the new covenant is, remember, it is God who wrote the new covenant.

And people come along and say, "Well, I don't see how God could say... what about over here, and he believes this, and what about all the people in China, and what about all the people over here who've never heard of Him? Oh, I mean, God's got to adjust to fit all these." No. God makes the covenant on His terms. And a man either takes it as is or rejects it. There are no arguments. In the first place, God knows exactly what is right and exactly what is best, and any concession God made would be to that which was wrong. So, first of all, God is the author.

Second thing about the new covenant is, it is different. It's different than the old. It's not just an attachment to the old covenant. And I see that in the word "new." There are several words in Greek for new. Neos, which means new in the sense of production. And kinas, which means new in the sense of quality.

The difference would be between a new car and a new invention. You could say, "Oh, I have a new car," but it's not really new in a kinassense. It's new in a neossense. Because there's a lot of cars, and yours has four wheels, too, and you've got an engine and a steering wheel and a seat. And it's not that new. Let's face it.

But if a guy came along and said, "I just invented the pumlerflare." Then you'd say, "Oh, that is new." That would be kinas. That means something that does not exist prior that has now come into existence. And the new covenant is kinas. It's a whole new thing. It's not just a little adaptation. It's a whole new thing. The new covenant is just that. New. And you might as well let the old one go.

In fact, in verse 13, it says, "Now that which decayeth and groweth old is ready to vanish away." The old covenant vanishes away. Decayeth. Vanisheth away is an interesting word. It means to obliterate, to completely wipe out. And that's what happens to the old covenant. Totally wiped out. Now, this is such an important message to the readers of Hebrews because they're hanging on tenaciously to the old covenant, just hanging on.

So what did we learn about the new covenant? God is the author, and it is different. Third thing. The new covenant is with Israel. It is with the Jews. And this is what I meant when I said this morning God has never made a covenant with Gentiles, as far as I can see, never will. The new covenant is not made with the church. It is made with the same people the old covenant was made with. It was made with Israel.

You say, "Well, what are we doing?" Well, we're beneficiaries of the old covenant, just like Gentiles could be...were beneficiaries of the new covenant, just like Gentiles could be beneficiaries of the old covenant. But notice, it couldn't be any clearer. "I will make a new covenant with the church." Is that what it says? No. "With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

And the amillennialist, those are people who don't believe in any kingdom or any restoration of Israel, comes along and says, "Well, when the Jews executed Christ, they forfeited everything." Not so,

friend. God said, "I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah." That's both sections of Israel. Right? You say, "I thought the northern tribes got lost." They may have gotten lost, but God knows where they are. They may be lost to some people, and there may be a lot of weird explanations about who they are, but they're not lost to God. And God has made His covenant with His people.

It's an important note. You see, nowhere in Scripture do you read that God ever made a covenant with Gentiles. In Romans, chapter 9, it says this. "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the covenants, covenants between God and His people, Israel?" You say, "Well, does that mean that we're not blessed?" No, it doesn't. It doesn't. God said to Abraham, "In thee shall all the nations of the world be," what? "Be blessed."

Genesis 12. When God established Israel, He made an unconditional covenant with Abraham to bless his seed and to bless the world through his seed. God said, "I'll not only bless you, Abraham. I'll bless the whole world through your seed." And that was an unconditional promise. God didn't say, "Abraham, if you will promise me to do this four times a day and run over there and do that and do this, then I'll do it." He just said, "I'll do it."

And then God said, "Well, now, in order for them to receive this blessing, they'll have to follow my standards." So God set up a Mosaic covenant to go with the Abrahamic covenant, and the Mosaic covenant gave them the morality to go along with God's desire that they might experience the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant said, "I'm going to bless you." The Mosaic covenant said, "If you obey my laws, then you'll get the benefits of the Abrahamic covenant."

But what happened? Israel kept breaking the Mosaic covenant, and thus they kept forfeiting God's blessing, and they're still forfeiting it today, aren't they, by breaking the Mosaic covenant, and by rejecting the fulfillment of the Mosaic covenant, Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, then, did God cancel the Abrahamic covenant? Did God just say, 'That's it, no more blessing for Israel?'" He can't do that. If God could cancel one of His promises, He can cancel any one of them, which puts us on pretty precarious ground.

And so God says, "I know what I'll do. I'll just get a new one. I'll get a new covenant that'll be able to do what the old one couldn't do." And so He got the new covenant, and it could do all that the old could not do. And you know what the Bible says? Let me read you some thrilling, thrilling things. God wants to bless men. And He says, "If they would only follow my standards, I'd bless them." But they blew the Mosaic covenant, so they forfeited the Abrahamic blessing. So God gave a new covenant. And when you come into the new covenant as a beneficiary, you're a Gentile, you can experience all that's in the new covenant as a beneficiary of it, even though it's made with Israel.

Listen to what happens. Galatians 3:7. "Know ye therefore that they who are of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham." See, when you believe in that that Jesus Christ has done, you become a spiritual son of Abraham. And the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled in you and in me when we accept the principles of the new covenant. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.'" Listen. "So then they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

The Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled in my life. And the Abrahamic covenant isn't some mystical, weird thing. You say, "Oh, I've heard about that. What does it mean?" It just means God promises to

bless. And it's fulfilled when we accept the new covenant, and we become spiritual children of Abraham.

Verse 14 says "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." It is through Jesus Christ that the Abrahamic blessing comes to us. Through the new covenant in His blood we receive all the promised blessing of God. Listen to the end of chapter 3. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." You know, I have become a beneficiary of the Abrahamic covenant though I'm not even a Jew, because, by receiving the new covenant, the promised blessing through Abraham has become mine. I'm not a Jew. I am only a child of Abraham by faith.

You say, "Well, when is Israel going to get in on this? I mean, they're not making it into the Abrahamic covenant as fast as the Gentiles." That's right. They will. During what period of time does Israel get saved? During the Tribulation. And then comes their kingdom. Romans 11:26 and 27 says, "So all Israel shall be saved." Their day is coming.

So, God is the author of the new covenant. It is different. It is made with the Jews. Quickly, it will not be legalism. Look at verse 9. "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt. Because they continued not in my covenant, I regarded them not,' saith the Lord."

Boy, that's pretty strong stuff. God had a legalistic Mosaic covenant, and He made it with them. He led them out of Egypt, put them in their land, and they blew all of His standards, and He said, "I regarded them not." And that's the Mosaic covenant. "If you do this, I'll bless you. If you don't, I'll just walk away."

God says, "I'm going to make a new covenant, and it's not going to be like that." The covenant of law at Sinai was conditional. You obeyed, you were blessed. You didn't obey, you got it. And it just kept going back and forth all the time. There was no security, no clear conscience, no freedom from guilt.

But God says, "It's not going to be that way any longer. I'm going to have a covenant different than that, a covenant that not only forgives them but keeps them." See? "So they don't vacillate all the time. Not based on legalism, but based on faith in Christ. Different. Not like the one I made with their fathers. Not like the Mosaic Sinai covenant that I made after I got them out of Egypt." Remember, right after they came out of Egypt He made that covenant with them on the mount. "And then when they didn't obey it, I didn't regard them anymore." God doesn't do that. He says to us that He is permanently in our hearts, that we're secure in Him. He does not leave us nor forsake us.

So the new covenant, God is the author. It is different. It is made with Jews. It is not legalism. Next, it is internal. I love this. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

You know, in the old economy, everything was external. The law was written on stone. In the new covenant, the law is written in our hearts. I John 2:27, "We have an anointing that teaches us from the inside." Right? Who is it? The Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, do you know why they obeyed? Because they were afraid. That's why. Fear of punishment. In the new covenant, why do we obey?

Romans 13:8-10, we have love, and that fulfills the whole law.

Under the old covenant, God's laws were upon the lips of the people and written in stone. In the new covenant, they're in their minds and written in their hearts. What a difference. In the new covenant, worship is internal, not external. It's real, not ritual. Israel had memorized God's Word. Israel had pledged obedience. But they never had the internal power to live up to their pledge. You see?

God promised them in Ezekiel, chapter 11, that He'd take away a heart of stone and He'd replace it with a heart of flesh, and He'd put His Spirit within them. And then God reiterated the promise in Ezekiel 36, or 26 and following. He said, "I'll take away your stony heart and give you a heart of flesh, and I'll give you my Spirit." God said, "I'm going to have to change you on the inside." That was all promises of the new covenant. In the old covenant, they were told to obey, but they didn't have the power. In the new covenant, we have the power to obey, the Holy Spirit, and the new nature. What a wonderful promise.

And then not only is this internal, but it is personal. Look at verse 11. "And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord.' For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." You know, in Israel, in those days, it was only the higher ups that knew the Word. It was only the higher ups that had access to the real truths of God. The poor people, the low class, really were victimized. They were not taught faithfully, and they did not know the things that could've changed their lives.

And so here simply the promise of the new covenant. Everybody's going to know this truth. It's not going to be only for the elite, only for the educated. Every believer is going to have a resident truth teacher who will lead them into all truth and bring all things to their remembrance, even the Holy Spirit. And no longer will they have to teach each other and say, "Know the Lord," "for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." What a wonderful thing it is in the new covenant to have that personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, who lives within us.

Then the Holy Spirit hits the capstone of the new covenant. Verse 12. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I," what? "Remember no more." The promise of the Old Testament finally fulfilled. The greatest feature, friends, of the new covenant is total forgiveness of sins. What a glorious covenant it is. Everything the old couldn't do, it does.

Then a closing statement. "In that He saith, 'A new covenant,' He hath made the first old." By the very fact that God said there's coming a new covenant, He therefore renders the first one old. Do you see? Just the statement of prophecy that there's coming a new one means the old one is old. "Now that which decayeth and groweth old is ready to vanish away." And only a few years after this was written, Titus hit Jerusalem and wiped out Judaism. It was ready to vanish away.

What is this saying to us? This is saying that everything in Jesus Christ is real, is divine, is superior to everything else. The age of the law and the priests is over. The age of the Son is here forever. Don't cling to the old covenant, or anything else, for that matter. Jesus Christ is the perfect and only high priest.

Father, we thank you for helping us to study this tonight. And, Lord, it's not been easy, and we've covered so much, and maybe too much. And, Father, it's been lengthy. But we do desire to know this

truth in its total.

Father, we thank you for such a new covenant. We thank you for such a high priest, who is superior because of His seat, because of His sanctuary and because of His superior covenant. All that the old couldn't be, the new is. We thank you for that.

And we thank you that it is not only for Jews to enter into the new covenant, but it is for all of us to be beneficiaries. The Gentiles, as well, those of us in the church who love you, can come and be a part of the new covenant. For, God, we still hunger in our hearts and await that day when Israel shall really know that new covenant, when, in the great time of tribulation, they turn and look upon their Messiah, and they receive Him, and then they receive the blessing of Abraham as children of faith. Thank you for what we've learned tonight. In Christ's name, amen.

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