

### Christ's Superior Priesthood (Continued)

#### Hebrews 8:1-13

Hebrews 8:1-13 - *Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,<sup>2</sup> a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.<sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.<sup>4</sup> For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;<sup>5</sup> who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."<sup>6</sup> But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.<sup>7</sup> For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.<sup>8</sup> Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—<sup>9</sup> 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 the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.<sup>10</sup> 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 in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.<sup>11</sup> None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.<sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."<sup>13</sup> In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

#### Background Notes

Christians have a great High Priest in Heaven – the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the theme of the epistle to the Hebrews. *"Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heaven"* (v1). In other words, the central theme of the epistle is our great High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven.

In previous chapters we have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ is qualified to be our perfect High Priest because He is fully God and fully Man at the same time. There can be no better High Priest! We've also seen that even though Jesus Christ is not in the line of Aaron, His Priesthood is still valid. It is a better priesthood than Aaron's priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood was imperfect in many ways, but Christ's Priesthood follows "the order of Melchizedek." It's universal in scope,

eternal in time, and does not have the imperfections of the temporary Old Testament priesthood. It is a superior priesthood.

The subject of the superiority of Christ's Priesthood continues in Hebrews 8. The functions of Jesus Christ as our High Priest are especially in view in this chapter. He ministers in a better Sanctuary, and He mediates a better covenant.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Christ's Priesthood is superior because He ministers in a better Sanctuary.

The point of verses 1-5 is that Christ ministers as High Priest in a better Sanctuary. Christ is *"a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man"* (v2). So the earthly Tabernacle of the Old Testament was only a copy of the true Sanctuary in the heavens. The priests and the Tabernacle served as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

Have you ever seen a model of the Old Testament Tabernacle? Some of you old timers have seen models – and many of you have heard rich ministry on the subject because of the teachings of Hebrews 8. Currently I'm teaching the book of Exodus in my Old Testament Survey class at Emmaus Bible College. I have a model of the Tabernacle made by a student, and I'm using overheads to show how all of these items were types of the Person and work of Christ.

The Old Testament Tabernacle was a "type" or a picture of the true heavenly Sanctuary. So the design of the Tabernacle, the altars, the laver, the lamp stand, the table of bread for the priests, the various offerings and sacrifices, and all the regulations were all a picture - a copy and a shadow of heavenly things.

The author's point in Hebrews 8 is that the shadows are gone and the substance has come! If we were still in the Old Testament "shadows," our Lord could not be a Priest because Jesus Christ was from the tribe of Judah – He was not descended from the tribe of Levi and the priestly line of Aaron. *"For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law."*

But we are not in the shadows! The substance has come! The Lord Jesus is now literally in the true and better Heavenly Sanctuary, seated at the right hand of the Father, and ministering as our High Priest. Christ's Priesthood is superior because He ministers in a better Sanctuary.

## 2. Christ's Priesthood is superior because He mediates a better Covenant.

Verse 6: *"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises."*

In verses 6-13, the author of Hebrews said that the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament was part of the "first Covenant" - the Law. But the old Covenant or the Law was not perfect. That's why it has been replaced with the New Covenant. Verse 7: *"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second."* It wasn't perfect.

Verse 13 says that the "new covenant" has made the "first covenant" obsolete: *"In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."* There are two Greek words that are translated "new." One means *new in time*, or *recent*. The other word means *new in quality*, or *kind*. Both of these words are used in Hebrews to describe the New Covenant, but the word used in Hebrews 8 is *new in kind* or *new in quality*.

The point, of course, is that Christ is the Mediator of this **new** and **better** covenant. As verse 6 says, *"He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises."* Therefore, it's obvious that Christ's Priesthood is superior to the old Aaronic priesthood, which was associated with the now-obsolete first Covenant, the Law. Christ's Priesthood is superior because He mediates a better Covenant.

Verses 8-12 include a lengthy quote from Jeremiah 31, which predicted the New Covenant. The context of Jeremiah 31 indicates that **the New Covenant would be made with Israel, not with the Church**. And the promises to Israel should not be spiritualized and applied to the Church. God's promises to Israel were not just stated in the Old Testament. Romans 11 - in the New Testament - says that there will be a spiritual revival of the Jewish people in the future. Israel has only been set aside **temporarily** from her place of spiritual blessing. Meanwhile the gospel is going out to the Gentile world, and the Church is being completed.

Romans 11:25-26, *"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved."*

So the Church is **not** the "New Israel." **Israel is Israel!** The New Covenant has been made with Israel, and it will ultimately be fulfilled with Israel. This chapter would have been very encouraging to the Hebrew readers. It was an encouragement and an exhortation not to drift back to Judaism, which was all tied in with the old Covenant, which has nothing to do with the New Covenant.

But while the New Covenant has been made with Israel, and the New Covenant will ultimately be fulfilled with Israel, the  **blessings**  of the New Covenant have been extended to the Church. That's also why Jeremiah 31 is quoted here in Hebrews 8. The shed blood of Jesus Christ is the basis for the New Covenant, and the blessing of forgiveness of sin is for all believers. In Matthew 26:28 the Lord Jesus said, *"For this is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins."* And 2 Corinthians 3:6 says that all believers are "ministers" of the New Covenant.

So the New Covenant has been made with Israel and it will be fulfilled with Israel in the future, but the blessing of the New Covenant has been extended to *all believers* now. The point that the author of Hebrews was making in this chapter is:  **the New Covenant is a much better Covenant in every way** . Christ's priesthood is superior because He mediates a better Covenant.

## Practical Application

### Remember the illustration of the car keys!

Here's an illustration that I use to help students understand the ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant with Israel, and the relationship of Christians to the New Covenant that has been made with Israel.

Suppose I promise that I'll give my children a new car when they turn 18 and can drive well. I've made a "covenant" with them. On their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday I present them with a new car - but I don't give them the keys! Why not? Because they flunked Driver's Ed, and they can't drive safely! So I tell them that the car is theirs, and they'll get the keys when they learn to drive well.

Meanwhile I've adopted some other children. Even though they were brought into the family, but I never made the promise to give a car to the adopted children. However, on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, because they've proved to be worthy drivers, I give them a car - and the keys - and let them drive. And finally when my biological children learn to drive properly, I give them their keys as well.

Is this a helpful illustration? My promise to my biological children is like the promise of the New Covenant with Israel. I did not revoke my promise, or reject my children, or change my covenant with them: I gave them a car. But I temporarily withheld the keys - the blessings of my "covenant" with them. **Temporarily**. The full blessing of my promise or covenant will be fulfilled in the future.

Meanwhile, I gave a car and the keys to my adopted children (even though I didn't make the promise or covenant with them). That illustrates how the blessings of the New Covenant have been extended to the Church that is composed of all believers today.

So – when trying to understand the promises of God to the Jewish people - remember the illustration of the car keys!