

Hebrews 8

Hebrews 7:12 declares that once the new priesthood was ushered in, once Messiah is put in place as a Priest, the old rules don't apply anymore. Hebrews 8 sets out the new rules.....the new covenant.....the new agreement in the relationship between God and man.

What is the main point (v. 1)? This High Priest we've been describing....He actually and really **is** our High Priest. He is Jesus Christ - who ministers for us from a position of all authority in heaven (seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven). No other High Priest ever sat down in recognition of a finished work and no priest ever held such a place of honor and power.¹

Where does Jesus serve as High Priest (v. 2)? In the heavenly sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord. Jesus doesn't serve as a priest in an earthly tabernacle or temple. The tabernacle of Moses was a *copy* of this original, and it was made by man (Exodus 25:8-9).

What work do high priests do (v. 3)? *"Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices."* Though Jesus never offered a sacrifice according to the Law of Moses He did offer a better sacrifice - the sacrifice of Himself.

The writer's point was that Jesus' priesthood was not an earthly priesthood, but a heavenly priesthood. Jesus could have functioned as a priest on earth after the order of Melchizedek, but His real priestly ministry of sacrifice and intercession began when He entered heaven. His ministry as our King-Priest began with His ascension.²

What is taught about Jesus' priesthood (vv. 4-5)? Jesus is not qualified to serve in the inferior earthly Levitical priesthood. He was of the tribe of Judah. There are priests - plenty of them - qualified to serve in the priesthood according to the Law of Moses. The earthly priesthood, though it was glorious in the eyes of man, was really only a copy and shadow of the superior heavenly priesthood now held by Jesus.

What was the warning Moses received (v. 5)? See to it that you make the tabernacle *"according to the pattern which was shown to you [Moses] on the mountain"* (Exodus 25:40). **Why was that important to God?** The earthly tabernacle was intended to be a shadow of the higher, heavenly sanctuary giving the people an appreciation of the heavenly reality that would one day be theirs.

How would you compare Jesus' ministry to that of Moses (v. 6)? His ministry is superior to that of Moses. No earthly priest could take away sin the way Jesus did. Therefore Jesus' ministry is far better than the ministry of the priesthood under the Law of Moses.

He offered Himself not an animal. He put away sins, not merely covered them. He gave believers a clear conscience not an annual reminder of sins. He opened the way for us to enter into the presence of God, not to stand outside at a distance.³

How would you compare Jesus' covenant to that of Moses (v. 6)? Jesus has mediated for us a better covenant, a covenant of grace and not of works, guaranteed for us by a cosigner (7:22). It is a covenant marked by believing and receiving instead of by earning and deserving. It imputes righteousness where there is none. It teaches men to live righteously, empowers them to do so and rewards them when they do.⁴

In what sense is Jesus a mediator? Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant because he "brought the two parties together." Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, a better covenant, bringing us to God the Father (1 Timothy 2:5).

What are the "better promises" that Jesus has for us (v. 6)? These are promises to see us through the most desperate and dark times. These are promises that become alive to us through the Spirit of God. These are promises of blessing and undeserved favor instead of promises of cursing.

What is the point of v. 7? If God established a New Covenant, there had to be something lacking in the Old Covenant.

What was the trouble with the Old Covenant (v. 8a)? The trouble wasn't with the Law itself (Romans 7:12; Psalms 25). The trouble was with the people to whom it was given: the law had poor raw materials to work with.

The first covenant was based on man's promise to obey (Exodus 19:8; 24:7) and therefore it was not destined to last very long. The new Covenant is a narrative from beginning to end of what God agrees to do; this is its strength.⁵

What are the implications of the Lord saying “I will make” (v. 8)? The Lord makes it plain that this covenant originates with God, not with man. At Sinai under the Old Covenant the key words were *if you* (Exodus 19:5), but in the New Covenant, the key words are *I will*. The Old covenant tells what man must do. The new covenant tells what God will do.

God gave the promise of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) because the people of Israel had failed Him. He also did so because the Old Mosaic Covenant did not have the power to enable them to remain faithful to God. The New Covenant includes the power whereby God's people may remain faithful, namely: the presence of God living within the believer (i.e., the Holy Spirit). This is one way in which it differs from the Old Covenant (v. 9).

With whom would this covenant be made (v. 8)? With the house of Israel and the house of Judah. **Does this exclude all Gentiles?** No. The New Covenant definitely began with Israel but it was never intended to end with Israel (Matthew 15:24; John 10:16).

What reason is given for this change of covenants (v. 9)? The Old Covenant didn't “work” and the reason the Old Covenant didn't work was “*because they did not remain faithful to My covenant.*” The weakness of the Old Covenant was not in the Covenant itself but in the weakness and inability of man.

The Old Covenant failed because it was conditional. It called for obedience from a people who did not and could not produce it. The New Covenant is an unconditional covenant of pure grace. God avoids any possibility of failure since fulfillment of the New Covenant depends on Him alone and he cannot fail.⁶

What are two of the differences ushered in by the New Covenant (v. 10)?

1. “*I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts.*” They will know and desire to do God's will. The New Covenant features transformation from within, not regulation through external law. They will want to obey not through fear of punishment but through love for Him. **How does this happen?** By the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

2. “*I will be their God, and they will be my people.*” This speaks of nearness. The Old Covenant told man to stand at a distance; grace tells him to come near. It also speaks of an unbroken relationship; and unconditional security. They will enjoy a privileged, unique relationship with God.

Why will everyone under the New Covenant know the Lord? Because He will reveal himself to *all* believersby the Holy Spirit living within us. **How does this differ from the Old Covenant?** He revealed Himself largely to the Israelites in visible/audible ways.

What promise does the Lord make (v. 12)? “*For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.*” The New Covenant offers a true, unconditional, complete cleansing from sin, different and better than the mere “covering over” of sin in the Old Covenant. It offers mercy and forgetfulness. The New Covenant provides moral cleansing (as opposed to ceremonial, external cleansing), a clear conscience and permanent forgiveness of sins.

What is the message (v. 13)? Now that the New Covenant has been inaugurated, the Old Covenant is thereby obsolete. The message is clear to these discouraged Jewish Christians, who thought of going back to a more Jewish faith. They simply *can't* go back to an inferior covenant, which was ready to completely vanish away.

¹ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p./2181

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Peter, 2014 Edition (published by Sonic Light, www.soniclight.com), p. 96

³ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 2182

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. p. 2182

⁶ Ibid.