

## “JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO...” SERIES

### OUR HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN

#### HEBREWS 8:1-7

*1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;*

*2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

*3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.*

*4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:*

*5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

*6 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.*

*7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*

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#### Introduction

At this point, it would be good for us to remember the audience of this letter; it was written to Jews who had become believers. It was a constant temptation for these Hebrew Christians to return to the old ways of their faith. This section begins at 8:1 and ends at 9:28 with a bold statement:

**27** And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, **28** so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Christ's death means there is no more a need for sacrifice of blood. He was "offered once" so that sin would not have to be dealt with. Death comes to all and judgment follows.

The writer continues his argument on the superiority of the Savior by identifying him as our High Priest in heaven. Remember, it was only the high priest that entered the Holy of Holies on behalf of the children or God on the day of Atonement.

**Hebrews 9:6** These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties,<sup>7</sup> but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

Jesus the Christ has established that He was to be a priest, not after the earthly, Levitical, order, but after the eternal order of a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, as stated by the writer in the previous chapter (Hebrews 7:22-28).

The priesthood of Melchizedek far surpassed that of the Jewish priesthood. This is the prevailing thought for the rest of this chapter.

*Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;*

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All things have led to this point: “We have a high priest, whose work is now in the throne room of God.” No seats were found in the Temple for the priests. Their work was never done. But for the Christ, His sacrificial work is complete; “once for all.” While still busy interceding on our behalf, He can now sit at the right hand of the “Majesty”, the Father because there is no more offering of sin on behalf of the people.

*A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

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The Greek meaning of “minister” correlates normally to temple service. The Lord Jesus Christ, our high priest, has entered the “holiest of the holiest” in heaven to minister on our behalf. This is the true tabernacle of God... He is the one who built and placed it in heaven and not man, as in the earthly tabernacle and Temple.

*For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.*

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The general function of the high priest’s office was to make offerings of gifts and sacrifices, mainly on the behalf of others. There was a need to make an offering for atonement of sin and someone had to accomplish that task.

As the Levitical High Priest was assigned duties, it is of “*necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.*” Like the Levitical high priest, the Lord Jesus would offer a sacrifice on the behalf of others, the only sacrifice that mattered, His own life.

*4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:*

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Interestingly, the writer is saying that Jesus could not fulfill the role of a high priest on the earth. There are several reasons, but the most important is that Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi and therefore could not be a priest after the Mosaic Law. Jesus Christ could not perform the high priest duties on earth, but is more than qualified in to fulfill that office in heaven.

*5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

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The Levitical priesthood, from which comes the high priest, was a mere example of “*heavenly things.*” A good illustration of this is when God showed Moses the “*pattern*” of the tabernacle while on the mount. God instructed Moses on the materials to be used, the size and who was to make it. God shewed it to Moses by a “*pattern*” (Exodus 25:9, 40). The Hebrew word for “*pattern*” is a model, figure or pattern. The Greek word carries the idea of a “*stamp or model.*”

As the instructions of the tabernacle were given as patterns, the high priesthood of the Christ is a pattern after the events going on in heaven. Jesus is completing His duties as the High Priest for all believers in heaven, this very second.

*6 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.*

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*But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry* – While this could mean a “*better*” ministry, it really refers to a ministry of a higher order.

*...by how much also he is the mediator* - The word mediator properly means one who intervenes between two parties, either as an interpreter or as an intercessor or one who reconciles. Unless otherwise stated in the New Testament, everywhere the word occurs, pertains to the Lord Jesus:

1 Timothy 2:5 For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Hebrews 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Christ therefore officiates between God and man according to a “new covenant.”

*of a better covenant* – Covenant and Testimony are synonymous. A covenant is basically an agreement or arrangement between two or more parties. I can also refer to the “act” of making a covenant.

The better covenant was announced by the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

There is a difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, Moses was the administrator of the Old Testament, while the administrator of the New Testament is Christ.

“He is the mediator of a better covenant.” We have what is known as a New *Covenant* today; we call it a new *testament*. The New Testament is actually a New Covenant which God has made, and it is in contrast to the old covenant of the Old Testament. God gave to Moses the Law, then He gave to him instructions for the tabernacle with its service. It was there that sin was dealt with. No one was ever saved by keeping the Law. No one ever came to God and said, “I have kept all Your commandments, therefore receive me.” No, instead they were continually bringing sacrifices because they had transgressed God’s law. The Law revealed to them that they had come short of the glory of God. The sacrificial system was all shadow. Although the tabernacle God gave to them was a literal tabernacle, it was a shadow of the real tabernacle in which Christ ministers today. In other words, so far we have seen that we have a better priest; we have a better sacrifice; we have a better tabernacle. All of this converges yonder at the brazen altar because Christ is all three: He is the better *priest* who ministers there. He is the better *sacrifice*—He

offered Himself And He ministers in a better *tabernacle*, for He offered His own blood for your sin and my sin.<sup>1</sup>

...*which was established upon better promises* – We will find out what these better promises are in the next passage, Hebrews 8:8-12.

*7For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*

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It is important that we do not throw the baby out with the bath water. Jesus said:

(Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. KJV)

The “Old”, “Mosaic” covenant was not a program from God that failed. It was never intended to save man. It was given so that people would understand that nothing they could do would ever satisfy the judgment of a Holy God. The Law never brought anyone to perfection, instead it showed all the frailties of man. The Law was to show man of their sin, establish a system of sacrifice, elements of the priesthood and the promise of salvation to be fulfilled in the Christ. Man’s inability to find salvation under the Old Testament, required the need for a New Testament.

#### Conclusion

(take out a credit card) recently I took my family out to eat and when the bill came, like most of us parents, I gave them this credit card and signed a piece of paper. Tell me, had I paid for my meal? The restaurant thought so. I didn’t have to wash dishes.

But did “I” really pay for my meal? No. I signed a promissory note that I would pay for the meal when billed. I won’t pay for that meal until the end of the month when I receive the bill.

So also, the sacrifices of the Old Testament paid for people’s sins... but the bill came due at the cross. If Jesus hadn’t died on the cross for our sins, all the sacrifices of the Old Testament would have been worthless.

Let us remember:

*Bob Crowder*

- Jesus is our High Priest
- Jesus is in Heaven appointed by God to be our High Priest.
- Jesus is the one who gave the ultimate sacrifice to pay in full other sacrifices.

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<sup>1</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 559). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.