

THE GLORIES OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

“THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT”

Hebrews 8:1-13

“We Have Such an High Priest” 8:1

“Now of the things which we have spoken [or, ‘Now to sum up what we are saying’] **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.**”

“**Such an high priest**” as the One described in the first seven chapters of this epistle is seated in the place of all power, ministering on behalf of His own (Cf. 8:1 with Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 10:12; 12:2). Jesus, the Son of God, an ever living High Priest, an Anchor of the soul, the Forerunner within the veil, the Surety of a better covenant—“**we have such an high priest**”!

- He is “**holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.**”
- He is better than the prophets, better than the angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron and all the Levitical priests.
- He has made propitiation for sin (2:17);
- He is able to sympathize with and succor His tempted brethren in the wilderness (2:18);
- He ever lives to intercede for them (7:25).

In these first seven chapters the Holy Spirit has spared no words in emphasizing the glory of the person of Christ—more excellent than that of any personage of Judaism. From 8:1-10:18, continuing the proof that He is better than Aaron. He lays emphasis upon the superior ministry of our heavenly Priest, a ministry more excellent than that of any earthly priest. Chapter 8 not only speaks of Him as “**a minister of . . . the true tabernacle . . . the mediator of a better covenant**” than that of the Law of Moses, under which Aaron served; but it also unfolds the terms of that new covenant.

Chapters 9:1-10:18 bring the entire argument to a climax, dwelling at length upon Christ’s more excellent, eternally sufficient sacrifice for sins.

Since the mighty God and altogether lovely One portrayed in chapters 1-7 is our Great High Priest—the inspired writer might have added surely no persecution, however bitter, should keep the Hebrew Christian from bearing faithful witness to **“such an high priest”**! In the light of His glory and grace it seems unthinkable that any Christian—Jew or Gentile—in any generation could allow the things of this world, the joys or the sorrows, to rob the crucified and risen Lord Jesus of first place in the heart and life.

“A More Excellent Ministry” in “The True Tabernacle”
8:2-6

1. “A minister of . . . the true tabernacle”

This One who **“sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high”** is **“a minister of the sanctuary [or, ‘holy things’], and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man”** (8:2).

The Jewish Tabernacle in the wilderness was earthly, a sanctuary of this world (9:1), pitched by man; the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, is heavenly, the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands (9:11). God’s **“house,”** over which Moses was a faithful servant (3:2), was an **“example [copy] and shadow of heavenly things”** (8:5); the more perfect tabernacle is the reality, of which the shadow, or type, spoke (8:5; 9:11, 23, 24).

The Jewish Tabernacle was very beautiful and very costly, made according to the pattern which God showed to Moses in the mount (8:5; cf. Exodus 25:40); but it perished many centuries ago. The true tabernacle is eternal, imperishable.

2. Christ’s continuing ministry

In this heavenly sanctuary the Lord Jesus ever liveth to continue His Priestly work which He began at Calvary.

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

In fulfillment of all the Old Testament types, Christ offered Himself as the one sufficient sacrifice — **“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29). But what are the “gifts” which He now presents to the Father in His intercessory work? As a Priest, He must **“have somewhat also to offer.”**

Are these gifts not the willing expression of service, thanksgiving and praise from the hearts and lives of His brethren? (See Romans 12:1; Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:15, 16; I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6)

He takes our prayers, our praise and our service; burns up all the dross in them, all the sins of pride and self-will; and presents them without flaw to the Father.

“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (13:15, 16),

3. Christ’s heavenly ministry

Further emphasis on the heavenly character of Christ’s ministry is seen in the reference in verse 4 to the higher order of His priesthood:

“For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing there are priests [Levitical priests] that offer gifts according to the law.”

Here, as in chapter 7, we are reminded that Christ did not come through the Levitical order. Therefore, if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all. That is, He would not intrude into the Aaronic priesthood, as did those who thus disobeyed the Law of Moses (See Lesson 4 of this course). The Lord Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law! His priesthood guarantees a heavenly ministry, after the order of Melchizedec, not after the order of Aaron.

The Mediator of the New Covenant

8:6-13

The new covenant is first mentioned in 7:22 where our High Priest is spoken of as the **“surety of a better testament”** than the one made through Moses. In 8:6-13 this thought is amplified. Our Lord, we are told, hath **“obtained a more excellent ministry”** than that of the priests before Him, **“by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises”** (v. 6). This authoritative statement is based on Jeremiah 31:31-34, which is here quoted in full. Turn now to that prophecy and read it carefully; then read the quotation of it in Hebrews 8:8-12.

1. The old covenant of the Law of Moses

The Jews of apostolic times who were continuing the forms and ceremonies of Judaism were rejecting the finished work of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. Likewise, many” professing” Christians today are legalists, that is, they limit the grace of God, seeking to add their own paltry deeds to the atoning work of Christ as the means of salvation. But what does God say in Hebrews 8:7, 8?

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them [the Israelites], he said, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (8:7, 8; cf. Jeremiah 31:31).

Morally God’s law is eternally holy and just; therefore, it was **“not faultless”** only in the sense that it could not save the sinner.

But God did not intend the Law of Moses as the *means of salvation*; **“it was added because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come”** (Galatians 3:19), It was given **“that sin by the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful”** (Romans 7:13), that is, to show fallen man the exceeding sinfulness of his sin. **“The law was our schoolmaster [or, ‘tutor’] to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”!** (Galatians 3:24).

God had been dealing with Israel in grace before the law was given (Exodus 19:4). He **“took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt”** (v. 8:9). He promised to make of them **“a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation”** if they would obey His voice (Exodus 19:5, 6). But even before Moses came down from Sinai with the tables of stone, the people were dancing, naked, around a golden calf, calling it the god who had led them out of Egypt! (See Exodus 32)

Israel broke God’s holy law in every detail, even as God said, **“They continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not”** (v. 9). **“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). Jew and Gentile—all have sinned. The best that the law could do—all God ever meant for it to do—was to reveal to man his utter failure to obey God’s holy law and his need of a Saviour. A mirror reflects the grime and dust on your face, but it cannot wash your face. In like manner God refers to His righteous law as a mirror that reveals to man his need of cleansing from sin by the precious blood of Christ (See James 1:22-25).

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

The Spirit of God is not referring here to the good works and the life separated from the world that should follow regeneration. He does not fail to emphasize the importance of the Christian’s manifesting his faith by his works—before God, men, angels and demons. The pages of the New Testament are literally filled with admonition and exhortation on this vital matter—from the lips of our Lord, as well as from His apostles. But when the Holy Spirit, in the passage before us, contrasts the old and the new covenants, He is speaking of the Law of Moses as **“our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,”** who fulfilled the old covenant and replaced it by the new.

2. The new covenant in Christ Jesus

From all eternity God planned to make a new covenant with His people, one which would be sealed with the blood of His only begotten Son. By faith in that promised Redeemer the Old Testament saints were saved. Then some six hundred years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, the Holy Spirit inspired Jeremiah to write the prophecy concerning the new covenant which God had promised (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Still later the Lord Jesus, at the last Passover with His disciples, said plainly,

“This cup is the new testament [covenant] in my blood” (Luke 22:20, R. V.; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:25).

And now, in Hebrews 8:8-12, the same Holy Spirit reiterates His prophecy, spoken through Jeremiah and fulfilled in Christ.

When Jeremiah wrote this message, existing conditions made it seem impossible of fulfillment, humanly speaking. The ten northern tribes had been taken into the Assyrian captivity, and Jeremiah was predicting the Babylonian captivity. A reunited Israel, enjoying the blessing of the new covenant, seemed improbable, from man's view. But the prophet had a living faith in his living Lord, who had said,

“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (v. 8).

Now you may ask, Is not the new covenant, spoken of by Jeremiah, for Israel only? According to the letter, yes! But in II Corinthians 3:6 the apostle says that he and his associates were made **“able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit.”** The spirit of the new covenant is for Gentiles also. In that same chapter Paul shows that the new covenant is heart-work (vv. 2, 3), gives life (v. 6) abides and exceeds in glory (vv. 7, 9, 10, 11), establishes us in righteousness (v. 9), and brings us face to face with the glory of the Lord without a veil between (vv. 13-18).

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his countenance shone with the reflected glory of God so much that he had to put a veil over his face before Israel could talk with him (II Corinthians 3:13; cf. Exodus 34:33). It was to this circumstance that Paul referred when he compared this experience in Israel's history with the heart-condition of the Christ-rejecting Jews of apostolic days, adding further:

“. . . until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it [or, 'the heart'] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away . . . But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Corinthians 3:14-18).

3. The terms of the new covenant

There are no “if's” in the new covenant, no “thou shalt's”; but there is a chain of divine “I will's.”

- The old covenant was *conditional*, dependent upon Israel's obedience to God's **“Thou shalt.”**
- The new covenant is *unconditional*, guaranteed by God's **“I will.”**

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord” (v. 10),

After what days? After centuries of unbelief; after utter failure to measure up to the standards of righteousness and holiness demanded by the law, after the demonstration of the bankruptcy of fallen human nature, then grace steps in.

It is so now in our personal experience. It will be so in the experience of Israel when God shall **“build again the: tabernacle of David, which is fallen down”** (Acts 15:16; cf. Hebrews 8:8).

“As it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Romans 11:26, 27).

According to the letter, Hebrews 8:8 looks forward to the Millennium, when this promise of Romans 11:26, 27 will be fulfilled, when Israel, as a nation, will be restored to Palestine under the reign of her Messiah. But this covenant is based upon the Father’s **“everlasting covenant”** (13:20), made with His only begotten Son, and sealed with the blood of Jesus (See Lesson 12 of this course concerning 13:20). And into the blessings of this **“everlasting covenant”** Jews and Gentiles of all ages enter by faith when they accept Christ whose finished work on Calvary’s cross is the only atonement for sin.

And what are the terms of the new covenant?

Four unconditional promises of God:

a. **“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts”** (v. 10),

The law thus becomes a part of the very being of the born-again soul. The understanding approves of it; the will loves it. Perception and inclination thus go hand in hand.

The Law of Moses was **“the ministration of death”** because the penalty had to be executed by a holy God upon a disobedient people. This **“ministration of death”** was **“engraven on stones”** (II Corinthians 3:7), But to believers in the Lord Jesus Paul wrote,

“Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men . . . not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart” (II Corinthians 3:2, 3).

This is the merciful work of God, accomplished on the basis of the new covenant in Christ Jesus.

b. **“And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people”** (v. 10).

The Lord is our God and we are His people. This mutual possession is a spring of infinite delight. God gives Himself to us and we give ourselves to Him. God takes pleasure in us and we find pleasure in God—all because we are **“accepted in the beloved”** Son of the Father (Ephesians 1:6).

c. **“And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest”** (v. 11),

We know God immediately.

That is the force of the words, “**All shall know me.**” The word “**know**” means conscious knowledge. God desires to be known in the soul of man. That is the objective of the gospel. The law left God behind the veil “**in the thick darkness**” (II Chronicles 6:1). But in Christianity the heavens are open—the veil is rent—and we are with God in the light of His perfect revelation in His Son. No longer does sinful man need an earthly priest to represent him before the righteous God, teaching him through ritual and ceremonies to know Him; for the heavenly Priest reveals Himself to the humblest “**who come unto God by him**” (7:25).

d. “**For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more**” (v. 12).

Our past is blotted out. The first is mentioned last, the foundation on which all else rests—our sins and iniquities God remembers no more. The past cannot lay its hand upon the present and say, “**Thou belongest to me.**” In the Greek there is a double negative here, “*never remember any more.*” Thus is the heart set at rest in the presence of God.

The Holy Spirit uses several figures to reassure us of full forgiveness of sin. He tells us that “**as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us**” (Psalm 103:12). Again, He says, “**I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins**” (Isaiah 44:22). And to Him the prophet spoke, by faith: “**Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back**” (Isaiah 38:17); and yet again, “**Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea**” (Micah 7:19).

If the Lord did all of that for us, yet remembered our sins, we might be distressed, realizing how black they are, how ashamed we should be to have Him remember such gross iniquities. But thank God! He has promised to remember them no more forever! (8:12; 10:17) That is grace—unmerited, immeasurable and divine.

4. *The new covenant annulled the old.*

“**In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away**” (v. 13).

In these concluding words of contrast between the two covenants the inspired writer is saying, as it were:

“Hebrew Christian, leave the forms and ceremonies of the Law of Moses, and be occupied wholly with Christ, who fulfilled the law and set it aside. Like a worn and cast-off garment, Judaism has served its God-given purpose, is becoming old and waxeth aged, and is nigh unto vanishing away. Since the Law of Moses has been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus—for sinful man; since ‘**Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth**’ (Romans 10:4); why continue to try in vain to be saved by the deeds of the law? ‘**Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**’ (John 1:17). ‘**Let us go on unto perfection**’ (6:1) by the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit.”

Some Bible students believe that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written only about four or five years before the Roman general, Titus, in A.D. 70, destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem.

Without doubt God permitted the Temple worship to be swept away because He had annulled, set aside forever, all the ceremonies of the old covenant. But here, in Hebrews 8, the inspired writer was beseeching his fellow Hebrew Christians to launch out in faith, trusting the unfailing promises of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, even while others were continuing the Temple worship.

And to Christians of every generation, whether Jew or Gentile, the Holy Spirit is saying through this profound, yet clear, epistle: Why stay at Mt. Sinai? Look away to Mount Calvary! Come out from among the Christ-rejecting world; your Great High Priest has saved you by His grace; He continues to minister for you in the true tabernacle at “**the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,**” as the Mediator of the new covenant, sealed with His own blood. To know Him is to love Him; and to love Him is to follow Him, even unto death.

Assignment for Exam 7

1. Be able to express in your own words the fourfold promise of the new covenant; or, if you prefer, you may memorize the verses (10-12).
2. As you let the truth of this chapter grip your soul, remember also the words of the Lord Jesus, “**If ye love me, keep my commandments**” (John 14:15)—not in order to be saved, but because you are saved by faith through His redeeming grace.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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CHAPTER SEVEN

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE MOODY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL FOR GRADING OF YOUR EXAMS – IF YOU WISH TO COMPLETE THEM, CONSIDER THEM AS AN OPEN BOOK EXAM

1. In the blank space write the letter of the correct answer. (24 points)

(1) “The true tabernacle”

- (a) Was built of costly materials**
 - (b) Was not made with hands**
 - (c) Was made by Moses**
 - (d) Has long since perished**
-

(2) As Minister of “the true tabernacle,” Christ presents to God

- (a) Our own efforts for salvation
- (b) Our praise, prayers and service as believers
- (c) Animal sacrifices
- (d) Our faults and failings

- (3) The new covenant is
- (a) a ministration of death
 - (b) written on tables of stone
 - (c) based on the law of Moses
 - (d) written on the heart

2. In the right-hand margin write “True” or “False” after each of the following statements. (20 points)

- a. God meant the Law of Moses to be a means of salvation. _____
- b. Israel broke God’s law in every detail. _____
- c. Jeremiah was inspired to prophesy of a new covenant. _____
- d. Jesus announced that the new covenant was established by His shed blood. _____
- e. The law was given to show fallen man how sinful he is. _____
- f. The new covenant offers blessing to both Jew and Gentile. _____
- g. In Romans 11 Christ is called the Deliverer. _____
- h. The old covenant has fulfilled its purpose. _____
- i. The new covenant will eventually grow old and vanish away. _____
- j. The old covenant was annulled by the new. _____

3. What were the threefold duties of a priest, fulfilled by Christ? (6 points)

- a. _____ Hebrews 2:17
- b. _____ Hebrews 2:18
- c. _____ Hebrews 7:25

4. Name five scriptural figures of speech which reassure us of God’s full forgiveness when we receive His Son as Saviour. (15 points)

- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____
- (d) _____
- (e) _____

5. Fill in the blanks below with the appropriate word or phrase from the following list. (15 points)

Enters	conditional
Faith	burden
Veil	glory
Millennium	returns

- a. The old covenant was _____
- b. When unbelieving Jews read Moses, a _____ is upon their hearts.
- c. According to the letter of the law, Hebrews 8:8-12 looks forward to the _____
- d. The veil is removed from the unbelieving heart when Christ _____
- e. Both Jews and Gentiles may enter into blessings of the everlasting covenant by _____

6. Match each reference in column 1 with the appropriate statement in column 2 by placing the correct letter from column 1 in the proper blank in column 2. (15 points). You may use your Bible.

Column 1	Column 2
a. James 1:23	(1) The law is compared to a schoolmaster _____
b. Galatians 3:19	(2) The law is likened to a mirror _____
c. II Corinthians 3:6	(3) The law reveals the sinfulness of sin _____
d. Romans 10:13	(4) The letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives life _____
e. Galatians 3:24	(5) The ceremonial law was in effect only until Christ finished His redemptive work _____

- 7. a. Give the reference of your favorite verse in Hebrews 8. (5 points)

- b. Explain briefly why this is your favorite verse.

