

Hebrews 8:1-13

Christ's Superior Priestly Service

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II. **Application:**

Supplementary Notes on Hebrews 8:1-13

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III. **8:1-13** Christ's priestly service is superior because...

a. **8:1-6** It is conducted in a superior place

i. What are "the things we are saying?"

1. The hope of inheriting by faith and endurance a share in the restored Davidic theocracy and an inheritance which involves ruling with Christ is guaranteed by Christ entering into God's presence as High Priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek (6:19-20).
2. Melchizedek is greater than the priests of Levi (7:1-10).
3. The rise of a new priest shows the insufficiency of the Levitical Priesthood and a need for a new/better priesthood (7:11-19).
4. This New Priest is better because he guarantees a better covenant, saves His people completely, and meets fully His people's needs (7:20-28).
 - a. Salvation "to the uttermost" found in 7:25 does **not** refer to being saved from the penalty of sin because this kind of salvation is not dependent on the Cross *plus* ongoing intercession. Christ said, "It is finished" and Paul said that God has forgiven us all our trespasses and has taken away the handwriting of requirements that was against us and has *nailed it to the cross* (Col. 2:13-14).
 - i. Therefore, salvation from the penalty of sin depends solely on the work of Christ on the cross!
 - b. This salvation "to the uttermost" refers to the Messianic Salvation for this is how the author uses *soteria* throughout the book (1:14; 2:3, 10; 5:9; 6:9; 7:25; 9:28). For example, he quotes in 1:8-9 the Messianic Psalm 45:1 which describes the kingdom of the Messiah and His companions. In 1:13, he

quotes Psalm 110:1 where David says, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” These Old Testament quotations are used by the author to refer to the future Messianic Salvation i.e. deliverance from enemies of Messiah and His people and subsequent enjoyment of that victory.

- i. Messianic Salvation refers to the future restoration of the Davidic Theocracy. Believers, who are “saved” in this sense, are those who will obtain a share in this great future. They are those who will be rewarded with an inheritance which involves ruling with Christ (Dillow, *Final Destiny*, 160).
- c. This salvation is available to those who “come to God through Him,” that is to those who are already saved in a soteriological sense. This verb *proserchomenous* (to come to) is used seven times in the epistle (4:16; 7:25; 10:1; 10:22; 11:6; 12:18, 22) and it always speaks of a post-conversion activity.
- d. Only those believers who persevere in faith and endurance like Abraham will inherit these promises i.e. participate in the Messianic Salvation (6:12, 15).

ii. What is the “main point?”

1. Christ’s priestly service is superior to that of the Levites because He is seated in the heavens and conducts his priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as opposed to the earthly copy of the sanctuary.

iii. Why is the High Priest seated at God’s right hand in heaven?

1. He took care of the sin problem once and for all (1:3; 7:27; 10:11-12)
 - a. He is seated which indicates that His work of purifying the sins of the people is done as opposed to the Levites whose work was never finished.

iv. What is the “sanctuary” and the “true tabernacle” which the Lord built?

1. They refer to the literal abode of God Himself. As will be mentioned later, the Levites served in a copy of this heavenly sanctuary which Moses modeled the tabernacle after (8:5). God does dwell in an actual

place where He sits in an actual throne room put together with precious stones (Revelation 4).

- v. Why does the author mention that every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices?
 - 1. Because this is the primary service of the Aaronic high priests i.e. to offer sacrifice for sin. Since Christ is a High Priest, He too must have this in common with the Levitical high priests if He is said to hold such an office.
- vi. But how is Christ's offering of sacrifice for sin as High Priest better than that of the Levitical high priests?
 - 1. Instead of offering an unblemished lamb perpetually, He offered Himself as a perfectly holy man once for all people (7:26-27; 10:11-12).
- vii. Why does the author explain his point further by saying Christ cannot be a priest on the earth?
 - 1. The answer is twofold:
 - a. (1) He does this to show that Christ's service is not an earthly one since the Levitical ritual of sacrifice continued. (These words imply that the Jewish temple was still standing.) Therefore, Christ's priestly service is a heavenly one.
 - b. (2) He is not qualified to do so because He is of the line of Judah (7:13-14). This means that another priesthood has risen not according to Levi, but to Melchizedek because the former did not perfect the people whereas the latter does.
- viii. Why does the author continue to describe the Levitical priests who offer sacrifice according to the Law as those who do so in the earthly tabernacle (prototype for the temple)?
 - 1. He did so to contrast the place in which Christ ministers as a priest with the place in which the priests of Levi minister as priests. According to Exodus 25:40, Moses was instructed to make a copy of the heavenly sanctuary which God showed him on top of Mount Sinai so the Lord could dwell amongst the Israelites albeit in both a limited

and constricted way. However, Christ currently serves as High Priest in the actual sanctuary, the heavenly abode of God.

- a. In Exodus 20:18-21 and 24:1-2, the limited access to God is described inasmuch that the people were afraid to draw near and only Moses was able to draw near to God.

ix. How is it that Christ has obtained a “more excellent ministry?”

1. Since the old priests served in a copy of the real thing, and Christ serves in the real tabernacle in the heavens, He has obtained a more excellent ministry. The Levitical priesthood ended at the death of Christ and Christ’s superior priesthood continued after His resurrection.

- a. The verb *obtained* is in the perfect tense which indicates He received that ministry in the past, but the ministry continues to the present day. He is still performing His ministry as a High Priest for His people today.

x. How is this covenant better than the one the Levites mediated?

1. Because, unlike the Levitical priests, Christ can enter into the very presence of the Father in heavens (7:26) since as the High Priest He is God and is holy. Since He is also a man and knows what man goes through (chapter 2), He can represent His people while in that presence. As their High Priest, He has made His people acceptable before the Father.

xi. What are these better promises that the better covenant is established on?

1. These better promises offered by the better covenant pertain to having a better relationship with God for the people of God that the Jews under the Old Covenant could not have. This relationship includes the permanent and inner dwelling of God in the believer as well as complete access to Him.

b. **8:7-10a** Which brings about a superior covenant

- i. In what way did the first covenant i.e. the Old Covenant have fault?

1. It wasn't the Old Covenant itself that had fault for Paul says it was holy (Rom. 7:12), but rather, the participants in that covenant had fault. The problem was the sinfulness of God's people. Because of the fallen nature of man, they did not keep it.
2. The bringing in of a second covenant shows the insufficiency of the first.
3. Because Israel did not keep the Old Covenant, God promises through the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34) that He will make a New Covenant approximately 800 years after the old one was enacted at Sinai.

ii. To whom was this New Covenant made?

1. Interestingly enough, the New Covenant is made with Israel, not with the Church. One day God would fix the hearts of His chosen people so that the promises He made to Abraham and his descendants would be realized. The Old Covenant could not bring these about. All of these blessings await a future day when they will be fulfilled under the New Covenant.
2. Even though this promise of the New Covenant was made to Israel, the Church shares in many of the blessings of the New Covenant now (e.g. forgiveness of sins and knowing God). Part of the promises made to Abraham included the idea that through him the whole world would be blessed. This universal blessing of the world through the descendants of Abraham will occur in the future kingdom of God when Christ rules. But the Church is now experiencing some of these blessings.

iii. What does it mean for the Lord to "disregard" His people?

1. God disciplined His people for not keeping His covenant by using their enemies to defeat them and take them off into captivity.

c. **8:10b-13** Which results in a superior relationship with God

- i. How is the New Covenant superior to the Old?

1. As opposed to the Old Covenant where the Law of God was written on tablets of stone, the New Covenant will place the Law of God in the believer. This is a reference to the Holy Spirit who lives within every believer.
 2. The church-age believer does share in these blessings (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6) even though the New Covenant has not yet been fully realized in Israel. The believer today by virtue of sharing in these blessings of the New Covenant have: (1) an inner inclination to obey (God will put His laws in their minds and write them on their hearts), (2) a firm relationship with God (I will be their God, and they will be My people), (3) the knowledge of God (they will all know Me), and (4) the forgiveness of sins (I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more). These are the “better promises” alluded to in verse 6.
- ii. Does this perception of the church age believer sharing in the blessings of the New Covenant mean that the Church and Israel are the same entity?
1. No, this perception does not lead to an inappropriate confusion between Israel and the Church. The New Covenant is God’s appointed vehicle for fulfilling the Abrahamic blessings to Israel. But the Abrahamic Covenant also promised universal blessing, so the New Covenant becomes as well God’s vehicle of salvation for believers since the Cross.
- iii. Why is the Old Covenant now obsolete?
1. Because Christ bringing in the New Superior Covenant has made the Old Inferior Covenant useless. From this Old Testament prophecy, the author concludes that the Old Covenant is obsolete, that it has no more use.
 2. Furthermore, it seems here that the author reaffirmed the prophecy of Jesus that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed (Matt. 24:1-2). If Hebrews was written in the late 60s AD, then this prophecy was fulfilled a little later in 70 AD.

IV. Application:

- a. From this passage, the vision of God is clear: He desires humanity to draw near to Himself (6:18-19).
- b. He does everything necessary to deal with the relational distancing effects of sin through the High Priestly Ministry of Christ in order to make this possible (Hebrews 8:1-13).
- c. Through the New Covenant, mediated by Christ, not only do we have access to draw near to the Father, but He draws near to us, in fact, He takes up residence within the believer and gives us a new nature that we may be like Him. The Jews under the Old Covenant did not have God's Spirit dwelling in them. Their only access to God was through the Levitical priests in the tabernacle and later the temple.
- d. Through this New Covenant we have a firm relationship with God that the Jews of the Old Covenant simply did not have.
 - i. We're able to call God our Father. Furthermore, our children of God status through faith in Christ is eternally secure (John 10:28-29; Romans 8) and not contingent on our obedience.
- e. Through this New Covenant, mediated by Christ, we have greater knowledge of the Lord of which the Jews only had a limited access to under the Old Covenant.
 - i. We have positional knowledge of God in Christ, that is, when we believe in Christ we receive everlasting life and are given the right to become children of God (John 1:12; 3:16)
 - ii. We have experiential knowledge of God in Christ, that is, when we obey the Father we have close fellowship with Him and are His friends (John 15:14).
- f. Through this New Covenant, mediated by Christ, we have the forgiveness of sins. The Jews under the Old Covenant never had their sins taken away, but continually had to offer sacrifice in order to maintain their limited access to God.
 - i. This is ultimately what allows us to go directly to the Father through the Son in prayer because our sins have been nailed to the cross so we now can come boldly to the throne of God (Heb. 4:16).