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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

# Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 8



Part 11/23

## God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

We're going to begin now with a review of the material that we went through in detail in the previous series of sessions which covered chapters 1 through 7. My review will basically not have much to do with the material on those chapters but I think it's very important that we go back and look at the introductory material. I think we have to refresh our grasp of that in order to be able to go effectively through the remaining chapters. So, if you have your outline, turn to the page which doesn't have any number on it. That's the one following the page that tells you who I am! When you've surmounted the first hurdle and got to know who I am and you can identify me by the picture there, then the next sheet which doesn't have any number is the one we're going to start at now. We're just going to look through the material there for a moment.

First of all, the method of teaching. I'm going to teach direct from the Greek text with extemporary translation. I do this because Ruth and I have a habit of reading the Bible through together, both Old Testament and New, in such a way that I read the Hebrew if it's the Old Testament, or the Greek if it's the New. I translate it and she follows along with two contemporary versions and we check where the real meaning is. It's rather slow but it's very thorough. At the moment, we're actually in our private readings, working through the gospel of Luke. I'm reading from the Greek, translating as I go, and Ruth is following along in two English versions. When I finish my translation she reads both versions. At the end of that time, we have a very thorough grasp of what that particular passage was about. We've learned a lot of things just by comparing an extemporary translation with two different English versions. So that's the way we'll be going. I'll be translating from my Greek New Testament, which is this little black leather-bound book, but we'll also be following along in English translations. The two translations which I have used basically to prepare these outlines are the New American Standard, which is here, and the New International Version. I basically go first to the New American Standard because it's a more exact translation than the New International Version, which takes a good many liberties in order to come out with elegant English.

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On the other hand, the English of the New International Version is far better than that of the New American Standard and in many ways it says things much more vividly and convincingly. I like to use the two together. That covers the first section there under preliminary explanations.

Then our method of study is primarily analytical and I want to point out there are many other valid methods of studying the Bible. This is not the only method. What we do is we read through the text to find out basically two things: What does it actually say? And second, What does it mean? or How does it apply to me or to us? Particularly in this epistle to the Hebrews we need to refer regularly to related or parallel Old Testament passages because Hebrews is written to people whose background is in the Old Testament and it abounds both with quotations and references. You really cannot grasp the full import of Hebrews until you have looked at the passages referred to in the Old Testament.

Another way that I do it, which I have found very fruitful, is to pick out key words representing strands of truth. As you'll see in a moment when we move on in the introduction, I've listed thirteen key words which really, I believe, present the main thrust of the epistle. I've listed each word where it occurs and how many times it occurs. You can look at that list and you can say for sure chapter 9 deals mainly with such-and-such a subject, because that particular word occurs so many times in that chapter. For me, key words are like strands that run through the Scripture and if you get hold of a strand, you can follow it right through the Bible. Again, translation into English often obscures that because English translators often use more than one English word to translate the same original word.

Or, it may be the other way around. For instance, an example comes to my mind. If you take the King James, which is the basic version that most of us are familiar with or were familiar with, where the King James in the New Testament uses the English word gift, there are nine different words in the New Testament. You understand, just the one word gift blurs a lot of distinctions which are there in the original. If you don't happen to know the original languages you can, to some extent, overcome that by using a concordance such as Young's or Strong's, which give you the original words transcribed into English letters. Unfortunately for English-speaking people, both Hebrew and Greek use a different alphabet from the English alphabet. But, you can get over that. I happen to know both the original languages, both Hebrew and Greek, and I've done a lot of the work for you so that you'll be able to follow these strands through simply by going through the note outlines.

Then there are certain structural features. You'd be surprised how many times when you have a list of things the list is seven. It's really—I would almost say—uncanny. Somebody's called that the signature of the Holy Spirit on Scripture. It's another realization that emphasizes the unique character of the Bible. For instance, I was listening to my own radio broadcast on "The Love of God" the other day. I discovered something I had forgotten. When Paul describes what love is in 1 Corinthians 13, if you analyze it, he lists seven negative features of love and seven positive features of love. Seven things love does not do and seven things love does do. What is miraculous is you think that he wasn't writing an analytical piece of literature, he was writing a letter probably under tremendous personal pressure and he just sent the letter off and that was it. Through it all the Holy Spirit was working and speaking.

I want to look at and actually read Proverbs 2:1–5 because this passage, I believe, states what's required of the student. That means you, in case you didn't know it! Let's look at what you have to contribute in order to receive what God desires you to have. One of the statements that Jesus made was, "Take heed how you hear." He also said, "Take heed what you hear." And in that context He said, "With what measure you measure, it will be measured back to you." This is eminently true in a Bible study. You need to be careful how and what you hear. What you put in of your own attention and study and effort will determine what you get out. It does not depend solely on the teacher. Proverbs 2:1–5 states four requirements. Of course, this is not limited to the study of Hebrews. This is requirements for studying the Word of God. Each of the first four verses lists a requirement. First one:

> "My son, if you will receive my sayings, and treasure my commandments within you..."

Notice, it's God speaking to his born-again children. This is not for those that don't know God because they don't have the ability to receive what God has. What are the requirements? Receive God's sayings, treasure His commandments. Be open, be receptive and treat the truths —estimate them for what they're worth. They're incredibly precious. Don't treat them like something cheap or commonplace. Treasure them within you.

Second verse:

> "... make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding..."

The requirements there are attentiveness and an inclined heart. I went into that in some detail last year. But an inclined heart indicates humility: being willing to be taught. You're not sitting there judging God putting your stamp of approval on things you agree with and shaking your head at things you don't agree with. That's not the right attitude.

I've preached several times in Holland and I love the Dutch people. If there are any Dutch people here, I hope you'll love me after I've said this. Corrie Ten Boom, of course, who is one of the best known Dutch people today, once remarked to me—and I'm glad she said it before I really went there. She said, "The trouble with Holland is every Dutchman is his own theologian." And you couldn't better describe their attitude in one sentence. When I preached I saw them sitting there and they were kind of checking me off. Yes, he was right on that point. I'm not sure about that point. Or, that's not right. They were not sitting there with the thought of, "Here is God speaking; I must decide what to do." But it was a kind of abstract, intellectual analysis without commitment to obey. That's not going to get you anywhere. Believe me, God is always right, you don't have to correct Him. You just have to obey Him.

The third requirement:

> "... if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding..."

That, I understand to mean, earnest, importune prayer. Prayer is an essential part of coming into the truth of Scripture.

Verse 4:

> "... if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures..."

And that is real searching and study. Hidden treasure is usually buried somewhere and to get the treasure Jesus said, first of all, you have to buy the field—which is expensive. Secondly, you have to look all through the field until you find what the treasure is. Thirdly, you have to dig the treasure out, which is hard work. What that really speaks about is hard work.

Then there's the reward, verse 5:

> "... you will discern the fear of the LORD, and discover the knowledge of God."

There is a reward.

I'm just preparing a series of radio messages on the fear of the Lord, and I'm sorry I missed out this Scripture because it really impresses me. To discern the fear of the LORD, and that leads to discovering the knowledge of God. No one can express in words how infinitely precious that is, the knowledge of God. I'm so blessed to see that the fear of the Lord is the key to the knowledge of God. Without the fear of the Lord we can have a lot of intellectual knowledge but true knowledge of God only comes to those who fear the Lord. "The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him and He will show them His covenant." God chooses His students, basically, on grounds of character.

Now we're going to go quickly through the next section which begins with the sheet numbered 0/1. We're not going to go into much of it in detail but some of it we are. We won't give any time to the question of the date except to point out it's clear the epistle was written before the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. In other words, it was written when the temple was still standing and the daily sacrifices were still being regularly performed by the Levitical priests. If you don't realize that, you will not be able to understand some of what it says. The author we will not go into. Addressed certainly to Jewish people. Who or where is not very clear. Its distinctive revelation is Jesus as high priest. It was borne in upon me again today as I was preparing for this session that if we don't keep our eye focused on Jesus and specifically His high priestly ministry, we will not receive the full revelation and blessing that God has. Jesus is the theme and if we stray away into secondary issues and lose sight of Him, we will not receive all that God intends.

The main theme apart from the revelation of Jesus as high priest is indicated by three recurrent words which we'll look at briefly in a moment in the list of key words. Inheritance, rest and perfection. Those words occur at decisive points all through the epistle. The epistle is a forward looking epistle. Its two directions are forward and upward. It keeps us pressing on toward our inheritance and it makes clear that true rest is found only within our inheritance. One of the great themes of chapter 3 and 4 is how to enter into rest. And one of the keys to understanding that is that rest for God's people is found only in our inheritance. If we do not enter into our inheritance we will never find true rest. Inheritance and rest go together all the way through the epistle.

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And then the word perfection, which is also translated "maturity" or "completion." That's the goal. Paul said in one of his epistles that he strove that he might present every man perfect in Christ. That's the objective of this writer whether it was Paul or not. It's the perfection of God's people. He has a very hard time because he sees God's people being slothful and stopping short of the mark and not pressing through to perfection. I'm really convinced that the problem that this writer discerned in the Jewish people to whom he wrote in the first century is one of the major problems of Christians in the twentieth century. It's a failure to press through. It's being content with less than God's purpose and less than God's best.

One of the main thrusts of this epistle is to keep stirring God's people up not to stop short. It contains, as we'll see, five of the most solemn warnings that occur anywhere in the Bible, to the people of God. All the warnings are really warnings to people who stop short. More and more, and partly through my study of this epistle, partly through dealing with a lot of different people, I've come to see that in the spiritual life you either go on or you slide back. There's nothing in between. Lots of people backslide not because they intend to but because they're not willing to press onward.

The purpose of the epistle, I chose just one verse in Hebrews 6:18. "That we may have strong encouragement." I think God's people need a tremendous amount of encouragement. How many of you would agree that you need encouragement? I'll put my hand up, too. One thing I've said is the Holy Spirit is the encourager of God's people. The very word that's translated "comforter" or paraclete or whatever word you're used to, means "encourager." Let me leave this with you: The Holy Spirit never discourages the people of God. Any voice, any influence, any teaching which has the effect of discouraging you as a Christian is not from the Holy Spirit. And there's a lot of it around.

The Greek word that's translated "encourage" has two related meanings and I'll express them this way: "to stir up" or "to cheer up." If you're slothful, you need to be stirred up. If you're discouraged, you need to be cheered up. But, the Greek word is the same for both; it's just two different aspects of the same. One of the results of studying this epistle should be that if you are slothful, you'll get stirred up and if you're discouraged, you'll get cheered up. I trust and pray that will be true for every one of us.

Let's look at the key words. There are thirteen key words which I've listed. You'll find them at the bottom of Page 0/1 and then going on the top of 0/2. I've divided them up into four groups of three and the first one, the initial one, is, of course, high priest. That's the central revelation. Then there are three related words: promise, oath and covenant; all of which occur frequently in this epistle. They're related to the high priest because it requires a high priest to guarantee the fulfillment of God's promise, God's oath, God's covenant. Without a high priest we cannot receive.

And to establish God's covenant it requires the next three things: offering, sacrifice and blood.

Wherever there is sacrifice in the Bible there is blood. Bloodless sacrifice is not accepted with God.

Then the response required from us at the top of Page 0/2, three things. Faith, hope and confession. Again, going through the material this time I was impressed by the continual linking together of hope and confession. In other words, unconfessed hope isn't going to do you any good. If you have a scriptural hope it'll only work for you when you confess it, when you state it aloud boldly with your lips. Of course, faith. The great faith chapter out of all the Bible is found in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Chapter 11.

> "And then finally we've already said the three objectives are inheritance, rest and perfection."

Let's look at the other distinctive groupings of passages there just to refresh our minds and, as it were, get us in gear when we start the actual study of chapter 8. First of all, I've already said there are five passages containing solemn warnings. I don't know any other book in the whole Bible that has anything that compares with the warnings given in Hebrews. I think we need to bear in mind that they were given to religious people. They weren't given to harlots or drunkards or drug addicts, they were given to very religious people. People with a tremendous spiritual inheritance and a great knowledge of Scripture.

If you and I were trying to assess who are the people who ought to be warned, we wouldn't think of them. But that's the people. And, being frank with you, that's the kind of people mostly that we have here tonight. Some of you may not have much religious background, but basically, well over fifty percent of the people here tonight and the people that will hear these tapes are people in that category. They're religious people. They're people with a knowledge of Scripture. "To whom much is given, of him much shall also be required."

One of the great mistakes of the Jewish people—and it's defined for us in Romans 2—is they assumed that because they knew better than other people what God required they were better than other people. Paul points out to them: on the contrary, it's just the other way around. If you know better than others and don't do it, you're more guilty than all the rest.

I've been just making a little study on knowledge and what it does. Mainly because of myself. One thing Paul says about knowledge, which is undeniably true, is found in 1 Corinthians 8:1:

> "Knowledge puffs up..."

The more knowledge we have, the greater the temptation to become proud. You've probably heard the different kinds of pride, have you? I'm not sure I can list them, but they all rhyme. Pride of face, that's pride in your personal appearance. Pride of race, you belong to the super race: black, white or in between. Pride of place, your social position. And pride of grace, your religious attainments. And the worst of them all is the last, pride of grace.

Let's consider the five things that we're warned against. You'll find the list there on Page 0/2. The first thing is neglect. The second is unbelief. The third is apostasy, deliberately turning away from the truth. The fourth is willfully continuing in sin. And the fifth, coming short of the grace of God, knowing and experiencing God's grace but not responding in the way that He requires.

I see in that the subtlety of Satan. He doesn't start with the big, dramatic, awful thing, but he starts with neglect. Which, apparently, isn't so serious. And neglect leads to unbelief. And in most Christian churches today, unbelief is not even considered sinful. But the writer of Hebrews points out that an unbelieving heart is a sinful heart. Believe me, if we are guilty first of neglect, secondly of unbelief, it's almost inevitable that we'll go the rest of the way and become guilty of the rest. So we surely need to take heed that we are not guilty of neglect, we're not careless.

I appreciate the people here tonight. I suppose many of you have made a sacrifice and you're going to put in a good deal of time and a good deal of effort. I tell you, there are countries in the Third World or behind the Iron Curtain where people would travel day and night on foot for a couple of days to get to a meeting like this. They would sit six or eight hours on planks or even on an earthen floor to listen to the Word of God. And when the preacher stopped, they'd say, "We want more." I've experienced this, I'm not theorizing. I've been in places like that. It is frightening.

And here, how much do we really give God of our best? How much of the best of our minds and attention do we give to Him? Are we perhaps without even knowing it guilty of neglect? I think if there's one agent that produces neglect in American Christians, it's television. I'm not against television, but I am convinced that it keeps countless millions of people from God's best. It's a strange thing. It's tremendously used of God to confront people in America with the gospel. Then it's tremendously used of Satan to prevent them from becoming the kind of people they ought to be. Passages indicating positive practical applications and you'll find there are seven. I think I'll leave it to you to read them, they're still on Page 0/2.

Starting at the bottom of that page, passages of comparison and contrast. Again, there are seven. In every one of them the preeminence of Jesus and the New Covenant is set forth as opposed to the Old Covenant.

The first comparison explains the superiority of Jesus over angels.

The second, of Jesus over Moses.

The third, of the priesthood of Melchizedek over the Levitical priesthood.

The fourth, of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant. That's the one we'll be looking at later tonight.

The fifth, of the heavenly tabernacle over the tabernacle of Moses.

The sixth, of the sacrifice of Jesus over the Levitical sacrifices.

The seventh, of Mount Zion over Mount Sinai.

I think we need to understand that the writer knew what he was doing. He had to emphasize these points to these Jewish people. There's a Scripture that we read in Luke the other day, Ruth and I, that really impressed us both. It's the end of Luke 5. Verses 37–39.

> "'And no one puts new wine into old wineskins' [it's Jesus who is speaking]; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins."

So, Jesus had to create His own wineskins for the gospel message because the old people steeped in Judaism really

could not respond to it. Then He makes this final comment:

> "No one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good enough.'"

Isn't that true of religious people? "The old is good enough." Why change? We've done this for centuries. Our fathers did it, everybody did it. This is the way it's done. This wine is good enough, don't offer me the new.

Then, going on in our outline on Page 0/3 we have twelve "let us" passages. We have been through the first five. Each one of those, if you look at them, will give you some kind of idea of the thrust of the gospel. The phrase "let us" indicates a collective decision by the people of God.

Then the occurrence of words. I think I'll let you look through for yourself. Just notice on Page 0/5 that when we look at number 7, blood, it doesn't begin till chapter 9. But, see how many times it occurs in chapter 9 and chapter 10. That gives you an idea of the thrust of those chapters.

I want you to look at seven key passages that focus on Jesus, because God has shown me that if we don't keep our focus on Jesus we won't get the full message. Quickly looking, Hebrews 1:2:

> "... in these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son ..."

Notice the phrase "in the last days" and "in His Son." That's the double emphasis of Hebrews. It's urgent and it all centers in the Son of God.

Then in Hebrews 2:9:

> "But we ... see Him [that's Jesus] ... crowned with glory and honor ..."

Again, that's the theme of revelation: Jesus crowned with glory and honor. We don't see it with our natural eyes; we see it by the revelation of Scripture.

Hebrews 2:17:

> "Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest ..."

Again, the theme. A merciful and faithful high priest. And then in the next chapter, 3:1:

> "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession."

The word consider means "fix your attention on." See, all the way through: never let your attention stray from Jesus.

Chapter 4:14:

> "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God..."

Notice again the emphasis. Our great high priest. Jesus, the Son of God. And then in chapter 6:19–20:

> "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil..."

And that's another key phrase in Hebrews: "within the veil." See, everything in the Old Covenant was done on the outside of the veil. That's the second curtain of the tabernacle. One of the thrusts of Hebrews is, how do we get inside the veil? Because, only there do we meet with God. Only there do we attain maturity and perfection. Only there do we enter into our true rest and inheritance. We have a great high priest and the writer says in 6:20:

> "... where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Notice the emphasis. Jesus, a forerunner and a high priest. Then, lastly, just two passages in 7:22:

> "... so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant."

Jesus is the guarantee. It's not exactly a written guarantee, it's a personal guarantee. Finally, a very powerful phrase, the last verse of chapter 7, verse 28: For the law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

That's Jesus: "a Son made perfect forever." What tremendously powerful words. The Son of God made perfect, and forever. All that distinguishes Him from the

Levitical priesthood and the Old Covenant which was not made through a Son, never made people perfect, did not last forever. But we only fully appreciate the message if we continually return to our focus on Jesus.

Now we're going to begin our study of Hebrews 8. We'll be using the printed outline. But, before we go directly into chapter 8, I would like to review very rapidly with you the material on sheet 7/4 and 7/5 which is headed "Points of Contrast between the Levitical Priesthood and the Priesthood of Melchizedek." This will be a kind of helpful introduction to the comparison that follows in chapter 8 which we'll be studying between the Old Covenant and the New.

Very quickly, without pausing for comment, we'll go through the fourteen points of contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek.

First of all, Melchizedek's priesthood combines priesthood and kingship. The priesthood, under the Old Covenant, was allotted to the tribe of Levi with kingship to Judah and no interchange was permitted.

Number two, Melchizedek gave to Abraham bread and wine, emblems of the New Covenant not previously given by Abraham. But the Levitical priests only gave back to the Israelites part of the sacrifices previously received from them. They had to receive before they could give.

Point number three, Melchizedek receives tithes from Abraham. The Levitical priests gave tithes through Abraham.

Point number four, Melchizedek, because of an indestructible life, had a permanent priesthood which never passed by succession to others. The Levitical priests, because of mortality, had only a temporary priesthood.

Number five, Melchizedek does not trace his genealogy from Abraham. The Levitical priests must be descended from Abraham.

Number six, Melchizedek blessed Abraham, therefore he is greater. The Levitical priests owe their blessing to Abraham, therefore they are less.

Number seven, Melchizedek provided direct access to God and perfection. The Levitical priesthood could not provide direct access or perfection.

Number eight, Melchizedek was priest by the power of an indestructible life. The Levitical priests only on the basis of a physical requirement.

Number nine, Melchizedek was appointed with God's oath. The Levitical priests were appointed without an oath.

Number ten, Melchizedek insures a superior covenant. The Levitical priests were linked to an inferior covenant.

Number eleven, Melchizedek and his priesthood provides one all sufficient priest. But, the Levitical priest, because of death, had to be many and were never sufficient.

Number twelve, Melchizedek, through his priesthood, in the person of Jesus is able to save completely and forever. The Levitical priests are unable to save.

Number thirteen, Jesus as the priest after the order of Melchizedek did not need to offer sacrifice for His own sins. He had none. But, the Levitical priests needed to sacrifice first for their own sins.

Number fourteen, Melchizedek's priesthood provides as a priest God's perfect Son. The Levitical priesthood provides only men with human frailty.

Now, with that in mind we'll go into chapter 8, the main part of which is a comparison between the Old and New Covenants. But remember, the covenants are linked to the priesthood. We're turning now to Hebrews 8:1. I'll read these in translation, that's 1 and 2. Then we'll go through the outline. My translation is not always fluent because I have to stop sometimes and think what's the best word.

The main point of that which we are saying is that we have such a high priest, who sat down on the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary [or the holy things] ...

I think the phrase includes more than just the sanctuary, it means all the vessels that were used in the sanctuary. So he's a minister of the holy things:

> "... and of the true tent [or tabernacle] which the Lord pitched, not man."

Bear in mind that the tabernacle of Moses was a real tent. The word that's used there in Greek to describe it is the same word that's used to translate the Hebrew festival of Succoth or Tabernacles or Booths. So, the word has a history all through the Bible.

We'll pause there and we'll look now at the outline. These two verses extract the main points about Jesus as high priest from the foregoing elaborate comparison which we looked at just in summary at the end of chapter 7. The four points which are brought out in this brief summary at the

beginning of chapter 8 are as follows—and as I said, the writer says the main point that we're trying to make is this. So if you're a little confused by the elaborate comparison in chapter 7, he's trying to help you. He says, Don't try to remember it all—here are the four main points that you need to keep in mind, which distinguish Jesus as our high priest.

Number one, He sat down. He never needs to repeat His sacrifice. You'll observe that through these chapters of Hebrews there is great emphasis placed on the fact that Jesus, having finished His ministry, sat down. This is always contrasted with the Levitical priests who never sat down and always remained standing. It's interesting if you study the description of the furniture of the tabernacle, there are no chairs anywhere. There are no seats. That's deliberate. They never sat down because their task was never complete. They never could offer a sacrifice that ended it all, they just offered temporary sacrifices. So, they had to remain standing.

Jesus, having offered one all-sufficient sacrifice forever, sat down on the throne. So there's great emphasis in the fact that He sat down.

Then it says He sat down on a throne. What kind of person sits on a throne? A king. So again, it's pointed out that not only is He a priest, He's also a king. That's the distinctive feature of the order of Melchizedek because Melchizedek (His Hebrew name), means "king of righteousness," and it's also stated in Genesis 14 he was a priest. As we pointed out in the brief summary at the end of chapter 7, under the Levitical law it was forbidden for a priest to be a king or a king to be a priest.

There were two kings in Old Testament history that tried to carry out the function of a priest, which was to offer sacrifice. One was King Saul and the other was King Azaiah. Both of them were judged by God. So, there was an absolute line of division between priesthood and kingship. That's under the Levitical covenant.

But the original priest first mentioned in the Bible is not a Levitical priest but Melchizedek and he was both king and priest. When Jesus came, the priesthood of Melchizedek, which had been kind of in abeyance, reemerged in him. Do you remember we saw that the two things that he offered to Abraham were bread and wine. I don't know whether it's ever occurred to you, but at the Last Supper when Jesus took the bread and the wine and offered them to His disciples, He was saying by that act: "Here's the priesthood of Melchizedek restored in Me. I'm both your priest and your king."

Let me point out the practical application. As a priest He represents us, He sees to our interests. As a king He has the authority to get it done. So never come to Him just as a priest but come to Him as a priest who is also a king.

> You see, what seems to be a rather kind of, almost verbal distinction, when first encountered, becomes charged with meaning when you meditate on it. You could say, "So, He's a king and a priest." But when you think it over, it has a great meaning for you and me.

The third main point is that Jesus exercises His ministry in the heavenlies. The Levitical priest operated on an earthly level. Jesus didn't take over their priesthood, but His priesthood is instituted in the heavenlies.

And fourth, it's in the true tabernacle pitched by God, not man. I like the word "pitched." It's really such a practical word. I'm going to come to this a little further on but I really believe there is a tabernacle in heaven. If you find difficulty in believing that, that's your privilege. I believe God pitched a tabernacle in heaven. After all, His Son was a carpenter. The Godhead is very practical, believe me.

We'll go on now with verses 3 and 4.

> "For every high priest is appointed [or holds office] for the purpose of offering both gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is necessary [or it was necessary] that this man also [that's Jesus] should have something to offer. Now if he were upon earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are those priests who offer gifts according to the law."

We'll stop there. This brings out one extremely important point, which we did deal with in our previous series. What is the supreme, unique function of a priest expressed in one key word? Sacrifice. No one but a priest has a right to offer sacrifice. And, together with that, nobody has a right to offer anything to God unless he's a priest. This is a truth that's very clear in the Scriptures but most Christians simply haven't grasped at all. We have no right to come to God and offer Him anything unless our offering is taken up by a priest.

See, most people don't think that. You cannot put your offering in the "collection" and give it to God unless it goes through a priest. People who are not priests have no right whatever to offer anything to God. Neither gifts nor sacrifices. I can see you looking astonished. I mean, I appreciate your astonishment. But we have brazenly assumed that we could walk up to God at any time and slip ten dollars in His hand. We can't. That isn't the way God operates. It's wonderful if you want to give God ten dollars, but it's got to go through a priest. He's the only kind of person that has authority to offer gifts to God. If we don't have a priest we have no way of offering anything to God.

No Israelite could offer anything to God unless he was a priest. That gives tremendous power to priesthood, doesn't it? In a certain sense, priests can either close or open the door to God. In certain sections of the church at certain times, that power has been abused by priests because they've dominated the people of God saying, in effect, "If you don't do what we say, you can't get through to God." That's not true of human priests. Thank God we have another priest. But it is true of Jesus. If you don't go by Him, your gift or sacrifice is not accepted. A priest to represent you is not a luxury, it's not some fine point of theology; it's an absolute essential. If I can impress this on you: you're going to have a very different attitude toward Jesus from now on. You're going to see that your entire ongoing relationship to God depends on Jesus being there. If you don't have Him there don't try to get to the throne. There's no way. Every high priest, it's very emphatic, is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices.

Now, Jesus doesn't offer the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood, he's not a Levitical priest. But He also has His gifts, His sacrifices. The first and primary sacrifice that He offered was what? Himself. He was both the priest and the victim. When we come in His name and through faith in Him, we can offer to God our praises, our worship, our finance, our service. But apart from Him none of it is accepted. You may say to yourself, "If I offered God a million dollars, He's going to be pleased." You can't get a million dollars to God unless you go through Jesus. And God, in the last resort, will be well off without your million dollars. God is not for sale. It's praiseworthy to offer but bear in mind it's only acceptable through a priest.

Going on in verse 5. We'll read the verse and then we'll comment on it. It begins with "who." That is, the priests who offer on earth.

> "...who do their priestly service [I'm amplifying a little bit] in what is a pattern [or a model] and a shadow of the things in the heavenlies, as Moses is warned by God when he's about to make the tabernacle; for, God says, See that you make it all [or everything] according to the pattern which was showed you in the mountain."

So, what the writer is saying is the Levitical priests on earth do their priestly service in something that is only a model or a shadow of the real thing which is in heaven. And in substantiation of that from the Old Testament we can turn to the passage that's actually quoted. We'll look at Exodus 25 at two successive verses. This section of Exodus deals with the instructions for making the tabernacle and all its furniture and utensils. Exodus 25:9, the Lord is speaking and He says to Moses:

> "According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it."

God is very specific. He says, "I'm going to give you an exact pattern and you've got to make it exactly according to the pattern. But the pattern that I'm giving you is a pattern of which the original is in heaven."

Then in the same chapter, verse 40:

> "And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain."

So when Moses was up on Mount Horeb in communion with God and God gave him the instructions for making the tabernacle and all its furniture, God showed him an actual pattern or maybe showed him the original. He didn't just have the dimensions, he had the dimensions but he'd seen what he was supposed to make it like. You see, there are many things in the Bible that although we have the dimensions, we really don't know how to make them. One is the tabernacle. Lots of different very learned scholars have worked long but they've never come up with a definitive, final picture of what the tabernacle was like. The other is the temple of Solomon. Concerning the temple of Solomon, David says that when he was making preparation for it, God caused him to know by His hand upon him in writing the pattern. So David, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had a pattern, a blueprint of the temple. We don't have the

blueprint. If you have just the dimensions without the blueprint, it's not at all clear in some ways what you're supposed to produce.

The point I'm making is that the tabernacle that Moses made was based on an original in heaven. I think that's very clearly stated there. I don't think there's any possibility of interpreting those words otherwise. You see, why I'm laboring this point is because I think a lot of Christians think that material things on earth are real and spiritual things in heaven are kind of misty, shadowy, amorphous—like little bits of mist that float around. They think if anything were specific it wouldn't be spiritual. I know that was my attitude as a teenager attending the Anglican Church in Britain. I thought about religion as a kind of mist that hung around in the corners of damp old buildings. That really was my mental image of it. I'm not saying it was right. I always thought, If I get religious it will be when the mist settles on my head. But it never did, so I concluded in the end it wasn't for me. I really wasn't too sorry, either.

What I'm saying is that's not the way the spiritual is. The original is the spiritual. Things on earth are copies. My friend Lance Lambert made a remark recently at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem which really impressed me. He said, "This universe is primarily spiritual. It's the spiritual things that are the ultimate realities." You might say, "Well, does Jesus' robe really have a color?" I believe it does. "Is there a certain material of the streets of the New Jerusalem?" I believe there is. "What are the gates made of?" I believe they're made of real pearls. The pearls we have on earth are just a faint shadow of the heavenly pearls. That's my conviction.

Our old Arab maid—who some of us here will remember well—Jameela, many years ago when she was baptized in the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Lydia, she went out like a dead person. She was on the floor for probably a couple of hours. Lydia knew she was in the hands of the Lord. When she came to, she was speaking in tongues and she said in a naive way, she hadn't any knowledge of the Scriptures, she couldn't read, she said, "I was walking in a most beautiful place on something that was like yellow velvet." She said, "Then I came to Jesus and He breathed upon me." And when He breathed upon her she began to speak in tongues. Well, I think heavenly gold is like yellow velvet. But that's just my opinion.

What I want to point out to you is something—this is kind of philosophic. I won't stay in it too long. We tend to think that everything on earth has precise color. But in actual fact, that's not true to experience. This past summer Ruth and I were making a journey through the Mediterranean. I stood on the deck sometimes for an hour or two and looked at the ocean. Do you know what? It was a dozen different colors at different times. It went from light blue through purple through black through every shade of gray. What is the color of the sea? Well, it reflects the sky, it depends on the depth of the water, it depends on the chemical contents. There's many different features. When we say the sea is blue or gray, what we're saying is there's a certain series of different colors that appear in different light settings and we know them. We think about it as precise, but it isn't. It says in one place about Jesus—I believe it's about Jesus—in the Song of Solomon, "His head and his hair are black as a raven." But in the first chapter of Revelation "His hair was white like snow." I don't see any inconsistency. See what I'm saying? I really believe it has real color. If you don't believe, that's your misfortune, that's all! The heaven I'm looking forward to is a lot more interesting than the one you're looking forward to! I believe God really has a right hand and a left. Otherwise I don't know why there's so much emphasis on the fact that Jesus sits at His right hand and not His left. It would be meaningless.

Having said that, I want you to look with me in Revelation 11:19. This is speaking about something in the book of Revelation which, of course, there are different ways of interpreting Revelation. You may have discovered that or you may not. But it says at a certain point in this unfolding revelation:

> "The temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and earthquake and a great hailstorm."

So, there is the temple of God in heaven. In it was the ark of His covenant. I believe the ark that Moses constructed on earth was simply a copy—but a very exact copy of the ark that's in heaven. There's a lot of fascinating thoughts like in Ezekiel 28 which is a picture of Satan—the second half—says "Thou wast the anointed cherub that covered." Covered what? Maybe the mercy seat, who knows?

But, in the ark that Moses designed there were two cherubs, one at either end and they faced one another and their wings stretched out over and met in the middle. This is just a supposition, but the problem with Satan was he was so beautiful and so wise that he became proud and fell. So after his fall who knows whether God said, "We'll never make that mistake again. From now on there'll be two

cherubs and each of them will look at the other and know that there's someone just as beautiful as he is!" I'm not saying that's right, but that's one possible explanation.

I believe that in this ark in heaven there's a covenant of which the covenant on earth is simply a representation. I believe that God the Father made an eternal covenant with Jesus Christ the Son before time began. It's amazing to me, I wouldn't have thought about it that way. But it says in Titus 1 that God promised salvation before time began. To whom did He promise it? That's a matter of consideration but I believe God the Father was committed to Jesus Christ the Son by a covenant that was made between them before creation took place. The Father said, "If we make creation and take the risk of making man, what'll we do about it?" The Son said, "If man sins, I'll become his substitute." And the Father said, "If You become his substitute and pay his penalty, I promise You I'll raise You from the dead." And they made a covenant. You can believe that or not, but I think there's much evidence in Scripture that something like that took place.

Let's look at one other passage in Revelation while we're about it. Revelation 15:5–8:

> "And after these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened ..."

Notice it's the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony. So, in a sense, everything centered around the temple. The temple centered around the tabernacle and the tabernacle centered around the ark of the covenant, the testimony. In a certain sense, all God's dealings in eternity and time center around His covenant.

We're going on. Revelation 15:6:

> "... and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright..."

I believe it was clean, bright linen. You're free to believe what you like.

> "... girded around their breasts with golden girdles."

I don't believe there's any inflation in heaven. I don't believe God ever has a financial crisis. If He wants gold, He's got gold. If He wants pearls, He's got pearls. Whatever it is, it's available. He just orders it. Verse 7:

> "And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished."

I'm reading those passages, first of all, because they impress me. I think I'm probably getting to that stage in life where I'm more interested in heaven than some of you because I'm probably likely to be going there before some of you. But I tell you, heaven for me is a very real place.

A few years ago I was really concerned about my own spiritual condition and I asked God to make heaven more real to me. I believe heaven is the home of every child of God. I've never met a child that didn't have a pretty clear idea about its own home. They may not know the street outside but they know the home. I think one of the marks of God's children is that we feel at home in relationship to heaven. This earth is beautiful, this life is exciting. By the grace of God, I'm doing well. But this is not my final resting place.

As a matter of fact, that's one of the themes of Hebrews we'll come to, especially in the 11th chapter. The great saints of God were looking ahead out of time into eternity. And they had some glimpses. It wasn't going to be a jump into the unknown. They had some clear revelation of what they could expect. I'm looking forward to the temple, I'm looking forward to the angels. I'm looking forward to the four living creatures. There's a whole lot of other things I'm looking forward to. The sea of glass mingled with crystal. I think that's going to be very exciting. No dull moments in heaven.

I used to think as a boy, "What do they do all the time up in heaven?" Really! And my picture was people sitting there in white clothes playing harps all the time. I thought, That's going to become monotonous after awhile. I wasn't in danger of being bored because I certainly wasn't qualified for heaven at that time!

We're turning back to Hebrews 8. I was wondering whether there was enough material in this outline to last for forty minutes. I see there is! Hebrews 8. We're coming up to

verse 6 which, in a way, sums up some things that have been said.

> "But now He [that is Jesus] has obtained a more excellent priestly ministry ..."

You need to put in both words.

> "... insofar as He is the mediator of a better covenant, which is legislated ..."

What does it say? Established? Enacted probably.

> "... which is enacted upon better promises."

So there we have the introduction to the comparison between the Old and the New Covenant. Notice in the introduction the writer affirms three ways in which it was superior. It's there in your outline. First of all, Jesus has a more excellent ministry. Second, He's the mediator of a better covenant. And third, it's enacted on better promises. So you see the three points of superiority? A more excellent ministry, a better covenant and better promises.

I hope you realize that. When I think of some of the things that the Israelites had under the Old Covenant I wonder how much better ours really is. I mean, God brought about three million Israelites out of Egypt after several generations of slavery and deprivation and there was not one sick person among them. You find three million Christians and you'll find two and three-quarter million sick people. It really is true. I know from experience ministering to the sick. You can get a group of Christians, eighty percent of them at least will come forward for healing. I don't say that to be critical, but I just wonder whether we really are enjoying all the benefits of our covenant. Or, is it because we don't realize how superior this covenant is?

We'll go on just a little further. We'll read verses 7 and 8 and then we'll stop at the quotation from Jeremiah. My wife will please make a note where we're stopping so I'll remember. Verse 7:

For if that first one had been faultless, no place would have been sought for a second. If the first covenant had done everything that was needed, why ever replace it with a second? So there must have been something inadequate in the first covenant.

> "But blaming them [that's the Israelites], God says ..."

And then we come to this promise quoted from Jeremiah 31 that God will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.

We can just bring out this one point which we'll have to go on with in the next session next time. The fault was not in the Law. God didn't blame the Law, He blamed them. The fault was in the people. The people were such by nature that they could not receive what was offered them through the Law. Not because there was anything wrong with the Law, we'll look at passages where Paul affirms this again and again. The law is just and holy and good. The problem is not in the Law, it's in the people who try to live by the Law.

Sermon

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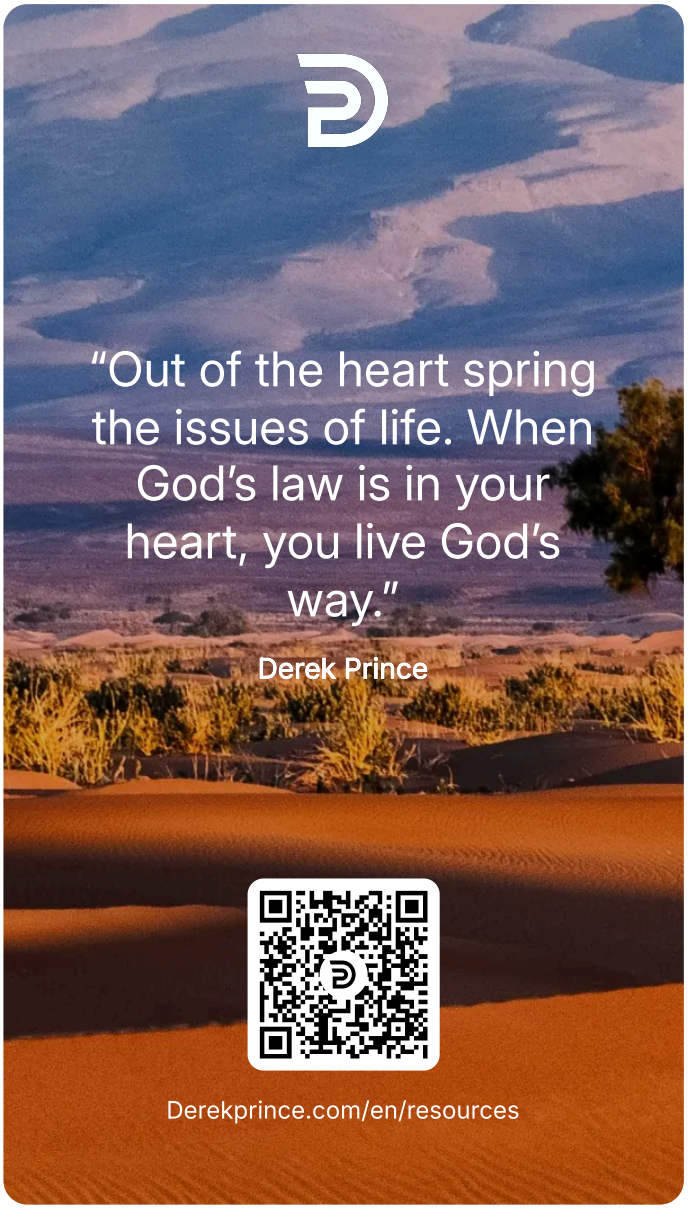


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