

Lesson Thirteen

(8:1-13)

8 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." ⁶But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.

8 For he finds fault with them when he says:

"The days will come, says the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;

⁹not like the covenant that I made
with their fathers

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on the day when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of the land of Egypt;
for they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.

¹⁰This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹¹And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
for all shall know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.

¹²For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more."

¹³In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

The epistle began with the idea that God had spoken in various ways but now is speaking in his son, and this with the idea of "better." All through the text up to this point, that idea has been carried. In our present section of text, Paul summarizes the whole discussion, and includes the information that God had carefully planned it all.

8:1 — **Now the point** — To sum it up, the thrust of what we have said, etc. Note these ideas:

Jesus serves in a better sanctuary than Aaron
Jesus offered a better sacrifice than Aaron
Jesus brings a better promise than Aaron
Jesus is a better mediator than Aaron

The last two ideas will subsequently be developed in chapters 9 and 10. Chapter 6 had made the point about a better promise, and ch. 7 the better mediator.

throne — This particular idea is part and parcel of the greatness of the new high priest: he is where God is, the God who knows all, and who must extend forgiveness if any are to be forgiven. No priest under the Mosaic dispensation was ever accorded such a place to serve.

V. 2 — **minister** — The Greek word *λειτουργός* was used earlier in 1:14 to describe the work of the heavenly messengers among Christians. It is a general word for service, but mostly used in the New Testament of religious service to God, as in Luke 1:23; Acts 13:2; Romans 13:6; 15:16, 27; II Corinthians 9:12, 13; Philippians 2:17, 25, 30. It is used in our epistle in 1:7, 14; 8:2, 6; 9:21; 10:11.

sanctuary . . . true tent — These two words describe the "place" of

service for Jesus, as high priest. They are equal to the tabernacle in the Mosaic economy, where the priests served. For the Greek expression translated "sanctuary," see on 10:19.

set up . . . by the Lord — The sanctuary/true tent are in heaven where Jesus is, and Jesus is at God's right hand. Hence, the "place" of service for the Christian's high priest is where God is, in heaven. Earthly things as in the tabernacle have been replaced by heavenly, that which is temporal and shadow by that which is permanent and real. Moreover, the distinction between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies is gone, as is seen in ch. 9. Jesus serves in the new and true tent.

V. 3 — **priest . . . to offer** — A priest might do many things, but the primary area of service is in respect to God/man relationships. Since man is sinful, separated from God, and needs to be brought back to God, gifts and sacrifices are the means to the end. Hence, the appointment is to that purpose.

this priest — Jesus. The gospel records help all to see clearly that he came for the express purpose of saving man (as was seen in our epistle, 2:10ff.). The familiar texts in Mark 10:45 and Luke 19:10 show his own thinking about the matter.

V. 4 — This verse recapitulates chapter 7 and the lessons there. We note that the point (10:11 probably adds evidence to this) is reasonably clear that Jewish priests were then serving, etc., which makes the writing of this epistle prior to A.D. 70, when the Jewish temple was destroyed, and the ability to do according to the Mosaic law ceased. It has not yet been restored, as the law spells it out.

V. 5 — **copy and shadow** — The Greek words are *ὑπόδειγμα* (as in 4:11; 9:23; then John 13:15; James 5:10; II Peter 2:6) and *σκιά* (as in 10:1; then Matthew 4:16; Mark 4:32; Luke 1:79; Acts 5:15; Colossians 2:17). In the terms of v. 2, the Aaronic priests served in that which was not real nor true. It is doubtful if very many of them understood this fact though, or if many Jews today do.

according to the pattern — Some have taken this to mean there was a real tabernacle with two compartments, so big, having certain pieces of furniture, etc. in heaven. Hardly. The point is that Moses was to make the tabernacle as God told him through that which was shown him. It was not the real or the true, merely a type. Any Bible student ought to know that types have both likenesses and non-likenesses. There is no Holy Place and Holy of Holies in heaven. There are no lampstands and courses of priests, no ark of the covenant or veil, etc. What is there is a real, live person named Jesus, sitting at God's right hand, who once and for all sacrificed himself for all, then ascended to heaven, there to intercede for those who call upon him. He is not continually sacrificing anything (himself or lambs, etc.)—that is done with. He is able to do

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abundantly above what we ask or think — and that in the real, true dwelling, the dwelling of God himself.

The text at hand was not written for Christians, not directed to us at all. While it is true that we should do as Moses did, obey the Lord in all that he says, it was said to Moses, not to us.

V. 6 — **Christ has obtained** — That is, God has built the true tent, and all that is “there” is Jesus. Christians are not told to build any “tent” — God has done that in Christ. Jesus said “I (not man) will build my church,” Matthew 16:18. All we mortals are to do is to accept what God has done in Christ insofar as “building” the “true tent” goes.

much more excellent — Because God did it, not man, v. 2. As men, we corrupt all we touch. God has to do all that is done right.

ministry . . . better . . . covenant . . . better . . . better promises — The refrain is continually repeated, not only for the sake of emphasis but also because it is true, and that in every way.

V. 7 — If the first . . . faultless — But it wasn't. It was merely transient, only for a time. Paul phrases the question in Galatians 3:19, “Why then the law? It was added till the offspring should come . . .” The law was “holy and just and good . . . (and) spiritual,” Romans 7:12, 14; and “if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law,” Galatians 3:21. “But the scripture consigned all things to sin . . . we are confined under the law, kept under restraint till faith should be revealed,” Galatians 3:22, 23.

first . . . second — The reference is to the two written revelations of God to man, the Old Covenant (basically given through Moses) and the New Covenant (through Jesus and the apostles).

V. 8 — **he finds fault** — The author, viewing the prophetic utterance through Jeremiah, correctly expresses the reason for the proposed new covenant: God was planning a new way to relate to man because the way then in effect, the Old Covenant, was faulty. Reread 7:11-19.

new — The proposed covenant was to be in a new time, to be to both Jews and Gentiles, different than the Old Covenant; to be written on mind not stone, to be a covenant of mercy not law, to last until Jesus comes; in effect, the real thing.

V. 9 — **not like** — Hence, we look for “new wine” in “new bottles,” not merely a new law system, or an addition tacked on to the Old Covenant.

on the day — As does II Corinthians 3, the specific law and covenant in view was that which came through Moses, expressed in principle by the ten commandments, first written upon stone tablets. We ought to make no mistake about which covenant was meant. We, as Christians, ought not to be guilty of inculcating anything upon ourselves that can't be found between Matthew and Revelation. We especially ought to teach

what is in the Acts account and the letters from Romans to Jude. These books were accounts of and/or letters to Christians about the Christian way of life. If we can't quote a teaching in the New Covenant for the practice we do, we ought to shut up and keep quiet (and that includes quoting Malachi 3:10). If we are going to make the claim to be New Covenant people, we ought to put up or shut up. (See comments on 11:33ff.)

V. 10 — **This is the covenant** — The Roman and Galatian letters actually develop in detail the thesis about the nature and ground of the two respective covenants. The Jewish system was similar in some respects to that of the Christian system. One major difference, among several of importance, is spelled out in this verse, and v. 10. The New Covenant is of such character that it is to be taught (preached, etc.), for it is of such nature. People are not born physically into Christainity—as one is born an American (or a Jew). One must “hear” in some manner, consider the matter, then will to obey. Because this is so, the message of Christ must then be taken to people (cf. the commissions to go!). This is the point behind the expressions in this verse and v. 10 about “minds” and “hearts” vs. teaching one's brother to “know the Lord.” As a Jewish person, one was born a Jew, and then taught what that fact meant. As a person, one is taught Christianity, and if the system is accepted, one is born into it.

V. 11 — **least to greatest** — Meaning anyone and everyone. Obviously, one can't become a Christian until the system is known about. Hence, anyone who is Christian, whoever it may be, knows God, Christ, etc.

V. 12 — **I will be merciful** — One of the reasons for the New Covenant is expressed here: it is of such nature that God can be merciful and yet just. Under the Old Covenant, law was supreme. Law provided no room for error, no place for mercy. Since no one could keep the yoke (Acts 15:9) of the law, God's decision was to bring into force a way for a new relationship with him. By means of the New Covenant in Christ, God can be both just and justifier, Romans 3:21-26.

V. 13 — **he treats the first as obsolete** — The expressed plan of God in respect to a new will by which to deal with man had the effect of delineating the end of the Mosaic system.

obsolete and growing old — As God views time, the expression uttered in Jeremiah essentially meant that the Old Covenant was done, the New Covenant was present. Though it was some 600 years away, yet it was so. Hence, to so speak about the New made the Old void, from God's perspective. It was but a matter of time.

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QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13:

116. Express the author's stated purpose for this section.
117. Sum up the qualities of the new high priest.
118. Where does the new high priest serve?
119. What did the Aaronic priests serve?
120. List the "better" things in this text. (It might be profitable to review all the places where "better" or its synonyms have occurred: 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6. It is also in 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40 and 12:24.)
121. Why was the second covenant proposed?
122. State the fault(s) of the first covenant.
123. How is the second covenant to differ from the first?
124. Does the New Covenant put all on equal standing with God (in the terms of our text, and in regard to salvation)?
125. In v. 12, what will God be able to do through the New Covenant?
126. How did God make the first covenant old/obsolete?