

**Topic: The Old and the New Covenants Compared (Part 1)**

**Text: Hebrews 7:11-8:6 (NIV)**

**Theme: “Reasons why the New Covenant is far better than the Old Covenant”**

**Introduction**

- A covenant is a contract where the parties involved are bound by its terms and conditions. God's covenant is a relationship of love and loyalty between Him and His people.
- This sermon shows why the New Covenant (New Testament) is far better than the Old Covenant (Old Testament). Hebrews 10:1 conjures that the Old Covenant is not the reality itself, but is just a shadow of the New Covenant.
- Further, Hebrews 8:13 reiterates that the Old Covenant is obsolete and will soon disappear. This means that the New Covenant has more substance, better terms and conditions, more “fringe benefits.”
- But, it is unwise to disregard the Old Testament and give the New Testament the best regard--they are both important as Word of God.

**I. BETTER ORDER OF PRIESTHOOD**

v11 *“If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?”*

v12 *For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.*

v19 *(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.*

**PRIESTHOOD IN THE ORDER OF AARON (Levitical or Aaronic Priesthood)**

- These passages speak of two priesthoods: one in the order of Aaron (the Levitical priesthood), and the other in the order of Melchizedek (the Messianic priesthood).
- The Melchizedek priesthood was the original priesthood; it existed over 400 years before the Levitical priesthood.
- The Levitical priesthood (coming from the tribe of Levi, one of the 12 sons of Jacob) was established by the Lord in the days of Moses. Aaron was the first High Priest and his sons as priests.

- Not all individuals born in the family of Aaron could serve as priest; certain physical deformities disqualify a person from being a priest, or being ceremonially unclean disqualify a person from performing some duties.

### **PRIESTHOOD IN THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK (Messianic Priesthood)**

- Jesus came from the order of Melchizedek (Jesus was from the tribe of Judah) v14.
- M (whose name means “king of righteousness”) was king and priest of Salem (ancient Jerusalem), priest of the most high God.
- M was not a famous character in the Bible, his name was mentioned only 11 times, nine times in the book of Hebrews, once in Genesis 14 and one in Psalm 110:4.
- M had no descent, no genealogy, no recorded father, mother, birth, or death; he was a type (“copycat”) of the Son of God who really had no father, mother, birth, or death as a Divine Being.
- The priest and king of Salem who blessed Abraham (Hebrews 7).
- Abraham gave his tithes to M.

### **A. Need for a Change of Priesthood to Achieve Perfection**

v11 *If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood... why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?*

v19 *(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.*

1. The OT priesthood was imperfect because it could not bridge the gap between men and God.
2. The Levitical priesthood (LP) was faulty; priests were sinners.
3. The LP was merely a shadow (sneak preview), not the substance and reality of the eternal priesthood of Jesus.
4. The LP was a “copycat” of the priesthood of Jesus. Although, it seemed that the priesthood of Jesus came after the LP, the reality was His priesthood

originated from Melchizedek whose priesthood started 400 years before the LP.

5. The LP represented a perfect system, but was imperfect itself (as OT priests could represent people to God for the forgiveness of their sins thru sacrificial offerings, BUT the priests themselves were sinful as well).
6. The LP system pointed to a perfect sacrifice (the Lamb of God) that would take away sin, but was helpless to cleanse anyone from sin.
7. In the OT, the blood of the animals just COVERED (atonement) their sins, while in the NT, the blood of Jesus WASHED AWAY our sins; that is Perfection.
8. Perfection pointed to the time when Jesus cried out at the Cross "It is finished" (paraphrased as "The Old Covenant has ended; the New Covenant has started. Perfection has come.").
9. His death marked the change from Law to Grace.
10. The curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn into two, from top to bottom, signifying that men's access to God is now full and complete, 24/7.
11. The Earth shook, rocks split, tombs broke open, bodies of many holy people were raised to life, they came out of the tomb and appeared to many people.

## **B. Need for a Change of Law/Testament**

v12 *For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.*

v12 *For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is of necessity an alteration of the law (concerning the priesthood) as well. (Amp)*

1. Since there was a change of Priesthood, there was a need of change of Testament.
2. (Amp) **"There is of necessity an alteration of the law."** Hence, the 10 Commandments (Law) were

altered and were condensed into two. God's dealing with men was altered from a strict/loving God to a gracious/loving God.

3. Change of Testament is just like a company's change of ownership. There will be a change of the Management (CEO), change of business practices, code of ethics, company name, logo, etc.
  - OT = based on law/regulations of Moses
  - NT = based on God's grace
  
4. God designed to change the law and its priesthood to introduce Jesus Christ as the only Priest and Sacrifice and to substitute the Levitical system with the Gospel system.

**Remember:**

- The Law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. (Hebrews 10:1)
  
- By calling this covenant, "new," He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear. (Hebrews 8:13)

## II. BETTER BASIS OF PRIESTHOOD

v15 *And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears,*

v16 *one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.*

v17 *For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."*

v18 *The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless.*

v21 *but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: (Psalm 110:4) "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'"*

v22 *Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*

v27 *Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of*

the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

v28a For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak;

**A. The OT priesthood was based on regulations/rules/law.**

v18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless.

v27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

v28a For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak.

1. **15 things law could not do (weaknesses):**
  - a. Justify
  - b. Free from sin and death
  - c. Free from condemnation (The Law was given to intensify man's knowledge of sin. A man's conscience will bear inner witness to him that he is a sinner, but through the Law, he has a clearer knowledge of what sin is.)
  - d. Redeem
  - e. Give inheritance
  - f. Bring righteousness (all right filthy rags before God)
  - g. Impart Holy Spirit
  - h. Perform miracles (The Law itself could not do miracles. The Law is just a set of rules and regulations to be observed.)
  - i. Free from the curse (Could not free from penalty of sin)
  - j. Impart faith (rather it imparts fate)
  - k. Impart grace
  - l. Make perfect
  - m. Control sin in man
  - n. Keep man from sin
  - o. Enable a man to obey
2. Vv27-28a = OT priests were weak.
3. An OT priest did the offerings first for his own sins, then for the people.

4. The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year, a rope was tied in one his legs with a bell to pull him out of the Holy of Holies when he dies.

**B. The priesthood of Jesus was based on the power of an indestructible (permanent) life.**

v16 *one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.*

1. Jesus is always alive and living.
2. Jesus as priest, is ALSO a PROPHET, and KING. None of the Levitical priests exercised a double or a triple office.

**C. The priesthood of Jesus was based on an oath.**

v21 *but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: (Psalm 110:4) "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'"*

v22 *Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*

1. An oath is a promise or pledge.
2. Since God did not establish the Levitical priesthood (or the law of Moses) by an oath, He was free to change or abolish them at His pleasure.
3. V22 = Jesus became the guarantee (not the guarantor) of the New Covenant.
4. A guarantor is someone who gives the guarantee when something wrong happens, or is a sponsor or a backer; while a guarantee is the assurance or pledge or the package itself.
5. He became the guarantee that the benefits of the new covenant would be given to all men who meet the terms.

**III. BETTER TENURE OF PRIESTHOOD**

v23 *Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;*

v24 *but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.*

v26 *Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

v 28b *but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever*

### **A. Temporary tenure of OT priests due to death**

v23 *Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;*

- OT priests were many because they died but Jesus holds His priesthood FOREVER.

### **B. Permanent tenure of Jesus as priest**

v24 *but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.*

v26 *uch a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

v28b *but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever*

1. And because Jesus is our High Priest forever, we no longer need to rely on sacrificed animals and priests to obtain God's forgiveness
2. **5 Kinds of Offerings:**
  - i. **Grain/Cereal Offering** – to show honour and respect to God in worship (flour, cake, wafer, loaves)
  - ii. **Burnt Offering** – to make payment for sins in general (bull, goat, sheep, bird); it was entirely consumed on the altar and thus not eaten by anyone.
  - iii. **Well-being/Peace Offering** – to express gratitude to God; a significant portion was returned to the offerer.
  - iv. **Sin Offering** – to make payment for unintentional sins against God; a high priest had to offer a young bull; a ruler would bring a male goat; a commoner could provide a female goat or a lamb; a poor could offer two turtle doves or two young pigeons; an extremely poor

could offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour; the choicest of the internal organs were all offered to the Lord on the altar; other parts were for the priest to be eaten within the temple area.

- v. **Guilt Offering** – to make payment for unintentional sin against others. (ram or lamb)

3. How the animals were sacrificed in OT:

- They were cut into pieces; parts were washed.
- The fat was burned; blood was sprinkled on the side of the altar or poured or drained out at the base of the altar.
- The choicest of the internal organs were all offered to the Lord on the altar.
- Blood was demanded as an atonement for sins (to cover their sins)
- The meat was boiled as portions for the priest (Sin Offering).

4. Jesus was sacrificed in NT:

- He was sacrificed once and for all, He finished the OT sacrificial system.
- Jesus was referred to as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” Being God’s Lamb means that it was God who provided for the final offering. It was God who was the Offerer, and NOT the sinners.
- As God’s Lamb, He “is without blemish and without spot” 1 Pet 1:19
- He was the perfect sacrifice (v28b), and at the same time the perfect and permanent High Priest (v26)