

Readings

Scripture

¹ 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, ² a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴ Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵ They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." ⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares 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. ¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." ¹³ In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

- Hebrews 8:1-13 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

The Christian Way- The Christian says, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same."

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (p. 136-137)

The word "better" occurs more times in Hebrews than in the whole of the rest of the New Testament put together. That tells us something about the way the writer thinks. He is constantly contrasting, not something bad with something good, but something good with something better. He is not saying that the ancient Israelite system was a bad thing, with its Temple, its law and its Levitical priesthood. What he is saying is that the new dispensation which has arrived in and through Jesus is *even better* than what went before. Now at last 'perfection' is in sight and Jesus has achieved it for us. Let us then press on in faith and hope so that we may fully grasp the perfection, the glorious new world, which God has by this means prepared for us.

- N.T. Wright, *Hebrews For Everyone* (p. 76)

Sermon Outline

A Better Covenant

Hebrews 8:1-13

Consider Jesus

Jeff Hooker

The point in what we are saying. (Hebrews 8:1-2)

Christ has obtained a better ministry and covenant. (Hebrews 8:1-6)

It is the failure of the first covenant which provides the necessity for the second. (Hebrews 8:7-13)

Reflection Questions

(taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Have you ever seen a copy of something? (A painting, a model, a book made into a movie, a replica of a famous landmark or building) How was it different from the original?
- What is the author's main point (vv.1-6)? How would this offer a strong incentive not to turn away from Christianity, as some were considering?
- What is a covenant? What is the significance of the fact that God initiates and guarantees it? What is a mediator? Why is one needed?
- From Exodus 19:5-6, 20:1-17 and 29:35-41, what characterized the old covenant administered by the priests? How does the new covenant mediated by Jesus differ (vv.10-12)?
- Which aspect of the new covenant brings great joy to you now, and why: Having God's law on your heart? Being one of God's people? Knowing God? Having your sins forgiven?
- From the aspects of the new covenant listed above: what action can you take in your daily lives to walk more in the truths of God's covenant with us?