

A Study in Hebrews

Study Five

Hebrews 7:15-8:10

Day One

15 And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16 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.

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

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

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

vs. 15&16 - At this point, I have completed studies of six New Testament books. Paul spent considerable time in Galatians and Romans addressing the issue of the Law and grace, trying to convince the readers that Jesus represented a better way than the Law and Temple regulations ever provided. Here the writer addressed the same issue.

The issue of legalism is still prevalent in the Church today, making the issue of the Law as important today as it was 2,000 years ago. Man is a religious being, always searching for some system that will codify and structure his service to and relationship with God. The Lord isn't interested in a system, but a relationship with His people. If the early writers spent a lot of time addressing legalism, then we should, too.

We want a system because we want God to be predictable so we can control Him. Whenever that happens, we become God because we have found principles that can control Him. God will not let that happen.

The writer stated that Jesus' priesthood was based not on the past but the present and future. His priesthood wasn't based on ancestry but eternal life. Jesus did not come to teach men to follow the Law, but to give them eternal life, something which He possessed.

v. 17 – Jesus can perform His priestly duties forever, because He lives forever. There is no end to His priesthood, as there was to every Levitical priest. They all died, but Jesus keeps ministering, because He had no beginning and no end, just like Melchizedek.

vs. 18&19 – The former regulation for the priesthood and the Law was put aside. We now draw near to God through a better hope by far. Yet the readers were considering whether to abandon this hope for the reliability and predictability of the Old Testament Law. On what basis do you draw near to God? On weak regulations and legalism or strong and eternal hope in the Son of God who lives forever?

Day Two

20 And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath,
21 but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has
sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'"
22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

vs. 20-22 – God swore an oath that Jesus will be a priest forever. There is not a “new thing” that will come along to change that. We can count on Jesus fulfilling His promise to save us because He will live forever.

One of the themes in Hebrews is the use of the word “better.” The writer was pointing out to the believing Jews that what they had under Jesus was better than what they had under the Law. The same is true for you and me. A relationship with Jesus is better than trying to follow rules and guidelines that will try to earn God’s favor. Yet the temptation to submit to rules after we know Jesus is very strong. We take on a mentality that we “have” to do things, instead of seeing that we “get” the privilege of serving God.

We have a better covenant—a contract or agreement with God—than the Old Testament could ever offer. Yet some still trade it away for a lesser deal, one that cannot bring life or fulfillment. Have you done this? Are you living in the fullness of this better covenant?

Day Three

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from
continuing in office;
24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.
25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him,
because he always lives to intercede for them.

vs. 23-25 – I think that heaven or the next age is comprised of more than one eternal song service. We will have purpose in the next age as we do in this one, but we will be able to carry out our purpose without the limitation of fatigue, hunger or limited knowledge. Why do I say this here?

Because Jesus went to sit at the right hand of the Father; He went with purpose. He went not to sit and have angels adore and worship Him, but to intercede for those whom He has saved. Jesus is working in heaven and we will too. And Jesus is working in heaven and He is working with the glorified flesh of His resurrection. Did it ever occur to you that when Jesus came back from the dead, He bore the scars in His body of His “previous life?” But He also had perfect memory of what had happened to Him before He died. Jesus carried with Him into His new state the remnant and consciousness of His previous state. Why do I say that?

Because what we do now, learn now, perfect now will probably be with us for all eternity. What we do today prepares us for what we will do in the future. Jesus is still a priest because He will live forever. What you are you will be forever because you have eternal life through your relationship with Him.

What can you do today to prepare yourself for eternity? It's a pretty sobering and exciting question, don't you think?

Day Four

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

27 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.

28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

vs. 26-28 - Christ is the focus of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. He is the central figure and theme. Hebrews reiterated this truth and was written to reinforce this fact in the minds of the believing Jews to whom it was addressed.

Jesus was and is perfect. He didn't need to make atonement for His own sins before He atoned for the sins of others. His was an efficient and perfect priesthood to serve the needs of men. And He is the Son of God, so His sacrifice was perfect. Everything that needed to be done for man's salvation has already been done. Man cannot supplement this already perfect redemption.

Yet man always tries, coming up with new teachings and movements that see something new. I am not saying that we shouldn't grow in our understanding of God, what He wants and who He is. But if our movement doesn't have Jesus as the central focus, then it is counterproductive, as important or profound as that movement seems to be.

Are you growing in your devotion to Jesus? Do you love Him more this year than last? Are you growing in your knowledge of Him, appreciating every facet of His perfection, love and work? Read what Paul wrote to the Colossians and see if you can see the objectives that God has for our lives in Christ:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from

the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:9-20).

Day Five

8:1 The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. 3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

vs. 1&2 – The things of the Old Testament—the sacrifices, holy days, festivals, and regulations—were types or shadows of heavenly realities. The wilderness tabernacle was a type of worship—how to proceed into God’s presence. The tabernacle furnishings were types of Christ. The golden lampstand, for example, was a type of the only light that is to be present in the believer’s life and worship—the life and light of Jesus. The old covenant priests were only shadows of the priest who was to come, namely Jesus. It is fun to study the Old Testament from this perspective and to see the spiritual reality behind the earthly manifestation. Why not choose one Old Testament character, or one sacrifice or one festival and see what of Jesus is reflected in those Old Testament types?

vs. 3&4 – Jesus priestly environment wasn’t earth, for there were already priests here doing what priests needed to do. Rather Jesus was a heavenly priest and He presides over the heavenly realities of the things of God rather than their earthly shadows. But a heavenly priest would have to be much better than the earthly priests because of the heavenly perfection that He served. Remember, the theme of Hebrews is that Jesus provides a better “everything” when compared with Judaism or any other legalistic system.

Perhaps we need to stop here and simply worship the Lord for His goodness to us. In Jesus, He has provided everything we need for godliness and righteousness. Let’s worship the Lord!

Day Six

5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

8 But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

v. 5 – When you read the accounts of the tabernacle construction, it is tempting to skip over them because they are so repetitious. But the Lord was instilling an attitude of precision in the Israelites when it came to the things of God. They were never to make the tabernacle or Temple the romantic focus of their worship; those two entities were only a training ground to teach them about a holy God. Remember that the Lord took a people from Egypt who had little awareness of who He was and built them slowly into His people.

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law (Galatians 3:24-25).

When Christ died, the dietary, civil and sacrificial statutes died with Him. Perhaps I should say that we died to those things, because something better came along. Now we are alive in Christ, He is our priest and those things of the past have value to instruct us, but they have no power over or attraction to us.

v. 6 – Once again we see the word “better.” We have a superior covenant because Jesus instituted and maintains that covenant. Jesus is better than the system of the Law, but He is also better than Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. He is superior to any religious system because He is alive.

vs. 7&8 – Israel was warned and instructed that a new covenant was coming to replace the old, but they could not surrender the familiarity of the old to the new. Even after some came into this new covenant, they were considering returning to the old! This is remarkable, but true. And the same happens today. Some who began well falter as their expectations of what God would and would not do are not met. They then settle for a form of religion that lacks the dynamic relationship with Christ that they once had.

What about you? Have you settled for a form of religion? Are you disappointed with your walk with Christ or His church?

Day Seven

9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

vs. 9&10 – Looking back, God made it clear what He was going to do as the writer quoted from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Furthermore, it is clear that what He promised to do He has done through Christ and the new covenant. The old covenant was a system of externals, but clearly the new covenant is one of internals. God now lives in you and me and He has changed us from within. He has written His requirements in our heart and then helps us carry out those requirements.

The old system was meant to teach man that he did not have it “in him” to do the will of God. He was also to become wearied by the endless sacrifice and cleansing that was necessary due to man’s inability to please God. Jesus was to have represented a better way to God. But when Jesus came, men had become sentimentally attached to the system, while others made money or held power over people’s lives. For these and other reasons, many rejected the new system in favor of the old. The very system that God instituted was used to kill God (Jesus). That is truly ironic!

I don’t ever want to develop a system that is about Jesus but actually excludes Him from my life and worship. I want the Lord to write His law in my mind and heart, because my mind and heart are prone to wander. If I’m not careful, I’ll write other things on them instead of God’s laws and ways. Lord, keep me from being religious. Deliver me from systems that are about You, but aren’t You. Don’t let me forsake the superior for the inferior. I thank you for your covenant with me in the blood of Jesus. I thank you for my High Priest, Jesus Christ. I want to be among Your people and I want you to be my God. Amen.