

### **1. A Heavenly High Priest (Heb 8:1-2)**

The truths set forth by the author of Hebrews all point to *heaven*. Our hope is in *heaven* (Heb 6:19). Our rest is in *heaven* (4:9-10). Our high priest is in *heaven* (4:14; 8:1). The true tabernacle in which He serves is in *heaven* (8:2). The whole Mosaic system was pre-paratory. The earthly hope and rest (Canaan), the earthly high priest, the earthly sacrifices, the earthly tabernacle of wood and fabric were all designed to raise men's sights to a higher plane. Now that God's purposes are fulfilled and Jesus ministers at His right hand, these brethren are being tempted to abandon the heavenly for the earthly.

1. Who erected the true tabernacle in which Jesus now serves as high priest?

### **2. Copies and Shadows (Heb 8:3-5)**

The author now establishes the necessity of a heavenly sanctuary for Jesus' ministry by reference to the purpose of high priests. Since "*every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices*" (Heb 8:3), where is it that Jesus can offer His? Not on earth, for the only perpetuated priesthood had been Levitical, and it had not been replaced by any other earthly tabernacle or priesthood after it was nullified. Why had the tabernacle/ temple not been replaced? Because they were constructed only as a "*copy and shadow of the heavenly things*" (8:5). Jesus' offering of Himself had provided once-for-all atone-ment for sin thus eliminating the need for manmade tabernacles, sacrifices and related accoutrements. [Note: The present tenses "who offer" and "who serve" strongly suggest that the book of Hebrews was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. After this time, the author could not point to these Levitical activities as ongoing.]

2. Why would Jesus not be a priest according to Mosaic Law (comp. 7:14)?

3. What warning was given to Moses concerning the construction of the tabernacle?

### **3. A Better Covenant (Heb 8:6-9)**

Some elaboration is now made upon an earlier point from chapter 7: "*of necessity there is also a change of the law ... there is an annulling of the former commandment ...*" (Heb 7: 12, 18). The author affirms that Jesus is "*Mediator of a **better** covenant, which was es-tablished on **better** promises*" (Heb 8:6). The comparative term "better" flavors the entire epistle, for the writer confidently asserts that what Jesus offers is *better* than what Moses offered (see 1:4; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35; 12:24). The first covenant was inferior, else "*no place would have been sought for a second*" (8:7). A note of caution: God did not enact a covenant that itself was imperfect or less than intended. The writer hastens to say, "*Because finding fault with **them** ...*" (8:8a). This is similar to Paul's point in Rom 8:3: "*For what the law could not do in that it was **weak through the flesh**, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh ...*". The Law in and of itself was "holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12), but the weakness of man was so pervasive and chronic that none could perfectly observe it. The "fault," then, was that the Law provided no adequate restitution for violation. The author then offers a quote from Jer 31:31-34

which indicates that the Law, itself, spoke of its own future eclipse by a new covenant (8:8). This change of covenant was made possible by the faithlessness of the Jews, *“because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord”* (8:9). God was thus freed from any obligation to maintain the first covenant.

4. About how long was it from Jeremiah’s prophecy to its fulfillment?
5. The new covenant was not according to what?
6. Who is mentioned in Hebrews 8:8 as ones with whom a new covenant would be made? Who is not mentioned?

#### **4. Differences in the New Covenant (Heb 8:10-11)**

A Jew was a covenant member by heritage and circumstances of birth. His “religion” was outward in the sense that he had no choice but to conform to God’s law with the nation. He was a Jew first, then a believer in God. But under the new covenant, God would **first** *“put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts”* and **then** *“I will be their God, and they shall be My people”* (8:10). Further, *“None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them”* (8:11). In other words, one must first come to a knowledge of God and learn to appreciate Him; then he can enter a covenant relationship with Him. The sad history of the OT is the Jewish nation plummeting time and time again over the precipice of rebellion, immorality and self-will. All the promises and blessings offered them could not make them faithful without individual conviction and commitment. The new covenant would begin with the individual, not the group.

7. Did God expect the Law of Moses to be taken into the heart? See Dt 6:4-9; 11:18.
8. How do men come to know God before they commit their lives to Him?

#### **5. True Forgiveness (Heb 8:12-13)**

The writer had said that the new covenant was established on “better promises” (Heb 8:6). Those promises are, in a word, *forgiveness* (8:12). This is what the apostles went forth proclaiming to the Jews (Ac 2:38; 3:19, 26; 4:12, etc.). From Jeremiah’s viewpoint the first covenant was already obsolete; it was only a matter of time before it would vanish forever. As the author indicates in various ways, that time has now come.

9. Under the new covenant, how does God respond to unrighteousness and lawlessness?