

LESSON 4

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

Hebrews 7:1-8:13

Introduction

After pointing out the Hebrews' need of moving on to doctrines beyond salvation, the author returned to the subject of Christ's priestly work. The extended emphasis he gave to the argument that Christ has fulfilled the ceremonial laws suggests that his readers were advocating that Christians must continue the ceremonial practices of Judaism. The Jerusalem Conference in A.D. 49 had concluded that Gentile Christians should not be required to keep the ceremonial traditions of Judaism. So long as there were not Jews and Gentiles in the same church, it was easier to carry out the decision of the Jerusalem Conference.

It is difficult sometimes to distinguish between national traditions and Christian principles. The problem of distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable national traditions is faced frequently by those who receive Christ. People from one national background tend to approve certain customs which another group might feel violate Christian principles. When two groups as different as Gentiles and Jews came into the same church, conflict was inevitable. For example, as mentioned in the beginning of this study guide, the Gentile Christians had no scruples against eating meat offered in pagan worship, but the Jewish Christians did. On the other hand, the majority of Jewish Christians likely would advocate the observance of the ceremonial traditions of Judaism. Many would feel that these traditions were part of the Christian heritage from Judaism and should be observed by Gentile Christians also. Without a Jewish background, most Gentile Christians would see the sacrificial rituals of Judaism as nationalistic traditions which were unrelated to the truths and principles of Christianity. It is possible that the author of Hebrews was attempting to alleviate the conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians by showing the Jewish Christians that the sacrificial system was no longer necessary. He attempted to accomplish his purpose by explaining that Christ's priestly work is superior to the Levitical priestly work.

The recipients of Hebrews probably were advocating that Christians continue the ceremonial practices of _____.

(Judaism)

To Gentile Christians, the Jewish requirement of keeping ceremonial laws would have seemed a n _____ t _____.

(nationalistic tradition)

The Superior Priesthood of Melchizedek

Hebrews 7:1-10

The author previously justified a priestly order different from that of Aaron. The Jewish Christians had been taught that the Levites were the official priestly order. It was a daring thing for the author to exalt Melchizedek above Aaron, but he found scriptural support in Genesis 14:7-20 and Psalm 110.

Hebrews 6:19-20 presents Jesus as having entered into "that within the veil." The reference is to the Holy of Holies where the Mercy Seat of God was housed. The high priest approached the Mercy Seat only once each year, but Christ has entered into the presence of God and abides continually before Him. The author proceeded to develop this thought.

Melchizedek as both king and priest (7:1-3)

Melchizedek was a fitting prototype of Christ as a righteous king and a qualified high priest. The name 'Melchizedek' is the literal interpretation of the Hebrew name which signifies 'righteous king' (cf. v.2). Israel had long looked for a king who would guide the nation in righteousness and would prepare for the restoration of God's presence and blessings. The anticipated Ideal King who would be anointed of God must be righteous. The author used the rabbinical method of relating similar expressions to justify the application of Genesis 14:17-20 to Jesus. The Messiah was to be a righteous king, which is the meaning of 'Melchizedek'. He did not stop with this identification but proceeded to find significance in the fact that nothing was said about his ancestry, parentage, birth, or death. The pedigree of the Aaronic priesthood was well known.

Melchizedek was "king of Salem" (Jerusalem), which means "king of peace" (v. 2). Evidence that he was priest of the Most High God is based on the fact that he blessed Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, and Abraham presented a tithe to him. Melchizedek met Abraham upon his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and his allies, gave bread and wine to him and his men, and blessed him in the name of God who delivered Abraham's enemies into his hand. Abraham recognized that God had given to him the victory; therefore, he responded in gratitude by offering a tithe to God. His gift was received by the priest of the Most High. The fact that Abraham presented the tithe to Melchizedek and it was blessed by him showed the superiority of the latter as king of righteousness, king of peace, and priest of the Most High God (vv. 1-2).

Melchizedek was a fitting prototype of Christ as a righteous _____ and a qualified _____.

(king, high priest)

Underline the name of the superior one below.

Abraham Melchizedek

Using the above names, fill in the blanks--

_____ presented tithes to _____, and _____ was blessed by _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Great emphasis was placed on the genealogy of the sacrificing priests to show that they were qualified for the task as descendants of Aaron. In contrast to the Aaronic priests, the ancestry of Melchizedek was not mentioned: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life ... " (v. 3). Melchizedek was unlike the other personages of the Old Testament, who had family histories. He suddenly appeared as an important person who functioned as a priest of God. No additional information about him was given after Abraham's encounter with him. Because the Scriptures are silent concerning his lineage, the author of Hebrews found in him a type of the eternal Christ. As Son of God, Christ was without father or mother and without beginning or end of days. As Son of man, Christ's ancestry could be traced through Joseph back to David. As Son of God who had no end of life, the author concluded that His priestly work was uninterrupted. Christ as a priest after the order of Melchizedek is superior to the Aaronic priesthood because He is eternal.

The author of Hebrews found in Melchizedek a type of the eternal _____.

(Christ)

The greatness of Melchizedek (7:4-10)

No person in Israel's history was considered greater than Abraham, who was father of the race. Yet Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and was blessed by him. The Law required that all the people of Israel should pay tithes to the priestly tribe of Levi. Abraham's action acknowledged the priestly office of Melchizedek.

The giving of tithes was a recognition of God's ownership and expression of gratitude for His blessings. Therefore, those who received tithes for God were considered to be closer to God than those who offered them; thus the priests were superior to other Israelites. Abraham's giving a tenth of his spoils to Melchizedek was an acknowledgement of Melchizedek's superiority (v. 4).

Although the Levites descended from Abraham, as did other Israelites, the Levites were commanded to receive tithes from their brethren (v. 5). Their common ancestry put them on an equal basis, but God selected the Levites as priests. They were one in nature with other Israelites, but they differed in office and function. With regard to Melchizedek, the author concluded that he was different from Israelites and greater than the descendants of Abraham. Since he did not descend from Abraham but was greater than he, it was logical to conclude that Melchizedek was greater than the Levitical priesthood (v. 6). Based on the principle that the one who blesses is greater than he who is blessed, Melchizedek was greater than Abraham (v. 7).

Match the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| ___ 1. the one who blessed | a. Melchizedek |
| ___ 2. the one who was blessed | b. Abraham |

On that basis, _____ was greater than _____.

(a-1, b-2, Melchizedek, Abraham)

The author returned to the implication that Melchizedek, who was without a historically-recorded end of life, was a priest continually (cf. v. 3). The Son of God, as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, did not cease in death but lives to continue eternally His priestly work (v. 8). A priest who abides continuously is superior to those mortals who receive tithes.

Since the whole Jewish Law and priesthood were regarded as potentially present in Abraham, the author pointed out that Levi, who was yet "in the loins" of Abraham (a potential descendant), was present corporately when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (vv. 9-10). The application of the principle that the lesser pays tithes to the greater led to the conclusion that Levi, who paid tithes through Abraham, was lesser than Melchizedek, who received them.

The Establishment of a New Priestly Order

Hebrews 7:11-27

A new priestly order was needed (7:11)

The author continued to pursue the implication of Psalm 110:4, which states that the Lord gave an oath that the Messiah would be a priest eternally after the order of Melchizedek. Since the Scripture spoke of a priestly order other than the Levitical, the writer of Hebrews concluded that the Levitical priesthood must not have been adequate; otherwise, there would not have been the need for a new order (v. 11). The Levitical priesthood failed to give men a perfectly adequate relation to God; therefore, it needed to be replaced by a superior order. Since the sacrificial law was related to the order of Aaron, it would have needed to be changed if the Aaronic priestly order had been changed (v. 11). The parenthetical statement, "for that is the system under which the people were given the Law" (Phillip's Trans.), introduced a new point which needed to be explored further.

The Jews believed that the sacrificial system given under the Law should be continued by Christians. The author of Hebrews argued that if they accepted Jesus as Christ (Messiah), they were obligated, according to Psalm 110:4, to accept Him as the High Priest of a new and eternal order. The new priestly order would not function under the rules and laws of the old order.

A new priestly order required a new law (7:12-19)

If the new priesthood continued functioning like the old order, there would have been no need for a new one. Since the Scripture stated that a new order would arrive, it was logical to conclude that the change

Melchizedek was greater than the Levitical priests because Levi was represented in the loins of _____ when he paid tithes to _____.

(Abraham, Melchizedek)

The Levitical priesthood failed to relate man perfectly to _____; therefore, a _____ order was needed.

(God, superior)

Underline the correct ending for the following sentence.

According to Psalm 110:4, Christians were obligated to

observe the rules and laws of the sacrificial system.

accept Christ as High Priest of a new and eternal order.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

implied a change of law which set forth the rules controlling the function of the sacrificial work (v. 12). It was widely accepted in Judaism that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah, not from the priestly tribe of Levi. Yet Psalm 110 stated that the Messiah would be a priest after the new order. This Psalm implied that He would come from Judah since He was the Messiah. The establishment of the new order from Judah would set aside the Law requiring that he be a Levite (v.13).

The ancestry of Jesus satisfied the Messianic requirements of the Old Testament that the Messiah would come from Judah (v. 14). Although the Law of Moses said nothing about a priest coming from the tribe of Judah, Psalm 110 did speak of the Messiah's being a priest like Melchizedek (vv. 14-15). The author of Hebrews concluded that the Psalm, on this point, superseded the Law of Moses because it spoke of a new level of existence. "A priest for ever" (Ps. 110:4) was not based on a commandment controlling destructible flesh but on the power of eternal life (v. 16). Again, the author drew the fullest implications from the phrase in Psalm 110:4—"a priest for ever." Nowhere did the sacrificial law promise eternal life to those who kept it. The resurrection of Christ (the Messiah), who functioned as a priest by offering Himself for men's sins, did provide for man's eternity (cf. 1 Cor. 15).

The author's deep insight and fascinating interpretation allowed him to make a full application of his point in verses 18 and 19. The sacrificial law was null because it was weak and unprofitable (v. 18). The sacrificial law had been unable to make sinful man righteous; therefore, it needed to be superseded by a new priestly order and law which were effective. The death of the Messiah as a sin offering and His resurrection as an eternal priest-king brought a superior hope to those who turned from dependence on the sacrificial law to faith in Christ (v. 19). Through the works of the Priest-King, men are brought near to God (v. 19).

The new priestly order was divinely established (7:20-21)

The author had already mentioned that God's oath gave certainty that God will keep His promise. According to Psalm 110:4, God swore that the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek would be established. If that Scripture was accepted by Jews as divinely inspired, which apparently it was, they would have had to conclude either that a new priestly order would be established or that God was not truthful. The Jews did not question the integrity of God; therefore, they had to agree that the author's interpretation of the Psalm was correct.

Psalm 110 superseded the Law of Moses in authority because it spoke of e _____
l _____ rather than d _____
f _____.

(eternal life, destructible flesh)

Is this statement true or false?

The sacrificial law was unable to make sinful man righteous. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Certainty of the establishment of the new priestly order was assured by God's _____ or promises.

(oath)

The Superiority of the New Order to the Old

Hebrews 7:23-8:13

Jesus established a perpetual priesthood (7:23-25)

Jeremiah stated that in the last days God would establish a new covenant with His people which would be based on mercy and forgiveness. The Old Covenant based on the Law failed because men had failed to keep the Law. The numerous transgressions of the people required numerous sacrifices in atonement efforts. Many priests were required to continue the sacrificial work. When one group deceased, they were succeeded by another (v. 23). The sacrificial offerings were innumerable and endless. No man among mortal priests could insure permanent acceptance by God to those whom he represented. In contrast to the mortal priesthood, Jesus has established an unchangeable priesthood because He abides for ever. In the new order, men do not come on different occasions to different priests. This mortality renders their work defective. Jesus died once for all and lives for ever. He has established an indefectible, permanent priesthood.

Hebrews 7:25 contains a teaching which is basic to the doctrine of the security of the believer. Christian assurance of salvation is not based on man's ability to achieve sinless perfection. The sinner's great hope is based on the adequate salvation which God has provided in Christ. His redeeming work did not stop with His death, but He continues as man's priest in the presence of God, making intercession for him (v. 25). The priest is man's representative who offers sacrifices in order to render his sinful life acceptable by God. Christ is man's representative who has offered one sacrifice which is sufficient to cleanse him from all sins for ever and to render him acceptable before God. Although the believer commits sin after he has been forgiven and born into the Kingdom, his great High Priest continues to live in God's presence to make intercession for him. The author of Hebrews was convinced that the salvation provided by Christ is completely adequate ("to the uttermost").

Christ was perfectly qualified as High Priest (7:26-28)

The Hasmonean priest-kings were so corrupt and deceitful that a primary purpose of the Qumran community was to oppose them. Aspirants to the office of high priest were more concerned about the wealth and honour of the position than the service rendered to sinful men. In the day of Jesus and Paul, the high priests did not give the impression of being pious men. In contrast, the author of Hebrews presented Christ as the Ideal High Priest.

Draw lines from the persons to their function.

Mortal priests	insured permanent acceptance by God to those whom He represents
Jesus	offered numerous and defective sacrifices.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The exalted Christ makes priestly intercession for His people who commit _____.

(sin)

Unscramble the letters below to make words which describe the Hasmonean priest-kings.

tedelufic _____
turorep _____

(deceitful, corrupt)

Being holy, Christ was concerned with God's will rather than with wealth and prestige. 'Holiness' means to be set apart into God's service. Jesus' life was dedicated totally to the service of God. In contrast to the deceitfulness of the Jerusalem priesthood, Jesus was without malice and innocent of underhanded means of gaining wealth and power (v. 26). In addition, He was sinless or undefiled. It was not necessary for Him to offer sacrifices for Himself because He had no sins. He was in a different class from sinners, and because of His sinless life He was exalted to a place of honour in heaven.

The Levitical priests needed to offer sacrifices for themselves daily. On the great Day of Atonement, they first made sacrifice for themselves before they offered sacrifices for the people (v. 27). It was not necessary for Jesus to make one offering for Himself and additional offerings for others. He not only was the High Priest who made one perfect offering, but He was Himself the perfect offering which atoned for all the sins of everyone for ever (v. 27). Jesus had to make only one offering because of the perfect nature of the Offering and the perfect qualifications of the Offerer. Men who filled the priestly office based on the Law were imperfect; therefore, their sacrifices were temporary (v. 28). God's oath, which was superior to the Law and more recent than it was, established His Son as an eternal high priest (v. 28).

Charles Trentham notes seven ways in which Jesus as High Priest is superior to the Levitical priesthood based on the Law.¹ He is greater because—

1. He was divinely appointed (7:14-15).
2. His indestructible life was established by His resurrection (7:16-19).
3. His new priestly order was established by the oath of God (7:20-21).
4. His work is based on the New Covenant of God's mercy and forgiveness rather than on the Law (7:22).
5. His priesthood is perpetual in contrast to the mortal priesthood of the Levitical order (7:23-24).
6. He offers a salvation which is adequate for depraved sinners (7:25).
7. His personal qualifications are perfect (7:26-28).

¹Hebrews, " Vol. 12 of The Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), pp. 56-57.

In contrast to the Jerusalem priesthood, Jesus was without _____ and innocent of underhanded means of gaining _____ and _____. Because He was _____, he did not need to offer _____ for Himself.

(malice, wealth, power, sinless, sacrifices)

Use the following words to complete five ways Christ as High Priest is superior to the Levitical priesthood.

*perfect
indestructible
appointed
perpetual
adequate*

1. He was divinely _____.
2. His priesthood is _____.
3. He offers _____ salvation.
4. His life is _____.
5. His personal qualifications are _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

By bringing together the doctrines of the pre-existent Son of God and the reality of Christ's manhood, the writer of Hebrews sets forth an explanation of the atoning work of Christ. As human, Christ understands man's situation and is perfectly qualified to offer sacrifices for man. As the divine Son of God, He was appointed for the task and was raised from the dead to become an eternal High Priest.

As human, Christ understands man's situation and is qualified to be his _____.
As divine, He is man's eternal _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Christ's priestly work is in heaven (8:1-5)

The resurrection and ascension of Christ played important roles in the interpretation of His redemptive work and of the establishment of the Kingdom. After forty days of post-resurrection instruction to the disciples, Christ was received up in a cloud into the heavens. The disciples understood that He was seated on the right hand of the "Majesty in the heavens" (v. 1).

Major influences in the interpretation of His redemptive work and the establishment of the Kingdom were Christ's _____ and _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The Temple in Jerusalem was God's earthly house. Upon the dedication of the Temple in the day of Solomon, "the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house" (2 Chron. 7:1). On the Day of Atonement each year and after making sacrifice for his personal sins, the high priest represented Israel with a blood sacrifice in the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. He entered the sacred place with fear and trembling because he approached the invisible presence of God. The most significant work of the high priest was to represent Israel in the presence of God and to make atonement for her sins.

Even though the Israelites experienced the glory of God filling the Temple, they recognized that God was too great to be contained in a house made with human hands: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27) God's presence in the Temple represented His immanence with His people, but the Holy God of Israel was so great that His Being far exceeds what can be comprehended as dwelling within an earthly Temple. The transcendent God is described as abiding in the highest heavens. The ministry of the earthly high priest was limited to the Temple, the representation of God's dwelling on earth. The high priest expressed his unworthiness to approach even the limited earthly presence of God by offering sacrifices and by entering the Holy of Holies with great fear. Jesus as High Priest does not bear such limitations. He was sinless and has been raised by God to enter the heavenly sanctuary (v. 2). The earthly Temple was constructed by man and was not adequate to contain the Lord. By entering the heavenly tabernacle, Christ dwells in the true presence of God and not in an earthly representation of His presence.

Christ was raised by God to enter the _____ sanctuary.

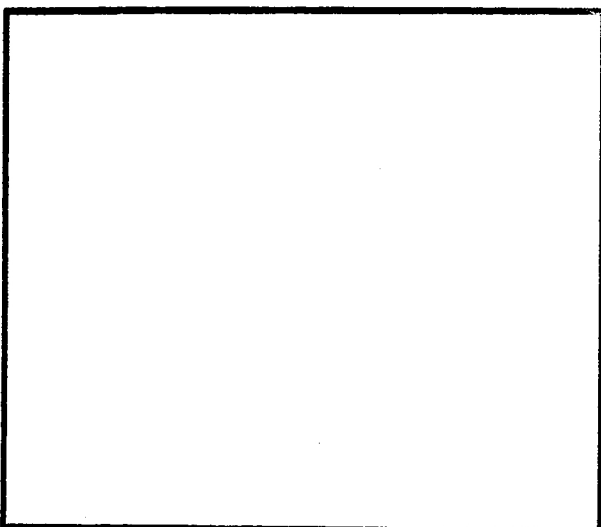
(heavenly)

When the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he carried the blood of a sacrifice for the congregation of Israel. Likewise, when Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary He had a sacrificial gift to offer (v. 3). His sacrificial gift was not according to the Law which regulated offerings presented at the earthly Temple, but His gift superseded the blood of animals (v. 4). The Law instructed the priests concerning the proper animals to sacrifice on particular occasions. The earthly institution was inadequate and only a shadow of the true offering to be presented in the heavenly tabernacle (vv. 4-5).

The author implied in verse 2 that the earthly Temple was only a representation or shadow of the true tabernacle which is heavenly. In verse 5, he specifically stated that the earthly sacrificial institution is only an "example and shadow of heavenly things." To make such a bold assertion, he recognized his need of supporting it with Scriptures. He found his support in a careful interpretation of Exodus 25:40, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." The author concluded that if Moses saw a pattern to copy in constructing the earthly tabernacle, the true tabernacle must exist in heaven. If the true tabernacle is in heaven, the priest who ministers in it is superior to those who serve in the earthly, copied institution. The author admitted that if Christ were on earth, He would not be a priest at all because He would not qualify according to the Law of Moses (v. 4). However, His ascension to the right hand of God and the scriptural implications of a heavenly tabernacle lead to the logical conclusion that Christ is the High Priest serving in heaven in the very presence of God.

Christ has established the superior Covenant (8:6-13)

Verse 6 served as a transitional statement by which the author connected the exalted priestly ministry of Christ with the establishment of the New Covenant. The work of the Levitical priesthood was part of the Old Covenant, which required Israel to worship only God. Even though there were various ways of worshipping God, the major aspect of public worship was the offering of sacrifices. The Covenant at Mount Sinai required the people to be obedient to God who would bless them and establish them in the land. The sacrificial law was given for those who failed to live perfectly. One who transgressed would seek the removal of his sins through the atonement of sacrifices. However, the sacrificial system did not make Israel obedient nor righteous; for the people turned to idolatry and immorality. The evidence of Israel's unrighteousness was her punishment by captivity. The Old Covenant provided for the atonement of certain transgressions, but it could not provide power to avoid the transgressions. In spite of the moral and ceremonial



The earthly Temple was a r _____
 or s _____ of the true tabernacle
 which is heavenly.
 (representation, shadow)

The sacrificial law was given for those who
 failed to live _____.
 Underline the correct word or words.
 The sacrificial system (did, did not) make
 Israel righteous.
 (perfectly, did not)

laws, the people of Israel went astray, broke the Covenant by turning from Yahweh to serve other gods, and were disinherited by Yahweh as a sinful and unfaithful companion who had broken the covenant vows. As the unfaithful companion severs the marriage relationship, so unfaithful Israel broke the covenant relationship with God. A new and better covenant needed to be established (v. 6).

To assert that the first Covenant was inadequate and needed to be replaced was a bold step by the writer of Hebrews. Again, such a statement made to Jewish Christians would require support from the Old Testament. The writer found his Biblical support in Jeremiah 31:31-34. His interpretation of the establishment of the New Covenant, spoken of by Jeremiah, was that the Old Covenant would be replaced. To replace the Old Covenant would do away with Judaism. Early Jewish Christians continued to worship in the Temple. However, by the time of the systematic interpretation of the writer of Hebrews, Christianity was understood to be more than a new patch to be put on an old garment. Judaism, which was based on the Law of Moses and centred in the Temple and sacrificial system, was discovered to be incompatible with the new way to God through faith in Christ. The author pointed out from the Old Testament and in the inspired words of Jeremiah that the first Covenant was inadequate. Therefore, it must be replaced by the New Covenant (vv. 7-8). Jeremiah's reference to the establishment of the New Covenant implied that it would replace the former. It would be significantly different from the Old (v. 9). The Old Covenant consisted of religious, moral, and ceremonial laws. The religious and moral laws were summed up in the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20). The religious laws concerned man's relationship to God: the requirement that he worship only Yahweh and hallow His Name. The moral requirements concerned a man's relationship to his fellow-man, beginning with his parents. Man is to honour his parents, to regard and protect the life of his fellow-man, to recognize the sacredness of marital relations, to respect the property of his neighbour, and to uphold truth. The sacrificial law was given in the event man failed to live perfectly in relationship to God and his fellow-man.

The Covenant, which was based on the Law, failed to make provision for man's deep sinfulness. Atonement for wrong acts was not sufficient. Sin is more than wrong actions. Its roots reach into the very heart and nature of man and pervert his desires, thoughts, and feelings. A law which deals only with external actions is inadequate to deal with the problem of sin. Man's sinful nature required that God's power deal with the inner man—the mind and the heart of man (v. 10). The Israelites' gratitude to Yahweh for His deliverance of them was insufficient to overcome the deceitfulness of their hearts and to enable

The author of Hebrews interpreted the replacing of the Old Covenant with the New Covenant as doing away with _____.

(Judaism)

Sinful man needs a covenant by which God's _____ deals with the _____ man.

(power, inner)

them to choose the right instead of the wrong. Man did not continue in God's Covenant because of his sinful and perverse inner nature. The New Covenant provided for God's laws to be written within the inner man—that he be changed in motive, purpose, and ambition (v. 10). Only with such a change would man look to Yahweh as his God and submit his life to Him as His servant (v. 10).

In connexion with the New Covenant, Jeremiah had explained that man's relationship to God would involve more than being taught external laws to follow (v. 11). His reference to "knowing the Lord" may not have been understood at first, but in the light of the teachings of Christ it came to be understood as a spiritual encounter with God and a new birth. The internal personal nature of man's relation to God and the intimate knowledge of his experience could be accomplished only by the Spirit of God dwelling within man. The Spirit was not limited to the kings and prophets who were "the greatest" in Israel's society, but even "the least" would be indwelt by the Spirit (v. 11).

There was no way that Judaism could relate these verses from Jeremiah to the legalistic system based on the Law of Moses. Judaism continued to be a religion of external rules and laws. To be religious meant to memorize the religious requirements and to practise them as well as possible. Jeremiah spoke of something more intimate and personal than loyalty to traditional laws. He spoke of a new relationship to God which was described as knowing the Lord. This new relationship was made possible because God has promised to be merciful to unrighteous men and to forgive their sins and iniquities (v. 12). The Old Covenant was based on strict keeping of laws and severe punishment for breaking them. The New Covenant was based on God's mercy and forgiveness. Only through the death of Christ, which was God's sacrifice for man's sins, could full meaning be given to the promises of God as stated by Jeremiah.

The author concluded that, by the giving of the New Covenant, the first was made old and ineffective (v. 13). The implications he drew from Old Testament verses enabled him to justify his dispensing with the Old Covenant and its supporting ceremonial system (v. 13).

Although the author of Hebrews dispensed with Judaism as based on the books of Moses, he did not reject the Old Testament. It was the interpretation of the Old Testament which he found to be lacking. He agreed that the sacrificial system had served the purpose of preparing for the coming of Christ as an example or shadow. But Judaism had rejected Christ because its interpretation of the Old Testament projected concepts of the Messiah which Jesus did not fulfil. The contemporaries of Jesus could not deny that His miraculous works and resurrection from the

Use the following phrases in the blanks below:

intimate knowledge of God
external laws to follow

Hebrews 8:11 means that man's relationship to God involves more than being taught _____

_____. It consists of man's _____

accomplished by the Spirit of God.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Contrast the bases of the Old and New Covenants.

The Old Covenant was based on s _____
k _____ of l _____.

The New Covenant was based on God's m _____
and f _____.

(strict keeping, laws, mercy, forgiveness)

Did the author of Hebrews reject the Old

Testament? _____
yes/no

(Compare your answer with the text.)

dead distinguished Him as anointed for God's mission. A new examination of the Old Testament and its re-interpretation uncovered neglected teachings which spoke of the Messiah as the High Priest, the Suffering Servant, and the victorious Son of Man. The Christian interpreters leaned more heavily on the Prophets and the Writings than the Rabbis who focused attention primarily on the five books of Moses, the Law. For the author of Hebrews, the Old Testament should be interpreted typologically and the Gospel of Christ as its fulfilment. This approach does not dispense with the Old Testament, but it sees in Christ a higher reality than that which is embodied in the Old Testament.

Neglected teachings of the Old Testament which were uncovered by the author of Hebrews were:

the Messiah as the _____,
the _____,
the victorious _____ of _____.

The author saw in _____ a higher reality than that which is embodied in the Old Testament.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What does the writer's emphasis on the fulfilment of the ceremonial law indicate? _____

2. How would Gentile Christians likely respond to the Jewish requirement of keeping ceremonial laws? _____

3. In what ways was Melchizedek a fitting prototype of Christ? _____

4. Give two indications of Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham. _____

5. How was Melchizedek a type of the eternal Christ? _____

6. How did the author argue that Melchizedek is greater than the Levitical priests? _____

7. How did the writer refute the argument that Christians should continue the ceremonial law? _____

8. Give two reasons the author saw greater authority in Psalm 110:4 than in the Law. _____

9. According to Hebrews 7:25, what is the function of the exalted Christ? _____

10. How did Jesus differ from the Hasmonean priest-kings? _____

11. List five ways Christ as High Priest is superior to the Levitical priesthood. _____

12. Relate Christ's ascension to His high-priestly work. _____

13. How does the Temple relate to the heavenly Tabernacle? _____

14. State the purpose of the sacrificial system and why it failed. _____

15. What did the author interpret to be the consequences of the establishment of the New Covenant?

16. What kind of covenant does sinful man need? _____
17. Explain Hebrews 8:11. _____

18. What was the attitude of the author of Hebrews towards the Old Testament? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

Read pages 46-55 in The Letter to the Hebrews by Bowman and answer the following questions.

1. What three ways did the author of Hebrews argue that Melchizedek was superior to the Levitical priesthood?
2. What arguments did the author of Hebrews use to support his teaching that the Levitical priesthood was suspended?
3. How was the priestly work of Christ superior to that of the Levitical priesthood?
4. How did the author use Jeremiah 31:31-34 in his argument?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

Read pages 115-138 in Hewitt and answer the following questions.

1. Give two arguments used by the author of Hebrews to show that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham.
2. State the fourfold superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood to the Aaronic priesthood.
3. Briefly outline the comparison between the legal and spiritual priesthoods.
4. How did Christ's death and resurrection make His priestly works superior to that of the priests of the law?
5. How did the author of Hebrews prove the imperfection and replacement of the Old Covenant?

Seminar Discussion

1. What does the emphasis in Hebrews 7 and 8 suggest the Hebrew Christians were advocating?
2. Why was the author so interested in showing that Christ supersedes and replaces the Mosaic Law?
3. Explain why the author used Melchizedek as a prototype of Christ.
4. What scriptural foundation did the author lay to support his arguments?
5. How did the author justify his recognition of greater authority for the Psalms than for the Law of Moses?
6. In what way is Jesus as High Priest superior to the Levitical priesthood based on the Law?