

A Study of Hebrews

Lesson 8

Hebrews 8:1-9:28

Jesus Has a Better Ministry

(Hebrews 8:1-13)

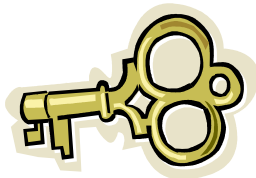
In Hebrews 8 and 9 we see the ministry of Jesus as high priest to be far superior to that of the Old Testament high priests. In chapters 5-7 we have seen who Jesus **is** and now we will concentrate on what he **does** as our high priest. In Hebrews 8:1 we see Jesus **seated** at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven. Now we can answer these short questions:

1. Where is Jesus now?
2. What does his posture of sitting tell us?
3. How is it that he both sits and serves? (Heb 8:1-2)

The word “tent” in verse 2 is an illustration to compare Jesus’ role in heaven with the high priest’s role in the Tabernacle. The tabernacle was the portable worship centre used from the time the Israelites went into the desert after leaving Egypt until the construction of the first temple. Hebrews 9 lists some of the articles that were found in the tabernacle.

Today Jesus serves in the figurative tent or tabernacle that God has “pitched” and this is heaven. Jesus **serves** in heaven as he intercedes for us. While he was on earth, he was not even from the priestly tribe, but today he serves as our high priest.

4. What is the meaning of the words “shadow” and “copy” in Hebrews 8:5?



The key verse in all of the book of Hebrews may well be **Hebrews 8:6**: *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.*

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The book of Hebrews is all about telling us how much better Jesus is than the angels, Moses, Joshua, the Old Testament high priests, and the covenant he brings is better than the Old Testament covenant.

The ministry of Jesus is better than that of the high priests because he is our **mediator**. This word usually describes one who is an arbitrator between two disagreeing parties, but the mediation of Christ described here indicates what he does for us in bringing a new covenant from God. It is not a two way mediation, but rather a one way ministry from God to us through Jesus.¹

Furthermore, the ministry of Jesus is better than that of the high priests because it is **enacted on better promises**.

Nature of the New Covenant

It is a covenant of assurance -- It tells us what God will do. (Note the number of times God says, "I will" in the quotation from Jeremiah.)

It is a covenant that restores fellowship between God and men -- (8:10) This covenant brings about a real change of heart and mind.

It is a covenant that offers a knowledge of God to everyone -- (8:11)

It is a covenant that offers forgiveness -- (8:12)

It is a covenant that is new -- (8:13) This covenant renders the old obsolete.

5. What are the promises the Hebrew writer has in mind in Hebrews 8:6?

In Hebrews 8:9ff we have a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34. The new covenant was not an afterthought of God, but was in his plans from the beginning as is indicated from the prophecy of Jeremiah.

Worship Under the Old Covenant

(Hebrews 9:1-10)

Beginning in chapter 8 there is an illustration and contrast made between the Old Testament tabernacle and the sanctuary where Jesus ministers in heaven. This contrast gives us reason to recall some of the facts about the



¹ Girdwood, Jim and Verkruijse, Peter. *The College Press NIV Commentary, Hebrews*. p. 269.

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tabernacle. The tabernacle was constructed using an exact pattern given to Moses by God (Hebrews 8:5, Exodus 25:40).

Inside the tabernacle was two main compartments. These were separated by a wall or curtain. The first compartment was the the “Holy Place” and the inner compartment was called the “Holy of Holies.” In the Holy Place was located the seven branched candlestick (Ex 25:31-40), the table (Ex 25:23-29, and Bread of the Presence (Ex 25:30’ Lev 24:5-9.”

In the outer courtyard of the tabernacle was located the altar of burnt offering and the basin. These were for sacrifices and for ceremonial cleansing.



In the photo to the left we have a representation of how the Holy Place appeared. Note the candlestick, the altar of incense in front of the curtain, and the Table for the Bread of the Presence.

The Holy of Holies which was located behind the curtain in the Holy Place. This was room was sometimes called “The Most Holy Place.” This room is an illustration of heaven where Jesus is now. Located in this room was the “ark of the covenant.”

The golden altar of incense was located outside the Holy of Holies and just inside was the ark of the covenant. There were three items in the ark of the covenant; a) the jar of manna, b) Aaron’s rod which budded, and c) the tablets of the ten commandments.

It is possible to see many of the New Testament counterparts of the items within the Tabernacle. For instance the altar of burnt offering represents the death of Jesus. The basin represents Christian baptism, the Holy Place the Church, the lamp represents the Bible, the bread the Lord’s Supper, the altar of incense represents prayer, the veil is the body of Christ, the ark the presence of God, the manna is the provision of God, and the tablets are the laws of God.



6. How often did the high priest enter the Holy of Holies?

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7. What item did the High Priest always take into the Holy of Holies with him?
8. Why do you think the Hebrew writer goes into such great detail in describing the worship in the tabernacle?