

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 8, Verses 1-7**  
**Notes From Class on December 1, 2009**  
**Last Revised on (December 2, 2009)**

Good evening everyone!

---

Welcome to our continuing study of the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

---

Before we begin please make sure that you have everything you need.

---

Tonight you will need a Bible and a song book.

---

If you are using an English translation of the Bible other than the English Standard Version ("ESV") then you may like to have the handout we have prepared, which has the ESV text of Hebrews.

---

Tonight there is a second handout with the ESV text of Matthew 5:17-20 and Luke 16:14-17. Please make sure you have a copy of that also.

----

There is coffee and tea at the back.

---

Please get what you need and, then, let's get started.

**Review**

So far we have finished reading the first **seven** Chapters of Hebrews.

---

I am not sure we have finished **discussing** Chapter 7.

---

I expect that some of you have comments and questions left over from last week.

---

But before I invite you to **share** your comments and questions,

---

please let me begin, once again, with a very brief **review** of the first seven chapters.

---

which will hopefully help us to keep everything in the proper **perspective**.

---

We recall that Hebrews is best thought of as the text of a **sermon**,

---

written sometime around the end of the **First Century**, A.D.

---

to be read in a **particular** church.

---

We do not know **who** the preacher was or **what** church he was preaching to.

---

But it seems clear that the members of this church and the preacher **did** know each other.

---

One of the preacher's objectives was to encourage these people to **hold fast** to their confession of faith.

---

It appears that most of them **had** confessed their faith in Christ long before this sermon was given

---

but that at least some of them were in danger of "**falling away.**"

---

---

The preacher began his message by reminding the church of the **unqualified supremacy** of Christ.

---

This is something of which we all need to be **constantly** mindful.

---

Our **salvation** depends on it!

---

So too does any proper **understanding** of Hebrews, and much else.

---

We are duly reminded then that:

---

Jesus is the **eternal Son** of God. **(Chapter 1)**

---

And he **is** God, the Son.

---

He is greater than **everything** in all creation,

---

including even the **angels**, **(Chapter 2)**

---

and including even **Moses!** **(Chapter 3)**

---

---

Having made these important points,

---

our preacher next urges his listeners **not** to imitate Israel, **(Chapters 3 and 4)**

---

which **had** repeatedly fallen away from God,

---

**despite** the ministry of angels

---

and **despite** the ministry of Moses.

---

Understanding the **failure** of Israel is important for understanding this sermon, I think.

---

And I think that this, the failure of Israel, is one of the **important** lessons of the Bible.

---

This **points** us to Christ

---

---  
Near the end of Chapter 4 we are reminded that

---  
the **Christian** church can and should do better,

---  
because our Lord and Savior, **Jesus Christ**,

---  
has become for us our great "**high priest**."

---  
---  
This is a **figure of speech**.

---  
**Jesus** is the eternal Son of God who "passed through the heavens." (4:14)

---  
In this way Jesus is **not** like any priest!

---  
However during his days among us Jesus **was** wholly human,

---  
and he was **tempted** as we are, yet without sin. (4:15)

---  
So we can confidently draw **near** to God **through** Jesus

---  
and receive **mercy** and find **grace**. (4:16)

---  
In these ways Jesus **resembles** a high priest

---  
The high priests were, in other words, imperfect **copies** of Jesus.

---  
This brings us to the end of **Chapter 4**.

---  
---  
The preacher next begins to **compare** Jesus with **ordinary** priests (5:1-10)

---  
to help us see how what Jesus does for us **perfectly**

---  
is sort of like what was once done **imperfectly** by the priests under the law.

---  
Because Jesus is the **only** perfect priest,

---  
God has designated him as the high priest **forever**,

---  
---  
The preacher **wanted** to continue this line of thought straight away (5:11)

---  
and he finally **does** continue it starting in Verse 1 of Chapter 7. (Look!)

---  
---

But in **between** Chapter 5, Verse 10 and Chapter 7, Verse 1 he interrupts himself to speak of other things.

---

This section is more of an **exhortation** than a teaching.

----

In short: he tells these Christians that they lack **maturity**,

---

and says that he intends to **bring** them to maturity, God willing.

---

He frightens them by suggesting that it may be impossible to restore some who have **rejected** Christ

---

but he reassures them that he does not regard **them** as having rejected Christ in this way.

---

Finally he encourages them with a reminder of the promises God swore to **Abraham**,

---

and which **Jesus** guarantees for us, having become a high priest forever, like Melchizedek.

---

So ends **Chapter 6**.

---

---

In the **first 10 verses of Chapter 7** the preacher explains this description of Jesus as being a priest forever like **Melchizedek**,

---

The point in these 10 verses, mainly, it seems to me, is that Melchizedek is **greater** than **Abraham!**

---

who is rightly considered father of all the faithful, perhaps especially including **all** the faithful in Israel.

---

An important **corollary**, then, is that Melchizedek is greater than **Levi**, **Moses**, and **Aaron**.

---

and so greater than **any** priest or Levite who ever lived.

---

And because Melchizedek is introduced merely as a **typological** figure,

---

that is only for the purpose of helping to **describe** the greatness of Christ,

---

all of these things said about Melchizedek are **perfectly** and **infinitely** true of Christ.

---

---

Q. But why would God, the preacher asks rhetorically, need to appoint **such** a perfect high priest? (greater even than Abraham *et seq.*)

---

A. Because God **intends** a perfection that Aaron's priesthood could **never** have attained.

**(7:11)**

---

To achieve such **perfection**, that is to remove all sin, it was necessary to have a **better** priesthood.

---

And when the **priesthood** changed, from the family of Aaron to the person of Christ,

---

the law **necessarily** changed as well. **(7:12)**

---

According to the flesh, Jesus was descended from the Tribe of **Judah**. **(7:13-14)**

---

The law made **no** provision for any priest to be appointed from **this** tribe.

---

Furthermore the **eternal** son of God was appointed a priest **forever**,

---

not because of his **human** descent but because he was the eternal Son of God!

---

The law **certainly** made no provision for anything like **that!** **(7:15-17)**

---

Thus the appointment by God of **such** a high priest,

---

is something which the Law could not **accommodate**, at least not without being substantially **changed**.

---

In particular there was no longer any room for any **mortal** priests or Levites. **(7:18-19)**

---

Jesus had taken **their** jobs forever.

---

Consequently there was no room for any of the **ceremonies** that priest and Levites formerly performed.

---

Certainly all of **those** (priestly and ceremonial) parts of the law were no longer of any force or effect.

---

This may seem shocking at first, but really it is not. **(7:20-21)**

---

**Jesus** was appointed a priest **forever** by God who sealed his appointment with an **oath**.

---

The Aaronic priesthood had never **been** established in that way.

---

Furthermore, as the preacher himself notes in the following chapter, God often spoke through the **prophets** in Israel against the empty ceremonial aspect of the law and foretold a time when it would be replaced by something better and more sincere.

---

**All** that has been said so far makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant, long hoped for. **(7:22)**

---

---

But as we saw **last week** in reading to the end of Chapter 7

---

the preacher **continues** to meditate on the ways in which the new covenant is better than the old one.

---

And so must we, because this **affects** us greatly!

---

For one thing, **mortal** priests were constantly **changing**, (7:23-25)

---

hence they were **different** over time,

---

and therefore the office of the priesthood was **inconsistent** and **unreliable**.

---

History certainly bears **this** out!

---

in **every** place where there is **any** kind of a "priesthood"

---

But since God intends **perfection**,

---

he requires a **consistently** perfect priesthood,

---

which requires an **eternal** priest.

---

And if we are going to have only **one** high priest forever,

---

then it surely makes sense that God appointed absolutely the **perfect** high priest,

---

as the God-Man Jesus clearly is. (7: 26)

---

Since he **is** perfect, he doesn't need to make sacrifices or perform ceremonies to purify **himself**.

---

Neither does he need to make repeated sacrifices to atone for **our** many sins.

---

He did that **once for all** when he sacrificed himself on Calvary! (7:27)

---

The death of Christ, therefore, superseded and **replaced** all ceremonies formerly intended to make purification for sins,

---

just as his resurrection and appointment as high priest forever superseded and replaced all **priests** (7:28)

---

So ends my review of what we have read previously in this class, in the first **seven** chapters of Hebrews.

---

**Now**, are there any comments or questions?

### **Chapter 8, Verses 1-7**

O.K. then, would someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 8, Verses 1- 7, in Japanese (Shin Kaiyaku)

---

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

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.

Thank you. Verse 1 reads:

#### **(Verse 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,

Many words have **already** been said, and many more words **remain** to be said, to make this point:

----

we **do** have **such** a high priest, seated in heaven, at the right hand of God, and his name is Jesus.

---

Verse 2 continues to describe him as...

**(Verse 2)**

a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

The Risen Lord ministers **inside** in the holy places!

---

the **actual** holy places, where God is

---

and **not** in the earthly places once built by men as **symbols** of heavenly reality.

---

Yet it is also made clear here that those earthly places once **were** potent symbols...

---

symbols **of** the actual, eternal, and heavenly ministry of **Christ**

---

who always has been, is now, and ever shall be the only **source** of salvation.

---

Verse 3 reads:

**(Verse 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.

It is worth remembering that God himself, through Moses, **ordained** the high priestly office of Aaron.

---

And later it was God himself (in the mouth of David) who **describes** Jesus as a high priest forever.

---

Since we know that **every** high priest offered gifts and sacrifices,

---

it necessarily follows that Jesus offered **something**.

---

Otherwise God's description would make no sense (and what are the odds of that!?)

---

Q. OK, so **what** did Jesus offer?

---

A. **Himself**

---

Yes, Jesus offered himself, **once for all**, as we read in Chapter 7, Verse 27.

---

Thus we know that no **other** gift can atone for sin.

---

So when we forget the **death** of Christ,

---



we cannot **approach** God.

---

*n.b. Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper in (1 Co. 11:26)*

---

Verse 4 reads

**(Verse 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.

The preacher has already argued that Christ alone is the one, true, perfect, and eternal priest in **heaven**.

---

Now he argues that Christ is **not** any kind of a priest on earth,

---

first of all because he is not **on** earth any longer,

---

and secondly because **if** he were on earth, he would not be a **priest**,

---

because the law provides for **earthly** priests,

---

and Jesus doesn't **qualify**.

---

And please remember that no earthly priesthood could ever be anything more than an imperfect **metaphore** describing the perfect eternal Son of God.

---

Verse 5 reads

**(Verse 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."

Q. Who are "**they**?" (look back to Verse 4)

---

A. The earthly **priests** who offer gifts according to the law.

----

A. The **gifts** they offer?

---

A. The **law** in accordance with which they offer these gifts?

---

We read that "they" (some or all of these things) serve a **copy** and shadow of the heavenly things. "

---

Q. What is meant by that?

---

A. The earthly **tabernacle** (in) which they served, in accordance with the law, was a copy and shadow of the actual holy places where Christ is a minister.

---

A. The high **priests** were copies and shadows of Christ, the perfect eternal high priest.

---

A. The **gifts and sacrifices** were copies and shadows of Christ, the perfect gift and sacrifice.

---

A. The **laws** were copies and shadows of what is written on our hearts by the Spirit of Christ.

---

We've here entered into a sort of symbolic echo chamber!

---

It is easy to perceive connections that may **not** be intended by the author.

---

But however we read the detail, I think we will be not far wrong, in general, if we understand that heaven where Jesus Christ sits beside God, is **real** and actual, whereas earth is filled with **copies** and shadows.

---

Thus our hope is **entirely** in heaven and should depend on nothing here on earth.

---

No **earthly** tabernacle, priest, gift or sacrifice, and no laws written on tablets of stone can save us!

---

Only our great high priest forever in heaven and his perfect sacrifice and his law written on our hearts.

Verse 6 reads

**(Verse 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.

Christ, then, has not **succeeded** the Levitical priesthood.

---

Rather he has obtained a more **excellent** ministry

---

of which theirs was always only a **copy** and shadow.

---

Likewise he mediates a more excellent **covenant** of which theirs was always only a copy and shadow.

---

Q. What **is** the covenant that Christ mediates?

---  
 A. The **Gospel** (for short)

---  
 Q. What is the covenant that the Levitical priests mediated?

---  
 A. The **Law** (for short)

---  
 The last clause of Verse 6 says that the Gospel is **better** than the Law,  
 ---  
 because it is enacted on better **promises**.

---  
**What** these better promises are shall be made plain presently.

---  
 But one thing is certain: the gospel is **better** than the law, or it would not have come,  
 ---  
 or having come it would not have **been** the gospel (i.e. good news).

Verse 7 reads:

**(Verse 7)**

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

Q. So what **fault** was there in the first covenant?

---  
 A. The **people** repeatedly did not **do** what they repeatedly said they would do.

---  
 A. That is, they repeatedly **disobeyed** the law,  
 ---  
 even though the law **is** (objectively and self evidently) right  
 ---  
 and even though they **knew** the law was right,

---  
 A. The law (which is good in itself) was **ineffective** in making people obey going forward.

---  
 A. And the law was also ineffective in cleansing their **consciences** of guilt, looking backward.

---  
 A. And so the law **could** not bridge the gap between man and God.

---  
 A. To quote Paul, "the law never saved **anybody**."

---  
 That is precisely why people were **looking** for a second covenant.

---  
 Q. **Who** was looking for a second covenant?

---

A. The **prophets** in Israel.

---

A. **Every** man and woman of faith who ever lived.

---

Q. And what **are** the better promises made by the Gospel?

---

A. The Gospel is the promise that all of our sins are forgiven and we are free to live a life pleasing to God, through the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

---

A. The Gospel is that all of the requirements of the law have been satisfied once for all by the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and that all who believe in him will enjoy a blessed eternal life.

---

A. And finally the Gospel is for **all** nations, including those which were **never** party to the first covenant, thus demonstrating all the more clearly that the new covenant supersedes and replaces the old one.

---

---

But what about Matthew 5:17-20 somebody wanted to know last week.

---

Would someone please read Matthew, Chapter 5, Verses 17-20 in Japanese (Shin Kaiyaku)

---

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

**(Matthew 5:17-20)**

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Thank you. There is similar passage in Luke's gospel, which we should also read.

---

Would someone please read Luke, Chapter 16, Verses 14-17 in Japanese (Shin Kaiyaku)

---

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

**(Luke 16: 14-17)**

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.

15 And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

16 "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.

17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.

So, then, do we see a contradiction here?

---

In Luke 16:17 Jesus says that not the **smallest** part of the Law shall become **void**.

---

But he also makes a **distinction** in the preceding verse between the reality that was "**until John**" under the Law and the Prophets,

---

and what things are like **after** the good news is preached --- when everyone is forcing his way into the kingdom of God.

---

This, in turn, seems consistent with the first passage we read, from Matthew, Chapter 5

---

Verses 17, 18, and 19 of Matthew Chapter 5 together make the point that Jesus does not **oppose** the law and his **followers** must not oppose the law either.

---

Jesus came to **fulfill** (v. 17) and **accomplish** (v.18) the law,

---

and his followers must be even **more** righteous than the scribes and pharisees,

---

who are seen as those who obey the **letter** of the law almost perfectly,

---

while all too often disregarding the **spirit** of the law.

---

In sum, the coming of Christ makes things **different** and **better** than they were under the law,

---

and it does so in a way that **fulfills** and **accomplishes** the law,

---

by making it **possible** for people to **obey** the law,

---

and not **just** the **letter** of the law, for public approval,

---

but the **spirit** of the law for a true and perfect **righteousness** pleasing to God.

---

The gospel **effectively** bridges the gap between man and God.

---

---

It is true that the coming of Christ and, in particular, his establishment as our great high priest makes the **priesthood** obsolete

---

and, therefore, renders obsolete all of the **ceremonies** performed by the priesthood.

---

Q. Does this amount to "**voiding**" part of the law?

---

A. No, I don't think so.

---

The priesthood and the ceremonial law were **always** signs pointing to Christ.

---

So when Christ finally **came** the signs were simply replaced by the thing signified.

---

It was only **when** Christ came that these signs had finally fulfilled their purpose.

---

And they **still** fulfill their purpose in scripture by pointing to Christ and glorifying Him,

---

albeit in a different **way**.

---

Q. And what of the moral law?

---

A. Something similar.

---

A. Christ himself fulfilled the law, by **obeying** it, once for all. Only He ever did that.

---

A. He then atoned for **our** sins by offering himself as a perfect sacrifice, once for all.

---

A. Now all who belong to Christ are filled with the Holy Spirit and led to achieve a righteousness **exceeding** the requirements of the law.

---

When we fail, **his** obedience, and his **blood**, atone for our sin. For **his** sake, **we** are forgiven.

---

Thus Christ fulfills **every** iota of the Law.

---

Questions?

---

Comments?

