

Leviticus & Hebrews: The Necessity of the Cross

Lesson 11: Better Promises Through the Cross

Key Verse: ...but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. ~Hebrews 7.24-25

On November 7, 2024, I was proclaimed “Mother of the Year” by two male Costco employees. Noticing the three purchases I had made, the two men exploded in praise of my excellence, instantaneously pronouncing me “Mother of the Year”! Alongside such praise and adoration, they presented me with an original drawing that fully expressed their great joy for being in the presence of the “Mother of the Year, 2024”: a smiley face adorned with radiating sunbeam-like lines drawn on the back of my receipt! Jesus was pronounced as God’s Son, by God Himself at Jesus’ baptism by John (Matthew 3.13-17). Such an instantaneous and joy-filled response by God set Jesus apart as God’s **Great High Priest**. The credentials to become “Mother of the Year” are 8 fresh chicken bakes, a box of frozen mozzarella sticks, and a bag of frozen Italian meatballs. These items reveal a great promise of a fabulous meal for my home full of sons *and* their friends! Jesus’ credentials reveal the greater promises of a second **Covenant**: God’s intimate writing of His laws on our heart, His intentional presence placing them in our minds and His mercy-filled forgiveness that keeps us eternally secured as His.

Most High God, King of Righteousness and of Peace, thank You for salvation through Your Great High Priest. Help me appreciate Your mercy extended to me, a sinner, as I find my sinful nature revealed in my heart’s attitudes through this lesson. Give me the bravery to desire to hold to the promises YOU have made to me over my circumstances. Give me the vision to see Your Sovereign work, for my good and most especially to Your Glory in the midst of hardship, and hard things in my day. Give me faith to trust in all Your promises, most especially when I desire to solve my problems my way. Thank You for the better promises. Thank You for faithfully holding to Your new covenant, secured in My Savior, Jesus.

Hebrews 7.1-8.13 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything.

He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. ⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!

⁵ And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶ But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸ In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹ One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

¹¹ Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? ¹² For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. ¹³ For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵ This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶ who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸ For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. ²⁰ And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹ but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”

²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. ²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

²⁸ For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

CH 8 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. ⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

¹³ In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Diamonds: Before we join Paul in his deep dive into the intriguing character of Melchizedek, let's first understand Paul's reason for his deep dive into Melchizedek.

1. Paul's main idea (8.13) is secured by his foundational thought in 7.28. What is the focus of Paul's foundational thought in Hebrews 7.28 (or what phrase/word is twice repeated in 7.28)?
2. Paul's foundational thought is the basis for his main idea in 8.13. What point is Paul driving home to this Jewish-Christian church (8.13)?
3. Paul secures his main idea (8.13) through the foundational thought of the law (7.28). How does your study of Leviticus help you better understand Paul's main idea? Or why do you think it is necessary for Paul to first point to the law (Leviticus) to drive home the truth of the "new covenant" alongside the vanishing reality of the "first", "old" covenant?

To enjoy the beauty of Texas Hill Country flowers, you must throw seed in the harshest conditions of winter. In fact, the harsher the season of winter, the more beautiful springs blooms! Melchizedek is a seed God planted under harsh conditions in Genesis 14.1-12. Abraham destroyed four kings while rescuing his sin-filled, marginally worthy nephew Lot (Genesis 12.5) from his own destructive consequences (Genesis 14.13-16). And yet, here, God plants the seed of His eternal priesthood to come: Melchizedek (Genesis 14.17-21).

Genesis 13 provides us a unique and rich window to help us fully grasp the consequential reality of oaths and covenants, as well as the character of the oath maker revealed in devoted obedience to keeping an oath. The

interaction between Abraham and Lot in Genesis 13 is the soil upon which God will once again reveal His plan for salvation.

4. What do you learn about the character and nature of Lot in Genesis 13?

Abraham gave Lot much power over his future by allowing Lot first choice for establishing his homestead. Yet, in doing so, Abraham receives affirmation and security from God in Genesis 13.14-18. Years later, Lot brings trouble and hardship to Abraham's doorstep (Genesis 14.1-4), forcing Abraham to choose between faith in the God whose promises had placed him in this circumstance (Genesis 12.1-8), or abandoning and rejecting his nephew who seems to have placed Abraham in this conundrum (Genesis 14.10-12). Notice that Abraham's decision impacted an additional 318 men, all residents of his own household (Genesis 14.14).

5. What is Lot's worth to Abraham?

6. What Christ-like attributes do you see in Abraham? Consider your answer with the fuller picture of events that lead to Abraham's decision to rescue Lot from circumstances of Lot's own making. Ponder Abraham's family dynamics at this moment in time, alongside the international politics and personal risk of rescuing Lot from himself. Truly, how do you see Abraham displaying Christ-like attributes, especially in so willingly rescuing His people from their sins?

Here, in this astonishing act of geopolitical warfare and interpersonal bravery on behalf of an unworthy family member, we see God using all things to work for Abraham's good and to God's glory! Paul's audience is also sitting on the edge of their seat, wondering how the sudden entrance of this priest-king, Melchizedek, reveals Jesus as not only God's appointed Great High Priest, but also the proof of the obsolescence of the law (Hebrews 8.13)!

7. What information does Paul provide you about Melchizedek?

8. Before you jump into how Melchizedek foreshadows Jesus, first notice what we learn about Melchizedek through his own words, as well as the actions of Abraham in Genesis 14.18-20:

9. Now run wild with the connections you see between Melchizedek and Jesus! Freely use the depth of your knowledge of Jesus through scripture to explore their connections. However, you may also simply use what you have learned up to this point in your study of God's word and His work through His Great High Priest, Jesus:

Deity: Great High Priest~ (Hebrews 7.24-25) Scripture teaches that we all require a priest to approach God. Jesus Christ Himself is our priest and He is an unrivaled Great High Priest. As our Great High Priest, Jesus has offered Himself as the perfect, all-sufficient, and final sacrifice to atone for sins (Hebrews 10.14).

Jesus is also our Great High Priest in a way that is superior to the high priesthood of the Old Testament because Jesus ministers in heaven itself. Hebrews 1.3 states that Jesus sat down at the right hand of God when he had made purification for sins (see also 10.12). His seat at the right hand of God is the seat of the victorious conqueror, who has conquered all his enemies, including sin and death (Hebrews 1.13; Psalm 110.1).

And as the risen-and-ascended, divine-and-human Great High Priest, Jesus is a priest forever. He never has to be renewed in his office. He never takes a break or goes to sleep. Death will never prevent him from executing his office as priest. He is a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He is the royal priest-king whose priestly reign has no end. He, therefore, is able to save his people to the uttermost because he always lives to intercede for us, and never ceases to provide access to God, blessing us with the benefits of salvation acquired by his high priestly work (see Hebrews 7.23-25).

There are four powerful "P's" that faith in Jesus as your Great High Priest provides:

- a. Permanence (Hebrews 7.23-24): The work and the recognition of becoming Mother of the Year is a yearly, *not* eternal proclamation! However, Jesus' eternal permanence as Great High Priest is the foundation upon which He provides salvation for His people. Just as Abraham rescued Lot from his own certain death, so too has Jesus rescued His people from His Father's legally justified wrath.
 - b. Prayer (Hebrews 7.25): Jesus prays for you! In fact, He lives to do so!
 - c. Perfection (Hebrews 7.26): Just as the high priest established the pattern of perfection when entering God's presence on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16.4, 24, 26, 28, 32), Jesus' sinless life and stainless blood provide His children the holiness required to enter God's presence (Hebrews 10.14). In addition, the pattern of perfections of the earthly tabernacle reminded God's people of Eden. Now, God's people look forward to the perfection of their heavenly home (Hebrews 8.1-2)!
 - d. Power-filled promise of possession (Hebrews 8.8-13): God's promise to tabernacle, or dwell, within His people is accomplished through the new covenant. Now God has written His law on His people's heart; He is personally known as your God and now you too may know Him personally; He has provided permanent forgiveness of sin rather than just the covering of sins required through the yearly ritual of the two goats on the Day of Atonement (the goat whose blood covered the people's sin in Leviticus 16.9, 15 alongside the goat who removed the people's sins, providing atonement, as the scapegoat in Leviticus 16.10, 20-22).
10. Which of the provisions provided by your Great High Priest have you (unintentionally) forgotten? Or which one is new to you? And/or which provision of your Great High Priest are you focusing on now?

Doctrine: Covenants¹ ~ (Hebrews 8.6-13) A covenant is a formal binding agreement or sealed promise. Covenants are accompanied by a sign or a legal guarantee. Like covenants, promises are legally binding.

However, a covenant is superior to a promise. To illustrate, the promise of marriage is inferior to getting married (a covenant). Marriage involves not only a promise but a ceremonial sign that seals and guarantees the promise (the exchange of rings). Likewise, the Holy Spirit seals and guarantees God's promise of eternal life with Him (2 Corinthians 1.21-22, 5.5; Ephesians 1.13-14, 4.30).

There are at least six widely agreed upon covenants documented in the Bible. Five of these covenants are unconditional, while the Mosaic covenant is conditional and temporary. It ended with the death of Jesus. In Genesis 1-2, God obligates man to worship and serve Him, man's Creator. Yet God obligates Himself through His promises to sinful man. In fact, God uses His covenants to man as His plan through which His kingdom purposes unfold.

Paul explores God's use of patterns found in both the priesthood and the "tent", or tabernacle to dive deeply into the consequential meaning of God's covenants (Hebrews 8.1-5). The astonishing and breathtaking splendor of the glory of an open field of Texas bluebonnets erases the years of hardship required to achieve such dramatic relief. Likewise, the spectacular and stupefying reality of Jesus' advent, or birth, provided dramatic relief to the years of hardship, despair, and longing of God's people living under the rule of constant rituals and sacrifices.

11. Paul may have exploded in excitement as he proclaimed the "better promises" established through God's use of covenants (Hebrews 8). What promise would have had you shouting "hallelujah" directly after Paul proclaimed the better promise?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: Perhaps your answers to Questions 10 and 11 will be useful in helping you jumpstart your SSP. No matter what you write here, know that your Great High Priest is thrilled to be present in you, praying both *for* you, and *with* you! 🙏

Hughes, R. Kent, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) pp.185-223

Phillips, Richard D., *Hebrews*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006) pp. 221-286

We have provided you with additional information about the six covenants documented in the Bible. Please read this information as you have time and desire.

1. **Noahic Covenant:** Established and confirmed in Genesis 6.18, 9.9-17. The first use of the word “covenant” (*berit*) after sin’s entry into creation is used in this covenant. This is an **unconditional and eternal** covenant still in effect today. Its **sign** is the **rainbow**. This covenant is considered the initial platform for God’s purposes. Listed are the promises and provisions of this covenant:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Provides stability of nature (Genesis 8.22) ~Reissues God’s command to Adam to multiply (Genesis 1.28, 9.1, 7) ~God causes animal kingdom to fear man (Genesis 9.2) ~Like plants, animals become food for man (Genesis 9.3-4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Dignifies man as God’s image bearer despite sin’s entry (Genesis (9.5) ~Capital punishment instated for murder of God’s image bearer (Genesis 9.6) ~God promises never to destroy the world by water again (Genesis 9.15)
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2. **Abrahamic Covenant:** Established in Genesis 12.1-3, ratified by God in Genesis 15.7-17, reaffirmed in Genesis 22.15-18. This **everlasting covenant** details **God’s plan to save people and restore all things** through three promises: 1) land for Abraham, 2) numerous descendants of Abraham, and 3) universal blessings for the nations.

It is through this covenant that God reveals He will use Abraham and the nation of Israel to bless the Gentiles (Genesis 12.3; 22.18). Through the lineage of Abraham, God promises kings, most importantly, king David, who is in the lineage of God’s promised Messiah, Jesus. Listed are the promises God makes in this covenant:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~God will make Abraham a “great nation”: Israel, the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12.2) ~Abraham will be blessed, and his name will be great (Genesis 12.2) ~Abraham will be a blessing for others (Genesis 12.2) ~God will bless or curse others according to their treatment of Abraham (Genesis 12.3) ~The nation to come from Abraham will be a blessing “to all families of the earth” (Genesis 12.3) ~Land for Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 12.6-7) and “forever” (Genesis 13.14-17); dimensions given in Genesis 15.18-21 ~Commitment to protect and reward Abraham (Genesis 15.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Abraham’s descendants as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15.5) ~Multiplication of Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 17.2); descendants will be innumerable (Genesis 22.17) ~Abraham will be father of many nations (Genesis 17.6) ~Kings will come from Abraham (Genesis 17.6) ~Abraham promised all the land of Canaan (Genesis 17.8) ~Male circumcision established as the sign of the “everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17.10-14) ~All the nations of earth will be blessed through Abraham’s offspring (Genesis 22.18)
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There are over fourteen promises God makes to Abraham on behalf of not only Abraham himself, but also his children, their children, and through so many generations of descendants that they make up a nation!

3. **Mosaic Covenant:** Commonly referred to as “the law”; given through Moses after Israel’s exodus from Egypt to govern the life and conduct of God’s people in the “Promised Land” of Canaan (see Abrahamic covenant). This covenant is **bilateral and conditional, contingent on Israel’s obedience to God**. Their disobedience would render this covenant invalid (or legally null). It consisted of 613 commandments in total, summarized by the ten commandments (Exodus 20.1-17). It includes rules governing Israel’s social life (Exodus 21-23) and worship system (Exodus 25-31). The **Sabbath**, a day of rest, is the **sign of this covenant** (Exodus 31.12-17). Keeping the Mosaic covenant out of love for God would result in spiritual and material prosperity, while disobedience would result in judgment (Deuteronomy 28-29).

This covenant was never a means for salvation. Rather, this covenant is considered a gracious covenant because **it allowed Israel, God’s chosen people, a way to show its love and commitment to God**. While Israel promised to obey (Exodus 24.1-18), the biblical record reveals their disobedience to God, resulting in God’s judgment for breaking the covenant. Thus, **this covenant reveals people’s sinfulness**. Since Israel failed and

broke this covenant, God promised a better, new covenant (Jeremiah 31.31-32). **The Mosaic covenant ended with the death of Jesus because He fulfilled the demands of this covenant and established a new covenant with His blood** (Luke 22.20).

4. **Priestly Covenant:** This covenant was established in Numbers 25 at a time when many of God’s people, Israel, were worshipping Baal of Peor (a false god). It was a **perpetual covenant** made by God with a priest named Phineas. While Moses was leading Israel in eliminating all those in Israel who “yoked themselves to Baal of Peor” (Numbers 25.5), Phineas killed an Israelite man for openly and brazenly bringing a Midianite woman into his family (Numbers 25.7-8).

The perpetual nature of this priestly covenant suggests it stands as a separate covenant and not as a part of the temporary nature of the Mosaic covenant. This **Priestly covenant extends into Christ’s second coming** (1 Chronicles 6.50-53; Jeremiah 33.20-21; Ezekiel 44.10, 15; 48.11).

5. **Davidic Covenant:** This covenant was established in 2 Samuel 7.1-17 and 1 Chronicles 17.1-15 with king David through God’s prophet, Nathan. This **unconditional covenant reaffirms the Abrahamic covenant of blessings**, including the Gentiles. It reveals more of God’s covenant plan by focusing on the royal descendants through the lines of Isaac and Jacob. These are the provisions of this covenant:

~David’s name will be made great (2 Samuel 7.9) ~Israel will have a home (2 Samuel 7.10) ~Israel will “disturbed no more” by their enemies (2 Samuel 7.10-11) ~A “house” or dynasty in the line of David will endure forever and his throne established forever (2 Samuel 7.11, 16) ~A coming son will establish this kingdom (2 Samuel 7.12)	~Solomon (David’s son) will build the temple (2 Samuel 7.13) ~Solomon’s kingdom will be established forever (2 Samuel 7.13) ~God will be a father to Solomon, whom He will discipline when Solomon sins, but God will not take the kingdom from Solomon as He did Saul (2 Solomon 7.14-15)
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The genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, references Jesus as “the son of David” (Matthew 1.1). This recognition remained in Jesus’ earthly ministry (Matthew 9.27, 15.22, 21.15). Through the early church, Jesus’ death and resurrection are recognized as the fulfillment of the promised seed of David (Acts 2.30-36, 13.34-37). John also identifies Jesus with David (Revelation 3.7, 22.16). As such, Jesus’ first coming as King in the line of David fulfills the promise of messianic salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 15.14-18), and transfers those who believe in Him to His kingdom (Colossians 1.13). Jesus’ second coming will fulfill the final promises left of this covenant (Matthew 19.28; 25.31).

6. **New Covenant:** This is an **unconditional and eternal covenant** founded in Jeremiah 31.31-34. It is a covenant **in effect now** in what is known as the Church Age (Acts 1-2). **A new heart is the center of the New Covenant** (Jeremiah 31.33; Hebrews 8), which also includes the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36.26-27). No longer is obedience to God compelled by external threat. Now, **obedience to God is internal. God enables and empowers His people to serve Him willingly and to remain in His blessings** (Ephesians 1).

Jesus is the mediator of this covenant, having ratified it with His sacrificial death (Hebrews 9) and His identity as the Suffering Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 53.3-6; Luke 22.20; Hebrews 8.8-12, 9.15, 12.24). **Jesus’ second return is also tied to the final fulfillment of this covenant** (Jeremiah 31.27, 31, 38; Hebrews 9.28). **The indwelling Holy Spirit is a sign of the New Covenant.** The Holy Spirit seals and guarantees God’s promise of eternal life with Him (2 Corinthians 1.21-22, 5.5; Ephesians 1.13-14, 4.30). **A new heart, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and forgiveness of sins are the spiritual blessings at the center of this covenant.**

Lecture Outline:

Aim: In Christ, believers are transitioned into a superior covenant with God.

- I. Superior Priest (7.1-28) **T1:** In Christ, believers are transitioned from wretched sinners to righteous, reconciled saints.
 - a. When did you transition from a wretched sinner to a righteous, reconciled saint?
 - b. If you have already transitioned from sinner to saint, the question is: How are you living like that is true?

- c. What will you do differently this year to take advantage of the access to God the better hope and better covenant provide?
 - d. How will you bring His healing, holy kiss to this broken world?
- II. Superior Promises (8.1-13) **T2:** In Christ, believers are transitioned into an eternally fresh and superior spiritual life.
- a. What are you trying to accomplish, remedy, or cover up in your own strength?
 - b. Which areas of your life do you need to surrender to the Holy Spirit's power?
 - c. Which of your old habits or old ways of the flesh are obsolete in light of all you have learned about Christ's superiority?
 - d. How will you pursue the eternally fresh and superior spiritual life that is yours in Christ?

¹MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017) pp. 870-880