

## LIFE Bible Study: Hebrews 8:1-13

**For Discussion:** What is the greatest commitment you've made to someone? What sets that commitment apart from lesser promises?

### Read Hebrews 8:1-13

**For review:** In Hebrews 7:11-28, the author addressed a fundamental flaw of the Levitical priesthood that necessitated its replacement by the priest of the order of Melchizedek, namely its inability to perfect the worshipper of God. This new high priest would have better qualifications than the existing priests (E.g., holiness, an indestructible life, everlasting office in accordance with God's oath), and thus a better ministry. From there the author highlights a final difference between the priests of these two orders, bringing together his preceding arguments and showing his readers the point toward which he has been building: God has established a new and better covenant with His people, one whose mediator and guarantor is this priest from the greater priesthood of Melchizedek.

**After addressing at length Jesus' superiority as high priest over the Levitical high priests in terms of His attributes, His service, and His character, the author highlights one final area in which Jesus surpasses those who served under the Levitical system. Where do each of these priests perform their service (v.1-5; Heb. 9:24)? Why is the place where Jesus serves better?**

The new priest from the priesthood of Melchizedek is one who mediates a new covenant that is better than the one that was previously in effect (v.6). A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more parties to fulfill specific terms (E.g., performing certain actions). It is a solemn promise that joins those who are involved in a partnership with each other. Like with oaths, God was under no obligation to offer this, which makes it remarkable that He would bind Himself to sinful people with something as irrevocable as a covenant. In all covenants between God and men, God is the one who initiates and establishes its terms and people are the beneficiaries.

**To demonstrate the superiority of the new covenant, the author quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 to show that God Himself recognized that the old covenant was lacking and had a plan from long ago to supersede it with a better one. What fault did God find with the old covenant (Lev. 18:4-5 & Jas. 2:10-11)?**

**The author presents the new covenant using the same reasoning that he used to argue for the necessity of a new priesthood (Heb. 7:11), that what is flawless and complete leaves no room to speak of any other (v.7). In what ways is the new covenant superior to the old (v.6)? What does God promise to those who become members of the new covenant through Christ (v.10, 11, 12; Heb. 4:1-11)?**

**Despite being freed from having to earn God's approval through the law, our sinful tendency can be to still reserve parts of our lives to take pride in our own accomplishments and retain a sense of self-sufficiency and independence from God. What are some ways that Christians can still live as though they are under a covenant of works instead of grace? Are there areas where you have been living like your actions or lifestyle contribute to your acceptability before God? What would it look like for you to bring those to the Lord and live out of the grace Christ gives instead?**

### **Reflection and application**

The exalted Son mediates from heaven a new and superior covenant that features the better promises of a new heart, personal relationship with God, and genuine forgiveness of sins. This represents the transition from a covenant of "you shall" (Ex. 20:1-17) to a covenant of "I will" (v.10-12). There is a movement from prescription to description and from uncertainty to certainty. God has taken upon Himself the burden for covenant faithfulness and what He has committed Himself to, He will certainly fulfill.

In the days of Jeremiah, people were only able to see a glimpse of what God was planning, they were in a time of waiting for the fulfillment of His words. They knew God as a covenant maker but could never have imagined the extent of the grace He was preparing to show. Consider the rigours of the old covenant system of law and sacrifice and how even that was insufficient to restore us to God. Now that God has fulfilled in Christ the requirement to perfectly follow His law in order to live, we have the freedom to follow Him out of the love of a transformed heart rather than the need to justify ourselves in His sight.