We Have a Superior Covenant

**Hebrews 7:11-22**

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**Introduction:** In Hebrews chapter six God issues several spiritual warnings to believers and people who consider themselves “Christians.” It is possible to allow our senses to become dull. To go through the motions, attend the services, observe rituals and even confess doctrine while totally forgetting God and His only Son Jesus.

Chapter six is intended to make you uncomfortable with your spiritual state. To question it! It does that by challenging the idea that some sort of mental assent to truth is enough. There are those who grow up in church. Church becomes part of their culture. They can be close to the truth but never really internalize it. Their hearts tell them…. “If I believe the right things, do the right things and say the right things then I am ‘alright’.”

Warning: Do not do what vast numbers are doing now. They see the emptiness of much of evangelicalism and they abandon the church and move even further away from the only hope any men will ever have. The person Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of the Church. Men just need to insist that He is acknowledged and worshiped that way. They need not abandon the Christless Church but find a Christ centered Church. Men need to draw near to Christ and the church is intended to be the means to do that in this world.

Then there are true believers who can and do become dull to their Savior. They are too busy performing spiritual works to give thought to their affection for Jesus. They are focused on what they are doing or “must do” for Christ and thinking little about what Christ has done for them.

**Hebrews 5:11**  11 Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

These are snares. Spiritual traps that the world of religion and Satan have set for men. The way out for believers like us is The Word of God. The Written Word of God is given to reveal The Living Word of God. It is intended to be preached and taught that way. It is about Jesus! Your salvation and the physical life you have was His doing not your religion’s, not your prayer of confession or mere sound doctrine. The Word of God will take you to Christ and Christ will change your life.

**2 Corinthians 3:18**  18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

God sums up all these warnings to us in a very reassuring way.

**Hebrews 6:9**  9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

Have you given your life to Christ? You are beloved, not just okay. Let that sink in. God is convinced (persuaded) not just hopeful. Let that sink in! There are things that are linked or bound to salvation. The saved have them but like many things in this fallen world they need to be discovered, accepted, embraced and experienced. It is precisely these “better things” that we are learning about in Hebrews seven.

* We have a Better Priest
* We have a Better Covenant
* We have a Better Salvation

Today we want to learn about our superior Covenant. But first let’s talk about covenants for a bit. What exactly is a covenant? It sounds so religious and medieval. It certainly must have something to do with ancient times. So what is it exactly.

A covenant is and agreement. We would use the word “contract” today. It is a document that guarantees certain actions on the part of two parties that enter into it. “I will give you this house if you will pay me “X” amount!”

What we have in the Bible however are covenants that God initiated with men. They are more like promises that God has made to men then agreements we have entered into with Him. With few exceptions the covenants are unilateral. God makes them and they come to pass. Here are a couple of examples.

**Genesis 17:4-5**  4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.

**2 Samuel 7:16-17**  16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."'" 17 In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

The covenant spoken of here is a conditional covenant. In it, God promises certain blessings to Israel based on things they were to do.

**Exodus 19:5-8**  5 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." 7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

We call this The Law today. It is summed up by the 10 commandments, but in reality is contained in the first 5 books of the Old Testament. This covenant (agreement) contained all the instructions about behavior, diet, civil contracts, worship, ritual, sacrifices and the priesthood. God wrote it and gave it to mankind, but its promises were conditional on men keeping up their end of the bargain. The rest of the Old Testament (Covenant) documents their failure to do so.

And mankind is doing no better at it today and yet there are many religions who are putting the destiny of their eternal souls in the hope that they will be “good enough” to go to heaven. That they will keep more of the commandments than they break. That keeping the 10 commandments will perfect them before God on the final day. It Will Not!

**Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? [11]:** This is a full court press from God opposing the idea of “works salvation” or salvation through any means for that matter. God’s Word is going to talk about the religion and the priesthood that He Himself set up and ordained in the Old Testament. So…why did God set up a system that did not bring salvation?

First of all, it was never intended to bring salvation. It was intended to point the way to Jesus Christ the Son. The sacrifices were intended to show that men were hopeless. They sinned again and again and again. It showed that God was gracious and accepted innocent sacrifices offered by a priest in place of the life of the sinner.

Secondly it was given to keep mankind from self-destructing until the time Christ actually appeared.

**Galatians 3:23-25**  23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

**For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also [12]:** The word ‘changed’ here does not mean morphed or altered. It means replaced with something else. It would be like “changed oil” or “changed clothes.” The priesthood and the Law are inseparable in the Bible.

**For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests [13-14]:** God’s argument is simple here; If the priesthood is no longer valid then the law is no longer valid. The Law is revoked by the coming of Christ for He fulfilled the law. All this is part of the Old Covenant. It is now replaced by the New. The Scripture goes on in verse 15.

**And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is attested *of Him*, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." 18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness [15-18]:** Melchizedek was not a Levite. He was chosen by God before the law and before there were any Levites at all. This priesthood exists after the Law but is not dependent on the Law. It is based on Christ’s perfect, sinless, and eternal life. In other words….**Not ancestry but Resurrection.** God the Father declared Jesus to be Our One and Only High Priest. And God also acted to prove definitively that Jesus is His Messiah by raising Him From The Dead. **Peter and Paul preached about it saying…..**

**Acts 2:29-32**  29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. 32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

**Romans 1:3-4**  3 … concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

**(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. [19]:** So many people are confused about the role of The Law in the life of believers today even though the Scripture is very clear about it. “How can it say in the Bible not to eat certain things and yet we eat them?” “Why does it say to keep certain feasts and yet we do not observe them?” “ How come it says to observe the Sabbath and yet we do not?”

All these things are part of the Old Covenant (The Law) which was never, ever given to save men and women. It was given to condemn us! It was given to show us how far we are from God and how much we need for Him to save us. Speaking of salvation coming through The priestly sacrifices of The Law, Scripture says…

**Hebrews 10:2-4**  2 …. would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

**And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath 21 (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER '") [20-21]:** So what did you have to do to become a priest under the Old Covenant (The Law)? You just had to be born in the right group. Period! But in the case of Melchizedek, before The Law, and Jesus, after The Law, they were made priests by God Himself. God said…”You shall be my priest!”

**So much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant [22]:** Jesus is infinitely superior. Under The Law the sinner (you and me) had to bring their own sacrifice and give it to the priest so that he could offer it to God.

When you come to Jesus you bring nothing. You do not bring your good works or religious actions. You cease to worry if you are good enough. Jesus has become the guarantee for you! Whatever perfections, transformations, or good works God demands from you (and He does demand them) are fully and eternally guaranteed by Jesus Christ! John MacArthur writes this in his Hebrews commentary ….

“A beautiful illustration of guaranteeing is found in Genesis. When Jacob’s sons were preparing a second time to go to Egypt to get grain, Judah reminded his father that the Egyptian ruler (Joseph) had told them they could not expect more food unless they brought their youngest brother, Benjamin with them to Egypt. Only after Judah nobly offered to be the security for Benjamin did his father reluctantly agree.

**Genesis 43:9**  9 "I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever.

After receiving more food from Joseph, they were stopped on their way home because of Joseph’s concealing his own silver cup in Benjamin’s sack of food. Dismayed at what had happened and grieved at what the loss of Benjamin would do to his father, Judah again offered to become a guarantee for his brother. After a lengthy explanation to Joseph of his concern, Judah said…

**Genesis 44:33**  33 "Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

He was willing to go to any length to fulfill the pledge to his father that Benjamin would return home safely. In this noble gesture, Judah illustrated the idea of Christ’s being the guarantee for the New Covenant.” ***John MacArthur***

**CONCLUSION:** Was anything in the Old Covenant that was bad? Absolutely not! But it was only a shadow cast into history of the true priest and the true sacrifice that would truly take away your sin. The Old Testament simply pointed the way to the fulfillment of the ages.

The Old Covenant required a lot from you. In fact it required perfection. This is what Sabbath keepers fail to realize. If you are going to keep The Law then you MUST keep it perfectly 100% of the time.

**James 2:10**  10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

Scripture says that just trying to be saved by law keeping or Sabbath observing nullifies the grace of God and makes Christ’s death useless….even stupid.

**Galatians 2:21**  do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

So how did Jesus give us a covenant so vastly superior to even the one God gave in the Old Testament? Two ways:

He did it by becoming the reality behind all the sacrifices and rituals of the Old Covenant. They all pointed to Christ. Even the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to the man Jesus Christ who was also the Son of the Living God.

**John 5:39-40**  39 "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

He did it by fulfilling the Old Testament (covenant). He didn’t destroy or demean it in any way. That is what the incarnation of Christ accomplished. Every undertone, every shadow, every symbol became a reality in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 5:17-18**  17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

There are still many things about The Christ in the Old Testament that have not been fulfilled. Jesus Himself said that 100% of it would be fulfilled before it all over.

What does this mean for us? It means that when you give your life to Christ you stop worrying about being good enough to please God. You will never be good enough. Satan will leverage that until the day you die. He will make you religious and a moralist or he will discourage you so much that you will run from Christ and the preaching of the Cross. Either one is a win. Hell will be brimming with religious people. People who believed they could “keep the ten commandments” or “do more good deeds than bad.”

So do you worry about your sin? Jesus took that and paid the penalty for it at the cross.

**1 Peter 2:24**  24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Do you worry that you’re not good enough for God? Jesus lived a sinless life and uses that perfect righteousness as surety…a guarantee, for your entry into heaven.

**Romans 8:3-4**  3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Jeremiah spoke of this very covenant centuries before Jesus. When you give your life to Jesus you enter into this Covenant. The Covenant that Jesus keeps perfectly for you.

**Jeremiah 31:31-33**  31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.