

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 19 September 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **A Better Testament**

### **Hebrews 7:20-28**

Back in 2010, a T.V. network in America called Comedy Central found a new way to blaspheme God. That year Comedy Central launched an animated “comedy” series called “JC” (for “Jesus Christ”). In this cartoon, “Jesus Christ,” the main character, is trying to “escape the enormous shadow of his powerful but apathetic father,” who is preoccupied with playing video games. So, he goes to New York City to try to live a normal life; but he finds there that he can’t adjust, and that he is a “fish out of water.”

Yes, my friends. This is the kind of sewage that flows from the “boob tube” into the American home; and people are lapping it up like dogs lapping up vomit. And we wonder why America is being afflicted with unprecedented wildfires, decades-long drought, severe water shortage, and failing crops; floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes; rage and division of the population, rioting, violence, anarchy, and burning cities; shocking illiteracy, and seriously declining wages and standard of living; homelessness, drug wars, sewage, disease, filth, and mountains of rubbish in the streets of big cities; out-of-control national debt; weak-minded leaders who are the laughingstock of the world; ever-increasing loss of personal freedom; and iron-fisted government tyranny! (Does the word “Judgment” come to mind?) You know what, though? We can expect to see this kind of mockery of Christ. The world has *never* loved Jesus Christ. The world is certainly much *bolder* in its repudiation of Jesus Christ than it was one hundred years ago; but the world has never loved Jesus. The world and Jesus are *always* 180 degrees apart.

Why does the world hate Jesus so much? It is because He is “*holy, harmless, undefiled,*” and “*separate from sinners.*” Jesus Christ is the Light of the World; but the world loves darkness. Jesus Christ exposes man’s sin, and rebukes it; but man loves his sin, and has no desire to depart from it. **Jesus Christ is also the Way to the Father.** He is the High Priest who has passed into the heavens, and who is, at this very moment, making intercession to the Father for all who believe on Him. The world, on the other hand, has no desire to be reconciled to God. The world despises God, and wants Him to leave them alone.

Happily, though, there is a small portion of humanity who *have* repented, and who have come to God by Jesus Christ. To the Christian, Jesus Christ is precious. To the Christian, Jesus is High Priest. To the Christian, Jesus is the Surety of a better Testament. To the Christian, the New Testament isn’t just a book of moral precepts: it is the fulfilment of God’s promise of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

As we’ve been studying through **Hebrews 7**, we’ve been talking more and more about the New Covenant, and about why it is superior to the Old Covenant. As we saw in our last message, the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant because it has a superior High Priest; and that Priest is **Jesus Christ**. This morning, we will examine this truth in more detail; and as we do so, it is my prayer that, if you are saved, Christ will become even more precious to you than He has ever been before. If you are *not* truly saved, it is my prayer that you will come to understand exactly what is necessary for you to get into Heaven. The title of this message is ***A Better Testament***.

**Read Hebrews 7:20-22.**

In **verse 22**, we read that Jesus is made the surety of a “better” covenant. *Why* is the New Covenant a “better” covenant? There are three reasons. First of all, the New Covenant is “better”...

## I. Because the High Priest of the New Covenant was ordained by a divine oath (vv. 20-22).

As we have already seen in the first half of this chapter, Paul is showing his Hebrew audience why Jesus is superior to all the Levite priests of the Old Testament. He has already given us several reasons; and now, in **verses 20-22**, Paul gives us yet another reason why Christ is superior to the Old Testament priests. Christ is superior to the Levite priests because He **was ordained as High Priest with an oath: and, it was an oath that God Himself made!**

When the descendants of Aaron were consecrated as priests, oil was poured on their heads. This was God's way of setting them apart for service. (This is what David was talking about in **Psalm 133** when he said that unity between brethren is pleasant, "*like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his garments.*") However, there was no *oath* involved in their ordination.

In contrast, Christ *was* ordained as Priest with an oath; and this oath was sworn by God Himself. When did this declaration take place? Let's look again at **verse 21**, and see what Paul says. (**Read verse 21 again.**) Once again, Paul is referring back to that very important Scripture in the Psalms—**Psalm 110:4**. Let's look at that passage.

### Read Psalm 110:4.

Sometime in eternity past, before there was earth or man, God the Father ordained His Son to be our eternal High Priest. He did this by an oath; and *He swore this oath by His own name*. This sets Christ apart from any other priest who has ever lived. All the high priests of the Old Testament were merely *pictures* of Jesus Christ in His role as our High Priest; but Jesus is the *reality*. He is our true Priest, who has actually opened the way for us to reach the Father.

Now, let's look at **Hebrews 7:22** again. Paul says, "**By so much** (in other words, "by this great oath"), "**was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.**" Now, what, exactly, does that word "**surety**" mean? It means "guarantor." In a contract, a "guarantor" is someone who has the responsibility of *guaranteeing* that all the terms and conditions of the person whom he represents *will* be carried out. Likewise, Jesus is the "Guarantor" of the New Covenant that God has established. He is the one who sees to it that the Covenant is carried out.

Now, in this New Covenant, which party does Christ represent? **Does He represent God to man?** (Does He guarantee to Man that *God* will keep *His* promises?) Or, **does He represent Man to God?** (Does he guarantee to God that *man* will keep *his* end of the covenant?) The answer is: "Both!" Christ represents God to Man, *and* Man to God. He is able to do this because He is the God-Man. He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man!

Now, if Christ represent both God and man, this raises a question: "How can Christ be the guarantor of *man's* end of the Covenant?" It isn't hard to understand how He could be the Guarantor of *God's* end of the Covenant, since God never lies; and Christ, who *is* God, isn't going to lie, either. But how can man *keep* his end of the covenant? That's a good question, isn't it? Since man is a sinner, how can he be faithful? How is this possible?

Well, I have good news, brethren: it *is* possible for man to keep his end of the covenant! In order to understand how this is possible, let's compare the two covenants—the Old Covenant, and the New Covenant.

First, let's examine the **Old Covenant**. The *Old Covenant* was between God and the nation of Israel. God was the one who set the terms for the Covenant. The children of Israel did not contribute anything to it: it was entirely God's doing. *However*, there was a flaw in this covenant, which guaranteed that it would *not* last forever. The flaw was that it was *conditional*. The condition was, "If you break this covenant, Israel, then I will break *My* end of the covenant."

This is why the Mosaic Covenant *could not possibly have been permanent*. The Jewish people, like every other people on earth, are sinners: and as sinners, they broke the covenant again and again--both personally, and nationally. They could not keep it. They broke it before Moses had even come down from Mount Sinai, with the tablets of the Law fresh in His hands; and as the centuries unfolded, they *continually* broke it. That is why God finally broke His covenant with them, and scattered them to every end of the earth, after they had committed the ultimate rebellion of rejecting their own Messiah, and crucifying Him!

**Read Deuteronomy 28:14-20, 63-67.**

**Read Acts 7:51-53.**

We've looked at the Old Covenant; and the picture is grim. The Old Covenant could never have lasted, because it was conditioned upon the faithfulness of Israel; and Israel *could not* be faithful. That is what makes the Old Covenant completely different from the New Covenant. The New Covenant is *unconditional*—and permanent. If the New Covenant had been conditioned upon *our* faithfulness to God, then it would have been no more permanent than the Old Covenant was, because **we would not have been able to keep it!**

You see, this is the beauty of the New Covenant. Because God's Law has been kept and carried out perfectly by one *sinless Representative* of humanity, God is now able to pardon all who place their trust in *Him*. *Christ* is that sinless Representative of humanity, my friends! All who are "in Christ" are viewed by the Father as having the perfect righteousness of His Son. For Christ's sake, and for His sake alone, you and I can be saved!

This is what Paul meant when he called Jesus the "**surety**"—the "guarantor"—of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is "better" than the Old Covenant because it is "kept," on man's end, by a perfect Guarantor. The nation of Israel, under the Old Covenant, was not able to keep God's Law. But Jesus Christ, the Guarantor of the New Covenant, *was (and is)* able to keep God's Law. He, and He alone, is able to uphold man's end of the covenant in our stead; and because He is able to do this forevermore, the covenant is *permanent!*

Jesus Christ, the one perfect Member of the human family, paid the price for the sins of all mankind, and made it possible for full forgiveness of sins to be granted to every member of our race. I asked the question earlier, "How can sinful man *keep* his end of the covenant?" The answer is: He can't! That's why Christ, our Guarantor of the New Covenant, keeps it *for* us!

There is one, and *only* one, “condition,” on our part, for being accepted into the New Covenant—and that is that *we receive God’s Son* by faith. That’s it! If we try to offer our own good works to God, He will not accept them. *God*, and *only* God, set the terms for this covenant. In the New Covenant, God the Father says: “I am placing all the conditions of the Law upon My Son. Since man has broken my Law, my sinless Son must die and shed His blood as man’s Substitute, in order to pay for their sins. However, in order for men to be *received* into the New Covenant, they must stop insisting on their own ‘goodness,’ and receive My Son as their only payment for sin. They may accept or reject my offer; but they cannot alter this arrangement, or put anything else on the table. There is only one member of Mankind whom I will accept—and that is my Son, Jesus Christ. So, if *other* men are to be saved, *they must go to my Son for refuge, and be placed in Him.*”

John put it very simply in **1 John 5:12**: “*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*” To be in the New Covenant, and to receive forgiveness of sins, you must receive the *Guarantor* of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, why else is the New Testament “better”? The New Testament is a “better” testament...

## II. **Because the High Priest of the New Covenant is eternal (vv. 23-25).**

**(Read verses 23-25.)** In these verses, we see another reason why Jesus Christ is superior to the Levite priests of the Old Testament: namely, the Levite priests all *died*, and others had to succeed them in their office. In contrast, Jesus ever lives; and no one will ever succeed Him.

Now, didn’t *Christ* die, too? Yes, He did—in *His humanity*; but as God, He cannot die. As God, He was our High Priest from eternity, before He ever created Man; and He has never stopped being our High Priest. What about those three days when Jesus’ body was in the grave? Did He stop being our High Priest then? No. Why? Because as God, He never died. In His humanity, He died; but as God, He never died.

So, does this mean that Jesus’ deity is important to His office of High Priest, but His humanity is *not* important? Not on your life! In order to be our true High Priest, Jesus had to be both God and Man! As God, He is our eternal, never-dying Intercessor; but as Man, He actually *had to* die. His death was what made our redemption possible! He is both the sacrificial Lamb and the High Priest rolled up in one. Christ’s job wasn’t to sacrifice an animal as a *symbolic* sacrifice for our sins, as the Old Testament priests did; His job was to offer *Himself* as the *real* Sacrifice for our sins. **Jesus Christ is both our Priest and our Sacrifice!**

However, Jesus’ job didn’t end at the cross. In His humanity, He is now risen from the dead, and will never die again. He will never be replaced by another priest, as the Levite priests were. Because He lives forevermore as both God *and* Man, His priesthood is *unchangeable*.

**Revelation 1:12-18** [Note: In **verse 18** Jesus declares His *deity*. In **verse 18** He declares His *humanity*.]

Now, let’s go back to **Hebrews 7**, and read **verse 25** again. **(Read Hebrews 7:25.)** Isn’t this a great verse? Paul says that Jesus Christ saves to the “*uttermost*.” This means that there is

*no more saving to be done.* It's already done. It is complete. Christ did it all! Those who are saved are as saved as they can possibly be. There is no possibility of their ever being condemned to hell again!

By the way, this phrase "**to the uttermost**" (*eis to panteles*) is used only one other time in Scripture. It is the same expression that Luke used to describe a woman who had an infirmity.

### **Read Luke 13:11.**

In our King James Bible, we are told that this woman "**could in no wise** (literally, "not to the uttermost") **lift up herself.**" The Greek phrase that is used in this verse is *eis to panteles*—the exact words that are translated as "**to the uttermost.**" The idea here is that the woman could not lift herself "to the uttermost." Could she *partially* stand? Yes; *but she couldn't lift up herself completely.* She couldn't stand *upright.* She couldn't stand *erect.* Either you are *completely* lifting yourself up, and standing upright, or you are not standing upright at all. If you are hunched over, it doesn't matter *how severely* you are hunched over; you are not standing upright. Either you are standing completely erect, or not at all.

So it is with salvation. Either Jesus provided a *complete* salvation, or He didn't provide salvation at all. If you could *lose* your salvation by committing some sin, then salvation would not be complete. *It would mean that there are some sins that Jesus didn't pay for.* It would mean that salvation is *partially* the work of Christ, but *partially* the work of man.

Folks, to teach that a child of God can lose his salvation is to teach another gospel entirely! That is why we do not fellowship with, co-minister, or accept the baptism of churches that teach that you can lose your salvation! For us to do so would be to say, "If you don't believe that Jesus saves to the uttermost, that's O.K.!" No, it's not O.K.! Brethren, we need to get the truth of **Hebrews 7:25** into our hearts, and not waver from it! Salvation is eternal. Christ's ministry as our Priest is not one of *continual* sacrifice, or of *repeated* sacrifices. Any religion that says that Jesus is still being sacrificed in any way is a false religion. Just before Jesus died, He cried, "**It is finished!**" Jesus' sacrifice has been made completely, once for all.

Yet, if the Sacrifice has already been made once for all, what is Christ's High Priestly ministry for us *now*? It is one of *continual intercession* for us. His blood has already been offered up once for all; and it is *on the basis* of His shed blood for us that He now sits on the Mercy seat (the throne of God) and eternally intercedes for us.

When Christians sin, Christ, our high Priest, is there on the throne of God, with the nail scars still in His hand, as the proof that that our sins are paid in full; and it is on that basis that we remain His child, even though we've sinned. When we ask God to *cleanse* us from our sin, our High Priest is there to ensure that we are brought back into unhindered fellowship with the Father; and it is all because of His shed blood! Christ's redeeming work is done; and because it is done, Christ is able to do His *interceding* work for us.

Now, there is a third reason why the New Testament is a "better" testament. The New Testament is "better"...

### III. Because the High Priest of the New Covenant is sinless (vv. 26-28).

(Read verses 26-27.) In these verses, we see one more reason why Jesus is “better” than the priests of the Old Testament. Namely, the priests of the Old Testament were all *sinner*s: but Jesus Christ is “*holy, harmless, undefiled,*” and “*separate from sinners.*”

By the way, when Paul said that Christ is “*separate from sinners,*” he doesn’t mean that Christ didn’t *associate* with sinners. It doesn’t mean that He shunned them, and didn’t speak to them. On the contrary, He spent *much* time with them, because He wanted to save them. (This is why the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a “*friend of publicans and sinners.*”) Let’s look at a passage in **Luke**, and see how Christ acted in the presence of sinners.

#### Read Luke 5:27-32.

Do you see any indication in these verses that Jesus was *partaking of* the publicans’ evil deeds? Of course not! Jesus wasn’t sitting down with “the lads” and “having a pint.” He wasn’t hanging out in a local bar. Rather, He was in a publican’s house, at his personal invitation. He wasn’t using “colourful language” and talking about unholy things in order to fit in with sinners, and to make himself “relevant” to the culture. He wasn’t hanging around them in order to make Himself appear to be “inclusive” and “tolerant.” On the contrary, He hung around them in order to call them to *repentance*. *Their* behaviour was modified by *His* presence! We know that at least one of them (the man who invited Jesus to this feast) *got saved* because Jesus sought him out, and called him to salvation. Levi the publican left all, and followed Jesus. He was re-named *Matthew*, and became one of Jesus’ 12 Apostles!

Jesus was *in the company of* sinners; but he did not go into evil places, nor partake of evil deeds. He was *with* sinners, yet *separate* from sinners. Jesus once asked the Pharisees, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” In other words, “Who can point out even one sin that I have committed?” They couldn’t point out even one! All they could do was try to smear Him as a man who “eats with sinners.” Of course, they ignored the fact that most of the “sinners” with whom Jesus hung out ended up repenting of their sins, and becoming completely different people!

By the way, this is why the Pharisees couldn’t be saved. This is why Jesus said to them, “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*” The problem wasn’t that salvation was *unavailable* to them; the problem was that they were too proud to receive it. They viewed themselves as righteous, and not as sinners in need of repentance. Tragically, they have all eternity, in the torment of hell, to rue their error. My friend, if *you* think you are “O.K.” with God because you are a “good person,” you are just like those Pharisees. You are failing to realise that Jesus paid your death penalty *for you* because you are unrighteous. You must confess to God that you are a sinner, and that you need Christ’s righteousness to cover you. If you have never done this, I urge you to do so today!

Jesus was *in* the world; but He was not *of* the world. He is the perfect Example of how believers should relate to the unsaved around them. Now, Paul does make it clear that if someone who claims to be a *brother in Christ*, and who has been a member of the church, is now living in open, gross, unrepentant sin, Christians should *not* allow him to remain in the church membership, or keep close company with them, or even eat with them, until he repents

of his sin, and gets right with God, and with the church body. However, those who *clearly aren't* born-again Christians, and who are living in gross sin, should be sought after, and befriended, so that they may be won to Christ. Fanny Crosby, the author of "To God Be the Glory," and some 8,000 other hymns, was a virtual celebrity in the Christian world of her day. Yet, this little old blind lady went down into the slums of New York, where no "respectable" person would go, and sought after the drunks and the prostitutes, and told them the good news that a Saviour had died to wash away their sins. She called the drunks to whom she ministered at the Bowery Mission "my boys." Many of those "boys" are in Heaven today because that little old blind lady didn't fancy herself too "good" to eat with them!

### **Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-10.**

Now, let's read **verse 27 again.** (**Read Hebrews 7:27.**) In this verse, Paul says that because Christ is sinless, He doesn't need to offer a sacrifice to cover His own sins, as the high priests did on the Day of Atonement. *Furthermore*, because He is eternal, His offering of Himself for our sins is *eternally effective*. He doesn't need to offer up daily sacrifices for our sins. He has made only *one* sacrifice, for all time.

The high priest of the Old Testament sacrificed a goat for the sins of the whole nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement, and a bullock for the sins of himself and his family. However, that certainly wasn't the extent of it! *Every single day*, all year 'round, the high priest offered sin and trespass offerings for the sins of the people, *and for his own sins*. God said, "***If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering.***" In contrast, Christ did not need to make any sacrifice for His own sins, because He *has* no sin; and the sacrifice that He made for *our* sins was made by only *one* offering, *forever*. That one offering on the cross of Calvary is sufficient to cover *all* our sins!

Now, let's look at **verse 28** once last time. (**Read Hebrews 7:28 again.**) Paul sums up this chapter by reminding us that in the Old Covenant, God made provision for the priests' "***infirmity.***" The priests had "***infirmity***" both in the *spiritual* sense (in that they were sinners), and in the physical sense (in that they all died). In stark contrast, Christ, in His New Covenant, needs no provision for infirmity, because He is our *eternal* High Priest, who cannot die. Furthermore, Paul says that the "***word of the oath***" (in other words, Christ's Melchisedec Priesthood, which the Father swore to Him by an oath) has been in place "***since*** (or, "after") ***the Law.***" What Paul is saying is that Christ was already High Priest in Old Testament times, after the Law was given on Mount Sinai. Even while the high priests were offering sacrifices of animals on the altar, Christ was seated in Heaven as the *true* High Priest of Israel! Christ didn't suddenly become High Priest when He died on the cross: He was *already* High Priest before He came into this world! In Old Testament times, Christ was *already* interceding for His people on the basis of the sacrifice that He *would* make for them in the future. When He entered our world, He performed His high priestly duty of dying for our sins, and rising again; and now He is seated in Heaven, as our Advocate forever more!

**Conclusion:** The world kicks around the name of Jesus in the same way that they would kick around a football in a mucky back alley. Why is it that so many people who claim to be "Christians" use Jesus' name in this way? Because they do not know Jesus. If they truly knew Him, they would cherish His name. Perhaps you don't understand everything we've talked about today; but maybe it has occurred to

you this morning that you have never truly placed your trust in Jesus to save you. If so, you've heard the Gospel presented clearly today. Won't you repent and believe on Jesus while He is calling you?

For those of you who are saved, this message has been one of comfort. Your salvation is secure, because it has been secured by the "Guarantor of the New Covenant," Jesus Christ. He loves you, and will never fail you. Yet, doesn't this prompt you to love and serve Him more? Is it unreasonable to pour out your life in service to the One who gave His life for you? Let Him have His way in your heart today!