

# A HIGHER COVENANT

## GOLDEN TEXT

“This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (Hebrews 8:10).

## USEFUL PRACTICE

The New Covenant is in everything superior to the Old Covenant because it is based on higher promises.

## SCRIPTURE READING

### Hebrews 8:1-10

1- Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

2 - and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.

3 - Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer.

4 - If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

5 - They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

6 - But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

7 - For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place

would have been sought for another.

8- But God found fault with the people and said: “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

9 - It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

10 - This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

## **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

To explain the superiority of the New Covenant inaugurated by Christ.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

**I. To explain** the aspects of the superiority of the New Covenant: its size, nature and importance;

**II. To emphasize** the superiority of the New Covenant in its positional, functional, and cultic aspects;

**III. To show** that the promise of the New Covenant is of an inner and spiritual nature; of an individual and universal nature; as well as relational nature.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter eight of the Letter to the Hebrews presents a higher covenant; a higher sanctuary and also a high priest, Christ Jesus, with an equally higher ministry. The ancient earthly sanctuary, with its complex ritual system, had given way to a new sanctuary, the heavenly one, where Jesus himself officiates as High Priest. But He is not only a High Priest. He is the high priest-king, who is seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for His people. The New Covenant made the old one obsolete because it was of a spiritual, inner nature and for being based on higher promises.

### **I - A HIGHER SANCTUARY**

**1. That belongs to a higher dimension.** Both Judaism and Christianity were familiar with the figure of the tabernacle of Moses. In the book of Exodus are the instructions given by God to Moses for the building of the Sanctuary (Exodus 25:1-9). The recommendations given to Moses, as set forth in the sacred record, were intended to build a sanctuary, where God would dwell with them (Exodus 25:8). This was therefore the earthly purpose of the moving tabernacle, and it was in this tabernacle that both the priests and the high priest exercised their ministries. However, it was into the heavenly sanctuary that Christ came to officiate as High Priest on our behalf. For the writer to the Hebrews, this tabernacle is heaven itself, which is called the "true Tabernacle" because it belongs to the heavenly dimension.

**2. That has a higher nature.** The earthly sanctuary, though constructed with precious objects and metals, was not the true tabernacle, but just a model of the true one. In fact, the earthly tabernacle was a type that points to the heavenly sanctuary: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (Heb. 8: 5). It was the visible side of an invisible reality. Invisible, but real! The earthly sanctuary was by nature temporal, a picture of the true sanctuary, which is spiritual and eternal. It was in this Most Holy Place that Jesus became "a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle." (Heb. 8:2).

**3. That is highly important.** It is possible for us to see the relevance of the heavenly tabernacle when we contrast it with the earthly one. One author highlights three great important things about the earthly tabernacle. At first, the tabernacle provided the necessary conditions for maintaining fellowship in the relationship with God. In the heavenly tabernacle this condition is fully met. Secondly, the tabernacle was the guarantee of God's presence in the midst of his people. This fact makes the tabernacle consistent in every detail with its divine nature, that is, unity and holiness. God requires a sanctuary; the holy God requires a holy people (Lev. 19:2). The fullness of the Divinity lives in the heavenly tabernacle. Thirdly, the tabernacle revealed the perfection and harmony of the Lord's character seen in its architecture, such as the gradations in metals and materials, the degrees of holiness displayed in the court, the holy place and the holy of holies. But all this was only a "shadow" of the perfection and harmony of the heavenly tabernacle.

## **II - A HIGHER MINISTRY**

**1. In the positional aspect.** The author shows through his arguments that Jesus, in fact, must be seen as true high priest-king. It has already been pointed out in previous lessons that in the Old Covenant no king

exercised the function of a king-priest legitimately. Two biblical examples of kings who tried to act as priests, but who failed, are those of Saul and Uzziah. Jesus is the only High Priest-King who met the requirements of the biblical prophecy of Psalm 110:4. Because he was of a higher order, the order of Melchizedek, He is not subject to the demands of the Levitical system. And because he was a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek he is not limited to an earthly tabernacle either. His sanctuary, where He officiated, is divine, as well as greater and better in two other aspects.

**2. In the functional aspect.** In the Old Covenant, the priests entered the tabernacle to offer their offerings and sacrifices many times, and the high priest once a year (Heb. 8:3). Christ, like the Aaronic priestly system, should also have an offering to offer. However, there are two things that differentiate the priesthood of Christ from that of the Old Covenant: He offered himself as sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7), and this, unlike the Levitical sacrifice, is no longer repeated, it was made once and for all. Christ, therefore, no longer offers sacrifice in heaven repeatedly as did the Levitical priests. Now, He intercedes for all those who call on Him.

**3. In a cultural aspect.** The author writes from the perspective that the Levitical worshiping continued in full operation. There were still in his day priests who offered sacrifices and offerings according to the law (Heb. 8:4). The priestly activity, together with the other priestly functions, was strictly related to worshiping. In this respect, the priesthood of Christ was superior because its worshiping activity was higher in everything, as it was carried out in the heavenly sanctuary.

### **III - A HIGHER PROMISE**

**1. Of an inner and spiritual nature.** Under the Old Covenant, God had called the Israelites to be his people (Exodus 19:5, 6). This covenant was written on stone tablets, thus revealing its outward side. In this regard, the law acted from the inside out (Heb. 8:9). As the people of God failed to fulfill the legal requirements of the Old Covenant, God promised to make a new one. In this New Covenant, the divine law would no longer be written on stone tablets, but on the heart. No longer from the outside, but from within (Hebrews 8:10).

**2. Of an individual and universal nature.** The Old Covenant is also contrasted with the new one as to its scope. In the Old Covenant, not everyone knew the Lord, which was reserved only for the priest, the scribe, and those who specialized in minutiae of the Law. In Jesus' day, it was common to find "teachers of the law" who were often consulted

about the details of the Torah. However, in the New Covenant, the Lord promised "For all shall know Me" (Hebrews 8:11). In the New Covenant, the Lord's knowledge is available to all believers, not just a privileged class.

**3. Of a relational nature.** The relational aspect is highlighted in the quotation from this verse: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (v.12). The New Covenant is a covenant of mercy, grace, and forgiveness. One author points out that the ancient system used to separate religion from life. Man could be ceremonially upright and wicked in heart, or upright in heart and ceremonially wrong. In the New Covenant, instead of an "annual reminder of sins" (Heb. 10: 3 - NIV), as in the Old Covenant, God no longer remembers the sins of his people (Heb. 10:17).

## **CONCLUSION**

The author had already shown the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus over the Aaronic and Levitical one when he places it as belonging to the order of Melchizedek. Now he shows that this high priest has a higher ministry because he ministers in a higher sanctuary and is the guarantor of a higher covenant. Belonging to this New Covenant, believers enjoy higher promises. That is why we glorify God for these blessings.