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THE LOOKOUT

OCTOBER 2021

Unit: HEBREWS (Part 2)

Theme: HIGH PRIEST

Overview: Sooner or later in life we need someone to represent us. When purchasing a home, we might need a Realtor. When executing a will, we might need a lawyer. When making arrangements for a funeral, we might need a funeral director. The Bible calls the representative between God and people a priest. In this unit students will learn of the character, calling, office, covenant, and sacrifice of Jesus our high priest.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 24, 2021

LESSON AIM: **Learn the lessons of
the Old Covenant in order
to be faithful under the New.**

UNIT: Hebrews (Part 2)

THEME: High Priest

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 8:1–9:10

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Exodus 25:1-9; 26:31-35; Jeremiah 31:31-34;
1 Peter 2:1-10

HIGH PRIEST IN A NEW COVENANT

BY MARK SCOTT

Why is so much learning actually relearning? God must know our propensity for amnesia. (Can you say *Communion*?) Don DeWalt would tell his students, "To be heard you must tell old things in new ways or new things in old ways." Fred Craddock suggested that one cannot realize the "shock" of recognition until there is the "nod" of recognition.

How does the new high priest (Jesus) connect with the Old Covenant? And how does the New Covenant connect with the priest after the order of Melchizedek? This text is at the heart of the Hebrew writer's argument about how the high priesthood of Jesus interfaces with the old and New Covenants.

The New Above the Old

Hebrews 8:1-6

A thin veil separates this world from the one above us where God dwells. (Sounds platonic, does it not, that things here correspond to things in the next world?) When saints worship in corporate assembly here, be advised that worship at another level is taking place above (Revelation 4-5).

The Israelites had their tabernacle in the wilderness. In many ways the tabernacle was a template of heaven and an image or metaphor of the church. But the *sanctuary* where Jesus dwells now is *superior* and above the old one. If a person had a choice of which tabernacle in which to dwell, that person should choose the better one above. Priests in the old tabernacle stood up to serve. But Jesus *sat down* at God's right hand. The right hand was the seat of honor, and sitting down meant Jesus' full work on earth was complete. Bezalel and Oholiab built the earthly tabernacle (Exodus 31:1-11), but *the Lord* built the heavenly one.

Priests went in and out of the old tabernacle sacrificing and serving in just the prescribed way. But that tabernacle was only a *copy* (pattern) and *shadow* of the one above. Jesus' priesthood was superior to the former priesthood in the Old Covenant because his was *established on better promises*. The new is above the old.

The New Different than the Old

Hebrews 8:7-13

While the law itself was holy and good (Romans 7:12), it was incomplete in bringing people to God due to the weakness of humanity's flesh (the devil's foothold). The fault of the old priesthood and covenant was not

with them but with the people who attempted to live by them. "*God found fault with the people.*"

One of the longer quotes from the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34) was used to contrast the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. The significance of this quote cannot be overstated. This passage was clearly a high-water mark of the Old Testament. In striving to give hope to the exiled people, Jeremiah predicted a time when the New Covenant would overtake the Old Covenant. We know this quote speaks of the messianic age because Jeremiah 31:15 was quoted in Matthew 2:18 when Jesus came.

As the *Sesame Street* song says, "One of these things is not like the other." The Old Covenant was made with old Israel (Judah). The New Covenant was made with the new Israel (church?). The Old Covenant brought God's people out of Egypt. The New Covenant brought God's people out of sin. The Old Covenant witnessed God's people being unfaithful. The New Covenant witnessed God's people obeying God from their hearts. Beyond the comparisons, the New Covenant would be written in the minds and on the hearts of God's people as opposed to tablets of stone (Ezekiel 36:26-27). The New Covenant would not be by birth but by new birth. Finally, the New Covenant would not just push sins back (Acts 17:30; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 10:3), it would completely forgive sins. The old was almost gone (it was about A.D. 70). It was time for the new.

The New Within the Old

Hebrews 9:1-10

The Hebrew writer looked back at the Old Covenant with his new "Christian" lens. He saw the new within the old. It was called typology. The first part of the text talked about the furniture and contents in the tabernacle (vv. 1-5). The second part of the text talked about the priests' work in the tabernacle (vv. 6-10).

While connecting the predictions (types) with the fulfillments (antitypes) is not a pure science, we do see things like the light of the gospel, Communion, prayer, provision, promise, and forgiveness (themes in the New Testament) in the old tabernacle. We also see the full and complete work of Christ by shedding his blood and opening up the way to God in the old observance of the Day of Atonement. The old must give way to the new, but for those who have eyes to see, the new is actually within the old. ■

APPLICATION

WHAT'S NEW? (AND WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?)

BY DAVID FAUST

I got a new cell phone the other day—under protest. My old phone worked fine. It just didn't have enough capacity. When I tried to add another photo, a stern warning appeared: "You are DANGEROUSLY short on space." That message seemed a little over-the-top, as if the device was ready to explode.

Grudgingly I drove to the phone store where an employee the age of my grandkids asked, "How old is this phone?"

"About five years," I said.

"That's really old," he replied, shaking his head. "It's definitely time to replace it."

"But I'm used to it," I protested. "Just when I finally learn how to use a computer program or a cell phone, why is it always time for an upgrade and everything changes?"

The young man looked perplexed. I continued, "My old phone has the same fantasy football app I've used for five seasons, and I don't want to lose my stats. Plus, I'm familiar with this phone's quirks, like when I'm driving and the GPS suddenly starts giving directions in Spanish. That's funny!"

The sales rep didn't laugh, but he answered my questions politely. As we finished, he handed me a new phone and said, "Take this home and play with it for a while. You'll get used to it."

I thanked him for his help, but in my heart I grumbled, *I don't want to play with a new phone. I just want one that works!*

Adapting to Change

Do you welcome change or resist it? Change isn't always an upgrade. Some things never change, like the Lord himself, and the Scriptures, and basic human needs. But today we face a dizzying array of cultural changes—with shifts occurring not only in technology and style, but in substantive matters like worldviews, ethics, and how to understand the Bible.

When I coach younger leaders, I encourage them to consider several factors when implementing change:

- *The purpose of change.* What is the "why"? Is the proposed change biblical and missional? Does it have the support of wise, trusted advisers and influencers?
- *The price of change.* Are you prepared for what it will cost in time, work, and money to implement this change?
- *The patience change requires.* Don't expect others to immediately embrace a new idea you have been considering for months. Take time to answer questions, think through the pros and cons, and explain the rationale behind proposed changes.
- *The people who change.* Spiritual growth and healthy relationships matter more than flashy programs. Impulsive, herky-jerky leaders make church members feel like carsick passengers in the back seat speeding down a winding road. If God has trusted you with the steering wheel, care well for the passengers traveling with you.

Followers of Christ must embrace positive change because, although God himself doesn't change, he excels at making things new. When the old Mosaic covenant became "obsolete and outdated," the Lord replaced it with a New Covenant of grace and truth "established on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6, 13). "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We're headed for a new heaven and a new earth, where God will say, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5).

I don't think we will need cell phones in heaven, but if we do, I'm sure they will have plenty of capacity.

Personal Challenge: What is your personal attitude toward change? Rate yourself on a scale of 1 ("I hate change and resist it stubbornly") to 10 ("I love change and adapt to it quickly"). What changes do you sense the Lord nudging you to embrace? How can you be a force for positive change in your church? What cultural changes ought to be resisted? ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How were you able to help someone see their need to put their faith in Jesus alone last week?
2. How did you see God respond to your needs last week?

Ask two people to read aloud **Hebrews 8:1–9:10** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to provide a concise summary of the passage.

3. What do you learn about the Old Covenant as compared to the New Covenant in this passage?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - In what ways are some of the things we experience on earth merely copies of or patterns of the things we will experience in heaven?
 - How are they different?
 - How has Jeremiah's prophecy (8:8-12; from Jeremiah 31:31-34) come true?
 - In what ways is the New Covenant more personal, internal, and relational than the Old?
5. What do you learn about Jesus and his present ministry from this passage?
6. What do you learn about humanity?
7. What do you learn from this passage about the nature of obeying God under the New Covenant?
8. Jesus, our high priest, came as a servant (8:2; cf., Mark 10:45) and he has called us as his followers to serve (Mark 9:35; 10:43). In what specific way will you seek to serve others this week?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenges are you facing this upcoming week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Hebrews 9:11-28**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■