

God's Glory in God's Word

Hebrews Part 2 – Christ is Better

The overall theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the superiority of Christ. In his exposition of the letter, A.W. Pink lists seven ways in which Christ and his ministry are superior to what came before:

1. Superiority over the prophets (1:1-3)
2. Superiority over the angels (1:4 – 2:18)
3. Superiority over Moses (3:1-19)
4. Superiority over Joshua (4:1-13)
5. Superiority over Aaron (5:14 – 7:18)
6. Superiority of the New Covenant over the Old (7:19 – 10:19)
7. Superiority over the OT saints (11:1 – 12:3)

In week 1, we covered the first two ways in which Christ is superior. Today, we will consider the other ways mentioned above.

Superior to Moses

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses--as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (Heb 3:1-6)

Superior to Joshua

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest," although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Heb 4:1-11)

Superior to Aaron (i.e. the Aaronic priesthood)

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and

exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. (Heb 7:23-28)

*For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as **the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises**. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. (Heb 8:3-7)*

Superior to the Old Covenant

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:7-13)

From Chapter 9, we see the contrast between the Old and New covenants:

Old

1. An earthly place of holiness
2. A second curtain separates the people from God
3. Only the high priest may enter the Holy of Holies – and only once per year – to offer sacrifices for himself and the people.
4. Gifts and sacrifices that are offered cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper.

New

1. Entrance through a perfect tent (not of this creation).

2. Entered the holy place by means of his own blood – “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”
3. Once for all sacrifice

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. (Mat 27:50-51)

Superior to the OT Saints

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. (Heb 11:1-2)

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Heb 11:13-16)

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Heb 11:39-40)

Next Week: Warnings from, and a Christian response to, Hebrews