

Our Better Hope, Our Better Worship

Hebrews 7:11–19

Resurrection Sunday 2017

© 2017 Daniel R. Hyde

EVERY Resurrection Sunday I focus the message of the first service on an apologetic and evangelistic proclamation of Jesus' resurrection since we have many visitors and since this helps equip you to witness to family and friends. But since those who visit typically leave after our first service, here in our second service I try to focus attention on some practical benefit of Jesus Christ's resurrection for us as believers. Since I was teaching all week on liturgies and public worship, I thought I'd focus our hearts and minds for a few moments on the benefit of Jesus' resurrection for our worship. To do that we turn to one of my favorite books of the Bible: Hebrews. In Hebrews 7:11–19 we learn that Jesus' resurrection (**the power of an indestructible life**) gives us a **better hope** than even the Old Testament priests had because it brings us **near to God**. Let's listen in to what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us today.

The Big “Argument” of Hebrews: Jesus is Better

First, what's *the big “argument” of Hebrews*? Simply put, *Jesus is better*. Try to imagine yourself being Jewish to feel the power of this argument. We talk a lot in our

multi-cultural community about walking in someone else's shoes as we listen and try to understand what life is like for them. Try to do that now.

As you read through the book you begin to see that *he is better than the temple*. The tabernacle was the center of Israelite worship while they were in the wilderness and early on as they entered the Promised Land. Then it was replaced by the permanent building of the temple. And the Lord promised to be present among his people in it as his house. But these were mere copies of their reality in heaven, which came down with Jesus Christ, God in the flesh!

Hebrews also says of Jesus that *he is better than the priesthood*. The priests were the servants in the tabernacle and temple whose job was to offer sacrifice for their own sins and the people's and to pray for the people. But they only served in the earthly copy and offered animal sacrifices that could never take away sins. All they did was merely a picture of a greater reality to come when Jesus, the sinless priest who needed no sacrifice for himself offered himself once and for all for sinners! And so *he is better than the sacrifices*.

Brothers and sisters, what's *the big "argument" of Hebrews* again? *Jesus is better*.

The "Argument" of Hebrews 4:16–8:13: Jesus is Better than the Priesthood

Second, what's *the "argument" of Hebrews 4:16–8:13*, which is the overall context of our text this afternoon? *Jesus is better than the priesthood*. Notice the flow of our text.

First, *the Levitical priesthood could not give worshippers perfection*, and by perfection he means the removal of sin to make us acceptable and approachable to God. He says that in verse 11: **Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek?** He's saying, "God's own law commanded priests in the line of Aaron, but if they were able to give us all we need in our standing with God, why does God also speak in his word about another line of priests in the person of Melchizedek?" In fact, as verse 14 says **our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.** Judah was the line of kings; Levi was the line of priests. So how can Jesus be better than the priesthood?

Look at verse 15: **This becomes more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek.** And then the second thing he does is to make a *contrast between the Levitical priesthood, which was based on the law versus the Melchizedekian priesthood, which was based on the gospel.* Verse 16 speaks of this other priest becoming one **not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent**, as the law required, but on the basis of the gospel; and what is that gospel basis? **The power of an indestructible life.** What's that? Jesus resurrection!

Brother and sisters, what's *the "argument" of Hebrews 4:16–8:13? Jesus is better than the priesthood.*

Then comes the big *therefore*...

The Benefit of this for Us: Our Better Hope, Our Better Worship

What's *the benefit of this for us? Our better hope, our better worship*. Look at verses 18-19. **On the one hand, a former commandment** about Levitical lineage **is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect)**—remember, the **perfection** of making us acceptable and approachable to God was not **attainable through** it.

But—and here's the big payoff for us—**on the other hand, a better hope is introduced**. What's this **hope**? That we actually have been made perfect, that is, acceptable to God and approachable to God through Jesus' resurrection! And that's why he concludes saying it is **through** [this hope of Jesus' resurrection] that **we draw near to God**.

As we gather for worship not just on Resurrection Sunday, but every Sunday, all of us are able to **draw near to God** in a way that not even the high priest could! He alone could come, but only once a year; we get to at all times! He had to be clothed in the right garments; we are clothed in Christ! He entered an earthly sanctuary; we enter heaven! He had to wear a rope around his waist with bells in case he died; he come with hope, the certain confidence that we are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ's indestructible life! Amen.