

The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה
אַחֲ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמְצָה
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



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Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)**

Outline of Hebrews

IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)

- A. Jesus Is a Compassionate But Sinless High Priest (4:14-16)
- B. Jesus Was Appointed By God to Be Our High Priest (5:1-10)
- C. Jesus Is Better – Don't Apostatize (5:11-6:20)
- D. Jesus Is a Priest After the Order of Melchizedek (7:1-28)
- E. The New Covenant Mediated By Jesus Is Better than the Old Covenant (8:1-13)
- F. Jesus' Sacrifice Is Better Than the Temple Sacrifices (9:1-10:18)

Outline of Hebrews

D. The New Covenant Mediated By Jesus Is Better than the Old Covenant (8:1-13)

1. Jesus' Heavenly Priesthood Shows He Is Mediator of a Better Covenant (8:1-6)
2. Prophecy of New Covenant Shows Weakness of the Old (8:7-13)

Jesus' Heavenly Priesthood Shows He Is Mediator of a Better Covenant (8:1-6)

¹ Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ² a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

³ For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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 [Ex. 25:40]."⁶ 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.

Jesus' Heavenly Priesthood Shows He Is Mediator of a Better Covenant (8:1-6)

- Having established the superiority of the high priesthood of Christ (in chapters 5-7), our author now proceeds to relate his high priesthood to the themes of **covenant**, **sanctuary**, and **sacrifice** – themes that were very much bound up in the Old Testament Levitical priesthood.
- He will show us that just as the **Levitical** priesthood is replaced by a priesthood after the order of **Melchizedek**, so **also**:
 - The **old covenant** is replaced by a **new covenant**
 - The **earthly sanctuary** is replaced by a **heavenly one**
 - Sacrifices which were but **temporary tokens** are replaced by a **once for all sacrifice** that is **truly effective**.
- Furthermore, we have a great high priest who is enthroned at the right hand of God, who discharges his ministry, not in an earthly shrine, but in the God's heavenly dwelling-place, a tabernacle made, not by human hands, but by the **Lord**.

¹ Now the point in what we are saying is this: **we have such a high priest**, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

- The point of what the author has been saying up to this point is now set forth for his readers: “**we have such a high priest**”
- What the author means by this is that **Jesus** matches the description of the Melchizedekian priest that the author has laid out up to this point:
 - He is the ever-living one
 - The one who always did the will of God
 - The one whose sacrifice accomplished forgiveness of sins
- The **oath** and **promise** of Psalm 110:4 find their **fulfillment** in Jesus: *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

¹ Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

- In addition, what is written a few verses earlier in Psalm 110:1 **also** points to Jesus: *A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”*
- Jesus is David's Lord and sits at the right hand of God until his enemies are made his footstool.
- Jesus is the **reigning** and **conquering** priest-king.

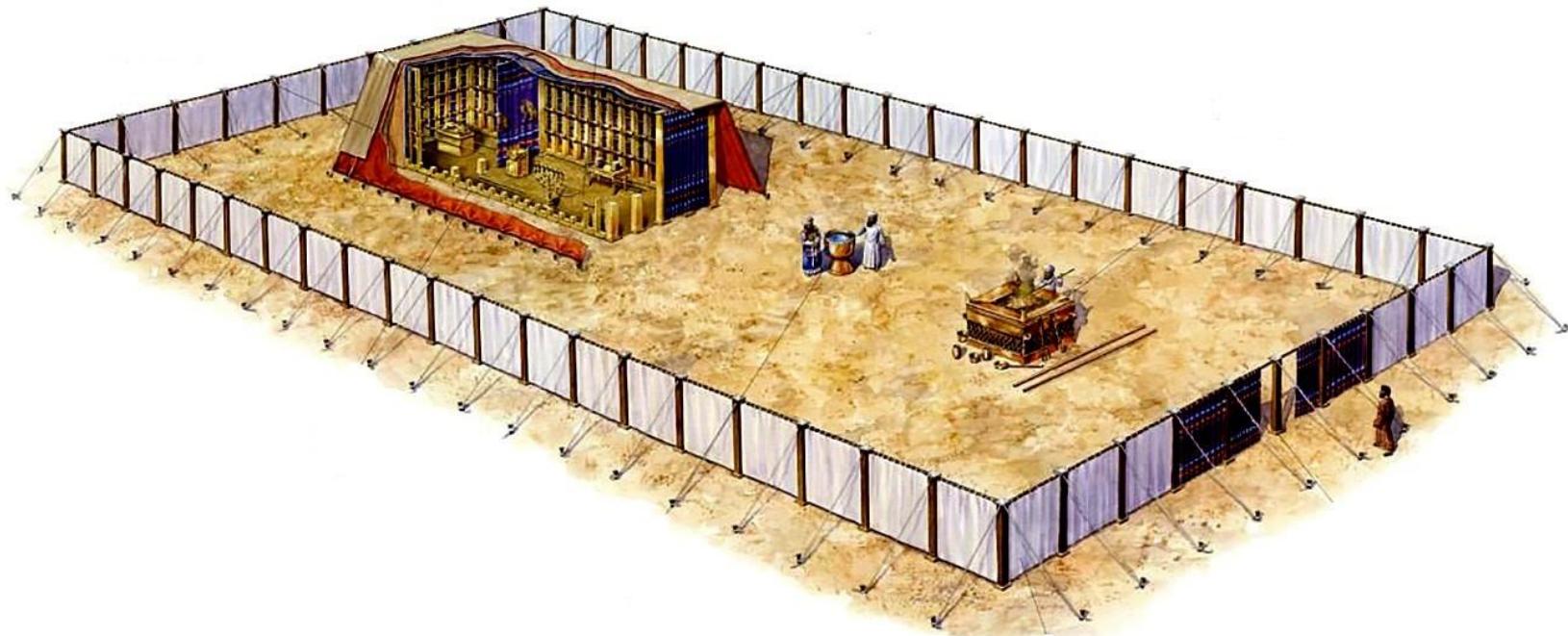
¹ Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

- The words “*Majesty in heaven*” point to God’s awesomeness and his **transcendence**.
- *God is both transcendent over and immanent in, His world. These nineteenth-century words express the thought that on the one hand God is distinct from His world and does not need it. While on the other hand, He permeates the world in sustaining creative power, shaping and steering it in a way that keeps it on its planned course.* (S. R. Holmes, *God*, Martin Davie, ed., *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, 2016)
- Since Jesus sits at the **right hand** of one who is so great, he **also** exercises **transcendent power**.

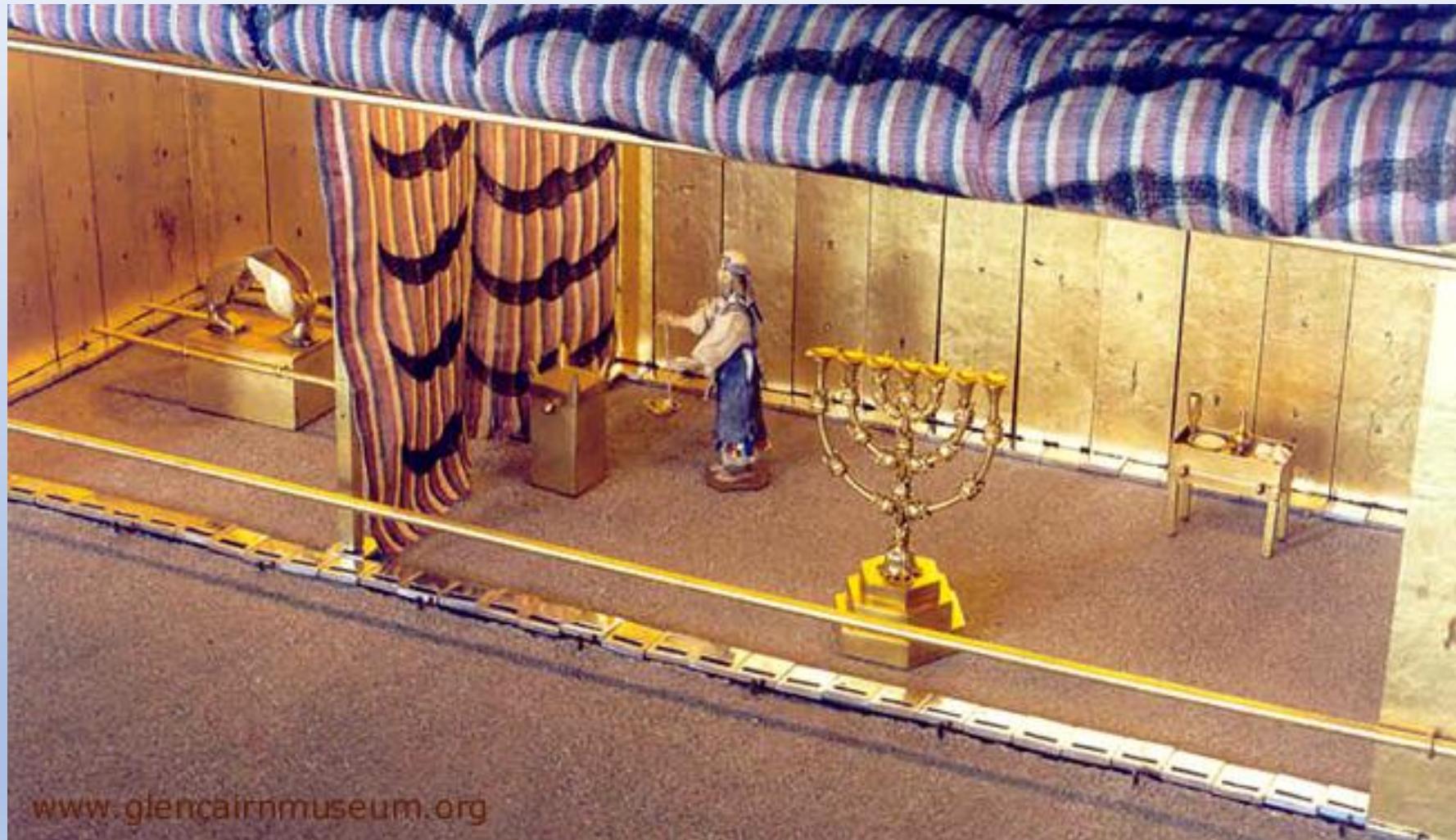
² *a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.*

- Jesus serves as “*a minister in the holy places*”, that is, in the **sanctuary** or dwelling place of God (cf. Heb 9:2, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11).
- God’s sanctuary where Jesus serves is also described here as “*the true tent*.” The “*true tent*” is **not earthly** but **heavenly**.
- It is called the “*true tent*” because the “*tent*” (or tabernacle) set up by the Israelites in the Old Testament **pointed forward** to this **heavenly** tabernacle that Jesus would enter after his death and resurrection.
- By calling the heavenly tabernacle “*the true tent*” it is **not** saying that the earthly tabernacle set up by the Israelites was a **false tabernacle**, but that it was **temporary** and pointed to something **greater**.

The Jewish Tabernacle

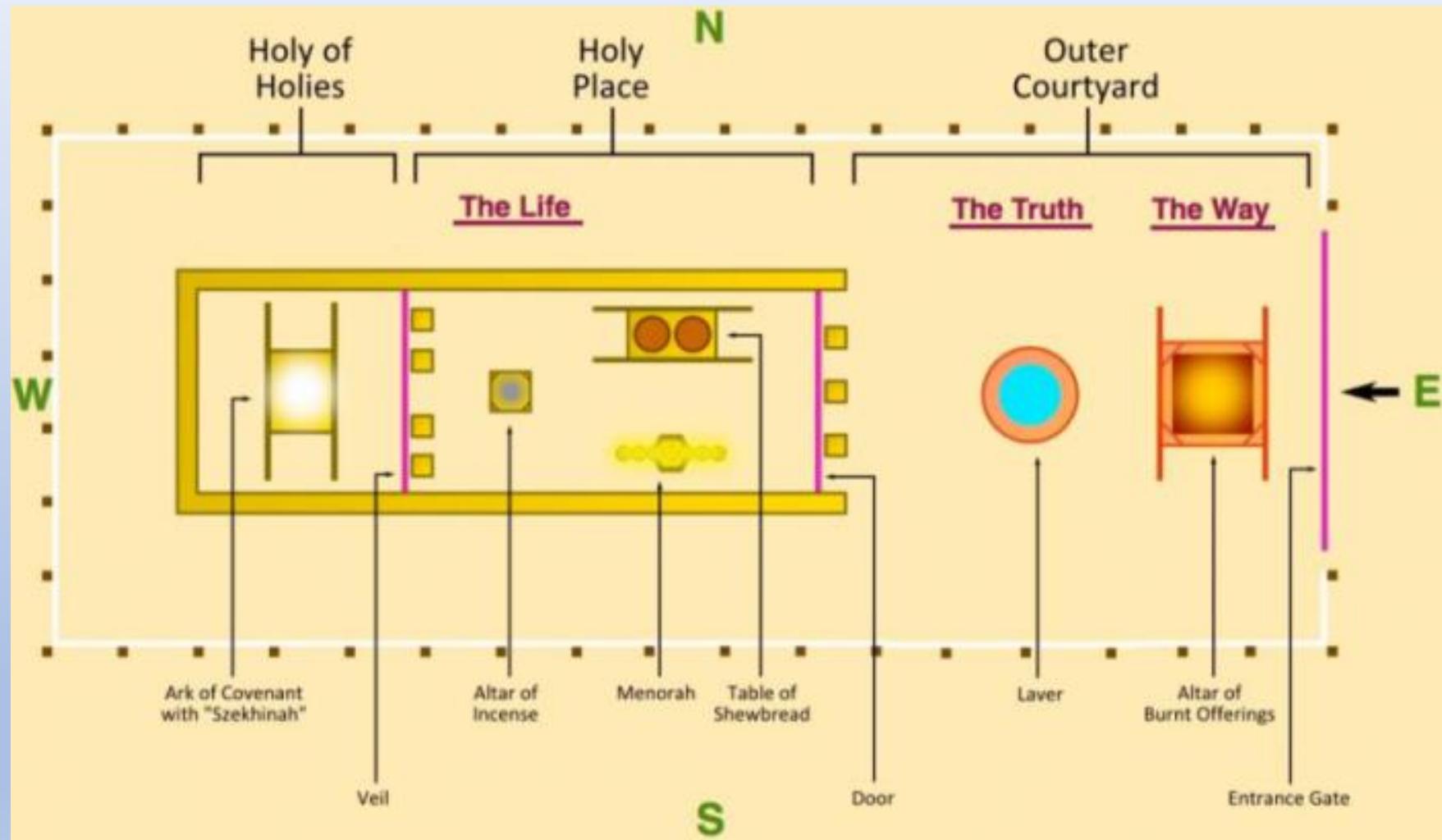


The Jewish Tabernacle



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The Jewish Tabernacle



² *a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.*

- When the author says the Lord “*set up*” the ***true*** tent, he is not suggesting there is a ***literal*** tent in heaven.
- The “***true tent***” refers to the place where God dwells and rules.
- Jesus is therefore the ***greatest*** priest since he dwells in ***God’s presence*** and ministers in the ***heavenly realm*** where God dwells.

³ *For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.*

- The author has already said in Heb 5:1 what he says again here – that high priests are appointed “*to offer gifts and sacrifices*”.
- “*For*” links the argument here to what was said previously – as Christ ministers in the “*true*” tabernacle the author finds it “*necessary*” that Christ have “*something to offer*” because “*to offer gifts and sacrifices*” is the *essence* of being a high priest.
- But Christ’s offering is *not* an unending series of offerings like those offered by the Levitical priests, instead his offering is “*something*” offered at a point of time (aorist tense in the Greek) “*once for all*” (cf. Heb 7:27).
- The *nature* of Christ’s offering, though not *explicitly* spelled out here, has already been mentioned in Heb 7:27 (*he offered up himself*), and will be discussed further in Heb 9:14.

⁴ 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.

- That Jesus' high-priestly ministry must be exercised in the **heavenly sanctuary** is further shown by the fact that he would **not be authorized** to exercise it in the earthly sanctuary.
- In the earthly sanctuary, the high priesthood was confined to **one family**; and far from belonging to that family, Jesus did not even belong to the tribe from which it came.
- On earth Jesus was a **layman, excluded** by the Mosaic law from **all** priestly functions.
- But to our author, this simply emphasizes the **dignity** of Jesus' high priesthood; for a high priesthood exercised in any **earthly** shrine is far **inferior** to that heavenly high priesthood which depends for its exercise on a **perfect** sacrifice offered **once for all**.

⁵ *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 [Ex. 25:40].”*

- The Levitical priests served at an ***earthly*** sanctuary – the tabernacle that God commanded Israel to build (cf. Exodus 25-31; 35-40)
- “*They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.*”
- The earthly sanctuary, however, was never meant to be ***ultimate***.
- It served as a “***copy and shadow***” of the ***heavenly*** sanctuary.

*5 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** [Ex. 25:40].”*

- Still, the author views the earthly tabernacle as an ***inferior reflection*** of the heavenly tabernacle.
- The Mosaic law and the earthly tabernacle were intended to be in force under the ***old*** covenant.
- They were set in place for a limited period of salvation history.
- When Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle, he was commanded to “*make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain. [Ex. 25:40]*”

⁵ *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 [Ex. 25:40].”*

- The ***typological*** role of the Old Testament tabernacle is communicated by three different terms:
 - “*copy*”
 - “*shadow*”
 - “*pattern*”
- The original plan for the tabernacle (given in Exodus 25:40) reveals from the beginning that it signified a ***greater*** reality, that the earthly place of God’s residence only ***figuratively*** represented his residence in heaven.

⁶ *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.*

- If **one** word were to summarize this verse, it is the word **“better.”** There is a:
 - More excellent (= better) “*ministry*”
 - Better “*covenant*”
 - Better “*promises*”
- Jesus therefore has a ministry that is **“more excellent”** than the ministry of the Levitical priests, because, as the preceding verses have clarified, his ministry is carried out in God’s very presence, in the **true** sanctuary.
- Furthermore, Jesus’ ministry is tied to a **better covenant** of which he is the covenant mediator.
- The better covenant referred to here is the **new covenant**, as the author will make plain in subsequent verses.

⁶ *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.*

- On **two** other occasions (Heb 9:15; 12:24) the author refers to Jesus as “*the mediator of a new covenant*” and in **both** places his role as mediator is tied to his **death**.
- Such a connection reflects the Gospel traditions where Jesus inaugurates the new covenant by shedding his blood (Mat 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20).
- **Moses** mediated the **old** covenant, but, as we have already seen, Jesus is **superior** to Moses (Heb 3:1-6), and this is no surprise since he, as the Son of God, establishes the new covenant by sacrificing **himself**.

⁶ *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**.*

- The author tells us that the new covenant is “*better*” than the old covenant **because** it is established on the basis of “*better promises*”.
- The better promises are revealed in the **terms** of the new covenant which the author will discuss in the **next** section:
 - God will write the law on the hearts of his people (Heb 8:10)
 - All covenant members will know the Lord (Heb 8:11)
 - Sins are forgiven fully and definitively (Heb 8:12)

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- One of the ideas talked about in this section is how the earthly tabernacle used by the Israelites, was an imperfect copy of the true heavenly tabernacle.
- Reading this reminded me of something I once read in C.S Lewis' *Mere Christianity* (Chapter 10: *Hope*):
 - *Most of us find it very difficult to want "Heaven" at all-except in so far as "Heaven" means meeting again our friends who have died. One reason for this difficulty is that we have not been trained: our whole education tends to fix our minds on this world. Another reason is that when the real want for Heaven is present in us, we do not recognize it. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality... Now there are two wrong ways of dealing with this fact, and one right one.*

*Class Discussion Time

- (1) *The Fool's Way*.—He puts the blame on the things themselves. He goes on all his life thinking that if only he tried another woman, or went for a more expensive holiday, or whatever it is, then, this time, he really would catch the mysterious something we are all after...
- (2) *The Way of the Disillusioned "Sensible Man."*—He soon decides that the whole thing was moonshine. "Of course," he says, "one feels like that when one's young. But by the time you get to my age you've given up chasing the rainbow's end." And so he settles down and learns not to expect too much and represses the part of himself which used, as he would say, "to cry for the moon."... But supposing infinite happiness really is there, waiting for us? Supposing one really can reach the rainbow's end? In that case it would be a pity to find out too late (a moment after death) that by our supposed "common sense" we had stifled in ourselves the faculty of enjoying it.

*Class Discussion Time

- (3) *The Christian Way*.—*The Christian says, “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.”*
- What do you think of Lewis' idea?