

Session 19 A Better Hope, A Better Testament

Before the Silence: A Study of Hebrews

Session 19 | Hebrews 7:18-22

The Assurance Of God's Oath (Hebrews 7:18-22)

Session 18 explained why another priestly order requires a corresponding change in the law governing priesthood. Jesus comes from Judah, and His priesthood rests upon endless life and God's declaration in Psalm 110:4. This session explains what that change accomplishes: the former commandment is set aside, a better hope gives access to God, and God's oath establishes Jesus as surety of a better testament.

For the Hebrew hearers, the visible Temple and its continuing service could make the earlier order seem more secure. Hebrews directs their confidence to the Priest God has appointed. The

decisive question is whether the former arrangement can accomplish the final cleansing and access that the living Messiah provides.

Follow The Argument

- **Verses 18-19:** The former commandment cannot bring perfection; the better hope provides the approach to God.
- **Verses 20-21:** Jesus' appointment carries God's oath that He is a Priest for ever.
- **Verse 22:** That sworn appointment establishes Jesus as guarantor of a better covenant.

Hebrews 7:18 - The Former Commandment Set Aside

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

Exegesis

- **“For”** connects this statement with the previous argument. God has announced a Priest of another order, whose authority rests upon endless life rather than the bodily qualification of Aaronic descent.
- **“A disannulling”** means an actual setting aside. The former priestly rule cannot remain the governing qualification for the new Priest, because Jesus belongs to Judah rather than Levi.
- **“The commandment going before”** refers immediately to the former regulation of priesthood in verses 11-16. The change has wider covenant implications, which verse 22 and chapter 8 develop.
- **“Weakness and unprofitableness”** describe inability to reach the goal in question. Mortal priests and repeated sacrifices could not secure final cleansing and complete access to God. Verse 19 states that the Law made nothing perfect; Hebrews 9:9 and 10:1-4 explain the limitation regarding conscience and sacrifices.
- God's earlier command was valid for its appointed purpose. Its inability to provide final perfection does not make it morally evil or historically useless. The same God who established the earlier order has authorized the better provision.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Hebrews 7:11-16** - Another priestly order requires a change of law; the new Priest serves by the power of endless life.
- **Hebrews 9:9-10** - The earlier gifts and sacrifices could not perfect the conscience; their ordinances had an appointed limit.
- **Romans 7:12** - The Law is holy, just, and good. Its moral character and its ability to accomplish final priestly perfection are different questions.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Disannulling”** means annulment or setting aside. It does not mean that the command never possessed divine authority.
- **“Going before”** means preceding or former. **“Unprofitableness”** describes ineffectiveness for the goal under discussion, rather than absence of all usefulness.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does not declare the Old Testament worthless for instruction.
- It does not authorize dismissal of any divine command merely because it is inconvenient.
- It does not identify a defect in God's holiness. The limitation belongs to the earlier priestly arrangement and the work it could accomplish.

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Exegesis

- **“The law made nothing perfect”** explains verse 18. In this priestly argument, perfection concerns reaching the intended goal: final cleansing and an effective approach to God. It does not mean that the Law failed to reveal sin or regulate Israel’s worship.
- **“A better hope”** recalls Hebrews 6:19-20. That hope reaches within the veil, where Jesus has entered as forerunner. Its strength rests upon the Person already before God and the promise He secures.
- The removal and the introduction belong together. God sets aside the inadequate priestly regulation and brings in a better provision. The hearers are not left without an appointed way to approach Him.
- **“By the which we draw nigh unto God”** states the practical result. The better hope supplies the confidence and access that the former arrangement could not bring to completion.
- **“We”** includes the writer and the Hebrew hearers addressed in this covenant setting. The truth of access through Christ has wider significance, but the pronoun does not erase the identity of the people receiving this argument.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Hebrews 6:18-20** - God’s promise and oath give strong consolation; the hope enters within the veil where Jesus serves as Priest for ever.
- **Hebrews 4:14-16** - The great High Priest is the basis for approaching the throne of grace with confidence.

- **Hebrews 10:19-22** - Jesus’ blood, the new and living way, and the great Priest explain the invitation to draw near.
- **Leviticus 16:2** - Aaron could not enter within the veil at will. Restricted sanctuary access forms the background of the contrast.

Text And Translation Notes

- The KJV supplies **“did”** to complete the English contrast. It is not a separately expressed Greek verb; it states the accomplishment implied by the better provision.
- Some translations place **“the law made nothing perfect”** in parentheses and connect the introduction of better hope directly with verse 18’s setting aside. Read both verses together: the former command is removed and effective access is introduced.
- **“Draw nigh”** means draw near. The phrase belongs to the language of approaching God in worship and priestly access.

Theological Insights

- Biblical hope rests upon God’s promise and the living Priest who secures it. The hearers’ assurance has a foundation outside their changing feelings.
- Understanding the priestly distinction should deepen confidence in the approach to God through His appointed Messiah.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does not teach that the Law never instructed Israel or that no Israelite received forgiveness under the earlier provision.
- It does not define perfection as an inability to commit another sinful act.
- It does not make better hope an inward technique detached from Jesus’ priesthood.

Hebrews 7:20-21 - A Priest Appointed By Oath

*And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:
(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with
an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and
will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of
Melchisedec:)*

Exegesis

- **“Inasmuch as”** opens a comparison that **“by so much”** completes in verse 22. Verse 21 explains that comparison: Jesus’ oath-confirmed appointment establishes Him as surety of a better testament.
- **“Those priests”** are the priests of the earlier order. They held a genuine divine commission under the Mosaic regulations, but their individual appointments lacked the particular oath of Psalm 110:4 declaring one Priest’s permanent office.
- **“The Lord sware”** identifies the source of the assurance. The oath is God’s declaration to the Son, rather than an ordination vow made by a priest or a pledge of support from a congregation.
- **“Will not repent”** means God will not reverse this sworn appointment. He is not confessing wrongdoing. The promise concerns the settled purpose that this Priest will serve **“for ever.”**
- Psalm 110 was given after Aaron’s priesthood had been established. God’s later revelation announces an enduring provision beyond the succession of mortal priests. Human rejection of Jesus cannot cancel that divine appointment.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Psalm 110:1-4** - The Lord at God’s right hand is appointed by the LORD’s oath as Priest for ever after Melchizedek’s order.
- **Hebrews 6:16-18** - God’s oath confirms His unchangeable purpose and supplies strong assurance to the heirs of promise.

- **Hebrews 7:28** - The word of the oath, given after the Law, appoints the Son, consecrated for evermore.
- **Numbers 25:10-13** - God’s covenant with Phinehas promises an everlasting priesthood to his line. This prevents an overbroad claim that God never made a covenant promise concerning Aaronic priesthood; Hebrews contrasts the particular appointments and the permanent Priest of Psalm 110.

Text And Translation Notes

- The KJV supplies **“he was made priest”** in verse 20. These words make the subject of the surrounding priesthood argument explicit in English.
- **“Sware”** is the older past tense of *swear*. **“Repent”** here concerns a change in declared purpose.
- The KJV includes **“after the order of Melchisedec”** in verse 21. Many modern versions end the quotation at **“for ever.”** The order remains explicit in verse 17, so the shorter wording does not remove it from the chapter’s argument.

Theological Insights

- God’s oath adds confirmation without suggesting that His ordinary word might be false. He chooses to give the hearers this additional assurance.
- The oath concerning Abraham in chapter 6 and the oath appointing the Priest in chapter 7 join promised inheritance with the One who secures access to God.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does not make Aaron’s priesthood a merely human invention.
- It does not say God repents of sin or that His sworn appointment may later fail.
- It does not authorize a modern minister or organization to assume Christ’s unique Melchisedec priesthood.

Hebrews 7:22 - Jesus Guarantees A Better Testament

By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Exegesis

- **“By so much”** brings verses 20-21 to their conclusion. The greater confirmation of Jesus’ appointment corresponds to His role as guarantor of the better testament.
- **“Jesus”** gives the assurance a personal foundation. The covenant undertaking is secured in the appointed Son, whose endless life sustains His priesthood.
- **“Surety”** is one who guarantees an undertaking. A succession of dying priests cannot provide the same enduring assurance as the Priest who continues for ever.
- **“A better testament”** introduces the covenant comparison developed in chapter 8. Its superiority concerns God’s provision, promises, and priestly mediation. God has not become more truthful; He has provided what the earlier arrangement could not accomplish.
- Jeremiah’s new-covenant promise names **Israel and Judah**, and Hebrews 8 repeats those names. Jesus’ completed sacrifice and present priesthood secure the promised outcome; this does not require every feature of Israel’s national restoration and knowledge of God to have reached full historical manifestation already.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Genesis 43:9; 44:32-34** - Judah becomes surety for Benjamin and accepts personal responsibility for his return. This illus-

trates the word without making every detail a description of Christ’s work.

- **Jeremiah 31:31-34** - God promises a new covenant with Israel and Judah, including His Law written within, knowledge of Him, and forgiveness.
- **Hebrews 8:6-12** - The better covenant rests upon better promises; the quotation identifies the covenant parties and blessings.
- **Hebrews 9:15** - Christ’s death and mediation secure the promised eternal inheritance.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Surety”** means guarantor. It differs from **“mediator”** in Hebrews 8:6: a guarantor assures an undertaking, while a mediator stands between parties. Hebrews uses both terms for aspects of Jesus’ work.
- **“Testament”** is the same underlying word elsewhere translated **“covenant.”** Here it concerns the covenant undertaking, rather than a bound collection of New Testament books.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does not replace Israel and Judah with unnamed covenant recipients.
- It does not turn *surety* into a detailed financial transaction beyond the priestly and covenant context.
- It does not make the covenant’s security depend upon Jerusalem’s Temple or the approval of its leaders.

Session Summary

The Logic At A Glance

- **The former regulation is set aside:** it cannot bring the worshipper to final perfection.
- **A better hope is introduced:** the approach to God rests upon the Priest already within the veil.
- **God swears the appointment:** the Son’s office is permanent and will not be reversed.
- **Jesus guarantees the better covenant:** His person and endless priesthood secure the undertaking.

Why This Mattered To The Hebrew Hearers

The Temple’s visible activity could continue while its priestly provision remained unable to accomplish the goal Hebrews describes. The hearers therefore needed to judge their position by God’s revelation concerning Messiah. Returning to the earlier order as their final confidence would overlook the better hope God had introduced.

The God who gave the earlier command also spoke the later oath. Recognizing Jesus’ superior priesthood honors that later revelation and the promises made to Israel. The appointed Priest gives assurance while the full covenant outcome remains secured in Him.

Review The Reasoning

- **In what sense is the former commandment weak?** It cannot provide the final cleansing and access that the argument requires.
- **What makes the hope better?** Jesus has entered within the veil and serves as permanent Priest.
- **Whose oath establishes this office?** The LORD’s oath to the Son in Psalm 110:4.
- **What does “will not repent” assure?** God will not reverse His sworn appointment of this Priest for ever.
- **What is a surety?** A guarantor who gives personal assurance that an undertaking will stand.
- **Who are the named new-covenant parties?** Israel and Judah, as Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 specify.

One-sentence summary: God sets aside the inadequate priestly regulation, introduces a better hope for drawing near, and appoints Jesus by oath as the enduring guarantor of a better covenant.