
The Better Christ and His Gathered People

Various Texts³⁷

Hebrews has been a long journey in magnifying Christ so as to mature believers. Through the Word this morning, I hope that we will fellowship with Christ as the One who is greater and better. As we worship Jesus in the Word and through our “Amen” to what it says about Him and for us, we will focus our souls on Him.

While we often become more aware of sinfulness and smallness when coming closer to such stunning greatness, let us also lose our affections to run with gladness and gratefulness on these tracks of truth. We can only be satisfied with what we have tasted and savored. We will believe and obey only what we know. We will only worship what we respect and desire. We will enter in only where there is a door. We will only see where there is light. We will celebrate where there is joy.

Let us join then with the Word and Spirit to seek Him who loves to be found.

His Supreme Person

All through the book, our author has pointed to the superiority of Christ by speaking of “better” or “more excellent”. By indicating His better and more excellent person and provisions, he magnifies Christ to us. He places the telescope of his sermon/book up to our hearts and takes what is often distant and small and makes it appear as it truly is, large and near and wonderful.

His Better Name

Hebrews 1:1-4

¹ Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. ² And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. ³ The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. ⁴ This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

His place and position are as superior to the angels as His fame and reputation, His Name, is to theirs. So while angels are great and wonderful, Christ is immeasurably superior to them. They are created by Him and serve us, while He is to be worshipped by all.

Having a superior Name, worship Him.

His Better Priesthood

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So

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let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Because we are vulnerable and visible to God, we need a compassionate High Priest so that we can have a confident access. His priesthood is superior to all others, even the Levitical. His priesthood gains and grants an immediate and direct access. His mediation inspires confident coming. When we draw near to where grace reigns, we receive mercy and have helping grace just in time.

Having a compassionate priest, boldly come.

His Better Hope

Hebrews 7:18-19

¹⁸ Yes, the old requirement about the priesthood was set aside because it was weak and useless. ¹⁹ For the law never made anything perfect. But now we have confidence in a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Jesus brings us a better hope, a better confident expectation. Through His setting aside the Law and the introduction of that better hope, we draw near to God. That better hope is Jesus Himself. He is in heaven, having died and been raised, for us. Rather than a system designed to bar access while inviting nearness, we have a Person who is Himself the pioneer of the way to heaven and the one who awaits our spiritual entering by prayer now and our physical entering at death.

Having a better hope, draw near.

His Better Covenant

Hebrews 7:22

²² Because of this oath, Jesus is the one who guarantees this better covenant with God.

The permanence and eternalness of Christ's priesthood guarantees the superiority of His covenant and promises. What was old and incomplete and unable has been fulfilled and completed by the Lord. Thus He brings better promises for His people. And most grandly, He is able to save all who draw near.

Having a better promise, be saved.

His Better Ministry

Hebrews 8:6-7;9:11-14

Hebrews 8:6-17

⁶ But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.

⁷ If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it.

Hebrews 9:11-14

¹¹ So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. ¹² With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

¹³ Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. ¹⁴ Just think how much more the

blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Since the Lord mediates a better covenant based on better promises, He has a better ministry, a better serving. The routine work of daily sacrifice inside the courtyard of the tabernacle and the Temple is now the ministry of walking with God in love for Him and love for others every moment and every where. It is an exaltation of the “work at the church” but an exaltation of all of life as worship and ministry.

Having a better ministry, serve God

His Better Sacrifice

Hebrews 9:23-27

²³ That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals.

²⁴ For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. ²⁵ And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. ²⁶ If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice.

²⁷ And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment,

We are not saved by the repetitious sacrifice of bulls and goats, but by the once for all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the outpouring of His life in death that brings pardon and life. By the sacrifice of himself, He has put away sin. Soon He will appear, not to deal with sin, but deliver His people.

Having a better sacrifice, eagerly wait.

His Better Country/City

Hebrews 11:13-16

¹³ All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. ¹⁵ If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. ¹⁶ But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

God has provided a better country than Israel and a better city than Jerusalem for His people. Even His Old Covenant people, with eyes of faith, looked behind and beyond the earthly to long for the heavenly. When they or we are this kind of people, God is not ashamed to be called our God.

Having a better city, desire it.

His Better Provision***Hebrews 11:39-40***

³⁹ All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. ⁴⁰ For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

Through Christ, God has planned down through redemptive history to bring about something immeasurably better for His people. A commended faith trusts God even when what is promised waits fulfillment after death. They did not receive because something better was promised and we will receive it together. This better provision is the perfection of the glorified realities, the newness of the new heavens and new earth. All this great perfection and provision is located in Christ.

Having a better provision, believe God.

His Better Speaking***Hebrews 12:24***

²⁴ You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.

While Abel's blood cried out for vengeance, Christ's blood speaks of mercy and forgiveness. His speaking is better because of its place, in heaven, and its person, the Lord Jesus. Christ is the speaking of God. His Word in heaven and from heaven commands our attention and our approach.

Having a better speaking, refuse Him not.

Our Superior Privileges

The people of God, because of the superiority of Christ, have superior privileges. Through the phrase "we have" I want to press upon us that superiority, both in its privilege and in its responsibility.

The Word We Heard***Hebrews 2:1***

¹ So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.

This conclusion to chapter 1 presses home our responsibility in the light of the fullness and finality of the revelation in Jesus Christ. And we have this revelation in scripture so that it is accessible to all of us. Having now that kind of revelation, we had better pay close attention lest we drift. So here is a great privilege and a great danger. We have the Word and we tend to drift from it. So, we have to give it our attention.

Having the Word, pay attention.

A Great High Priest***Hebrews 4:14; 8:1; 10:19-25***

Hebrews 4:14

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe.

Hebrews 8:1

¹ Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven.

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰ By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. ²¹ And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, ²² let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

²³ Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. ²⁴ Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. ²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

We have confidence to enter and we have a great high priest – what grand privileges. But are they great to us? Do we sense our distance from God and our need to draw near? Do we sense our dependence upon One to be there for us? Having then these two privileges, respond like this: draw near, hold fast your profession of faith and learn how to stir up one another for God and good. And the closer we come to the end of days, we must do this all the more, not the less.

Having a High Priest, draw near, hold fast and stir up.

An Anchor for the Soul

Hebrews 6:19

¹⁹ This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.

In the midst the danger of drift and doubt and denial, we have an anchor cast forward and upward into heaven. That is, we have Jesus. Jesus is our anchor. When we are anchored to Him then our soul flees to Him for refuge. Our blowing about with uncertainty and instability is a sure symptom that we are not setting our hope in our heavenly anchor.

Having an Anchor, hope in Him.

A Complete Sanctification

Hebrews 10:10

¹⁰ For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.

While God is at work in transformation, we have been set apart to God by His Divine decision and action. We are marked out by God's will, separated from the mass of depraved humanity and set apart for the holy God to become a holy people. This once for all act of God initiates a process whereby we behave what we have become. We do what we are.

Having been sanctified, be transformed.

A Better Possession

Hebrews 10:34

³⁴ You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.

While all that surrounds entices us to crave, covet and possess, God places in our gaze the delights of a better possession. We have all that God has promised us in Christ. What we have is eternal, lasting and will not corrupt, decay or fade away. Craving and clinging to what God promises, to those better and eternal possessions, loosens our hold on earthly ones so that we are poised to give them up. It so transforms us that we can joyfully accept the loss of our earthly possessions in God's providential care.

Having a better possession, let go.

A Lasting City

Hebrews 13:14-15

¹⁴ For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

¹⁵ Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name.

What a great privilege this is. We do not have an earthly locality, but a heavenly city. We are seeking what Abraham looked for. We are not of Jerusalem here on earth but of Mt. Zion, the new Jerusalem in heaven. We have no citizenship here; our citizenship that defines us is that of heaven.

Having a lasting city, offer praise sacrifices.

A Clear Conscience

Hebrews 13:18

¹⁸ Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do.

Finally, we may have a clear conscience. We no longer need to live under the accusing frown of God. Our Redeemer has cleansed and quieted our consciences so that we have openness before others and in the presence of God. What a grand thing it is to be so forgiven that we do not feel guilty.

Having a clear conscience, act honorably.

Conclusion

So:

- Having a superior Name, worship Him.
- Having a compassionate priest, boldly come.
- Having a better hope, draw near.
- Having a better promise, be saved.
- Having a better ministry, serve God
- Having a better sacrifice, eagerly wait.
- Having a better city, desire it.
- Having a better provision, believe God.
- Having a better speaking, refuse Him not.
- Having the Word, pay attention.
- Having a High Priest, draw near, hold fast and stir up.
- Having an Anchor, hope in Him.
- Having been sanctified, be transformed.
- Having a better possession, let go.
- Having a lasting city, offer praise sacrifices.
- Having a clear conscience, act honorably.

Here then is the invitation that accompanies these excellences and privileges: draw near.

Come on in; draw near to the throne of grace (4:16).

Come on in; draw near through the better hope (7:19).

Come on in; draw near to be saved (7:25).

Come on in; draw near to be made complete (10:1).

Come on in; draw near with a true heart (10:22).

Come on in; draw near believing He is real and He is a rewarder (11:6).

Draw near and celebrate the Jesus.