

• *Review – Melchizedek greater than Abraham*

• *Jesus’ priesthood greater than the Mosaic*

• *Jesus – a perfect saviour for ever*

• *A perfect sacrifice?*

1. Jesus guarantees our spiritual survival

• *A better covenant*

• *Three types of covenant – the crucial matter is whose oath?*

• *The Mosaic covenant – a law covenant – the people’s oath*

• *The new covenant – a covenant of generosity – God’s oath*

• *This covenant relationship cannot be destroyed although the promises could be forfeited by extreme rebellion*

• *Jesus guarantees the continuing relationship*

We are approaching the end of this sub-section of our letter. He began by recalling the basic facts concerning Melchizedek^{□1} and argued that Melchizedek was even greater than Abraham^{□2}. Then we had a series of arguments which made the point that Jesus’ priesthood was greater than that of the Mosaic high priests. (i) The old system could not bring perfection^{□3}. (ii) It has in fact been displaced^{□4}. (iii) The two priesthoods come from different tribes^{□5}. (iv) The new priest has resurrection-power^{□6}. (v) The ineffective priesthood has gone; a powerful replacement has come^{□7}. (vi) The presence or absence of the oath is significant^{□8}. It is obvious that a better covenant is now in force for God’s people^{□9}. (vii) The contrast between mortality and immortality is significant (7:23-24 with another conclusion in 7:25). (viii) The significance of the sinlessness of Jesus is noted^{□10} and another conclusion is reached. The Son of God is a perfect Saviour for ever^{□11}. The next question will be: does the perfect Saviour have a perfect sacrifice?

1. **Jesus guarantees our spiritual survival.** Hebrews 7:22 is a little conclusion in the midst of the arguments. *Because of this oath Jesus became the guarantor of a better covenant.* This is the first time the word ‘covenant’ has occurred in our letter. We shall meet it again^{□1}. A ‘covenant’ is a **promise that has been made legally secure by the taking of an oath.** In the ancient world there were different kinds of covenant. They may be divided into three groups. The crucial matter is the question: who is taking the oath?

- In a ‘covenant of generosity’ a senior person and a benefactor takes an oath to do something good to a junior or less powerful person or people.
- In a ‘covenant of law’ a powerful person demands that someone under his authority take an oath of obedience or loyalty.
- In a ‘mutual covenant’, two people or groups of people who are equal in power and authority both take oaths.

The Mosaic covenant was a law-covenant. The people had to swear obedience. **All other covenants in which God is involved are covenants of generosity and God takes the oath.** Some of the main characteristics of the new covenant are the following: (i) God enters into a fixed relationship with us in which he gives us promises and plans to take an oath about them. (ii) The covenant-promises deal with changing our nature within. Hebrews 8:6–10 explains this point. (iii) Jesus is the one who sustains the basic relationship so that it cannot be broken. (iv) Jesus is the one who ministers to us the fulfilment of these promises. (v) The starting-point of the relationship is blood-atonement. There can be no relationship with God without the forgiveness of sins through the death of a substitute. (vi) God plans to give us grace and mercy so as to sustain us until we inherit the covenant-promises. The covenant-relationship cannot be destroyed, but the covenant promises could be forfeited by extreme rebellion.

The point of Hebrews 7:22 is that God has taken an oath about Jesus’ being our high priest. Because of God’s oath to Jesus, this work of imparting to us a new nature is something that cannot easily be aborted. Because of God’s grace the covenant-relationship cannot cease at all. And the promises cannot be lost except by extreme rebellion (a point to which our writer comes in 10:29). Jesus guarantees the continuing relationship; we are sanctified for ever by the blood of Christ. And Jesus will uphold us in the power of his blood as in faith we continue to pursue our inheritance. The Greek word used here (*enguos*) means ‘someone

□1 7:1-3
 □2 7:4-10
 □3 7:11
 □4 7:12
 □5 7:13-14
 □6 7:15-17
 □7 7:18-19
 □8 7:20-21
 □9 7:22
 □10 7:26-28
 □11 7:28

□1 in 8:6-10;
 8:13-9:1; 9:4,
 15, 18, 20;
 10:16, 29;
 12:24; 13:20

• *The new covenant cannot fail*

2. Jesus' immortality is the secret of our survival

• *Levitical priests retired and eventually died*

• *But Jesus never retires and lives forever*

• *Raised from the dead – 'immortal'*

• *Our sympathetic high priest with divine power*

• *There can be no greater assurance than the heavenly intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

who guarantees the reality of something or the success of something'. The new covenant cannot fail. The 'guarantor' is Jesus himself. Jeremiah 32:40 puts it in a most powerful manner: 'I will make with them an everlasting covenant [not a temporary covenant that might be broken], that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they will not turn from me.'

2. Jesus' being raised to immortality is the secret of our survival.

²³And the people who became priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing their work. ²⁴But Jesus, because he remains for ever, holds the priestly ministry unceasingly. One of the things that ruined the ministry of the Levitical priests was old-age and death. You could go to the temple and ask for help from the high priest. 'Oh, have you not heard?' they might say to you. 'He died last week!' The priests and high priests had to be replaced from time to time because they got old and retired at fifty – 'from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting'¹. Eventually they died. But Jesus never dies! He is never off duty. He never retires. At any point we can go to him and he will be there for us. He holds the priestly ministry unceasingly! ²⁵So he is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him because he is always alive to make intercession for them. Because Jesus lives for ever, he will never stop serving as a high priest who sustains us and rescues us. He is always there for us, asking God to give us the help that we need to inherit the promises.

In Greek philosophy the great thinkers were very enthusiastic about the 'immortality of the soul'. In biblical thinking 'immortality' is connected with the resurrection of the body. Jesus was 'raised immortal' (as we Christians shall be – 1 Corinthians 15:42: 'what is raised is imperishable'). The glorified man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is our great high priest. He utterly sympathizes with us, yet he has divine power as the creator and sustainer of the universe. He rules all things in order to bring all of his people to the point where they inherit God's promises and he himself says to them, 'Well done'. What greater assurance or encouragement could there possibly be? He is pledging himself to bring us to the uttermost salvation – to glory, to heaven, to reward. He ministers to us our safety, our protection from Satan, our continuing and indestructible faith, our sanctification, our unity. He says to the Father, 'I desire that they also whom you have given me will be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory'¹. And Jesus gets his intercessions answered. 'You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me'². There can be no greater assurance than the heavenly intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Numbers 4:3

¹ John 17:24

² John 11:42



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