

Things Are Better

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 1:1-14

The world is full of problems and concerns that can often tempt us to say, “I wish we were back in the good old days.” Were those days so good? I know we can think back on many good things. But the good old days were also full of very bad things – things that have turned into many of the present dilemmas that we are now facing. Let’s think about the world from a spiritual perspective. Sin was so terrible in the days of Noah, that God chose to wash the planet off and start over with only eight survivors. From the eight survivors developed another society, so bad, that God had to scatter them abroad with different languages to somewhat slow down the rebellious projects that a united humanity would attempt.

Then came the call to Abram. God gave a promise to Abram that He would one day have a family of people that would bring blessing to the rest of the families of the earth. In the process of fulfilling this promise, God established, from Abram / Abraham, the nation Israel. God gave them a law that would give them the preliminary foundation for knowing God, for understanding sin, and for understanding God’s righteousness. Israel was often unfaithful to God and failed to keep the law. Yet, Israel could also become self-righteous and exclusive about their religious ordinances. God chastened them many times. Nevertheless, God used them to give us the Scriptures, which are packed with Gospel promises. He also used Israel to give us the Messiah – the One who would fulfill all that had been promised to Abraham.

So, in this lesson, when we say, “Things are better,” we are talking about the big picture which begins with the sin of Adam and Eve. We must not try to go backwards, but forwards in our thinking. Today we have the promise of a bright future that Jesus Christ has provided and is still unfolding for us.

As a nation, Israel failed in many ways. Yet, God used them. Many individuals in Israel were true believers and were faithful in many ways. They did not fully comprehend the great grace that was to come upon mankind. They simply trusted God and obeyed Him in the moment. God used them to pass on something wonderful to us. We share a legacy with all those who have loved and followed the Lord. A good study of Romans chapters nine through eleven would be beneficial (e.g. Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-4; 11:33-36). See I Peter 1:10-12; Hebrews 11:39-40 (Note the NIV); Psalm 61:5

We are going to look at some places in the Book of Hebrews that emphasize what is better today, especially when compared to the times of the Old Covenant. We will look at some things that will give us good reason to be optimistic about our present and future.

Jesus is made better than the angels – Hebrews 1:1-14

Hebrews 1:4 says that Jesus has been made better or superior to the angels. We are not talking about Jesus as a created being who excelled above the angels. Jesus is equal to the Father, as God (Hebrews 1:1-3 (*“the exact expression / representation of His substance / nature”*); John 1:1-3; Philippians 2:5-11 [*“Jesus...bow”* cp. Isaiah 45:22-23 *“God...bow”*]). Hebrews chapter one quotes the Old Testament to verify the deity of Christ (Hebrews 1:8-12 cp. Psalm 45:6-7; 102:25-27). The Son of God became incarnate and received a ministry with authority (John 1:10-17; 6:37-40). To accomplish the work of salvation, only God’s Son could qualify. But He would have to become a man (*“a little lower than the angels”* – Hebrews 2:9) and fulfill many things, including His suffering and death on the cross. God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus then inherited a greater name than the angels (Hebrews 1:3-4 cp. Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 4:8-12; Philippians 2:9 cp. Hebrews 2:9-10; 5:7-9. Jesus Christ is *“the captain of our salvation”* – *“the perfect author of eternal salvation.”*

Jesus, as a better high priest, provided a better hope / a better covenant with better promises – Hebrews 7:19-22; 8:6

- A better priesthood – Hebrews 2:16-18; 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:1-10; 9:1-28.
- Our better hope is an anchor of the soul – Hebrews 6:17-20 cp. I Peter 1:3-5.
- Compare the shadowy old covenant – Hebrews 8:1-6.
- Behold the better, transforming power of the new covenant – Hebrews 8:10-13.
- Trust the blood that speaks better things than that of Abel – Hebrews 12:18-24.

Jesus is a better sacrifice to God for us – Hebrews 9:22-28

Not like the repeated sacrifices of the old covenant, Jesus’ body was sacrificed *“once for all.”* – Hebrews 10:1-14; John 1:29; 19:28-30; Romans 8:3-4; Ephesians 5:2; I John 4:10 (*“propitiation”* means that God is satisfied. His wrath has been turned away. Reconciliation has been accomplished).

Jesus has brought us “something better” – Hebrews 11:39-40

The Old Testament saints lived by faith in promises that they did not see fulfilled in their lifetime. In the New Testament, we have been given something that fulfills a promise made long ago (Jeremiah 31:31-34 cp. Hebrews 8:10-12) – a perfect relationship / completeness in Christ. It does not mean that we have a sinless life. Rather, we have a perfect standing before God because of Jesus Christ, who now dwells within us and helps us (Hebrews 10:14 cp. Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 2:20; John 14:18-23; Romans 6:6-18; 8:1-14). We need only Christ (John 4:10,14; 6:35).

- Colossians 2:6-10
- I Corinthians 2:9-16