

6 And He says in another place, "You are a priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek."

"Order of Melchizedek" — Melchizedek was a king and a priest, Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4.

7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission.

"Petitions with fervent cries" — especially at Gethsemane. These prayers confirmed the righteous obedience of Jesus.

**SUMMARY** Jesus became uniquely fitted for a unique role as the eternal high priest of a new and superior covenant. Particularly at the end of His time on earth, He showed Himself to be obedient to His Father in the most extreme of tests. Facing up to the prospect of torture at Roman hands, He entered so fully into human suffering, that He was, and is, fully able to represent man to God, and God to man, as the eternal high priest of every person who turns to Him in trust.

**APPLICATION** We may feel we need to approach God through someone holy, but also relating to our human helplessness and pain. The one high priest who fulfills this need perfectly is in heaven, and it is He who has secured for every believer a better and much more accessible covenant with God — through Him.

**QUESTION** *If Jesus is now the exalted holder of the high priestly office, what now is the role of those who lead churches, teach the Scriptures and encourage us to grow spiritually?*

**PRAYER** Lord God, we are so grateful for Jesus making a way, for us to be counted righteous, as those that belong to Him, and to have direct and personal access to You through Him.

We have a new and better covenant with You, because Your sinless Son became a prisoner to set us free, submitting to the pain and torment that brought Him death, for our life.

May our lives reflect the salvation of Jesus and the lordship of Jesus — in every activity and every relationship, in devotions and church, and in all the busyness of daily life.

We pray this through You, our Great High Priest, Jesus. Amen .

8-10 Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered and, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

"He learned obedience" — Jesus did not lack character quality in childhood but for this highest of roles was put to the severest of tests, making right choices to obey His Father throughout adult human life. He became uniquely qualified for a new and everlasting high priesthood as the guarantor of a new and better covenant. Now interceding for those who come to God through Him, He is able, following His sacrifice of Himself, to save them completely, Hebrews 7:22-27.

# The Living Word

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Bible readings for Sunday, March 21, 2021, with explanatory notes

Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for **March 21**

Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand — read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching

Theme (Lent 5): **How Jesus has won for us a new and better covenant**

Jeremiah 31:31-34 — The promise of a new covenant of heart and mind

John 12:20-33 — Jesus speaks about His death also being His glory

Hebrews 5:5-10 — Jesus is appointed to a permanent high priesthood

And also read: Psalm 51:1-12

## Jeremiah 31:31-34 — The promise of a new covenant of heart and mind

*Jeremiah foresees a new relationship when God's way will become innate*

31 **"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.**

"The days are coming" — Jeremiah's language for a special divine intervention to come, a prophecy

about the Messiah. This passage is the longest quoted in its entirety in the NT.

• **For further study**, see Hebrews 8:8-12, 10:16-17.

"A new covenant" — by contrast with the Sinai covenant, later in the NT called the first or old covenant, Luke 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6,14; Hebrews 8:7. Only mention of the New Covenant in the OT.

"People of Israel and... Judah" — historically divided, but to be brought together as part of this new move of God that became the Church.

32 **"It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.**

"Not like the covenant... they broke" — the first difference being that Jesus fulfills its terms, Luke 22:20. The blessing of the Moses covenant depended on Israel being loyal to God and obedient, but from the wilderness years to the reign of Manasseh, they broke it frequently by turning to idolatry, Jeremiah 11:10.

33 **"This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.**

"My law in their minds and... on their hearts" — the second big difference is that this covenant will be internal and through relationship, rather than an external legal requirement. The Old Covenant invited God's judgment for transgressions; the new covenant invokes the Holy Spirit's help in living in its provision. The third difference is that

## Psalm 51:1-12

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

2-3 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

4 Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight; so You are right in Your verdict and justified when You judge.

5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

6 Yet You desired faithfulness even in the womb; You taught me wisdom in that secret place.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

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while the old covenant regulated, the new covenant transforms and brings real change, 2 Cor. 5:17. Jeremiah foretells what happens in the new birth through Jesus, described in the NT.

**34 "No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the**

**SUMMARY** Jeremiah foresees a time when the covenant established under Moses' leadership at Sinai is replaced with a new and better form of partnership. The people found the old covenant difficult to adhere to, and there were frequent transgressions which brought God's judgment. Jeremiah sees this pattern changing by God's initiative, and the old legal relationship being replaced by personal guidance.

**APPLICATION** Jeremiah does not speak of the Messiah directly, but the word he brings from God is clearly Messianic. The former covenant that defined how God's people were to live was a legal framework to be learned, practised and repented of when they got it wrong. Jeremiah saw something different – God putting a desire for holy living on people's hearts. It would become instinctive. God would see people in this new covenant differently, as those forgiven and their debts redeemed, enjoying fellowship as His people. This is a prophetic picture of Jesus' redeeming work.

**QUESTION** *If God's law is now in the minds and hearts of His people, what is the value of hearing the Bible read and expounded?*

### John 12:20-33 – Jesus speaks about His death also being His glory

*He invites all who will follow His self sacrifice to serve the mission of God*

**20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival.**

"Greeks among those" — the festival crowd would have included many non-Jews of the Greek culture who were attracted to the Living God and Jewish morality.

**21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."**

"They came to Philip" — who, like Andrew, had a Greek name. While Jewish authorities plot how to kill Jesus, Gentiles are seeking Him out.

**22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.**

**23-24 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.**

**greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."**

"No longer will they teach" — precepts of the old covenant had to be learned, but the new covenant is a relationship. Through Jesus, we come to know God in a personal way, and through the Holy Spirit, gain a heartfelt desire to live for Him.

"The hour has come" — Jesus repeatedly says in John's gospel that His appointed time had not yet come. When these Greeks wanted to talk to Him, He finally said that it *was* time — nearly the time when He would draw "all people", v.32 below.

"To be glorified" — meaning, to be crucified. What the Roman world viewed as humiliating torture, and the Jewish world saw as cursed death, Jesus associates with His glory, or honour.

"Unless a grain... falls... and dies" — a seed in the ground ceases to be a seed, but from its 'death' comes new growth — and very many new seeds.

**25 "Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**

"Loves... hates their life" — exaggeration to make the point about our values, either prizing quality of life for ourselves, or holding it lightly for God. Following Christ may not lead to the Cross, but it carries the cross of self-sacrifice.

**26 "Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves Me.**

"Whoever serves Me" — Not just Jews around Him but the Gentile Greeks also.

"Follow Me" — the path of self-sacrifice and disregard for status in this world, to fulfil eternal purposes, John 13:15, Philippians 2:5-8.

**27 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.**

"My soul is troubled" — deeply agonised. The other gospels expand this at Gethsemane a week later, where He prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me...", Matthew 26:39.

**28 "Father, glorify Your name!"**

**Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."**

"Glorify Your name" — show Yourself worthy of glory and honour. God showed His glory in Jesus' birth, and in the ministry which showed God's power to the world. But the greatest sign would come in the crucifixion and resurrection.

**29 The crowd that was there and heard it, said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to Him.**

"The crowd... heard it" — the third of three instances of God's voice being heard audibly.

**SUMMARY** With Gentiles asking for Him, Jesus speaks about the awful prospect of His death by crucifixion. Knowing the time is near, He says that in this way He will draw all kinds of people — Jews and Gentiles — to Himself. He explains that being His disciple means holding life lightly. There is both dying and growing in the process of organic growth and multiplication which glorifies God's name. The crowd hears the thunder of God's voice saying that the Son's entry into the world, and obedience in dying for it, brings Him glory.

**APPLICATION** This speaks to us about how Jesus sees people we regard as insiders, or outsiders like the Greeks in the crowd. Those who loved their position and influence in the establishment were working out how to arrest Him, while these second class citizens, hoping to speak to Jesus, heard God's voice like thunder and Jesus including them, by saying how He would draw all people to Himself.

**QUESTION** *What values and priorities should Jesus' church take from this story?*

### Hebrews 5:5-10 – Jesus is appointed to a permanent high priesthood

*Sinless life and suffering obedience qualifies Him as a unique mediator*

**5 In the same way, Christ did not take on Himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to Him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."**

• *For further study, read Matthew 3:13-17, 17:1-13.*

**30 Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not Mine.**

"For your benefit" — the Father validating the Son so that more people would believe.

**31 "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.**

"The prince of this world" — the devil gained influence when Adam and Eve, assigned to rule on God's behalf, acted independently from God, allowing Satan's dominion as a result of their sin. Through the Cross Jesus Christ would gain victory, deal with sin and grant freedom to those who trusted Him.

**32-33 "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself." He said this to show the kind of death He was going to die.**

"I... will draw all people" — all kinds of people rather than everyone.

"When I am lifted up" — referring to crucifixion literally, but the Greek word usually meant being exalted or honoured, Matthew 23:12, Luke 10:15. John sees the Cross as the place where Jesus' true glory would be displayed to all.

"Becoming a high priest" — the Son has been appointed by the Father in a summons backed up by two OT quotations. But this priesthood is on a different level from Aaron's. Jesus is uniquely qualified, both to represent God to man, and as the suffering servant, to represent man to God.