

## HEBREWS CHAPTER 8

Reminder about class party Aug 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM

One of the tools that teachers frequently use to help their students learn is repetition. If you say something enough maybe they'll remember it. So I'm going to do that with you this morning. This is a general statement. The author of Hebrews makes his case point by point...

In the O.T., God spoke to us by the prophets and thru angels. More recently God has spoken to us by His Son Jesus. His words are recorded for us here (the Bible). The central figure of the old covenant was God's faithful servant Moses. The central figure of the new covenant is God's faithful and righteous Son Jesus. The old covenant was made up of things that were merely shadows and pictures. The new covenant is comprised of the real thing. The old covenant gave us the Law which only revealed sin and covered it thru the blood sacrifice of innocent animals. The new covenant removes sin completely also thru a blood sacrifice – the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus. Under the old covenant the sacrifices for sin had to be done over and over again. Under the new covenant the sacrifice for sin was done one time (once for all by the finished work of Jesus on the cross). Under the old covenant a high priest had to first offer sacrifices for his own sin before he could make sacrifices for the people. Under the new covenant our high priest Jesus need not offer any sacrifice for his own sin because He was without sin. The O.T. priests were beset with weaknesses. Our priest-king Jesus is the source of eternal salvation. The O.T. high priests were many in number and they all died off. Our great high priest lives forever. In a nutshell, that's what we have covered so far. The author of Hebrews message to his Jewish audience is that there is no need for them to hang on to the old economy. It has been replaced with something much better. So, don't hesitate. Come to Jesus!

In today's lesson, Hebrews Ch 8 the author gives yet another comparison between the old and the new covenants.

READ Hebrews 8:1-2

Here the author mentions that our High Priest, God's Son, Jesus is seated. The Levitical priests never sat down because their work was never done. But Jesus accomplished what the entire Levitical priesthood could not. He dealt with our sin problem once for all. His work in regard to our salvation is complete. From the cross Jesus cried, "It is finished!" Mission accomplished. He died, was resurrected on Sunday morning, ascended back to heaven.

Notice where Jesus is seated. He is "seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places..." Heb 4:14 says that "we have a great high priest who has passed thru the heavens, Jesus." He is seated in heaven, on the throne, in the seat of honor and power. He is "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven," God the Father. As Paul states in Phil 2:9 Jesus is "highly exalted." He is seated on the throne of God in heaven.

Jesus is ministering as our High Priest "in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man." He is not ministering in an earthly house, tent, temple, church building or sanctuary that was made by human hands. Jesus ministers in the "true tent that the Lord set up." When we get to Ch 9, this idea is going to be expounded on some more. Hebrews 9:24 says that "Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands (not earthly)... but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." Jesus is right this minute interceding for us before the Father in heaven. When we studied 1 John he pictured Jesus as our Advocate before the Father, the Judge. The writer of Hebrews uses the analogy of Jesus as our High Priest ministering on our behalf before the Father.

READ Hebrews 8:3

So if all the work that the O.T. priests did before have been done away with, what priestly function is there left for Jesus to perform? What is it that Jesus offers as our High Priest? I read several commentaries on this

and let me give you my best understanding of what the writer of Hebrews is trying to say. Notice the terms "gifts and sacrifices." The O.T. priests administered two basic kinds of offerings (Leviticus). Gifts could be in the form of grain offerings, drink offerings, peace offerings, etc. These were gifts to God – gifts of thanksgiving, praise, dedication, commitment, etc. Sacrifices were made to deal with sin. These were blood sacrifices that involved killing an innocent animal on the altar – sheep, cattle, birds. So then the term "gifts and sacrifices" distinguishes between these two very different types of offerings. The various sacrifices for sin have already been accomplished permanently by Jesus's death on the cross. There is no need any longer for us to offer a blood sacrifice. But our gift offerings continue.

As Christian, as people under the new covenant, the writer of Hebrews pictures us bringing our gifts to God. We offer them thru our great High Priest, thru Jesus. When do we do this? Every time we pray. Every time we give our tithes. In our praise and worship. Thru our acts of service. These are in a real sense our gifts, our love offerings to God. Our sacrifice for our sins has already been done. But our gifts of thanksgiving, praise, etc continue and our Lord gladly receives them.

READ Hebrews 8:4

On earth under the old system Jesus would not have been qualified to be a priest. Why not? Wasn't He good enough? He was sinless. He knew the Scriptures and taught like no other man. He was compassionate and sympathetic with us? Why couldn't Jesus be a priest? He was from the wrong tribe. What tribe did the O.T. priests all come from? Levi. What tribe did Jesus come from? Judah.

So the writer of Hebrews is drawing a comparison between the new covenant priesthood of Jesus and the old covenant Levitical priesthood. Which one is better? He has already established that the new priesthood of Jesus is better. Now the writer continues further with this thought...

READ Hebrews 8:5

The old covenant – the priesthood, the sacrifices, the gifts, the tabernacle (later the temple) – all that O.T. stuff was just a “copy,” a “shadow” of the heavenly things. The new covenant is the reality. It’s the real thing. The term “shadow” is quite interesting. Shadows do not just appear on their own. They are caused by something else, produced by something that has substance to it. In this verse the writer of Hebrews quotes from Exodus 25:40. That’s where God laid out for Moses the instructions for building the tabernacle. That earthly tabernacle merely symbolized heavenly realities.

I’m not going to pretend to understand what all that means. The pattern of the Exodus tabernacle had something to do with what’s in heaven. We don’t know what that is, but God did. And in the pattern of the tabernacle He offered a glimpse of it to Moses. Perhaps there’s a parallel between the pattern of the tabernacle and the temple in heaven (Rev 3:12, 7:15, 11:19 and 15:5). Maybe that’s the connection. We don’t know. It is one of those mysteries. The point the writer of Hebrews is making is that everything in the O.T. – sacrifices, priesthood, tabernacle, etc is a picture.

READ Hebrews 8:6

This was discussed in detail last week when we looked at Ch 7. We talked about a better hope that was introduced to us thru Jesus Christ. Remember the love story that I closed with? The young woman when she got married not only had her debts paid but she got to live in the riches of the one she loved. The old covenant was hope of something to come. The new covenant is that hope which has now become a reality. So now you can answer Q6

READ Hebrews 8:7

This was a point made in Ch 7. If the first covenant had been adequate to save us there would have been no need to replace it. But it had its faults. It could not save. It merely showed us that we were sinners. And it provided us temporarily a way to cover our sins.

From verse 8-12 the writer of Hebrews is quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34. This is a very significant passage and one that the Jews receiving this letter need to pay close attention to. This is their Scriptures being quoted to them. In this passage God thru the prophet Jeremiah tells His covenant people that He is going to replace the old covenant of the Law with a new and better covenant. In other words, "Your own Scriptures tell you that the old covenant was never intended to be permanent."

READ Hebrews 8:8-9

God told His people way back in Jeremiah's day that He was going to establish a new covenant. It's going to be completely different, a whole new thing. It's not going to be just an improvement, a modification of the old one. It is going to be totally different. Before we get into the details we need to get something settled here.

The new covenant was made with the houses of Israel and Judah (v 8). The new covenant in Jesus was not made with the New Testament church. It did not exist in Jeremiah's day. Does that surprise? The church does NOT replace Israel as some Christian denominations teach. We Gentiles who are part of the New Testament church today have been grafted into the covenant nation of Israel. In Romans 11:11-24 Paul compares Israel to the natural branches of a cultivated olive tree and the Gentile believers to the branches of a wild olive tree. The natural branches (Israel) were broken off, and the wild branches (Gentiles) were grafted in. We Gentile believers, then, have been made partakers of the promises and inherit the blessings of God's salvation. We are beneficiaries of the new covenant.

READ Galatians 3:7-9. So, I may not be a Jew, but I AM a child of Abraham by faith. I firmly believe that God WILL keep His promises to Israel. When we did our Revelation study we saw in Chapter 7 that there is going to be one last great revival among the Jews and that will take place during the Tribulation Period.

Under the old covenant, the Mosaic Law, if an Israelite kept God's commandments they received God's blessings. If they were not obedient they received God's curses (Deut 27-28). God gave His covenant people divine incentives for obedience. It was very legalistic. The problem with the old covenant is that the people could not keep it. Why not? Because they were sinners. They were fallen human beings. They had a depraved sin nature they inherited from Adam. There was spiritual and moral failure by the nation of Israel (read about their downward spiral in the O.T.) No matter how hard they tried to keep the Law they could not do it! They erroneously thought that by keeping the Law they could somehow obtain righteousness. They believed that by their good works they could earn their salvation. There are some Christian denominations that still believe that. But it was a flawed system. Factor in basic human depravity and add to it a lack of faith in God and that will result in total failure.

READ Hebrews 8:10-12

With the new covenant that we get to be a part of God gives fallen people (like you and me) the power needed to believe and follow Him. That power comes by God the Holy Spirit. He is the One who writes the Law of God on our hearts. First John 2:27 says, "the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie--just as it has taught you, abide in Him." The Holy Spirit's presence, His anointing, changes the very heart of a person. He teaches us everything we need to know to live pleasing to God. When that promise was made thru Jeremiah the people did not understand that God would send the Holy Spirit who would put God's law, His commandments in their minds. But we understand that now.

This new covenant is not about outward religious observance and just being good people. Nothing we do impresses God. Under the new covenant God promises to be merciful and remember our sins no more. That is not because of anything we do, but because of what Jesus has already done

for us. We merely exercise childlike faith and trust Jesus to save us. Then we stand before God clothed not in our own righteousness but in the righteousness of the One who saved us, Jesus Christ. It's not about us!

And all of these promises of a wonderful new covenant were contained in Jeremiah Chapter 31. The Jews can read it for themselves. The writer of Hebrews is telling them that this promise is now a reality. "What are you waiting for? Come to Jesus!"

The writer of Hebrews closes with a commentary on the new covenant... READ Hebrews 8:13

The old covenant of the Law has become obsolete. It has been replaced with a new and better covenant.

The old covenant disappears!

Historical note: less than a decade after this letter was written, in 70 A.D., the Roman Emperor Titus overran Jerusalem, sacked the city, destroyed all the temple area and drove out the Jews. They were dispersed among the nations. They were without a temple, a place to sacrifice, a place to worship. Their old system as they knew it disappeared. There have been no temple sacrifices since then. God knew this was going to happen. But even before it happened the old system had been rendered obsolete. It had already been replaced by a new and better system. The new way centers on faith in Jesus and in His work rather than a flimsy self-reliance and dependence on our own goodness. I am so thankful that my salvation and my eternal security do not depend on me.