

Hebrews series
Part 9
"Better Promises"

Last time we ended with looking at Jesus as our far better Great High Priest who does not need to offer up daily sacrifices for the sins of the people. He has "once for all" offered up His own shed blood as God's sacrifice Lamb. When Jesus said on the Cross, "It is finished," it meant that the blood He shed was all that was needed to seal God's New Covenant!

Now as we begin chapter 8, the writer of Hebrews sums up what his message has so far been:

8:1-2 "Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated (who sat down) at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man."

So, we have a High Priest who is eternal, whose sacrifice need not be repeated, who can save us to the uttermost, and who is serving as our Great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary made by God, not man, where He ever lives to intercede for us.

He continues with comparing Jesus to the Old Testament priests:

8:3 “For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer.”

While the earthly priesthood under Aaron and the Levites had offered the various sacrifices directed by Moses, Jesus offered a far better sacrifice—His own body and blood on the Cross.

Then next, the writer of Hebrews says that if Jesus had still been there in the time that he wrote, He would not have been able to be a priest because the current priests were still offering the OT sacrifices, which Jesus made obsolete:

8:4-5 “For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

Notice: the writer says that the priests of his day were operating under the OT system, which was only a shadow of the real thing. When Moses built the tabernacle, God gave him very specific, exact instructions. Why? Because the tabernacle was a type of the real sanctuary in heaven. It was a “copy” or a “shadow.” We will see much more detail on the Tabernacle in

chapter 9. But just keep in mind the words “copy and shadow.” The Old Testament priesthood, the Tabernacle, the feasts, the rituals were only “copies, and shadows, and types” of the real things that exist in heaven.

Just this week I was riding my bike down a bike path on a bright, sunny day when suddenly a large shadow shaped like a bird passed right over me. I looked up and there he was—a huge hawk.

I knew when I saw the shadow that it was not the real thing, but that the real thing was above me. The shadow simply testified that the real thing existed.

The writer of Hebrews is telling us that when Moses built the tabernacle—with all the steps you took to enter into God’s Presence—through the courtyard, past the altar of burnt offering, the laver, the golden lampstand, the bread of God’s Presence, the incense, the ark of the covenant.....These things were only shadows of heavenly realities. They were pointing to the coming of Christ.

The real Tabernacle and the ultimate High Priest are in heaven right now! So Jesus is a better priest in a better sanctuary overseeing a better covenant!

And so the writer of Hebrews next once again uses the word "better" to describe it:

8:6 "But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises."

Amen! And here is where this chapter gets exciting, because the writer is going to talk to us about the incredible ways God's New Covenant under Jesus is better:

8:7-8 "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.'"

The Old Covenant, which God brought through Moses, anchored the people of Israel to God for more than 1,200 years. But even while it was in effect, God spoke through his prophet Jeremiah, quoted above, about its replacement.

But what kind of covenant would it be? And what made it a better covenant? Verses 9 and 10 continue to quote Jeremiah:

8:9 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them

out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.”

The first covenant was summarized in the 10 commandments. The 10 commandments revealed the requirements of God needed to achieve righteousness. If you wanted to be righteous, said God, this is what it would take, and they must be perfectly obeyed.

But no one could do it! Because of our sinful natures everyone failed. Paul writes to the Romans, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23).

And again he writes:

Ro. 3:10-18 “As the Scriptures say, ‘No one is good—no one in all the world is innocent.’ 11 No one has ever really followed God’s paths or even truly wanted to. 12 Every one has turned away; all have gone wrong. No one anywhere has kept on doing what is right; not one. 13 Their talk is foul and filthy like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are loaded with lies. Everything they say has in it the sting and poison of deadly snakes. 14 Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. 15 They are quick to kill, hating anyone who disagrees with them. 16 Wherever they go they leave misery and trouble behind them, 17 and they have never known what it is to feel

secure or enjoy God's blessing.¹⁸ They care nothing about God nor what he thinks of them."

So what is the verdict? Paul writes that "all the world is guilty before God" (3:19).

So because of our inescapable, undeniable proclivity for sin, the law could not save anyone because everyone broke it.

So...what to do?

God's answer was a New Covenant! And this New Covenant would do what the Old Covenant could never do:

8:10 "For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

The New Covenant promises an inward change that will make us WANT to do right. The Old Covenant just said, "Do this, or don't do that," while the fallen nature remained untouched.

In the New Covenant we have a promise of inner transformation, our very nature is changed. And this is what Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus "You must be born again" (John 3:7).

This is the transformation Paul wrote about: "When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

When a person turns to Jesus for forgiveness, and acknowledges the atoning death He submitted to on our behalf, he shall be forgiven. And immediately the Holy Spirit is sent to live inside that person. And when the Spirit is received, that person is transformed, receives new life, and a brand new nature that longs to please God.

This is the first promise of the New Covenant the writer of Hebrews speaks of. Now it's not just a matter of being under the harsh whip of the law with it's threats of punishment and hell, but our very NATURE is changed. True salvation is an inside job!

And better yet, our salvation does not depend on our own actions. It's not based on a merit system of gaining entrance into heaven based on how well we perform. No...it's based on God's grace! "By grace you are saved through faith, not by your own good works; it is the gift of God!" (Eph. 2:8)

Thank God for the New Covenant! It's a better covenant, based on better blood, better promises, and a better High Priest! The writer continues to describe the results of the New Covenant:

8:11 "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."

Verse 11 is talking directly to those that have partaken of the blessings of the New Covenant by turning to Christ. "All shall know me" is speaking about those that have experienced forgiveness at the foot of the Cross. Verse 12 makes this clear:

8:12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

This verse is ONLY true for those that experience the forgiveness made possible by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. But for those who do come to Christ, you will no longer have to describe or explain God to them like you would describe a person they've never met. They will PERSONALLY know Him!

The writer closes out chapter 8 with a stunning statement, especially for the Jews to whom he wrote:

8:13 "In that He says, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

Put bluntly—the Old Covenant that the Jews had been raised in, as well as all their ancestors and distant ancestors for 1,200 years—was now obsolete. No more sacrifice of animals was needed. Jesus had shed His blood once for all. No more Levitical Priesthood was needed. We now have a once for all Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, God's Son.

Now the ONLY WAY to get right with God and to enter heaven's gates is by way of the New Covenant through the shed blood of God's lamb. And this to them was a shock! But it was TRUE.

LET'S PRAY

