

## EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

### Message #15

### Hebrews 8:1-13

Just recently some of us who have had hip replacements learned that the company who designed our hip replacements are recalling their product. The company who manufactured our hip replacements has learned there are major problems beginning to surface with the old and what is needed is the new. (I have talked with my orthopedic surgeon's office and they have assured me that my model is good and they have assured me that my mental problems are not due to my hip replacement.)

This principle of something old being replaced by something new is certainly true in many facets of life. If you bought a new computer six months ago, chances are there are already new and better computers that completely outdate the old one.

That is precisely the point the writer of Hebrews wants to make. There was an Old Law Covenant that was not able to get the job done as far as giving people access to God; however, God wants us to know that **the Old Law Covenant that doesn't work is replaced by a New Grace Covenant that does work.**

On the night Jesus Christ was betrayed, Jesus took a cup of wine and passed it to His disciples and said this: "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for forgiveness of sins." The language that Jesus used that night came right out of the book of Exodus. When Moses took the blood of an animal and sprinkled it on the people, he said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." **What Jesus Christ did in using these words was theologically critical because Moses was speaking of the covenant of the law and Jesus Christ was speaking of the covenant of grace.** Moses used the blood of a literal animal; Jesus used wine as a symbol of His own blood which He was about to shed.

**GOD WANTS US TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE A LIVING HIGH PRIEST WHO GIVES US A NEW COVENANT RELATIONSHIP OF GRACE, WHICH IS FAR SUPERIOR TO THE OLD COVENANT RELATIONSHIP OF LAW.**

**A relationship with Jesus Christ is the relationship that gives us access to God.** Jesus Christ is superior to everything and better than everything: 1) He is a better High Priest (8:1-6); 2) He is a better covenant (8:7-13); 3) He is a better sanctuary (9:1-28); and 4) He is a better sacrifice (10:1-25).

You will notice in **verse 1** that we come to the "main point" of this priesthood discussion and that is to show the superiority of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ in God's covenant system of grace versus God's covenant system of law. **The word "covenant" (διαθηκης) (verse 6) refers to a legal, binding relationship that God makes with man (Smith, p. 107).** The uniqueness of this new grace covenant is that only one Person, God, is obligated to fulfill it. Once one believes on Jesus Christ, the new covenant guarantees that God is obligated to operate under His new system of grace. There are **two main theological realities brought out in these verses:**

**THEOLOGICAL REALITY #1** – Jesus Christ is our Divine Grace High Priest and He is far superior to any human law priest. **8:1-6**

There are five superiority facts brought out in this context:

**Superiority Fact #1** - Jesus Christ is a superior High Priest in His moral perfection. 7:26-28

As we saw last Sunday, Jesus Christ is a High Priest that is unlike any human high priest we could ever have. According to Hebrews 7:28, our High Priest is the Son of God. He is holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sin and sinners and exalted in heaven. No human high priest meets this criterion.

**Superiority Fact #2** - Jesus Christ is a superior High Priest in His seated position. **8:1**

Jesus Christ is “seated at the right hand of God.” Now this is somewhat odd news about a High Priest that He is One who has “taken His seat.” High priests under law were always working and never sitting. In fact, there were no chairs in the Old Testament Tabernacle because the work of the priests was never done.

Those Levitical O.T. priests could not sit down because they had the responsibility to carry out all of the matters pertaining to the altar. There were nonstop sacrifices and washings and various offerings and priestly functions.

So when we read here that Jesus Christ is seated as our High Priest, what that means is the work is done. His sacrifice is over. There is no more need of any further sacrificial work. It is finished.

Also we may notice where He is seated, “at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” We learn from the Melchizedekian connection of Psalm 110:1, 4 that God the Father invited the Son to sit here. No human priest was invited to sit at the right hand of the Majesty of God. Only Jesus Christ is invited to sit here proving He is our Superior High Priest.

**Superiority Fact #3** - Jesus Christ is minister in God’s sanctuary and Tabernacle, not one made by men. **8:2**

A priest’s responsibility was to minister in the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle and the Temple was all about a relationship with God. Jesus Christ is the minister in the true Tabernacle, the one in heaven. This is what those other places were all about. The Tabernacle was portable and temporal, but God’s true Temple in heaven is eternal.

The word “minister” (λειτουργος) used here and in **verse 6** is a specific word that refers to one who holds a public office at his own expense (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 267). Now the point is that Jesus Christ is presently and continually seated in the heavenly sanctuary and continues to minister as High Priest in view of the price He paid, Himself.

Jesus Christ is the sacred Priest that enables sinful men to have access to God in heaven. This is not about just going to heaven; this is about having access to God now. Christ’s ministry makes that possible.

When Paul says “take hold of eternal life” (I Timothy 6:12, 19), he is saying access heaven before you get to heaven. Cultivate your relationship with Jesus Christ who gives you access to God.

**Superiority Fact #4** - Our High Priest like all high priests had something to offer, Himself.  
**8:3**

O.T. human priests were responsible to offer animal sacrifices first for themselves and then for the people. That was their job. This point is stated multiple times (5:1; 7:27). Jesus Christ is a High Priest who offered something none of them could. **Jesus Christ is a High Priest who offered Himself**. Every high priest offered something, but only Jesus Christ could offer Himself, which is exactly what He offered (Hebrews 7:27). He was the sacrifice. He is far superior to O.T. priests because He did not need to offer anything for Himself, but He offered Himself for the people.

People were impressed by the O.T. priests and their clothing and their ministries. They conducted themselves in specified ways. Even when offering their sacrifices, there was an elaborate ceremony. But when Jesus Christ offered Himself, which was the ultimate sacrifice, there was no pomp, no elaborate ceremony. In fact, most would rather have the religious ceremony than the real righteousness of God.

**Superiority Fact #5** - Our High Priest would not be a priest if He were still on earth. **8:4-5**

If Jesus Christ were still here on earth, He certainly would not be a high priest according to the O.T. law. He didn't have the proper credentials. He was from the tribe of Judah, not a Levite. However, the truth is the earthly Tabernacle was a representation of the eternal sanctuary. So if Christ were still on earth He would be ministering in the lesser sanctuary.

The O.T. law and the O.T. sanctuary was a “shadow sanctuary.” Moses was under strict guidelines in constructing the Tabernacle. The Talmud says that Moses actually saw the Tabernacle and then reproduced it (*TB Menahoth* 291). Dr. S. L. Johnson said that many Jewish rabbis have speculated that Moses was actually shown a picture or model of the Tabernacle by God up on the mountain (*Hebrews*, 8:1-13, p. 4). However we all know that is not true because when Charlton Heston, who played Moses, went up on the mount, God didn't show him a model of the Tabernacle, which pretty much proves it didn't really happen

But none of this O.T. law business can compare to that of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the actual mediator between God and man. **Jesus Christ brings a better covenant than the O.T. ever brought and could enact better promises**.

**Here is one key reason why you should never go back under the O.T. law. You are going from greater to lesser. You have access to God through Jesus Christ but never through O.T. law.**

Notice **verse 6**; the mediator who can bring us into access to God and into a better covenant relationship with God than the O.T. law is none other than Jesus Christ. Through faith in Him we enter into a better covenant that offers us better promises.

**THEOLOGICAL REALITY #2** – Jesus Christ is our High Priest who brings a new grace covenant that totally replaces the old law/works covenant. **8:7-13**

Now one does not need to be a brilliant exegete of Scripture to see that this new covenant business is specifically aimed at Israel and Judah (**verse 8**). The prophet Jeremiah talks extensively about this new covenant in which God will nationally save Israel (Jer. 31:31-34).

The problem is how does all of this relate to the Church? Some have said it doesn't, however, we think differently. In fact, **the Apostle Paul specifically connected the Communion Service of the Grace Age with the "new covenant" (I Corinthians 11:25)**. The entire book of Hebrews is designed to teach the Church about the wonderful superior work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though the new covenant will mean some wonderful things for Israel nationally and physically, so also it means wonderful things for us individually and spiritually.

**Verse 7** begins by saying if the old covenant of the law could have given sinners perfect access to God, there would never have been need of a second covenant of grace. As Peter O'Brien said, "God's decision to establish a new covenant reveals that the first covenant was flawed" (*The Letter to the Hebrews*, pp. 295-296).

**Actually, the flaw is not in the first covenant, the flaw is in the people. Just like verse 8 says, that first covenant of the law does nothing but find fault with people because it keeps showing all to be sinners.** That Greek word "fault" (μεμφομαι) is one that means to find fault in the sense of culpable blame (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 283). Every time God looked at the O.T. law, all He saw was that it brought culpable blame to everyone. The Mosaic system shows all people that they are guilty and culpable for the wrath of God.

So this section is designed to show what the new covenant of grace gives:

**New Covenant Blessing #1** - The new covenant gives superior care . **8:9**

Under the old Mosaic O.T. law covenant, when God's people disobeyed, God paid no attention to them. He cut off His program with Israel. A relationship with Jesus Christ means God will never cut off His program with one who had believed.

**New Covenant Blessing #2** - The new covenant gives a superior spirituality . **8:10a**

Do you understand the ramifications of what is said here? Our access to God has nothing to do with our external, physical works of the O.T. law. It has to do with God's internal work in our hearts and minds. When one believes on Jesus Christ, a grace transformation begins that affects both the heart and the mind.

**New Covenant Blessing #3** - The new covenant gives a superior relationship . **8:10b**

Think of the new covenant relationship with God that Jesus Christ gives to us; we become God's people and He becomes our God.

**New Covenant Blessing #4** - The new covenant contains all believers . **8:11**

God speaks of a time when this new covenant guarantees that there will come a day when everyone will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. There will be no more need of evangelism. No more cults and no more false religion. There will be no need to try to point one to Jesus Christ. This new covenant guarantees that there will be a time when the whole world knows the True God.

**New Covenant Blessing #5** - The new covenant gives complete forgiveness . **8:12**

According to **verse 12**, this new covenant has the power and ability to permit God to be merciful to us in spite of our iniquities, and it has the power to cause God to never remember our sins again. This point about God forgiving and forgetting our sins is brought out here and again in Hebrews 10:16-17. This blessing means this new covenant is “radically new.”

The verb “not remember” (μνησκω) is one that means to not remind oneself of something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 293). The negation “not” (ου μη) is the strongest possible negation in the entire Greek language. Here is one time that Dr. Warren Wiersbe really misses the point in his commentary. He says that this means that “God recalls what we have done, but He does not hold it against us” (*Be Confident*, p. 94). That is not what the Greek says at all.

The Greek is emphatically stressing that when one has entered into this new covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, God chooses never to remember your sin and there is no possible way He will ever remember those sins again. As Kent Hughes said, if God chose to remember any sin, He would have to punish it. But the new covenant brings total forgiveness. “God does not just forget our sins. It is impossible for God to remember them!” (*Hebrews*, Vol. 1, p. 220). That is how thorough the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ truly is. No human high priest could do this.

It is possible to enter into a new covenant relationship with God in which all of our sins are gone and forgotten. This will never happen under O.T. law.

Now, of course, this entire new covenant is found in Jesus Christ. He is the only One who is able to give you these blessings.

**New Covenant Blessing #6** - The new covenant will cause the old covenant to disappear .

**8:13**

The adjective “new” (καινην) is one that means this grace system is of new quality and form (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 225-226). Grace is a completely new system. It is totally different and far better than O.T. law.

The word “obsolete” (παλαιω) means to actually declare and make something to be old and worn out (*Ibid.*, p. 334).

Listen carefully to what is grammatically said here. Jesus Christ has brought a new covenantal system of grace into this world. It is completely different than law. It is new in quality. It is a system that will give you access to God.

God has declared that the O.T. law has been nailed to His cross. The system of the law is done. It cannot give you any access to God. If you want access to God, you must come through Jesus Christ, the new covenant.

Your relationship with Jesus Christ is what gives you access to God. If you are part of the new covenant you have a superior salvation and a superior hope.