

Part II, Week Eight: The High Priest of the New Covenant

Digging Deeper

Read Hebrews 8:6-13

In this passage we see a better covenant, with a better mediator, enacted on better promises. It is not better in the sense that Plan B (Jesus) corrects what was wrong about Plan A (the law). Rather, it is better in the sense that the law is fulfilled in Christ. In fact, this fulfillment is anticipated from the very beginning (Deut. 30:6).

The story line of Scripture makes clear that on our own we cannot satisfy the demands of God's covenant. If we could satisfy the covenant demands on our own, then as verse 7 says, "there would have been no occasion to look for a second."

What makes the new covenant better is not that we receive new laws, but that we are given new hearts. The fault with the first covenant was not the laws, or that the laws led to legalism, or that the laws lacked grace. The problem was old, hard, sinful hearts. Verse 8 explains that the fault in the old covenant was "them" and verse 9 reveals that "them" refers to the fathers of Israel and Judah: "For they did not continue in my covenant."

The bad news in this passage is that we too have bad hearts. Apart from Christ, the fault in the fathers of Israel and Judah is found to be alive and well in us – we are not covenant keepers, but covenant breakers. Indeed, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Apart from divine intervention we are doomed.

But God gives us new hearts! Verse 10 says, "I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people." And verse 11 anticipates even more than that: "And they shall not teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

God made this promise to the house of Israel and Judah, extends it to all who would believe, has

established it through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and is fulfilling it as the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work of writing law not on stone, but on our hearts. It will ultimately be fulfilled when Christ returns.

Concerning believers, God has not told us to try harder; rather, he has caused us to be born again and has given us a new heart! Concerning the lost, Jesus promises that those receive him by faith will be shown mercy and their sins will be remembered no more!

Bible Study Questions

1. How does the new covenant help passages like Psalm 1:2-3 and Psalm 119:9-16 become a reality in our lives?
2. What role does the Holy Spirit play in writing the law on our hearts.
3. We are already saved, but we are not yet perfect in Christ. How does this tension relate to the new covenant?

Group Application Questions

1. What good things do you see or experience from God? List them.
2. Consider for each of these things, in what way is this a copy or shadow of something better that God has stored up for you? (Hebrews 8:5-6)

Prayer

Romans 15:13 - "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Take time thanking God for his blessings and the joy we find in Christ.

*Overview was adapted from Richland Hills Community Church

*Questions were adapted from "Hebrews, An Anchor for the Soul" by Kent Hughes and "The NIV Application Commentary" by George H Guthrie.

