

Christ Superior Priesthood – Part 2

Hebrews 8

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There's only two sections to Hebrews 8, and they're pretty simple. In verses 1-5, we have a better tabernacle; and then in verses 6-13, we have a better testament. Now, I know that this is a division that is created by the preacher, so you don't want to press it too hard. Basically, we see that first we have a better tabernacle, of which we won't really delve deeply in until Hebrews 9, so he starts to introduce the concept of the heavenly tabernacle in heaven where Christ is ministering and serving, in contrast to the earthly tabernacle of the old covenant, but it relates to the old covenant then moves to the covenant itself we have in Christ that supersedes the old covenant and is passing away.

Remember, he's writing to Jews who are believers in Jesus, and they're discouraged and are being tempted to turn back to Judaism. It's really that simple. They were following Jesus Christ as Messiah, but they began to be persecuted for their faith in Christ and began to think that maybe we need to go back to Judaism because we're being persecuted for our faith. It has a lot of application to us as believers. When we choose to follow Jesus Christ, we are many times going to be persecuted. Jesus said, "In this world you shall have persecution, you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world." We don't want to get discouraged, we want to move forward, we want to progress; we don't want to backslide or go back to our old ways, we want to follow Christ in His fullness.

Let's read verses 1-5. This section deals with Christ the superior Priest because He has a better covenant which functions with a better tabernacle in heaven. The writer of Hebrews says, verse 1, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum," or literally the word "sum" means head, or the conclusion, or the main point, "We have such an high priest, who is set on 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 pitched, and not man. 3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man," referring to Christ, "have somewhat also to offer. 4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern," is where we get our word "type" again, "shewed to thee in the mount."

It opens in verse 1 with, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum." Now, how far that is intended by the author to take us back in the book of Hebrews is uncertain; but one thing is certain, it's at least back to Hebrews 7. It's kind of like starting with a "Wherefore," or "Therefore," which ties into what was said just before that. When the Bible was written, we know that it wasn't written in chapters and verses, so you need to sometimes back up to get a running start on the chapter to take it in context. Backing up into Hebrews 7, at least we understand that Jesus is our great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

We went very deep into that last Wednesday night, He's a Priest after a different order—not of that of Levi, which was that of the family of Aaron, but a Priest after a different order, the order of Melchizedek. So, he comes to his head or the conclusion. The word "sum" literally means head, so it means, "This is the peak," or the pinnacle or the main point. He's come to this pinnacle, this main point, and summarizes it by saying, "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." It's really a summary statement of how we do have a High Priest and that He's "set" down.

If you write in your Bible, you want to circle or underline the word "set" because the earthly priest of Levi never sat down. When we get to Hebrews 9, we're going to look at the tabernacle. It was built in the wilderness, and you'll notice in the tabernacle there was no place for a priest to sit—not outside the holy place, not inside the holy of holies, no couches, no lounge chairs, no thrones, no seats, no stool. They were always working, always offering sacrifices, always offering incense, always engaged in ministry. They did not and could not sit down, so it's significant that it says that our High Priest is actually "set" and He's "set" in a particular place called, "the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," the very dwelling place of God where His majesty and glory is displayed.

The fact that He's "set" indicates that His work is finished. The thought is that it speaks of finality. The earthly priest, in which he's contrasting, never finished their jobs. They were always constantly offering sacrifices, always doing service, because the people were never fully completely forgiven and never really brought into a relationship with God. It was always something they had to keep going and keep doing. They were offering more sacrifices for themselves and for the people. The sitting aspect is the fact that it's conveying His finished work.

Remember when Jesus died on the cross and cried, "It is finished," *tetelestai* in the Greek. It means done or finished or paid in full. He finished the work, He rose from the dead and He ascended back to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Again, God doesn't have a right hand, but it's a figure of speech to say that Jesus Christ is at the place of authority. In the middle east at this time, as many times in today, when they dined and sat at a table they had a place for the guest of honor, so they would actually put the guest of honor at the right hand of the host. Jesus is at the right hand, speaking of His position of superiority and authority, so He's at the right hand, "of the Majesty," on high.

I was reading a commentary today that actually referenced to the thought that the Jews had at this time a high court called the Sanhedrin. There were 70 of them, and the priest actually headed up the Sanhedrin. It was their Jewish Supreme Court. When they were trying a case and someone was guilty, the person that wrote out the indictment against them, and we've been hearing a lot about indictments against people lately, he was on the left hand of the high priest. If the person was innocent and forgiven, then the person who wrote that would be on the right side or the right hand of the high priest there as the Sanhedrin would make their judgments. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, figuratively speaking, but it's a place of authority

because He's our intermediator between us and God. He's interceding for us, we're forgiven, and we're going to see this new covenant, so He is at "the right hand...of the Majesty in the heavens," what a marvelous picture that is.

Now, it speaks about where He sits and His finality and His majesty and honor at the right hand of the Father. Remember Philippians 2 that, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...every tongue should confess." Notice also it describes Him not only as a Priest that "is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," but "A minister of the sanctuary," verse 2, "and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." We have three things, He is a Priest, "who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," then He is also, "A minister," and it's interesting, that word "minister" we actually get our word liturgy from. It's a unique Greek word that translates liturgy or where we get our word liturgy. It has the idea of sanctified service in the sanctuary.

Now, notice the reference there to the sanctuary, which is also known as the tabernacle, which was the tent that was pitched, given by God to Moses to build, during their wandering in the wilderness. It was, "...the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." So, He's "A minister of the sanctuary," which is in heaven, it's "...the true tabernacle," in contrast to the earthly one. He uses the phrase "pitched" there to remind us that it's like the one that was on the earth, the Old Testament tabernacle. It was a tent, so he uses that imagery of "pitched," the idea of putting tent stakes down, pitched our tents, so it's the contrast.

Some of you may be wondering, What in the world is the Old Testament tabernacle? You don't even have a clue on what we're talking about here. In the Old Testament when they came out of the Exodus in Egypt and were in the wilderness, God had instructed Moses to build a tent. It had an outer courtyard and an inner tent with two compartments. The first compartment was known as the holy place; the inner compartment was known as the holy of holies. I don't want to go into detail about it because that's Hebrews 9, but this tent was the way that they would access the presence of God in the inner sanctuary of the tent known as the holy of holies. Between the holy place and the holy of holies there was a veil, and the high priest would go once a year through the veil.

The Ark of the Covenant was there, and atop of the Ark of the Covenant was the mercy seat. There were two cherubs carved out of gold sitting and facing one another. Above this, was the very presence of God, the Shekinah glory, and it was in the middle of the camp of Israel, the congregation. This is where God would actually hover over during the day in a cloud and a pillar of fire by night. They could look out their tents at the direction of the tabernacle and could actually see the presence and the glory of the Lord in the midst of the camp. There was only one door that they would enter into the outer court, and then there was an altar of brass where they would sacrifice the animal. They would go into the holy place where there was the incense, a candelabra, a table with showbread, and we're going to go into all that. All of the tabernacle—every facet and aspect of it—pictured Jesus Christ. It was a type or picture not only of Christ in heaven, taking the ministry of interceding for us into the holy place, but all the

instruments were—all the furniture, all the facets of it—a picture, a type, of Jesus Christ.

One thing that always fascinated me is the outer lining of the tent was made out of badger skin. I'm not sure what kind of badger or what badger skin looked like, but it was very humble and very plain and very simple. But inside were all kinds of beautiful linen, silk, and colorful curtains, with a curtain that separated the holy place from the holy of holies, which is a picture reminder of the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ. To look at Jesus Christ, there was nothing that would attract you to Him. He was a man like any other man. There's no indication in the Bible that Jesus had a halo or that Jesus glowed or that He had reverberation in His voice. He was just a man like any other man, sinless, but He was very plain. He also was divine, as we studied the doctrine of Christ on Sunday morning, we saw in what's called the hypostatic union that He's fully man and fully God, One Person, Jesus Christ. Every facet of this tabernacle, and it's a marvelous study in Hebrews 9, pictured that, so there was an earthly tabernacle.

The tabernacle was pitched in the wilderness. When they finally got into the Promised Land, long story short, David wanted to build a permanent tabernacle (or temple, they called it). God did not allow David to build a temple, but He allowed his son Solomon to build the temple. David was a man of war, and he had blood on his hands. He couldn't build the temple, so Solomon built the temple. The kingdom was divided, they were taken into captivity by Babylon, and the temple was destroyed. We know about Nehemiah and Ezra coming back to rebuild the temple, and then in the time of Christ, they had what was called the Second Temple, which was an expansion of Zerubbabel after Solomon's was destroyed. Herod the Great actually embellished that temple. During the time of Christ, the temple was known as the Herodian Temple, the Temple of Herod. That's kind of a quick synopsis or history.

It started with a tent, David said, "I dwell in a house of cedar while God dwells in a tent. I want to make Him a house." God says, "No, you can't do that, David, but I'm going to build you a house. From your seed, Messiah is going to come. Your son Solomon will build My house." So Solomon had all the material that David put together and built this beautiful temple. It lasted for a number of years before, because of their sin, they were taken captive and it was destroyed. Then, they rebuilt the temple. It wasn't as nice so Herod helped out by embellishing and enlarging it, and that was the temple that existed during the time of Christ.

How interesting that Jesus when on earth, and the Scriptures we covered tonight indicate that, was the Messiah, thus from the tribe of Judah so not being a priest after the tribe of Levi, He couldn't go into the inner sanctuary of the temple. Here's the Son of God, God incarnate, and He has to hang out in the outer courtyards. He can't go into the inner sanctuary. Now that He died for our sins, was buried, rose from the dead and has ascended and is exalted at the right hand of God the Father, He sits in the true sanctuary, the true temple as you would say, the true tabernacle which is in heaven not pitched by man but that which is in heaven, not the one that is on earth.

Here we have a contrast of the two tabernacles. One was a tent on earth by which the high priest would find access to God, representing the people to God and God to the people, and

atoning for their sins. He would sprinkle blood on the Day of Atonement on the mercy seat there where the presence of God was on behalf of the people. Jesus has actually gone as our High Priest to the true temple which is in heaven. That's what this passage is speaking about.

He's "A minister of the sanctuary," and that word "sanctuary" literally means the holy things, "of the true tabernacle," notice "the true tabernacle," in contrast to the tent which is done away with in the old covenant, "which the Lord pitched, and not man," so the tabernacle in heaven the Lord pitched it. Now, in that tabernacle, there was the glory of God, it was the manifest holiness of God, and it was the place where the seat for which God would actually pour out His judgment and His wrath upon the world. Read Isaiah 6 where Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon His throne and His glory and majesty filled the temple.

So, where He sits, verse 1; where He serves, verses 2-5. Notice it says in verse 3, "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." Again, he's saying that in the earthly priesthood, an earthly tabernacle, the priest was ordained by God, it was a God-ordained ministry, "to offer gifts and sacrifices," so it was something that God had ordained and established. All through the Old Testament they were constantly offering animal sacrifices. God said that the life is in the blood, the wages of sin is death, and they had to slay an animal to atone for their sins, which only formed a temporary covering, it wasn't real forgiveness that we have as we're going to see in the new covenant. Where He serves is in the heavenly sanctuary, but the true offering is offered by Christ, once and for all, at Calvary. He's offered Himself there in the sanctuary which is in heaven, "...which the Lord pitched, and not man," so he has "...somewhat also to offer."

Notice that even the earthly priesthood ministry was God-ordained, it was planned out in purpose by God. Why? Because God was pointing to something—the priests represented Christ, the tabernacle represented Christ, the sacrifices represented Christ, this is why Jesus said, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me)." All of it was pointing to Christ, all of it was a reminder that the wages of sin is death, all of it was a reminder that God is holy and sin has a penalty, that we need the blood to be shed. It's a picture that was ordained by God. Jesus also had to represent us before the throne of God, so He's representing us and He is also administering the blood for us in His sacrifice on the cross.

Notice verse 4, "For if he were on earth," referring to Jesus, "he should not be a priest," again, this is because He wasn't from the tribe of Levi, He was from the tribe of Judah, so "if he were on earth, he should not be a priest," or enter into the tabernacle, "seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law," so they offered sacrifices ordained by God and, "according to the law."

Just a little footnote that I found interesting. In verse 4 it says, "...there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." Grammatically, this indicates that the book of Hebrews was written while the temple still stood and sacrifices were being offered. You say, "Well, what's the big deal there?" The fact is that it must have been written pre 70 A.D. before the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people. Some people argue that Scripture was written

much later in time, but it indicates that there were priests at this time that were, verse 4, offering sacrifices and "...gifts according to the law." Again, it was all prescribed by God in the law.

Notice verse 5, "Who serve unto the example," he's talking about the earthly priest, and they're serving, "...according to the law," verse 4, "Who serve unto the example and shadow," I want you to note those two words, "example and shadow." The word "example" is a slightly different word than the word "pattern" in verse 5, which is where we get our word "type" or tupos. It's referring to the same concept or same idea. Everything in the Old Testament of the tabernacle was a picture or a type of that which is in heaven. This is why God told Moses, "When you build this thing, make sure you follow every detail of My instructions because it's a pattern," or a picture or an example, "of what is in heaven." This is a picture of a type. I think of that word "example" as well as a picture of a type.

I mentioned typology last week, and a type is something—person, place, thing, or event—in the Old Testament that God designed to prefigure or point to something that would be fulfilled in the New Testament. A very clear example is that of the Passover lamb. When they came out of Egypt in the Exodus, what was the final plague? The death angel and the Passover. What did they do? They'd take a lamb without blemish and spot. They would slay the lamb, take the blood, go outside on the front door, on the lintels, and the doorpost, they would put the blood on the house so that when the death angel came in it would passover the homes of the Israelites where the blood was applied. This is where we get the idea of Passover. That lamb that was slain was typical or prefigured Jesus Christ who would come and die on the cross for our sins. This is interesting to me because, again, someone said, "Cut the Bible anywhere, it bleeds red with redemptive truth."

Remember after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, what was the first thing God had to do? Kill an animal, shed blood, and make skins to cover their—what?—their nakedness. They tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves, it didn't work. God had to kill an animal because of their sin and cover their sin. Blood goes all the way through the whole Bible. It's called the line of redemption, the bloodline of redemption. It is pictured all the way through Scriptures. It culminates in the cross of Christ. The cross is central in the entire story of the Bible—everything before the cross points up to it, everything after the cross points back to it. It's the head, it's the climax, of the redemptive story, the cross of Jesus Christ. What a marvelous truth that is!

These are examples on earth. They were also shadows, verse 5, "...of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle." God said, and this is quoted from Exodus 25, "See...that thou make all things according to the pattern," there's our word "type," "shewed to thee in the mount." God gave to Moses a specific picture and instructions, and he was to follow that picture and make it according to that type.

In verses 1-5, we have a better tabernacle, so not on earth, not a tent pitched by men, not priests who died, not priests who had to go in every year to offer sacrifice again, but once and for all Christ died, gone to heaven, seated at the right hand, ever lives to make intercession for

us, and this is part of the new covenant. Now, in verses 6-13 we have a better testament. The word “testament” is the same concept as the word covenant, and it appears over and over and over through these chapters of the book of Hebrews. It actually appears 12 times in chapter 8 of the book of Hebrews, it appears 33 times in the New Testament, and actually appears 17 times totally throughout the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. The testament is a reference to the covenant, so we have in our Bible the Old Testament, we have the New Testament. It’s the same concept of covenant, so when you read the word “covenant” or “testament” it’s the same thing—Old Testament or New Testament, and old covenant, vice-versa.

Verse 6, he says, “But now hath he,” that is, Jesus, “obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is a mediator,” which is a go-between representing two parties, “of a better covenant,” or testament, which is of course the New Testament or covenant, “which was established upon better promises.” Now, notice these things: 1) He has a more excellent ministry; 2) He is a Mediator of a better covenant or better testament, talking about the new versus the old; 3) it “...was established upon better promises.” From verse 6, all the way down to verse 13, he’s going to be contrasting the two covenants. So, we have a new Priest, we have a new tabernacle, new temple, a better covenant. The old is passed away, the new has been established in Christ Jesus, a better covenant.

Verse 7, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.” This is his argument in verse 7: If the first covenant accomplished what was needed in redeeming man, there would be no need or no discussion or no promise of a second covenant. God made a covenant with Israel. He made a new covenant with them as well, so the old covenant had issues, it had problems. Notice it was not faultless,”then should no place have been sought for the second,” covenant.

Before I go any further, as you go through this section on the contrasts of the two covenants, the problem is not the covenant, the problem is that we are sinners and unable in our own ability to keep that covenant. In a simple way, the old covenant God gave to Israel and they said, “We will do,” but they did not do, they failed. The problem lie not in the covenant, the problem lie in the people who could not keep the covenant because they were sinners, weak and frail. In the new covenant, the focus is on what God will do. You’re going to find over and over, “I will, I will, I will,” spoken by God. The old covenant is what we do to try to keep God’s commandments and laws and we fail because we’re sinners. The new covenant is God’s provision in Christ. What He does is unconditional—not conditional like the old, but unconditional—and therefore it is sure, and as it says, verse 6, it is “...a more excellent ministry...a better covenant,” and has “better promises.” The old covenant has faults. It has the fault of man’s sin, man’s weakness.

When you talk about the law in the Old Testament, and Christians get all upset and all uptight about the law being bad, the Bible says the law is holy, righteous, just, and good. Were you here when we went through the Ten Commandments on Sunday morning? There’s nothing wrong with those Ten Commandments, the problem is us. We’re sinners. We can’t keep them.

So, God sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and forced then to condemn sin in the flesh that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, so He had to send a Savior, a Redeemer to do what the law could not do. Its purpose was never to save us, it was to show us our sin and our need of a Savior, again pointing to Jesus Christ. So, it was not faultless, there was talk of another second commandment, so he uses the word "first covenant," verse 7, which is the old covenant, and then uses the word "second" at the end of the verse which is a new covenant. It's a little challenging, sometimes we get lost in this.

He says, "For finding fault with them, he saith," notice "them" is the people of Israel, the ones that He made the covenant with and they could not keep it. He said, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," so he found the fault with the people, so He promised them a new covenant. It was about the time of Jeremiah the prophet when God established this new covenant. One of the references to the new covenant in the Old Testament when God gave it was Jeremiah 31:31-34. It's really important for you to write that down, look it up, and read it. That's God giving to Israel the new covenant which we are part of in the church today under Christ our Savior. He says, "...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

Again, notice with whom the covenant is made, "...the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." We, as Gentiles, get to be, as Romans says, "grafted in and partakers" of this new covenant, which technically was made with Israel not with the Gentiles, but we are part of the church therefore we're wild olive branches grafted in. We get to be partakers of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and also that He promised in the new covenant.

Now, the kingdom was divided when God made the new covenant, verse 8. There was Israel in the north, ten tribes, and then in the south the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He made it with Israel and with Judah. This covenant was, "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 continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." He says that this old covenant was made with them and they could not keep that covenant that He had given them.

Beginning in verse 10, he basically says what the nature of the new covenant is, and he gives it to us, verses 10-13. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. 13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." This is a marvelous reference to the new covenant given in Jeremiah 31; and again, verse 6, it's, "...a better covenant...better promises."

Now, go back over it with me beginning in verse 10. Notice, "...I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord," so you're going to see this repeated several times, "I will," verse 10, three times, then it's repeated again in verse 12, "I will," and again in verse 12, "I will." So, the focus on the old covenant is do this and live, but we could not because of the weakness of our flesh and our sinful natures, so we were hopelessly lost. The new covenant is, "I will," this is what I am going to do. It's unconditional, and the only condition you might say that we have to do is just trust and believe in Jesus Christ, which is not a work by the way. We're not working to save ourselves, our faith is not a work. It's trusting in Jesus to save me.

If you're down at the beach and you go out swimming in the ocean and you get caught in a rip tide, you're flailing out there and the lifeguard has to run out and save you, which could be pretty embarrassing on a crowded day on the beach. The lifeguard pulls you in from the ocean and you're kind of humbled, like everybody's looking, "Oh, look at that dude had to get rescued by the lifeguard." It's humbling, right? You're maybe a little embarrassed, but you're glad that they came to rescue you. You don't go up and down the beach saying, "Did you see how I let that lifeguard save me? Wasn't I awesome! Did you see how I just yielded to that lifeguard and let him pull me in? I'm amazing, aren't I?" You'd say, "You're a joke is what you are. You were flailing. You were going under. You were screaming and freaking out." Jesus comes to rescue us, save us by His grace. It's such a beautiful picture.

Everything about this new covenant—better promises, better Priest, and better tabernacle, better blood—it's just so amazing. As we go through the book of Hebrews, it's going to break it all down for us. Notice what God will do. I've broken it into five things: 1) "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." In the old covenant, the laws were written on what? Stone, tablets of stone, which when Moses came down from Sinai and found all the people of God dancing around a golden calf in a drunken orgy, he broke the commandments in anger. Isn't that funny that God gave Moses the commandments, he comes down. Before he gives them to the people of Israel, they've already broken them, so he breaks the commandments and has to go back, and God gives him a second set that He writes down with His own finger, but not on stone.

Where does God write His law? On our hearts. The difference here is one is external and the other one is internal. It's not the law written on stones, the new covenant is God writing on the... I like to use this concept of the fleshly tablets of our hearts. What it means is that God takes out our heart and gives us a new heart. He does a spiritual regeneration, which means giving us new life. You might say this is actually the picture of the conversion of a sinner, and the first thing that happens is God gives us regeneration, He gives us new life. We're dead in trespasses and sins, and what God does is quicken us or awaken us to our need of Him to what He did for us on the cross.

I don't know about you, but I think about my conversion and I can see nothing but the hand of God drawing me to Himself—opening my heart, opening my eyes, bringing me to submission and surrender. All praise, all glory, all honor be to Jesus Christ. Amen? I was running from Him, and He came after me and pursued me, convicted me, regenerated me, turned me

around, brought me back, and made me His child. This is a description of our salvation—God writes His words in our hearts.

The old covenant laws written on stone could not change our hearts. You know, it's like laws we pass in our land today. We pass laws, thou shalt not steal, which I guess isn't illegal anymore—if you need something, just go take it. You take a thief, put him in jail, it doesn't really change him. It punishes him, and it may be that they see the light and turn around, but once they get out of jail, they go steal again because their hearts haven't been changed. Jail can't really change them. But if you put somebody in jail and they get born again, guess what happens? They come out a different person. They're a new creation. The Bible says, "...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Some of my dearest friends over the years in the church have been people who got saved in jail. I had a dear friend for many years that got saved in prison. He's gone to be with the Lord, but what a blessing he was! When he got saved in prison, his life totally changed. He was one of the most Christ-like men of God I've ever known. He was a hardcore criminal, and he was converted in prison. God changed his heart. This is the new covenant. God takes out your heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh. He writes His laws on the fleshly tablets of our hearts.

What else will He do? 2) "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people," verse 10, so we are His people. We are part of the family of God. We have a relationship with God as our Father in heaven. We cry, then, "Abba, Father." 3) "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour," which is what they had to do in the old covenant, "and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for," here's the point, "all shall know me, from the least to the greatest," verse 11. Everyone in the new covenant has a personal relationship with God and knows the Lord, and we all have equal standing and footing before God as children of God.

It also reminds us that we have in the new covenant the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us. Our next study on "The Great Doctrines of the Bible" is a study on God the Holy Spirit, and one of the things that happens when we're saved is that God, the Holy Spirit, convicts us, convinces us of sin, converts us, regenerates us, indwells us, fills us, and seals us unto the day of redemption. You can't be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, but the fact is that every one of us in the new covenant have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us.

I don't want to get sidetracked, but in the old covenant not everyone had the Holy Spirit living inside of them. He would come on kings, He would come on prophets, He would come on people for special service. There were only a select group of people in the Old Testament that had the Holy Spirit inside of them. In the new covenant everyone equally, from the least unto the greatest, had the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that dwells in me, dwells in you. Every Christian equally has the Holy Spirit in His fullness, but the Holy Spirit doesn't have every Christian. You need to surrender to Him. But this is what the new covenant brings, we shall all know Him, "...from the least to the greatest." We have the Holy Spirit as our teacher.

Then, 4) “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,” verse 12. Isn’t that what God does when He saves us by His grace? Doesn’t He show us mercy? You know that word “merciful” is actually tied into the word that’s translated in the New Testament “propitiation” and that’s tied into the word that was used for the mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant in the holy of holies where the presence of God dwelt, where the priest would sprinkle the blood. If you’re a Christian, and you thus become a partaker of the new covenant, God showed you mercy. That means God did not give you what you deserved. That should humble you. God did not give you what you deserve, God showed mercy. The word “mercy” is also tied in with the concept of compassion.

Again, as I think of my own salvation when I read this section of Hebrews, I think of how merciful and how compassionate God was to save me by His grace. He could’ve just “FROOM!” fried me right on the spot and sent me to hell for all eternity, but He showed me mercy, showed me compassion. “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,” and then he says, “and their sins and their iniquities,” here’s another “I will,” “will I,” this time, “remember no more,” so there’s forgiveness. There’s regeneration, there’s relationship, there’s fellowship, there’s mercy, and there’s forgiveness. “I will no longer remember their sins.” Isn’t that awesome? “I will separate them from you as far as the east from the west,” the Bible says. God separates us from our sins. He forgives us. He lifts them up and carries them away.

He wraps it up in verse 13, “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old,” so it passes away, “Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” Remember when Jesus cried, “It is finished,” on the cross? Remember what happened when He gave up the ghost? The veil of the temple, the tabernacle, the curtain separating the holy place from the holy of holies was—what?—torn in two from the top to the bottom. It just went, “KEEECK!” It symbolizes something: Through the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ, access has now been made available to all of us. We don’t have to go to an earthly priest. We don’t have to wait on an earthly priest. We don’t have to wait for some animal to be slain, which only forms a covering and bring one all the time we sin. Once and for all forever, an eternal salvation. This is why Peter says we were redeemed, “...with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained,” for us, “before the foundation the world.”

All the pictures, all the types, all the illustrations in the temple and the tabernacle, the priests and the lambs, all pointed to Jesus Christ, the pure, holy, and sinless Lamb of God. When Jesus cried, “It is finished!” He did away with the old covenant, sealed it in His blood, rose again for our salvation, and again is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Someone put it in a poem, “Do this and live! the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. A better word the gospel brings, it bids me fly and gives me wings.” I love that. Amen? “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created...unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” That’s the new covenant. It’s sure. It’s built on promises that God will do—not what we do, but what God has done for us. Amen? Let’s pray.