

## Better Promises

## Hebrews 8

### Hebrews 8: Introduction

- We recently refinanced our house.
- Our previous loan agreement was for five years and ended this month.
- The new one is effective next month.
- We were able to get a better interest rate *and* up our monthly payment in order to pay off the house more quickly.
- The previous contract was replaced by a new and better one.
- Our previous loan agreement was for five years. It was never intended to be permanent.
- We knew in advance that in Spring of 2012, we would be coming to a new agreement and signing a new contract.
- The old contract is expired, the new contract is now signed, so the new terms are in effect.
  
- You may reasonably ask, “So what?”
- So here’s what:
- The Old Covenant that God made with Israel in the days of Moses was temporary.
- It was never designed to be permanent.
- God promised long ago that He would enter into a New Covenant or new agreement with Israel, which He has initiated through Jesus Christ, and which we may enter into today.

### Hebrews 8: Better Promises

- 8:1-6 We have confidence in a heavenly High Priest who is seated in a heavenly sanctuary.
- 8:7-13 We rely on a heavenly Mediator who has introduced a New Covenant between God and His people.

### Hebrews 8:1-6

- Start reading with **7:25-28**.
  
- **8:1-3** The Old Testament tabernacle was a large rectangular tent with a big fence around it, forming a sort of courtyard.
- Inside the courtyard and inside the tent the priests carried out their work of offering sacrifices, burning incense, lighting oil lamps and so on.
- This tent was later replaced by a larger stone temple built in the days of King Solomon.
- Christ is now seated now at the right hand of the Father in heaven.
- He occupies a position of majesty in the true tabernacle in heaven.
- Interestingly, the old tabernacle and the temple which later replaced it, had no place for the priests to sit down.
- Their work was never done until Christ fulfilled their ministry by offering up Himself.
  
- **8:3-5** The tabernacle, and the temple which replaced it, were built according to specific plans given by God.
- That specific pattern was a copy and a shadow of heavenly things – it was not the ultimate reality.
- It was a copy intended as a place for the Levitical priests to serve.
- Christ was not of the priestly family so He did not – and could not – serve as a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem.
- He can, however, serve in the true sanctuary or true tabernacle in heaven.

- The work of the Levitical priests was intended to teach the people about the work of the Messiah – Christ – who was to come.
- Illustration: My wife’s watercolors. First a pencil sketch, followed later by the paint.
- In fact, the painting itself is only a picture of something real, like a flower, a landscape or some other real scene.
- The earthly tabernacle was a *type* (Gr. tupos) or a “pattern” intended to remind us of – or teach us about – the real thing.
- **8:6** Christ has a more excellent ministry, as He fully accomplished God’s will and fully met humanity’s need.
- He is Mediator of a better covenant, as this one gives us better terms on which we can relate to God.
- It is established on better promises, as God has obligated Himself without any requirement on our part but to accept His generous terms.
- Two messages conveyed by the old temple and the priests’ ministry within it:
  1. God is with you. (He wants to relate to you.)
  2. Don’t get too close. (In order to relate to Him properly, you have to let Him set the terms.)
- Christ initiated an entirely new era, setting new terms, as he offered His own blood.
  - See **9:11-12, 24-26**
- *“Our faith is grounded not in what we are or what we have done, but ever and always in what he is, God’s perfect Son, and what he has done through his perfect, eternal sacrifice.”*
  - Raymond Brown, former principal, Spurgeon’s College, London

### **Hebrews 8: Better Promises**

- 8:1-5 We have confidence in a heavenly High Priest who is seated in a heavenly sanctuary.
- 8:6-13 We rely on a heavenly Mediator who has introduced a New Covenant between God and His people.

### **Hebrews 8:6-13**

- Covenant = binding agreement, contract, or sacred pact between two parties agreeing to do or not do specific things.
- A legal contract is one type of covenant.
- A peace treaty between nations is another.
- A marriage is a covenant between man and wife.
- God deals with people on the basis of covenants – like the covenant between Him and Israel given in the days of Moses.
- **8:7-8** The people of Israel, like us, were fallen people who could not hold up their end of the bargain.
- Notice in **v.8** the rabbi says, “finding fault with *them*.” The problem was not so much with the Covenant as with the nation.
- The Old Covenant, like the previous mortgage contract that Ginger & I had with our lender, was never intended to be permanent.
- **8:8-12** This passage is a lengthy quotation from the prophet Jeremiah.
- Jeremiah prophesied at a difficult time.
- The people had forsaken God.
- The religious rites practiced at the temple had fallen into pure formalism.

- Alongside that formalism, they were busy worshiping idols and engaging in all kinds of immoral and unethical behavior.
  - Most of Jeremiah's prophecies involve judgment.
  - He is often called "the weeping prophet" because he was so frequently driven to tears by his own messages of impending doom.
  - He witnessed the invasion by Babylon, the tragic destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple built by Solomon centuries earlier.
  - But he also prophesied of a better future day – which the rabbi reminds us of here.
  - Turn to **Jeremiah 31:31-36**.
- **8:10** God has not set aside Israel as some have suggested; He has set aside the Old Covenant through which He related to Israel in the past.
  - Things God Promised to Israel as part of the New Covenant:
    - Inward change (8:10)
    - Intimate relationship (8:10)
    - Wholesale conversion (8:11)
    - Complete purification (8:12)
  - Though our rabbi is writing to Jewish believers, this is the covenant under which God accepts non-Jews into His family.
- **8:12** John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, said of this passage:
    - *"For I will justify them, which is the root of all true knowledge of God.*
    - *This, therefore, is God's method. First, a sinner is pardoned: then he knows God, as gracious and merciful: then God's laws are written on his heart: he is God's, and God is his."*
  - The New Covenant Is:
    - Unrestricted In Its Power
    - Eternal In Its Duration
    - Complete In Its Effects
  - God makes specific promises to His people and then binds Himself to carry them out, transforming our hearts so that we can hold onto our end of the agreement.
- **8:13** The rabbi says the Old Covenant is:
    - Becoming obsolete
    - Growing old
    - Ready to vanish away.
  - He is writing before 70 A.D. when the rebuilt temple that stood at the time of Christ was destroyed by the Romans.
    - See also **8:4-5**, where he writes in the present tense.
  - The temple is now gone and the priests no longer have a ministry, so we can say the Old Covenant is already obsolete.
  - All that remains is for Israel to accept the terms of the New Covenant that Christ has established.
  - We anticipate this will happen at the end of the church age.
  - All are already welcome to accept the terms.

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## Hebrews 8: Conclusions

- We entitled this chapter *Better Promises*
- Under the New Covenant, God promised to do certain things for Israel nationally and will do so at some future date.
- What the Old Testament didn't clearly reveal was the founding of the church.
- God is now accepting anyone on earth who will accept this New Covenant's terms.
- This New Covenant is very reasonable as Christ takes on the complete burden of our sin, so that we don't owe anything.
- It's as if our lender decided to swallow the debt of the mortgage that Ginger & I still owe.
- God actually wants us to agree to such terms.
  - See **Isaiah 1:18**.
- Not living the Christian life well enough?
  
- **Possible False Belief:** I'm not worthy to enter God's presence.
- **A Biblical Response:** That's correct in the sense that we can only enter God's presence on the merits of Jesus Christ. If we trust in Him, we are declared worthy by God.
  
- **Possible False Belief:** I'm never going to change. I'm simply incapable.
- **A Biblical Response:** That is true in the sense that we cannot change without God's help. But the New Covenant promises include a promise of inward change. Christ has a present ministry of transforming hearts.
  
- This is what God promises as part of the New Covenant:
  - Inward change (8:10)
  - Intimate relationship (8:10)
  - Wholesale conversion of Israel someday (8:11)
  - Complete purification (8:12)
- We must remember not to place confidence in ourselves whenever we relate to God.
- Finally, remember these two points that come from our outline:
  - We have confidence in a heavenly High Priest who is seated in a heavenly sanctuary.
  - We rely on a heavenly Mediator who has introduced a New Covenant between God and His people.
- Both of these points require us to trust Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross.