

Hebrews: Lesson #68: The Mediator of a Better Covenant

Notes for Parents to Study with Their Children

For Sunday, Jan. 18th

Read Heb. 8:5 – 10:18 (a simplified explanation of the text is supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: Heb. 8:7 “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.”

The First Covenant

- The First Covenant was started in the days of Moses. God made a covenant, a contract with Israel. (A contract is an agreement between two people where each agrees to do something. A builder makes a contract with a family to build a house. He has to build the house a certain way. They family has to pay him a certain amount of money for the house.) In God’s contract with Israel, He agreed to be their God and they agreed to keep His Laws).
- Under the First Covenant the Law of Moses said that every time you sinned an animal sacrifice had to be offered to God. Then once a year another sacrifice was offered by the High Priest for all the sins. That same sacrifice was offered every year remembering the fact that the people of Israel had sinned. Thousand of sacrifices was offered, but sin was never fully taken away.
- The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah lived hundreds of years before Jesus. But he predicted that one day God would begin a New Covenant where sins would never be remembered again.
- The writer of Hebrews says that a New Covenant would mean that we would no longer live under the First Covenant. The First Covenant would come to an end.
- This means we don’t follow the Law of Moses today. We don’t have animal sacrifices. We don’t keep the Sabbath day. That covenant has been done away with. Now we follow what Christ teaches us. We don’t need to make animal sacrifices

Jesus’ Death Made the New Covenant Possible

- In the Old Testament, the blood of animals was sprinkled on all of the things they worshipped God with. That blood started the First Covenant.
- When Jesus died on the cross it brought the First Covenant to an end. His blood started the New Covenant. When Jesus had the first Lord’s Supper with the apostles the night before He was crucified, He said that the grape juice represented the New Covenant in His blood.
- Do you know what a will is? It is what someone writes to tell what should happen to what they own when they die. The New Covenant was like a will that Jesus made promising what He would do for us at His death. His will promised that sins would be forgiven. The New Covenant began when Jesus died.

Jesus Entered the Greater Tabernacle

- We remember that in the Old Testament during the time of Moses, God told the people to build the Tabernacle. God gave exact instructions on how He wanted it to be built.
- Hebrews tells us about that Tabernacle.
 - In the Holy Place, the first room inside the tent, there were three pieces of furniture: the Lampstand, the Table of Shewbread, and the Altar of Incense. The Altar of Incense was in front of a curtain. All the priests could come into this room.
 - Behind this curtain there was a second room called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. In it was the Ark of the Covenant – a chest that contained the 10 Commandments, a pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that miraculously budded.
 - Above the Ark of the Covenant was the Mercy Seat – two golden cherubim (angels) that faced each other and spread out their wings towards each other. Just above the mercy seat was where God would meet them.
 - Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place and he only came in one time each year to offer a sacrifice for all the sins of Israel. He would enter with animal blood and sprinkle it on the mercy seat. God agreed to pardon their sins for another year.

The Greater Tabernacle

- But Hebrews goes on to explain something very interesting: This Tabernacle was only a copy. The real Tabernacle was in Heaven.
- Once Jesus had died on the cross, He entered the real Tabernacle in Heaven. As our High Priest, He went into the Holy of Holies there in the presence of God.
- Jesus didn’t take animal blood, He took His own blood offering it for our sins.

The Blood of Jesus Was the Real Sacrifice God Wanted

- We are told that the blood of animals was only serving as a copy of the real blood that would have to be offered, Jesus’ blood.
- Hebrews says that the blood of bulls and goats could never have truly taken away sins.
- Hebrews says that when God sent Jesus into the world , He prepared a body for Him to offer as a sacrifice.
- Jesus would never have to make that sacrifice again. His sacrifice was once for all times. He would not need to go back each year like the earthly high priests did.
- When Jesus died for our sins, and we are cleansed by His blood, God never remembers that sin again.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Jesus, a Greater High Priest in a Greater Tabernacle

8:5 What these earthly priests are doing really only serve to show us a likeness that points to something else -- a shadow of what exists in heaven. Just like the warning to

Moses said when he was about to set up the Tabernacle, “God said, see that you make every thing according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

6 But now Jesus’ service as High Priest has come to be distinguished and superior to that of other priests.

Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant

This is especially true in that Jesus is the Mediator of a superior covenant. The Mediator stands between God and man, in setting up the laws of that New Covenant -- a Covenant that gives us superior promises.

7 If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no place for a second covenant.

8-12 But God did find fault with the first covenant in that He said,

“Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will finish with a New Covenant to the house of Judah and the house of Israel. ⁹The New Covenant will not be like the Old Covenant that I made with their forefathers on that day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They did not stay with My First Covenant and due to that I no longer cared about them the same way. ¹⁰For this is the Covenant I will make after the days of the First Covenant, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, I will write these law on their hearts. To them I will be God and they will be my people.

¹¹It will not be necessary for everyone to teach their neighbors and brothers to know the Lord because everyone will know me from the least to the greatest. ¹²For I will be forgiving and gracious toward their unrighteousness and their sins I will never again remember their sins.”

13 By calling it “a New Covenant” it makes the First Covenant old and worn out. But if something is old and worn out it will soon disappear.

A Description of the Earthly Tabernacle

9:1 However, it is certainly true that the First Covenant also had God-given requirements for serving God in the earthly Holy Place.

2 For the tabernacle was constructed and equipped in the first room (the area called the Holy Place) with the Lampstand and the Table of Showbread.

3-5 Then there at the second curtain (veil) was the Altar of Incense that stood before curtain leading in to the inner part of the Tabernacle known as the Holy of Holies. Behind that curtain was the Ark of the Covenant overlaid with on every side with gold. Inside that chest was a golden pot that had manna inside, and a rod that budded, and the Tablets of the Covenant. Above the Ark of the Covenant were the two glorious cherubims overshadowing the mercy seat. But we cannot talk about this in detail right now.

6 Once the original Tabernacle was finished and furnished, priests went in to the outer part (the courtyard and the Holy Place) to perform their service all the time.

7 But into that second, innermost part of the Tabernacle (the Holy of Holies), the only one who ever entered that area was the High Priest, and that was only once a year. He never went in without an offering of blood which he offered first for himself and then for the sin of ignorance on the part of the people.

Christ Entered the Greater Tabernacle

8 Now the Holy Spirit was using all this to help us understand that while the first part of the tabernacle (the Holy Place) was still standing, that the way into the Most Holy Place had not been shown.

9 Now that outer tabernacle (the Holy Place) was meant to be a comparison that speaks to our time. Gifts and sacrifices were being offered there that could not make those serving perfect in their conscience.

10 Such services only had to do with food and drink and different kinds of washings – regulations that had to do with the physical man that were laid down until things were restored to what they were meant to be.

11 But when Christ came to be a High Priest of the good things that have come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle – one men did not make and that is not part of this earthly creation.

Christ Enter the Most Holy Place With His Own Blood

12 And He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, having found and obtained a redemption lasting forever.

13 We know that the Law of Moses commanded that the blood from the sacrifice of bulls and goats and the ashes from the burnt offering of a red heifer could be sprinkled on those who had become unclean because they had broken the Law. Such acts would purify their fleshly bodies making them sanctified, set apart, once again.

14 Now if, through blood sacrifices of these animals, the flesh could be considered cleansed, how much more will the precious blood of Christ cleanse your conscience from dead works making it possible for you to serve the living God. Christ did not offer an animal, but offered Himself to God having no sins that would blemish Him.

15 And through His blood He can stand as a mediator between God and made and bring them together with a New Covenant (agreement). Since Christ's death had taken place redeeming those who had transgressed under the First Covenant, now those who are called may receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.

Christ's Death Started the New Covenant

16 For anyone to inherit there must be a Will. And before anyone inherits, the one who made the Will must die.

17 Whenever someone makes a Covenant in the form of a Will, it doesn't go into effect until that person dies. Even though the Will may promise to give an inheritance, the Will does not apply while the one who made it is still alive. So Jesus had to die for His New Covenant to go into effect.

Our High Priest Offered One Sacrifice in the True Tabernacle

18-20 We know that even the First Covenant did not start without blood; because after Moses spoke all the commandments from the Law to all the people, he took a branch of hyssop with scarlet wool attached and dipped it in the blood of calves and goats. Then he sprinkled the document itself and then all the people. And as Moses did this he said, "This is the blood of the covenant God had commanded to you."

21 And in the same way Moses sprinkled blood on the tabernacle and on all the instruments in it that were used to serve God.

22 According to the Law of Moses, we could say that almost everything is cleansed by blood, and that without blood being shed no sin could ever be taken away.

23 Now as we've said before all those sacrifices done under the Law were just examples to help show us what was to take place in heaven. The blood of animals served to cleanse the copies, but the real things in heaven would have to be cleansed with something better than that.

24 For Christ did not enter the Holy of Holies in the earthly Tabernacle which was constructed by men. That Tabernacle was only a copy of the real one in Heaven. But Christ entered into Heaven itself and now appears face to face with God on our behalf.

25 And Christ does not offer Himself over and over again like the high priest entered the Holy of Holies year after year with blood that is not his.

26 If it was like that, Christ would have had to suffer over and over again from the time the world began. But that is not the way it is – Now, once for all times at the completion of the ages (when the last period of time had come) He has appeared for the purpose of doing away with sin which He accomplished by sacrificing Himself.

27-28 And just as when people die, it is once for all time (for after death they face judgment). So it is also true of Christ – He died once for all time as an offering to bear the sins of many. But He will appear a second time. This second time, however, He will not be coming to offer Himself for sin, but to deliver and rescue those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

Christ Offered a Greater Sacrifice

10:1 Because the Law of Moses had only a shadow of good things to come, not the real image, its sacrifices being offered continuously year after year for those who would come near, could never bring them to perfection.

2 If those sacrifices had accomplished that, there would have been no reason to keep offering them. Once those performing the religious service were cleansed, their conscience would have had no reason to feel guilt for their sins. [These sacrifices had cleansed them ceremonially and in the flesh they were no longer considered unclean under the Law of Moses, but their conscience was still defiled. See 9:9,14]

3 One reason they still kept feeling the guilt for those sins (even though a sacrifice had been offered) was because every year those sins were remembered.

4 Their sins were always remembered because the blood of bulls and goats could never truly have been able to take away their sins.

5-7 Therefore when Christ came into the world, He said to God, "Sacrifices and offerings are not what You desire, but instead You have prepared a body for me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins, You took no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I come to do Your will O God. This is written of Me in the scroll of the book.'" [Quoted from Ps. 40]

8 Now in our text we've just looked at, it says, "Sacrifices and offerings are not what You desire, but instead You have prepared a body for me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins, You took no pleasure." Now remember, all those things are offered according to the Law of Moses.

9 Next He says, "Behold, I come to do Your will O God." If the sacrifices were not what God wanted, but instead He wanted Jesus to do the Father's will in offering His body as a sacrifice, then it would imply that He was taking away the first sacrificial system to establish the second.

10 In this “will” that Jesus came to do, we have been sanctified, set apart for serving God, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all times.

Under Christ’s New Covenant Sin is Remembered No More

11-12 Every priest is standing there every day offering the same sacrifices over and over again. Obviously those sacrifices were never really able to take sin away, but Jesus, offered one sacrifice for sin that is effective continually. After that, He sat down at the right hand of God

12-13 Expecting from that point on that His enemies would be put like a footstool under His feet. [See Ps. 110:1]

14 You see it only took one offering for Jesus to continually perfect those who’ve been sanctified.

15-17 But Scripture has something else that the Holy Spirit bears witness to us about; because after it said, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws upon their hearts and write them on their minds...” then God says, “And their sins and lawless deeds, I will remember no more.”

18 Now if God has released us from these sins, no more offerings for sin will be needed.