

THE STAND

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE HEBREWS CHAPTER 8



Chapter 8 Commentary

As we begin Chapter 8, the writer realizes that not everyone in his audience understands or completely comprehends his message. So like any good speaker or writer, he sums up the message in just a few sentences, and reminds us of the essentials of his teaching. He begins in verse 1 by saying, "We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man." The fact that Christ is High Priest and is currently interceding and ministering at the right hand of the Father is the most important message in the first half of the book of Hebrews. Above all, we must realize this is still true today. Christ is alive and willing to represent you blameless before the Father, if you put your faith and trust in Him. For this 1st Century audience, they must realize that the Levitical priesthood had no power for salvation and the Levitical priesthood no longer offered a connection to the Father. Christ is the only Way to enter into the presence of God.

The First Covenant



The first covenant with Israel was made after God brought the people out of Egypt. The last half of the book of Exodus, and the majority of Leviticus, details the covenant and the Law. One thing we must realize is the first covenant was dependant on the Law. In order for the covenant to be effective, the people had to follow the Law. However, the people did not follow the Law completely and man did not uphold his part of the covenant.

This is why the new covenant is so important. We no longer rely on our own efforts, but on Christ. In the new covenant, we will see that Christ is the sacrifice and the mediator and we are included in this covenant by belief in Christ, not by our own efforts.

The writer reminds his audience that Christ is also their eternal Sacrifice. Once again, he reminds them that there is no need to bring a physical sacrifice to the altar. Christ's physical death and shed blood are the ultimate sacrifice; sufficient for all men, for all of eternity. The Old Testament sacrifices of bulls and goats were simply a shadow and a representation of the ultimate Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Many of these Jewish Christians and seekers may have been able to see the connection and foreshadowing of these Old Testament systems in Christ. For those who had not made the connection, the writer makes it perfectly clear that the sacrificial system, the tabernacle and many other elements of the Jewish religious system were given to serve as a shadow. Not only were the physical elements a shadow of what was to come, but the first covenant with Israel also served as a shadow of a better covenant. This is the covenant the writer of Hebrews is ready to unveil.

When God made his first covenant with the nation of Israel, He also brought the Law. The covenant and the law were inseparable. In fact, the covenant and the law were used to show the nation of Israel that God loved them and wanted to restore His relationship with them. God knew the nation of Israel would not keep all the laws perfectly and, therefore, would not hold up their end of the agreement. Their faults would later allow them to see God's greater love when the new covenant was created.

This new covenant should not have been a surprise for most of the audience. A new covenant had been prophesied by Jeremiah 600 years before Christ. Christ has even said that His blood was the blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28). So, this audience had anticipated a new covenant from God. The writer quotes the words of Jeremiah to remind his audience of the prophecy of this new covenant.

To better understand the quote from Jeremiah, let's look at the background of Jeremiah's writing in more detail. Jeremiah was one of the latter prophets in the Old Testament. Jeremiah writes to the nation of Israel at a time when they are far from God. It had been many hundreds of years since God had led the Israelites to the Promised Land and once again they were falling away from God. Even though God had delivered the people from Egypt and brought them out of the desert wanderings into the Promised Land, the children of Israel still strayed from God. A number of

wicked kings had ruled Israel, and at the time of Jeremiah's writing there was little hope in the nation of Israel. But Jeremiah, a prophet of God, was called to bring a message of hope to the nation.

In Jeremiah 29-30, we see God reach out to the people of Israel and remind them of His great love for them. God tells the nation that He hears their cries and is aware of their exile. He reminds the people of their wickedness and

then brings a message of hope and restoration. Hundreds of years before Christ was even born, God promised to enter into a new covenant with the nation of Israel.

The Hebrews writer quotes Jeremiah's account of this new covenant (Hebrews 8:8-12). Since the old covenant had been broken by man, God desired to make a better covenant. This new covenant would not be based on man's performance, but on God's grace and His Son's sacrifice. The law would be written on the hearts of men and the message of God would no longer be taught simply by words of men, but God would simply be known.

What does it really mean that the law would be written on the hearts of man and God would simply be known? When God made His first covenant with the Israelites, He gave them the law and the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. The Israelites referred to this law in order to atone for their sin and be able to commune with God on a very basic level. But in the new covenant the tables are turned. God offered us a connection with Him through Jesus Christ without any law. He offered an open invitation for those who would believe and put their faith in Christ to obtain complete forgiveness of sin forever. The Holy Spirit would then come and dwell with them. God knew the natural response of a Holy Spirit indwelt believer would be to follow the example of His Son. He knew that a law on tablets of stone was no longer necessary. He knew when people understood the great gift that God had provided and saw the living example of the perfect Man, their heart would be transformed and the law, or the ways of God, would then be written on their heart.

This same transformation would impact the way the message of God was spread to the nations. No longer would people share the name of God just by teaching and preaching, "Know the Lord," these true Christ followers would be living a life that was unmistakably different than the rest of the world. The world would know the heart of God through the lives of people who had accepted God's Son. Now, this passage does not mean we stop teaching and preaching in our churches today, but it does mean our message should be different. We no longer teach a message of law and performance, but we teach the message of grace through faith. We can now speak of a hope and the free gift of salvation. Our message should instruct believers to live a life that will be a living testimony that will reach far beyond the words of our church platforms.

The writer of Hebrews ends this part of his message by making a bold statement about the first covenant. He claims that it is obsolete and is even ready to disappear. This writer knew that everything that needed to be accomplished in the first covenant was accomplished by Jesus Christ. Now that the first covenant has been settled, the rules and regulations of that covenant no longer apply. Very soon the physical reminders of the old covenant would be destroyed. The temple in Jerusalem was still standing when Hebrews was written. Many believe that the writer knew the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed just a few years later. Just as the writer had predicted, in 70 A.D., Titus came down from the north and destroyed the temple and killed over one million Jews. This was the last physical reminder of the old covenant and in 70 A.D. it disappeared.

There's one other thing that disappears in light of this new covenant, sin. God says, through Jeremiah, "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." It was hard for some of these 1st Century Jews to let go of the temple. Many of them never came to understand the promises of this new covenant. As well, many today don't understand the promises of this new covenant. Admittedly, it is sometimes hard to imagine that God would forget our sins, but He does. We may have to live with the consequences of our sin, but God has already forgotten a believer's sin. We must also learn to accept the forgiveness and promises of the new covenant. As followers of Christ we must let sin and its weight become old and disappear.



Personal Study Questions

The purpose of these study questions is to help you get into God's Word. We hope that through a personal encounter with God's Word, He will reveal His Truth and allow you to understand His story first hand.

1. What is Jesus currently doing today? (v1-3)

2. What Old Testament things were a copy or a shadow of the things to come? These can be things listed in Hebrews 8 or other things you have seen through study of Scripture.

3. Why was it important for Moses to construct everything in the tabernacle according to God's direction?

4. Who brought the new covenant?

5. What are some of the differences between the old and new covenant? (v8-12)

6. Is there a sin in your life where you still find it hard to accept God's complete forgiveness? Write it down and take time to pray that you will receive peace in this situation.

