



## **NG Study Guide: Hebrews 8:1-13 :: “Jesus Offers a Better Covenant” [11.19.23]**

### **Love God + know the Bible better:**

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### **The Study**

**Thesis:** Throughout history, God has been leading humanity to better places. As our better High Priest, Jesus offers us new life through a better covenant. Today, we will discover how we can experience the blessings of Jesus’ better priestly service and the benefits of the new covenant.

**Subject: Jesus’ Priestly Service and New Covenant**

**Object: Experience the Better Covenant**

**Context:** Hebrews 1-7 focus on the superiority of the person of Jesus and His position as our High Priest. Beginning here, the author shifts the focus to the results of His works, namely a better covenant, sanctuary, and sacrifice. In Hebrews 8 we see the result of a better covenant given through Jesus.

#### **A. Service of the Better High Priest [1-6]**

*<sup>1</sup> Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, <sup>2</sup> a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*

The first two verses serve as a reiteration of the main point made in the previous chapter. Jesus acts as our High Priest and Mediator. In contrast to the earthly priests whose work was never done, Jesus is *seated at the right hand of the throne of Majesty*. The sacrificial work of Jesus is complete and now He reigns in authority from heaven, the true tabernacle (dwelling place) of the Lord. What is the result of the service that our Great High Priest provides?

#### **1. Offers a Better Gift and Sacrifice [3]**

*<sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.*

It is the explicit role of every high priest to offer gifts and sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. As such, it was necessary that Jesus make an offering and sacrifice to God on behalf of the people as well. Rather than the sacrifice of an animal, Jesus offers up Himself. Living a sinless life, He was able to sacrifice Himself and die on our behalf, cleansing us of our sin (Hebrews 7:27). The usage of the terms “gifts” and “sacrifices” shows us the weight of Jesus’ offering. While these could be interpreted as references to meal offerings and blood offerings respectively, it’s best to understand this as a reference

to the sacrificial system as a whole. Jesus' offering of Himself fulfills the law of sacrifices and completes the work necessary to forgive the people of their sin forever.

## **2. Serves in a Heavenly Ministry [4-5]**

*<sup>4</sup> For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; <sup>5</sup> who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*

### **a. Distinct from the Earthly Priesthood**

All the priesthood was descended from the tribe of Levi. As a descendent of the tribe of Judah, Jesus wouldn't have met the requirements to serve as a priest. This shows that the priesthood Jesus serves in is distinct from the earthly priesthood. His is a better priesthood that serves in the heavenly temple.

### **b. Template for the Earthly Priesthood**

Still, the earthly priesthood served its purpose as God had intended. In Exodus 25, God instructs Moses to create the tabernacle and says, "<sup>40</sup> And see to it that you make *them* according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." The earthly priesthood served a copy or shadow of the perfect heavenly things. The work of the earthly priests point to the work of the heavenly High Priest, Jesus.

## **3. Mediates a Better Covenant [6]**

*<sup>6</sup> But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

The ministry of our High Priest is this: To mediate a better covenant that is built upon better promises. God was always leading humanity to this better covenant. What makes this covenant better?

## **B. Results of the Better Covenant [7-13]**

*<sup>7</sup> For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. <sup>8</sup> Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*

There are numerous benefits afforded to God's people through the new covenant. As we learn to appreciate the work of Jesus as our High Priest, we experience the blessings of the results of the new covenant on a greater level.

### **1. Resolves the Fault of the First Covenant [9]**

*<sup>9</sup> 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 did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.*

The author notes that a new covenant was necessary because of a fault found in the first covenant. However, the fault wasn't concerning God's promise He made to the people of Israel. There was no lacking in desire or ability on God's part to fulfill His end of the covenant. It was mankind's inability to satisfy their end of the covenant (i.e. their sin that led them away from God) that created the need for a new, better covenant. The new covenant was not an improvement or amendment to the old covenant, but an entirely new promise altogether.

#### **a. Leads to Life, Not Death**

Because of our sin, we must face the penalty of death (Romans 6:23). This was the glaring issue with the first covenant. God's desire is that none would perish (2 Peter 3:9). Due to the weight of the law and our inability to obey perfectly and completely, the old covenant led to death as a natural consequence.

Because of this, He offers a new covenant that leads to life everlasting. How does He do this?

#### **b. Based on Grace, Not the Law**

To offer new life, God had to change the nature of the covenant. In His dispensation of the law, God's moral standard was meant to show God's holiness and instruct the people of Israel how to live. Under the new covenant, God's people are no longer under the bondage of the law, but under the gift of grace offered to us freely through Jesus.

## **2. Gives Assurance [10]**

*<sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

### **a. Old Covenant Dependent Upon Man**

In Exodus 19:5, Moses meets with God on Mount Sinai after leading the people of Israel out of Egypt. In this passage, Moses is instructed to remind the people of Israel of their covenant with God. Specifically, God says, *"<sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine."* This old covenant was dependent upon mankind's obedience. If they would obey and keep the covenant, they would be God's special treasure above all people.

### **b. New Covenant Dependent Upon God Alone**

Hebrews 8:8-12 is a recording of the prophesy of the new covenant that's found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. While the covenant noted in Exodus emphasizes man ("If you will.."), the new covenant emphasizes God alone ("I will make...I will put...I will write...I will be.."). Regardless of our ability to perform, God has guaranteed the continuance of this covenant of grace between God and man. We can have assurance that this promise has been secured through Christ and will last for eternity. The new covenant is not centered around behavioral modification, but of true transformation that starts in the heart – a work only God can start and complete.

## **3. Provides Personal Relationship with God [11-12]**

*<sup>11</sup> None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

The new covenant is much more profound than intellectual understanding or memorization as was integral to the old covenant (c.f. Deuteronomy 6:6-8, 11:18-20). There is a deeper sense of knowing God that can be had in the new covenant. Rather than knowing through the adherence of the recorded law outside of oneself, one could now know God experientially through a personal connection created through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

## **4. Makes Old Covenant Unnecessary (Obsolete) [13]**

*<sup>13</sup> In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

Here is the focal point of the defense the author of Hebrews is making. While God provided the first covenant for His people to be used for a specific purpose through a specific time, He has now given a new and better covenant that makes the old one unnecessary (c.f. Galatians 3:19-25). There is not function useful to us provided by the old covenant once we receive the grace of God under the new covenant given through Christ Jesus. As we turn towards the High Priest who offers a better covenant, we have no need to turn back to the old covenant that will one day vanish completely.

## **Contemplation & Prayer**

- 1. Pray that God would give you a deeper appreciation for His work as our High Priest.**
- 2. Ask God to remind you daily of the incredible promises made in the new covenant.**

## Study Guide Qs

**Q1. What are some obstacles we might face that prevent us from experiencing the forgiveness offered through Jesus' perfect sacrifice?**

**Q2. How can we encourage one another to depend on grace over works?**

**Q3. What are some common areas we depend on our own abilities more than God's? How can we grow our dependence upon God for all things?**

**Q4. How has your personal relationship with God grown this past year and how do you hope to see it grow in the new year?**

### **"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Enduring Word Commentary from David Guzik on Hebrews 8: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/hebrews-8/>**

**2. Here's a helpful article that gives biblical context and explanation to the new covenant: <https://www.gotquestions.org/new-covenant.html>**

### **Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:**

- 1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**
- 2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

### **Disciples who make disciples:**

- 1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?**
- 2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead: [With the Thanksgiving holiday approaching, check in on neighbors who may not have family or community. Find ways to show them God's love.](#)**

### **Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### **Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

**2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

**3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

**4. Every time you meet consider asking:**

**a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.