

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

HEBREWS LESSON 6 (Chapters 8-10)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“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” (Heb. 8:13). Welcome to our study of the Book of Hebrews, chapters 8-10. The Book of Hebrews uniquely divides into three sections. Chapters 1-7 discuss the supremacy of Christ. Chapters 8-10 discuss the supremacy of Christ’s covenant. And chapters 11-13 discuss the supremacy of Christian living. In the section that we will be covering today (Hebrews 8-10), there is one overriding theme: Christ’s covenant is so much greater and so much better than the Old Covenant, and it is the covenant by which we today will be judged. The writer begins in Hebrews 8:6 by showing that Christ’s covenant is based upon better promises and better principles. “But now He [Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” Here we see a better Mediator and a better covenant that is built upon better promises. Everything about the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant could not take away sins. It was temporary, and was based on sinful human beings. But not the New Covenant. It has a new Mediator—Jesus Christ Himself, Who serves as the Mediator between man and God (1 Tim. 2:4-6). In the New Covenant we have better promises. The promise under the Old Covenant was, “Christ is coming.” The promise under the New Covenant is: “Christ is here, and through Him we can have immediate forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38). The New Covenant is not only based upon better promises, but the principles that underlie Christianity also are much better than those of the Old Law. The main passage used by the Hebrews writer in chapter 8 is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Here is the point that is being made by the Hebrews writer that I want you to understand. Writing to Hebrew Christians who were familiar with the Old Law, and who were thinking about going back to that Law, the writer said, in essence, “Even the Old Law to which you want to return said that a New Covenant was coming. That Old Law prophesied and promised that one day a New Covenant would appear, thereby making the Old Law obsolete.”

The writer makes three points about the New Covenant in regard to why it is so much better than the Old Covenant. As he quotes from Jeremiah 31:31-34, he first establishes the fact that, unlike the Old Covenant, which was outward and physical, the New Covenant is inward and spiritual. Hebrews 8:10, which is a quote from Jeremiah 31:31-33, says, “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.” Look at the New Law. It no longer is outward and physical. It no longer is written on tablets of stone. And it no longer requires a person to make physical sacrifices. Rather, it is inward. God said, “I will put My laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts.” This is something that is relevant to man’s spirit as the Spirit of God reveals the Word of God so that we can worship God in a spiritual way. John 4:24 tells us that “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The Samaritans came to Jesus in John 4 and said, “The Jews worship in Jerusalem, but we

worship on this mountain.” Jesus said, “Let’s cut to the chase. No longer will ‘worshiping God’ be about mountains or cities. Rather, ‘God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth’” (vs. 24). The New Covenant far exceeds the Old in that it is inward and spiritual in nature.

The New Covenant also is better than the Old because it is individual and universal. Look at Hebrews 8:11—“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.” Notice the “all,” indicating that the New Covenant is a universal law. The wonderful thing about Christ’s covenant is that it is not for a certain group of people. The Old Covenant was given to Israel (Hag. 2:5; Jer. 31:31-32). The New Covenant is universal in its nature. Jesus said, “Go into **all** the world...” (Mt. 28:18). He said, “Preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). The New Covenant is universal in its nature, and it is individual. Under the Old Law the concept was, “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord.’” Those under the Old Covenant were brothers and a part of Israel before they even knew anything about the Law. People were born into the Old Covenant. This is not the case with Christ’s Covenant. It is individual. Joshua said in Joshua 24:15, “Choose for yourselves this day....” We must make a decision for ourselves to obey the Gospel. We cannot become a member of the church just because some in our families were members or because some of our friends were. We all must make that decision for ourselves.

What is so wonderful and unique about the New Covenant is that under it, gracious provision for sin has been made. Look at Hebrews 8:12—“I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” This is what is so unique about Christ’s Covenant. Under the Old Law, there was not a lot of mercy. Yes, there were sacrifices and promises of sins being removed. But all of that was predicated on Jesus. “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” That could be obtained only through the blood of Jesus. He is the only perfect sacrifice for sin. Thus, since the New Covenant is inward and spiritual, because it is individual and universal, and because it can completely remove sin, why would anyone ever **want** to return to the Old Covenant? The Old Covenant is obsolete—which is the point being made in Hebrews 8:13. As you prepare to read this verse, remember the words of Jeremiah 31:31-32 where God said,

“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—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke.”

What covenant is he discussing? He is talking about the Ten Commandment Covenant given at Sinai (Ex. 20). God said that there would be a day when a New Covenant would arrive. Hebrews 8:13 plays off of that to say, “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.” How should the Christian feel about the Old Covenant as a system of salvation and as a system of worship? It is obsolete. It is of no value to us. Once we have tasted Christianity, and once we understand what it is to be a child of God, the Old Covenant is useless.

Let’s think about the word “obsolete” for just a moment. If we place this matter into some modern-day applications, I think we will be able to understand how the Old Law is obsolete. For example, as far as transportation goes, horses and buggies are obsolete. The next time you go to town, how would you like to have to hook up the horse and buggy? Can you imagine riding in a horse-drawn buggy today as your transportation? Once you know

how wonderful it is to ride in a car, and once you know how fast it is, how quick it can get you to a destination, and how efficient it is, would you want to return to a horse and buggy? Or, how would you feel about using a rotary phone today—by dialing in each number? Today, with our hand-held cordless phones, rotary phones are obsolete. Ladies, how would you like to do laundry by using a washboard down at the creek? Once you have used a washing machine or a dishwasher, you do not want to go back to the hand-style wringer or washboard. Think about the first computer you ever used. Do you remember how slow it was? At that time, it was great. But now you wouldn't be able to do anything on it. Once you've seen how fast things are now, and how much technology has improved, can you imagine going back to the very first computer system you ever had? It is obsolete today. It is of no value to us. It is not valid for what we are trying to do.

Here's the point. The Old Law is just like the horse and buggy, the rotary phone, the washboard, or the first computer you ever used. It is of no value to us in the here and now in regard to man's salvation. Hebrews 8 makes the point that we no longer are under the Old Covenant. Christ and His Covenant are the way to salvation today.

Hebrews 9 continues this discussion. Verses 1-11 discuss the tabernacle, and how it was carted along with the Israelites to be set up repeatedly. The writer even says that it is impossible to speak about such things in detail because some information about it has been lost. But the point he is making is that under the Old Covenant, it was impossible to ever really approach God in a personal sense. The priest could approach God once a year—but not in a personal sense. Under the New Covenant, we can approach the very throne of God (Heb. 4:16) and come boldly into His presence. But that is possible only because of the blood of Jesus. Did you know that Jesus' blood obtained eternal redemption for mankind? Notice Hebrews 9:12, which contrasts the blood of bulls and goats under the Old Covenant the blood of Christ. "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Jesus—with His own blood as the perfect sacrifice—entered the Most Holy Place so that we can now have eternal redemption. We can be brought back to God and have a relationship with Him forever. We are told in 1 John 2:2 that Jesus "is the propitiation [substitutionary sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." Galatians 1:4 teaches us that Christ ransomed us back to God by His own blood. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus "tasted death for everyone." God wants all people to "come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. There is one God, and one Mediator between man and God—the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:4-5).

Unlike the blood of bulls and goats (which could never take away sins, Heb. 10:3-4), Jesus, under the New Covenant, has made **eternal** redemption possible. Here is the point. Why would anyone ever want to go back to an old system that could not save, where eternal redemption could not be saved, and by doing so, give up Christ and all that He has done for us? We must not go back because with Jesus we gain everything, whereas we would lose everything if we tried to go back to the Old Law. Here is a valid principle that we need to understand. Judaism is no longer God's way of having a relationship with people. There are hundreds of thousands of Jews today who still believe that they must worship by the Old Law, keep the Ten Commandments, go to Jerusalem, and so on. But such things will not save them. Jesus' blood is the only way for people today to be saved. In fact, it is the blood of Christ that is able to cleanse our consciences from dead works. Notice Hebrews 9:13-14, and examine the contrast.

"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Under the Old Covenant, animal sacrifices sanctified the flesh. But under the New Covenant, the blood of Jesus purifies the conscience and makes the spirit right before God. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse our spirits and make it possible for us to stand before God. Revelation 1:5 tells us that we have been “washed in the blood of the lamb.” Saul was told in Acts 22:16, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” We can be cleansed from sin only through the blood of Christ. Romans 6:1-4 tells us that Jesus died, was buried, and was resurrected, and that we re-enact that as we die to sin, are buried with Him in baptism, and arise from the waters of baptism pure and clean so that we can walk in newness of life. That could not be achieved under the Old Law. Things like the ashes of a heifer or the blood of bulls and goats could never cleanse a person’s spirit and put him or her into a right relationship with God. Could such sacrifices purify the flesh? Yes. But God is not concerned with purity of flesh in the sense of having a relationship with Him. Yes, He wants us to live pure in the flesh. But our spirit is what must be purified so that we can be right in God’s sight.

The question then arises, “If eternal redemption can be found only in Jesus, and if it is through His sacrifice that we can become spiritually right in God’s sight, what about all of those people who died under the Old Law?” Is the Hebrew writer saying that all of those people were lost because they never came in contact with Jesus’ blood? Look at Hebrews 9:15, which makes a wonderful point about Jesus’ sacrifice. The blood of Christ not only goes forward under the New Covenant today, but it also went backwards in order to cover all those people under the Old Law who were obedient to God.

“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

People under the Old Law were not without hope. They were not lost. If they were obedient to the Old Law, if they did the best they could in order to worship God the way He instructed them, and if they kept His commandments, then God, through His Son (because Christ’s blood goes backwards) was able to forgive them of their sins, too. So, yes, people under the Old Testament had hope. But we today are under the New Covenant, and we must allow the blood of Jesus save us.

There are a couple of other points that the Hebrew writer makes in chapter 9 about the blood of Jesus. In Hebrews 9:22 he makes this point about how blood relates to forgiveness: “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” Here, blood is used as a figure of speech to represent Jesus’ sacrifice. We are not talking about the literal red substance that comes out of your finger when you prick it. The blood does represent the sacrifice, of course. And that is what we’re getting at here. Without the shedding of blood—without something or someone dying and giving its life in your place—there can be no forgiveness. In Leviticus 1-5 we see bulls, heifers, goats, and turtledoves that died. Their sacrifice was what God demanded at that point in time. Without Jesus having shed His blood, this world would have been without hope. According to Ephesians 2:12, we would have been “without hope and without God.” The blood and sacrifice of Christ are so important to our forgiveness. In 1 Peter 2:24 we are told that Christ “Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness.” Notice, too, Hebrews 9:27, which is another passage that teaches us the importance of being right under the New Covenant. This passage deals with death and judgment. Jesus is the only way, and one of the incentives that the writer offers is that we must be ready because we may not have much time. We are not going to live forever since “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” We have not been promised that we are going to live forever. James 4:14

says that life is like a vapor. In Job 14:1 we read that “man who is born of woman is of few days.” Proverbs 27:1 says that we are not to boast about tomorrow since we do not know what it will bring. At the most, we may have 70 or 80 years (Ps. 90:10-12). Yes, some people live longer than that, but as a rule we have 70 or 80 years to live. We must realize that life is very brief. In 2 Samuel 14:14 we are told that our lives are like a glass of water that, once having been poured out onto the ground, can never be recovered. Life is short. And we must, in view of death and the judgment, be right with God. Romans 14:10-12 says that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we are told that we will one day have to give an account for the things we have done in this body, whether good or bad. Revelation 20:12-15 is a judgment scene where books are going to be opened and people will be judged by their works. We, of course, will be judged by the New Testament. Before we die and go to be judged, we absolutely must make sure that we are right in the sight of God.

Hebrews 10 drives the point home about Christ's covenant being better than the Old Covenant. The main point is that the Old Testament sacrifices that were made year by year were never able to make anyone perfect. Hebrews 10:3-4 explains how those sacrifices were inferior to the sacrifice of Jesus. “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Under the Old Law, what did those sacrifices do? They reminded the people, on a yearly basis, of their sins. But those sacrifices could never really take away sin. This is the main point that the writer is making. Do you want to remember your sins and constantly be reminded of them? Then stay under the Old Law, because that's all it could do. Do you want to stay in sin? Then live by the Old Law, and that is exactly where you will find yourself. But with Jesus there no longer is a reminder. Rather, God has promised to take away our sins. Jesus is able to “save to the uttermost” those who come to God through Him (Heb. 7:25). Let it be clearly understood that the Bible teaches that Jesus came to take away the Old Covenant and to establish the New. I have heard people say, “Jesus never really came to take away the Old Covenant. He just came to give us some different principles.” That is contrary to Scripture. The Bible says that Jesus did come to remove the First Covenant and to establish the Second. Notice Hebrews 10:8-9.

“Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second.”

The coming of Jesus, His perfect life, and His dying on the cross took away the First Covenant. It removed it by nailing it to the cross (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15). Jesus tore down the middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles. So to claim today that we have any affiliation with the Old Covenant is blasphemous in regard to the work of Jesus and His sacrificial role for mankind. When we try to go back under the Old Law, we are saying, in essence, “Jesus, Your sacrifice, Your death, and Your New Law are not good enough for us.” Why, then, would anyone ever want to go back to try to live under the Sabbath? We do not live under the Sabbath. Colossians 2 makes that point very clearly. Why would anyone want to say that we are under the Ten Commandments today? Jesus' Law is so much better than the Ten Commandments. Why would anyone want to live under the Old Testament Levitical system? It could never take away sin. The Old Law was given “for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). It was a schoolmaster that was intended to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). But when Christ came, then we no longer were under the schoolmaster. We today are under Jesus' Law. There is a truly powerful lesson being made here in the Book of Hebrews.

Now I want to direct your attention to Hebrews 10:12, one of the most beautiful passages in the entire book. You will not find a more beautiful or concise statement about the sacrifice of Jesus. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God." Jesus made one sacrifice for all of mankind's sins forever. Notice how different that is from the Old Law, under which the people offered daily sacrifices (Heb. 10:1-3). Those sacrifices could never take away sins. Jesus said in Matthew 26:28 as He instituted the Lord's Supper, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." In Acts 2:38 the people were told to "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Revelation 1:5 says that we are "washed in the blood of the Lamb." We can stand pure, clean, and holy in God's sight as a result of the one sacrifice that is forever universal in nature. Thank God that we do not live under the Old Law!

Under the New Covenant, our sins have been forgiven. We therefore do not have to live the way that people lived under the Old Law. But in order for a person to take advantage of the sacrifice of Jesus and to be a part of the New Covenant, that person must obey the voice of Jesus. It is not possible to become a part of Christ's covenant, and to enjoy the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, until we are willing to do what Jesus says we must do. The Lord gave so much for us. He came to this world, lived a perfect life, and died for our sins by hanging in agony on the cruel cross—all so we could have the hope of salvation. Don't you want to become a part of the New Covenant today? Don't you want to have your sins forgiven? If so, here is what God says you must do to be saved. You first need to hear the Word of God—the New Testament. According to Romans 10:17, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Once you have heard that Word and realize that it is the only source for information about salvation, you then must believe in Jesus. Jesus said in John 8:24, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins." But belief alone will not save anyone, as James 2:24 explains. You also must repent. Jesus said in Luke 18:3, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Then you must confess Christ as the Son of God (Rom. 10:10). Then, in order to contact the blood of Christ that offers you eternal redemption, you must be baptized. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Saul was told, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). How does a person contact the blood of Jesus? According to Romans 6:1-4, we contact Christ's blood in baptism. And after we arise from the water, we then walk "in newness of life." I am pleading with you today to obey the Gospel and to become a part of the New Testament church. Let Jesus' blood enter your life through obedience to the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR HEBREWS LESSON 6 (CHAPTERS 8-10)

1. According to Hebrews 8:6, upon what two things is Christ's covenant based?
2. According to Hebrews 8:13, what did Christ make obsolete?
3. What prophecy is made in Jeremiah 31:31?
4. According to 1 Timothy 2:4-6, who is the mediator of a new covenant?
5. According to Hebrews 8:11, is the New Covenant a limited or universal law system?
6. According to Haggai 2:5 and Jeremiah 31:31-32, was the Old Law a limited or universal law system?
7. What important promise is made in Hebrews 8:12?
8. What important difference between the Old Law and the New Law is discussed in Hebrews 4:16?
9. According to Hebrews 9:12, how does Christ save people today?
10. According to 1 John 2:2, what is Jesus?
11. What is a "propitiation"?
12. According to Hebrews 10:3-4, what could the blood of bulls and goats never do?
13. What, according to Revelation 1:5, did Jesus do for us?
14. What important point is made in Hebrews 9:22?
15. According to 1 Peter 2:24, what did Jesus do for us?
16. What important point is found in Hebrews 9:27?
17. What, according to Romans 14:10-12, will each of us eventually have to do?
18. What, according to 2 Corinthians 5:10, will each of us eventually have to do?
19. According to Hebrews 10:3-4, how often did sacrifices for sin have to be offered under the Old Covenant?
20. According to Hebrews 10:3-4, what could the sacrifices under the Old Covenant never accomplish?
21. According to Hebrews 10:12, what did Jesus do for us?
22. According to Colossians 2:14-15, what did Jesus do to the Old Law?