

THE BETTER COVENANT (Hebrews 8:6-13)

1. The distinction (Hebrews 8:6).

- a. The words “but now” indicate a change in topics.
- b. He has just described Jesus as being superior to Aaron.
 - i. He says that Jesus has a more excellent ministry.
 - ii. His work as High Priest is much more effectual than anything Aaron and his descendants could do.
- c. He then says that not only is his ministry better, but Jesus is also the Mediator of a better covenant.
 - i. The high priests were mediators between God and man.
 - ii. The high priest would go into the Most Holy Place once a year and offer the sacrifice of atonement on behalf of all the people.
 - iii. Jesus offered Himself and became our Mediator, our go-between, between us and God.
- d. Jesus is the Mediator for us using a better covenant.
 - i. In the next verse, there is mention of the first covenant.
 - (1) It is interesting to note that there are several covenants in the Old Testament.
 - (2) There was a covenant with Noah, Abraham, a covenant of salt made with the priest (Numbers 18:19), a covenant of the perpetual priesthood (Numbers 25:13), and one with David.
 - ii. We need to know what this first covenant was to know which was done away with by Jesus.
 - iii. In the passage from Jeremiah, it was a covenant with Israel and Judah.
 - iv. It was made when God led them out of Egypt.
 - v. It had to have the 10 commandments as part of it because of what is said in Deuteronomy 4:13.
 - vi. So, this covenant is one that was made with Israel and Judah, when God led them out of Egypt, and has the 10 commandments a part of it.
 - vii. Therefore, the covenant that was replaced was the one over the entire Jewish religious system.
 - viii. Think of the shock that would cause the readers of this letter at that time.
 - (1) Everything they knew was replaced.
 - (2) Anything that was brought over from the Old Covenant, and there were numerous things, now gained their authority from Jesus and not Moses.
 - (3) Everything is new and different.
- e. This new covenant is established upon better promises.
 - i. The better promises are alluded to in Jeremiah’s prophecy.
 - ii. The better aspect of them is that they are spiritual promises whereas most of the promises of the old one were physical.
 - iii. Length of life, great crops, land, and other physical things were promised.
 - iv. The new one contains promises of a new home of a spiritual nature, a new body which is spiritual and many new spiritual blessings.
- f. So our writer begins this new topic by making a distinction between the old and

new covenants.

2.The dilemma (Hebrews 8:7-9).

- a.Our writer now points out a dilemma that existed before the bringing in of the New Covenant.
- b.In reality, the dilemma was two-fold.
- c.There was first of all a dilemma with the law itself.
 - i.Notice the “if” statement.
 - ii.If the first, the one covering all the Jewish system, were fine, there would have been no need for a second one to take its place.
 - iii.The writer does not really go into what was faulty about the first.
 - iv.He will do that beginning in chapter 9.
 - v.This is what I mentioned in the introduction when I said he does what he has done throughout the book by mentioning something he will come back to later.
- d.The other part of the dilemma was with the people themselves.
 - i.God had a fault with them and our writer brings the mind of his audience to the prophecy of Jeremiah to show this to be the case.
 - ii.He now quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34.
- e.This passage, written after the 2nd carrying away of the Israelites by Babylon in 597 BC, prophesies a new covenant and seems to have been ignored by the Jews.
 - i.In reality, the old one was never meant to last.
 - ii.It had a purpose and its purpose was to bring them to Christ (Galatians 3:24).
 - iii.It was weak because of the fact the people could not perfectly keep it (Romans 8:3).
- f.The problem with the people is that they did not continue in the covenant.
 - i.As mentioned, it was impossible for them to keep.
 - ii.Peter would even mention this, saying neither them nor their fathers could keep the old law (Acts 15:10).
- g.God had shown great care for them by leading them out of Egypt.
 - i.Notice how He is said to have taken them by the hand.
 - ii.He guided them gently and not forcefully.
 - iii.He was caring and compassionate even in the face of their rebellion.
- h.So great, though, became their sin and failure to continue in the covenant, that God stopped regarding them.
 - i.This carries the idea of taking care of them.
 - ii.Their sin became so great that God removed the providential barriers that had kept other nations from overtaking the Israelites.
 - iii.He allowed them to be taken captive and endure hardship because of their failure to keep the covenant.
- i.So now we see the dilemma that brought about the need for a new, speaking quality not time, covenant.

3.The differences (Hebrews 8:10-12).

- a.Jeremiah was inspired to write about this new covenant that would one day be put into place by God.
- b.The reason for the new one was that the people had failed to continue in the

old one.

c. What will keep people continuing in the new one?

i. Surely there has to be some differences to keep people from leaving the new one.

ii. This is what Jeremiah now showed them and was necessary to show the intended audience of the book of Hebrews.

d. Hebrews 8:10 shows a difference between the two being that the new one is much more spiritual in nature than the old one.

i. This new covenant would be one that affected the heart and mind.

ii. The old one was written on stone and mainly dealt with their outward actions.

iii. Think of all the commands of the old one and how much they had to do with ceremonies and sacrifices.

iv. The new one appeals to our heart and mind.

v. Whatever external things are found in the new one have to do with the expression of our feelings toward God.

vi. Worship, prayer, baptism, are all things that point to our devotion to God, which comes from a heart that loves God.

vii. It is not cold, formal, ritualistic actions which took place under the old covenant.

e. Hebrews 8:11 shows another difference being a much more personal relationship with God.

i. At the end of verse 10, God said He would be their God and they would be His people.

ii. How that is done is that, under the new covenant, God is known by all.

iii. To those under this new covenant, they would not be taught.

iv. The reason for this is that one must learn of God before He can be in a covenant relationship with God.

v. One writer put it this way: under the old, you were a member and had to be taught, but under the new you are taught, and thus you become a member.

vi. A Jew was born into a relationship with God and had to be taught about Him.

vii. Now, one is taught about God, his heart is appealed to by the gospel, and then He comes to know God, which means be obedient to His will (1 John 2:3-6).

viii. This does not mean we don't evangelize because all who are under consideration in this verse are those who are in a covenant relationship with God.

ix. All of us who are in the kingdom, whether rich or poor, which is the meaning of least to the greatest, know God.

x. One thing that needs to be pointed out is that there are two different Greek words for "know" in this verse.

(1) The first one indicates knowledge that is progressive, which is how the Jews came to know God.

(2) The second one indicates knowledge that is complete, which is what a Christian has in the sense that we don't learn about God after coming into a relationship with Him, but before we do.

f. Hebrews 8:12 shows what is probably the greatest difference, which is the

forgiveness and mercy of God under the new covenant.

- i. Under the old law, sin was remembered, which our writer will discuss later.
 - ii. Every sacrifice was a reminder of the sin in their lives.
 - iii. Under the new covenant, God wipes out the sin and does not bring it up against us any more.
 - iv. It is interesting that the word “unrighteousness” is plural just like “sins” and “iniquities”.
 - v. In other words, for all our unrighteous acts, there is mercy to be obtained.
 - vi. Under the Old Law, there were some acts for which there was no mercy.
 - vii. Under the new, there is mercy to be had if mercy is sought.
 - viii. The way the final phrase is written in the Greek is that God in no way keeps a record of our sins and iniquities when forgiven by Him.
- g. There are tremendous differences between the Old and New Covenants, starting with the fact that our Mediator is far better than that of the old.
- h. The New is much more spiritual in nature, allows for a closer relationship with God, and offers more forgiveness and mercy than the Old.

4. The decaying (Hebrews 8:13).

- a. This final verse of the chapter has a lot of differing opinions about what it means.
- b. Notice that the word “covenant” is in italics.
 - i. It was not found in the original.
 - ii. Since the words new and first are, it is definitely fitting that the word was added by the translators.
- c. There is a new covenant, so the first one must be out of date, which is the meaning of the word old here.
 - i. What do you do with products that are out of date?
 - ii. They are to be removed aren't they?
- d. Notice also, that it is God being referenced as making the old one out of date.
- e. I believe that is important in understanding the last phrase of the verse.
- f. The word “decayeth” refers to something declared obsolete.
- g. The phrase “waxeth old” refers to something that is infirm and aged.
- h. These words describe the old law as an aged, infirm, obsolete article about to pass from this life.
- i. Some believe that the old law, at the time of writing, was still in use but about to go away.
 - i. Jesus took it away, nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).
 - ii. This does not seem like the appropriate thought.
- j. I believe this passage to mean that the law is dead and soon all parts of it are going to be removed from the scene.
 - i. In other words, the Jewish system was dead but the Jews didn't realize it yet.
 - ii. The Law of Moses could not save them and what they had left was about to be removed by the coming invasion by Rome.
- k. This statement was for those Christians who were being tempted to leave Christ for the old ways.

I.They needed to know that what once was great and thriving is now dead and its carcass was to be finally removed in the very near future.