

title

hebrews 8.1-13

Hebrews chapter 8 this morning. Our author is continuing his development of Jesus' High Priesthood in heaven. And here we come to the idea that with this new priesthood comes also a new covenant between God and men.

So let's look at our text and see what we see.

Hebrews 8.1-13 - 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, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 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." 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.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 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— 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. 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. 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. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

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.

Jesus' death on the cross ushered in a brand new covenant between God and men. As our verses point out, the old covenant was rendered obsolete because it had always been insufficient to save. The Law could not save you, but instead it only revealed to you that you needed a Savior. People who were waiting for the Savior would attempt to obey the Law because that is what God asked them to do in that old covenant. But it was always incomplete and imperfect, because God Himself had to come and save us by dying for our sins and then rising again.

Now that Jesus has done that work of salvation, there is no need for the Law or the old covenant between God and an individual believer. Instead there is something new, something greater.

And what we see here in the text is that God always intended to get us past that old stage of being under the Law. Where we were constantly having to go and receive atonement week after week or day after day. What God intended from the beginning was to do a work so that one day we can not only forever move past our sins, but then grow in salvation.

It's exciting to pause and realize that, as a Christian, there's always more depth available to me in my relationship with God. As far as the Bible is concerned, I never have to hit a wall where I'm not really growing spiritually or in my nearness to God. There's always more of God's love for me to experience, because His love cannot be measured height or depth or width or breadth. There's always more wisdom that the Lord wants to give me when it comes to His word or for living my daily life. The power of God's Spirit is also limitless and available for me to grow in. So, it's exciting to think about how rich we are in Christ and that we can go to His heavenly storehouse and withdraw good things from Him every day and in every situation without ever having to fear that we're going to be turned away.

So, chapter 8 lays out the fact that there is this new covenant between God and His people. I mentioned it a moment ago, but we know that this new covenant started when Christ shed His blood on the cross.

In Luke 22 verse 20 Jesus said,

Luke 22.20 - ...This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

And from the text we understand that this new covenant extends from the moment of the cross all the way through our time and into the future. Because there in verse 11 we see depicted a scene where everyone on the earth has knowledge of the Lord. That certainly isn't our current time. So we're right in the middle of it and we're a part of it.

Because this new covenant brings us a new position as God's people.

Before, under the old system, there was a distance and a separation. The holy of holies from the rest of the temple, the people were separated from the priests. The priests were separated from the High Priest in many ways.

Now, under the new covenant arrangement, God's people have themselves become the temple of the Lord and, according to 1 Peter 2 verse 9, we have been commissioned as priests ourselves.

What that means is that we, as Christians, are to raise up a temple in our hearts, raise up a place of worship and dwelling place for the Lord, and we're to serve as priests the way Jesus served.

With those callings and goals in mind, we should do what Moses did there in verse 5. Moses was tasked by God with setting up a place of worship and establishing ministry for the people. But he wasn't left alone or unequipped to do it. The Lord didn't give Moses the goals and then

say, "Do it however you want." Instead, the Lord allowed Moses to peer into heaven so that he could copy what he saw and model the tabernacle after what he had seen.

In this new covenant that Jesus has ushered in, we've been put into a similar situation and calling. In that we're commanded by God to make our lives a temple and establish ministry to the world around us.

And God looks at our lives and says that He wants our temple, our priesthood, to mimic the realities of heaven. We've been given a pattern in the Scriptures so that we can know how to properly reflect Jesus Christ and His work in our lives.

And here's the thing - a covenant, by definition, is a cooperative agreement between 2 parties. God, for His part, has done a huge amount for us in this deal. He's done way more than His fair share. Commentators point out how many times in this chapter God says, "I WILL. I WILL. I'll do this. I'll do that." God, in His grace, is determining not to pour out legalism, but instead He pours out the richness of His love and mercy and graciousness to us.

But, since this is a covenant, we must recognize that we have a load to bear in cooperation with the Lord. Christianity is never portrayed as something dormant or inactive or without cost. There's always a calling and an action required because, as the Lord says, being a Christian means we're putting on a yoke with Jesus Christ, like to oxen in a field, with a job to do.

In the Old Testament, under the old covenant, sometimes the priests and Levites would forget or neglect to do the things they agreed to. You see there after the exile in Babylon and the people were coming back that a lot of the priests were slacking on cleansing themselves and preparing for service. Or, there were other times when there wasn't enough physical provision, so the Levites just left their posts and went to work elsewhere.

This text plainly says that under the old covenant there were times when God's people Israel wouldn't continue with the Lord. And that led to a number of sad and serious consequences.

Our new covenant with the Lord is much different than what we see in the Levitical Law, but, as we've been talking about for 8 chapters now, just because we're under this wonderful, gracious new covenant doesn't mean that we don't need to continue moving forward with the Lord.

If we're yoked up with Christ like 2 oxen and one ox wants to move forward and make some progress and do a work and the other just stands there, you've got a real partnership problem.

So, in the position we find ourselves in, we should be moving forward by doing what we've been called to do. And the 2 specific things that jumped out from the example of Moses and the tabernacle here in the text is that, first, we need to be tending the temple.

We are the temple of the Lord. But that temple needs to be clean and undefiled. It needs to be free from those spiritual money changers. We need to think about whether our lives are a place of on-going worship. Sometimes in the Old Testament stuff would be going on, the priests and Levites neglected their duties and worship in the temple stopped. I never want that to be true of my life, so I should be moving forward in my spiritual life, making sure that I'm growing in worship.

The temple was also a place of sacrifice and offerings and giving gifts to God. If I'm not growing in those areas, if I'm not going deeper in my giving to God, I should be. Because when God shows us His heart and shows us a glimpse into heaven, when we see what Jesus did and what He still does for us, we find that He is continually giving, continually offering us help, going to far as to lay down His own life for us. And, as Christians, our goal is to mimic the realities of heaven.

And that's the second aspect of Christianity that we can think about today. Not just cultivating and raising up a Temple in our lives, but also copying the pattern we've been given of our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

As I look at my life, as I evaluate my heart and think about what I'm doing, I should ask myself, "Would Jesus Christ be doing what I'm about to do?" And if the answer is no, then I should figure out if it's really something I should be doing at all, or if there's something else I could be doing to reflect heaven and minister to people around me.

As our chapter says, Jesus Christ has given us an excellent covenant. He's given us an excellent ministry to grow in. It's full of grace and provision as God takes our lives and says, "Go with me today and I *WILL* do all these things I want to do for you and through you."

So today, let's be sure we're making our lives according to the pattern we've been giving. Raising up a dwelling place in our hearts for the Lord, a temple that is fitting and carrying out our calling as priests in the manner of our High Priest, Jesus Christ.