

The New and Better
(An Review of Hebrew's Theology)
Reading: Hebrews 3:1-6

Bethany Baptist Church
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...pray...

We have spent the past year & half pulling apart every verse in the NT book known as *The Letter to the Hebrews*!

I want to *review* what we've learned before we *move on*!

So, what **do** you remember about *The Letter to the Hebrews*?

Do you recall the *date* when it was written...? Probably the late **60s AD**, just *after Paul's martyrdom*, and just *before* the fall of *Jerusalem* and its *temple*.

Do you recall the *identity* of its *author*...? He was a *gifted writer* and an *expert* in the **OT** and in "*all things Jewish*."

But do you recall his *name*? *No you don't*, because no one knows!

But do you remember who first *read* his letter...? *Hebrews* was apparently first read by a *church(es)* comprised largely of *Jews*:

Jews who had *become* Christians..., and
 Jews who were *thinking* about becoming Christians..., and
 Jews who were *resisting* becoming Christians!
 (Most churches today still have this *same blend* of attenders.)

Why did our unknown author write this carefully arranged *word of exhortation*?

Because this *church* was coming under fire from the *state*.
 Emperor Nero was *setting his sights* on Christians, and *dialing in the range*!
 A *barrage of persecution* was right around the corner.
 Many Jewish Christians felt it might be *safer* to just drop the *Christian part*.
 Maybe being "*just a Jew*" again wasn't so bad!
 After all, Christians and Jews shared a common *heritage*, and besides, the Emperor **wasn't** *targeting* Jews.

Hebrews was written to *close the door* on the church's *exit*!

But what was his *strategy*? How did he hope to keep the people in their *pews*?

You can *sum up* Hebrew's strategy in **two** words: *new* and *better*.

The Gospel offers a **new**: *revelation* (Jesus is the ultimate revelation of truth), *covenant* (God has instituted an eternal agreement with His people), *priesthood* (Jesus is the great High Priest), and a new *sacrifice* (Jesus died on the cross as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*).

And not only *new*...*new and better*.

Jesus is **better** than the *prophets*, the *angels*, than Aaron, than Moses.

The *New Covenant* is **better** than the *Old Covenant*.

The *Gospel* is **better** than the *Commandments*.

Grace is **better** than the *Law*!

Perhaps **no single verse** in Hebrews *summarizes* it better than **8:6** – *Now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.*

But with such a specific *historic* and *religious* context (**1st** century – **2000** years ago; *Jewish* believers – participated in **OT sacrifices**, *persecution* – madman Nero) ... what can *you & I* learn from Hebrews?

Let's *review* our timeless letter and *remind* ourselves of ...

...Four truths that Hebrews still teaches Christians in every age.

This morning...

1. **The superiority of Jesus. 7:11-8:2.**
2. **The strength of the gospel. 10:11-18**

Next Lord's Day...

3. **The severity of drifting. 6:1-8**
4. **The sweetness of assurance. 6:9-12**

The superiority of Jesus.

1. I am struck by all the ways in which Hebrews (this “*word of exhortation*”) *exalts* Jesus, and its most emphatic exaltation is that He is our *Perfect High Priest*.
 - a. What is a priest? *A priest represents God to man and man before God.*
 - b. Hebrews has *so much* to say about Jesus’ *perfect priesthood* that it is difficult to review just **one** text! **Turn w/ me to Hebrews 7:11-8:2.**
 - c. **7:28 & 8:1** make the *main point* of this reading very clear: God has appointed (28) His Son as our eternal, perfect high priest. And so we read this (1): *Now the main point of what has been said is this: we have such a high priest!*
 - d. Jesus is the *best*, the *last*, the *only* high priest anyone will ever need!

2. Let’s extract **five** *reasons* why Jesus has *replaced* the entire *Levitical priesthood* of the **OT** and why that’s *good & necessary*...
 - a. *First*, Jesus is a completely *new, different & better* High Priest. He isn’t even descended from the *Tribe of Levi*!
 - i. Jesus (7:14) is the “*Lion of Judah*”! Old Covenant priests don’t come from Judah’s tribe.
 - ii. And Jesus’ *priesthood* (11,15) was previewed by *mysterious Melchizedek*, an ancient priest & king who was a *symbol* of Christ, though he *wasn’t even Jewish*!

- b. *Second*, only Jesus can offer you a *perfect relationship with God!* By “*perfection*” (18&19) the writer of Hebrews is thinking of “*drawing near to God.*”
- i. **On the one hand**(18) the *Old Covenant(former commandment)* has been *set aside.*
 - ii. **On the other hand** (19) the *New Covenant (better hope)* has been *brought in.* Because...
 - iii. **On the one hand** (19) the *Old Covenant (Law)* made *nothing perfect.*
 - iv. **On the other hand** (19) the *New Covenant (better hope)* allows us to *draw near to God.*
 - v. **I.e.** the *perfection* the Law can **never** provide is the *reconciled relationship to God* that only Jesus’ can offer you!
- c. *Third*, Jesus’ priesthood was established with *God’s oath* (vv.20-22).
- i. Now, *to be sure*, God established & regulated the **OT** *priesthood* but (21a) He **never** *swore* to its *permanence.*
 - ii. Because Jesus’ *prophesied permanent priesthood* was God’s **final plan**, all along!
 - iii. As we read on in **v.21** we witness God *taking an oath* (**read**). Our writer as quoted **Psa 110:4** again (re 17), to show us what we need to see: *God has taken an oath...*
 - 1. The scene is the *Throne Room of Heaven.* The occasion is the *ascension & the enthronement* of the *resurrected Son of God – the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - 2. Our *eternal, incomparable high priest* –*established* w/God’s *oath* to *guarantee* (22) a *new & better covenant.*

d. *Fourth*, Jesus' heavenly intercessions *save sinners utterly* (vv.23-25).

i. **On the one hand** (23) Old Covenant priests kept dying!

1. From the appointment of *Aaron* to the end of the priesthood at the *Fall of the Second Temple* in **70 AD**, generations of priests were born & died, offering sacrifices for *themselves* and for the *people*. *Over & over*.

ii. **On the other hand** (24) Jesus *never dies* and therefore He is the *permanent high priest* (vv.17&21–*You are a priest forever*).

iii. And Jesus' *permanent priesthood* brings us to **v.25 (read)**.

1. **Now** it's *clear* why Jesus' *eternal priesthood* is such a *big deal*!

2. Because He *lives* forever and *intercedes* forever, Jesus will save you to the *uttermost*! That's the best translation of the beginning of **v.25**. "*To the uttermost*" suggests *completely & permanently*. There is **nothing** for you to add to your salvation & there is **no chance** it is going to *fade away*. Jesus *paid it all*

!

3. And **don't miss** here (25) that beautiful description of *salvation* that was previewed back in **v.19** – through Jesus we ***draw near to God***.

e. *Fifth*, Jesus' *holiness* makes Him a *spotless sacrifice & perfect priest*.

i. Jesus was *perfect* – just look at **v.26 (read)**:

1. *Holy* – His very *nature* was *sinless goodness & light*.

2. *Innocent* – His conduct towards men was *above reproach*.

3. *Undefiled* – Think of it, in His **33 years** among us, He remained unstained by *fallen men*, an *evil world*, & a *scheming Devil*.

4. *Separated from sinners – **Be careful!** Jesus **came to sinners, ate with sinners, was a friend of sinners, died for sinners**, but remained *conspicuously* set apart from us in *purity & purpose!**
 5. So Jesus is *exalted above the heavens* – Jesus is *exalted in His sin bearing **death**, His death defeating **resurrection**, His exalted **enthronement**. Jesus (King & Priest) is the name *above every other name.**
- ii. The *former priests were mere men – qualified & appointed by a Law which (19) made nothing perfect. But now consider this new priest, this eternal priest, this final priest – the **only** priest you will ever need:*
1. He is both *priest & king.*
 2. He is the high priest of a *new order.*
 3. He is the **only** priest *sworn by God.*
 4. *His has an indestructible life.*
 5. He sits at the *right hand of the Majesty on High.*
 6. He is *exalted in all His perfections.*
 7. He *intercedes* perfectly & eternally.
 8. He saves to the *uttermost.*
 9. He is *God's Son.*
 - 10. He is perfect!**

3. And there is *so much more* Hebrews teaches about the *superiority* of Christ!

- a. His *teachings* are better than all the *prophets' oracles.*
 - b. He is more excellent than all the *angels* in the heavens.
 - c. He is better than *Moses...and Aaron.*
 - d. His *sacrifice* is better than any prescribed by the Law.
 - e. And *by His sacrifice* He is the *mediator* of the *New&Better Covenant.*
- i. **One sacrifice, for all the sins, of all His people- once & for all!**

Do you remember the Spirit's main point here? ?One of the most imp't truths in all of Hebrews? Read 8:1&2. Praise God...we have such a high priest!

Hebrews declares the strength of the gospel by asserting that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant (10:11-18).

1. Let's start by defining the Old & New Covenants .
 - a. The **Old Covenant** was a *conditional agreement* that God made with the Israelites. The conditions being that Israel was required to *obey* God and *keep* the Law, and in return He *protected* and blessed *them*.
 - b. The **New Covenant** is the *promise* that God makes with humanity that He will *forgive sin* and *restore fellowship* with those whose hearts are turned toward Him through *faith* in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the *mediator* of the New Covenant, and His death on the cross is the basis of the promise.
 - i. **Luke 22:20** – At the Last Supper, Jesus said: “*This cup which is poured out for you is the **new covenant** in My blood.*”
 - ii. As we *unfold* the *provisions* of the New Covenant you'll see that the New Covenant and the Gospel are completely *intertwined*.
2. **Let's turn a few pages and read 10:11-18.** This text endorses the New Testament by teaching its *sufficiency* and its *efficacy* (power to *transform*).
 - a. *Sufficiency* (vv.11-14). Jesus' sacrifice was offered *once*, yet saves *forever*.
 - i. Our author now returns to the *comparison* between *Aaron's* priesthood and *Jesus's* priesthood! (*How many times have we seen **this** as we've unpacked Hebrews!?!)*
 - ii. Yet without a doubt, here is the clearest statement of this important *polar opposite picture*.
 - i. **v.11** – Old Covenant priests **never** sat down!
 1. Do you remember the *point*? They *never sat down* because their *work was never finished* because *sin was never really paid for*. It was all just a *preparatory preview!*

- ii. But now, consider **vv.12, 13** (read; “*but He...*”) – In these **two** verses, the author returns to one of his favorite psalm (the most quoted psalm in the NT): it’s David’s messianic hymn found in **Psalm 110**.
- iii. Jesus *offered* His sacrifice (once for all), *entered* Heaven’s throne room, and *sat down at the **right hand*** of God.
 - 1. He is now *enthroned* at God’s *right hand*! The **place** of *honor & authority*. The **posture** of *acceptance & finality*.
 - 2. Christ is *King ...* and He is our *Great High Priest*. An *enthroned king* and a *seated priest*.
 - 3. **Frederick Bruce** comments (**2X**): *A seated priest is the guarantee of a **finished work** and an **accepted sacrifice**.*
- iv. Our Risen & Exalted Lord’s *feet* rest on the *necks* of His *foes*: the *Deceiver*, the *World ...* and the *apostates*.
- v. Look at **v.12** & **v.14**: I’d like you to see an important phrase: “*for all time*”: **v.12** – “***one** sacrifice for sins, **for all time***”; **v.14** – “*by **one** offering He has perfected **for all time**.*”
 - 1. ***That’s it!*** Beloved, Jesus ***one** offering* is *eternally **efficient***. His *bloody sacrifice* is *satisfyingly **sufficient***...
- vi. This picture is *short* but *sweet*: the contrast between the **Old** Covenant priests (and their *many sacrifices*) and our **New** Covenant Priest (and His ***one** sacrifice*) tells you this: *Jesus is **enough!***

- b. And His sacrifice *transforms lives!* Christ's **one offering** offers *new life* to all who *turn* to Him and *trust* in Him. **Read vv.15-18.**
- i. Hebrews now appeals to the **OT testimony** of **Jer 31** (16,17). **Jer 31** documents God's *promise* of the *New Covenant*.
 - i. Through the *New Covenant*, God promises His people complete *transformation* (16).
 - ii. God's Law (*will & ways*) placed on our *hearts* (our "*command center*" for all areas of life: *decisions, values, affections, emotions*).
 - iii. God's *will & ways* written on our *minds* (our *reception & processing & evaluation & acceptance* of truth).
 - iv. This is nothing less than a *new heart* – a *new you!* Bible teachers call it *regeneration* (made **new**). Jesus called it *re-birth* (John 3 – *you must be born again*).
- b. *Total transformation* comes with **forever forgiveness** (**read v.17**).
- i. Friend, **this** may be the *marque promise* of New Cov! Here is where it all *begins*. There can be **no relationship with God** – no *drawing near to God* – unless He *forgives* you.
 - ii. God refuses to *bring your sin* to *His mind*. And to *your account*.
 - iii. Because Jesus' *once and for all* sacrifice offers a payment for **every** sin for **all** of God's people, **once and for all**, this Holy God can *justly forgive* sinful men & women.
- c. Finally, our author *rests his case* with an *understated* but *clear conclusion* (**read v.18**).
- i. The **Old** is **gone** – no more sacrifices *required ... or accepted*.
 - ii. The **New** has **come** – **one Priest, one offering, complete forgiveness** of your *sins* and *lawless deeds*.

The Old Covenant could only *prepare* you; Christ's New Covenant will *transform* you!

What about you...? Are you still *skeptical*? Are you *drifting*?

Or are you relying on your own, *personal* code and tradition?

The Jewish *priests* and *worshippers* who rejected Jesus kept on offering their *sacrifices* right up until the **Roman General Vespasian** *marched* through Jerusalem's gates and *pulled down* its temple.

That was the end of the *priesthood* and the *sacrifices*. **No more!**

Will God have to *pull down* your pointless personal code to get your attention?
(Maybe He's doing it *right now*!)

Friend, the Bible (God's Word) is *clear*:

Your sins need to be forgiven because they keep you from *drawing near to God*.

...and Jesus' blood is the *only remedy for your sins* that God will accept.

...that *all*, but that's *enough*.

If you *turn* to Jesus and *trust* in His death & resurrection as payment for your sins,

...God will forgive your sins & lawless deeds,

...and give you a *new heart* and *mind*.

So one last verse this morning, from the timeless message of Hebrews (5:9):

*And having been made perfect, God's Son became to all those who obey Him the source of **eternal salvation**!*

Come to Him...*draw near*!

...*pray*...

The Power of the Cross (screens)