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SPRING SERIES 2024 – WEEK 6

Hebrews 8:1-13: Better in Every Way

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

– Hebrews 8:6 ESV

- **Qualifications for a better high priest**

*Now the point in what we are saying is this: **we have such a high priest**, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. – Hebrews 8:1-2 ESV*

*For it was indeed fitting that **we should have such a high priest**, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. – Hebrews 7:26 ESV*

- He's **holy** – (*hósios*) - pious, devout
 - Not *hagios*, the common Hebrew word for holiness
 - It speaks of how God sees Jesus
 - He is a **fully devoted** high priest
 - Totally dedicated to His role as high priest

*“For I have come down from heaven **to do the will of God** who sent me, **not to do my own will**. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day.” – John 6:38 NLT*

*“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, **not my will, but yours, be done**.” – Luke 22:42 NLT*

- He's **innocent** – (*akakos*) - free from guilt
 - No reason to suspect Him of guilt
 - Sinless in action and motivation
 - Not true of any other high priest

- It speaks of how others saw Jesus

*Pilate went outside again and said to the people, “I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that **I find him not guilty.**” – John 19:4 NLT*

*Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking false testimony against Jesus in order to put Him to death. **But they did not find any**, though many false witnesses came forward. – Matthew 26:28 BSB*

- He’s **unstained** – (*amiantos*) - undefiled, pure
 - No need for ceremonial purification
 - Perfectly qualified for priestly service
 - Pure inwardly, not just outwardly
 - He could serve as our sin substitute

*“Behold, **the Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world!” – John 1:29 ESV*

*...you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of **a lamb without blemish or spot.** – 1 Peter 1:18-19 ESV*

- He’s **separated from sinners** – (*chōrizō*) - undefiled, pure
 - He was made **like** us
 - But He was distinctly different **from** us
 - He shared our likeness but not our sin nature

*“He is in a different category from sinful man, because he overcame temptation and emerged sinless....If we need Jesus to represent us because we are sinners, then it is vital that he be without sin, ‘separated from sinners.’” – Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews**

- He’s **exalted** above the heavens – (*hypsēlos*) - elevated, raised up
 - Another way in which Jesus is “separated from sinners”
 - He is seated in the throne room of God
 - No other high priest received this honor
 - Because He was the **perfect priest** who offered the only **acceptable sacrifice**

*...being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **Therefore God has highly exalted him** and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. – Philippians 2:8-10 ESV*

- **Where no priest has gone before**

*...we have such a high priest...a minister in the holy places, **in the true tent**... – Hebrews 8:1, 2 ESV*

- Jesus has entered the heavenly Tabernacle
 - He serves in the literal Holy of Holies
 - He ministers before the literal Mercy Seat
 - He offered the perfect sacrifice: Himself
 - And He atoned for all men's sins – for all time
 - He did what no other priest had ever done

*For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. **They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.** – Hebrews 8:3-5 ESV*

- **A flawed and potentially fatal facsimile**

- Under the old covenant, access to God was limited and life-threatening

*...the Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, **so that he may not die.** For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat." – Leviticus 16:2 ESV*

- The necessary precautions for priestly service
 - ...he shall bathe his body in water – Lev. 16:4*
 - ...he shall put on...the holy garments – Lev. 16:4*
 - ...he shall present the bull as an offering for himself – Lev. 16:11*
 - ...he shall make atonement for himself and his household – Lev. 16:11*

*For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything **according to the pattern** that was shown you on the mountain." – Hebrews 8:5 ESV*

- **A pitiful portrayal of the pattern**

- The earthly was to model the heavenly
- The priests were to promote and protect the purity of the earthly Tabernacle
- So how did they do?
 - The sons of Aaron, the high priest:
 - Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. **And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.** – Leviticus 10:1-2 ESV*
 - The sons of Eli, the high priest
 - Eli was priest during the period of the judges
 - He had two sons: Hophni and Phinehas
 - They also served as priests

*Now the sons of Eli were **worthless men**. They did not know the Lord. – 1 Samuel 2:12*
ESV

- They repeatedly violated God's laws
- They ate sacrificial meat that was off-limits
- They regularly had sex with the women who served at the door of the Tabernacle
- They ignored the rebukes of their father
- But they couldn't escape the wrath of God

*"And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: **both of them shall die on the same day**. And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind." – 1 Samuel 2:34-35* ESV

- The problem of poor-performing priests – Malachi 1
 - Things didn't improve
 - This was written long after the days of Hophne and Phinehas

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. – Malachi 1:6-10 ESV

- These men made lousy mediators
- They were hypocritical and unreliable
- Their offerings were unacceptable
- Their ministry was undesirable
- Their example was objectionable

*But as it is, **Christ has obtained a ministry** that is as **much more excellent** than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been **faultless**, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. – Hebrews 8:6-7* ESV

faultless – *amemptos* – free from fault or defect

- Is he suggesting the old covenant was bad?

- Was it inherently flawed or damaged?

*...**the law is holy**, and the commandment is **holy and righteous and good**. – Romans 7:12 ESV*

- ~ The law was not the problem
- ~ It did what it was designed to do: **Expose man's sin**

*Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the **promise to show people their sins**. – Galatians 3:19a ESV*

*But the law was designed to **last only until the coming of the child who was promised**. ^Galatians 3:19b ESV*

*For God has done what the law, **weakened by the flesh**, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. – Romans 8:3-4 ESV*

- **Yet God had promised something new**
For **he finds fault with them** when he says:

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,
not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” – Hebrews 8:8-9 ESV*

“The problem with the old covenant was the infidelity of the people. Read the Old Testament and you will find a continuous history of idolatry and unfaithfulness.” – Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews*

- The author returns to the Hebrew Scriptures
- He quotes from Jeremiah 31
- A passage full of grace, mercy, and forgiveness
- Written to a rebellious and unfaithful people

*“Behold, the days are coming...”
“...when I will establish a new covenant...”
“not like the old covenant...”*

*“For this is the [new] covenant that I will make...”
“...I will put my law into their minds...”
“...and write them on their hearts...”*

“...they shall not teach, each one his neighbor...[to know the Lord]...”

- A promise made to the people of Israel
***“For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.”*** – Hebrews 8:12 ESV

- **Fulfilled in part**

- In those believing Jews in his audience
 - ~ Spirit-transformed hearts – vs 10
 - ~ A restored relationship with God – vs 10
 - ~ An intimate knowledge of God – vs 11
 - ~ And full forgiveness of sin – vs 11
- But it has not yet been fulfilled **in full**
 - ~ But it will be!

***Behold, the days are coming,** declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.* – Hebrews 8:8 ESV

*In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is **ready to vanish away.*** – Hebrews 8:13 ESV

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, **the new has come.*** – 2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV

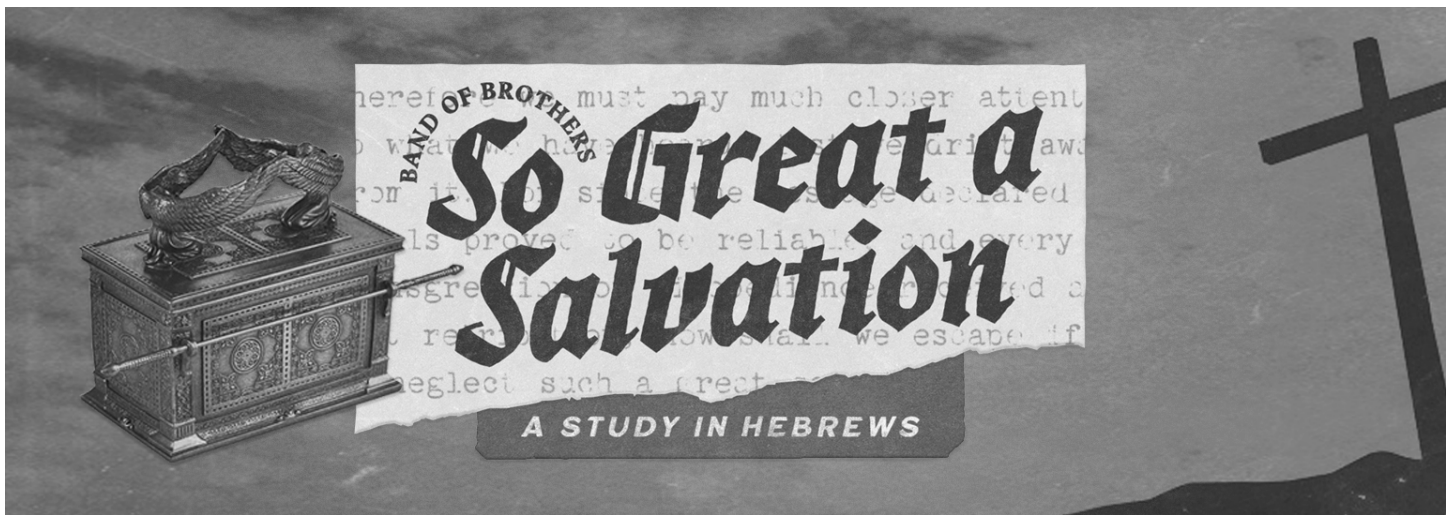
*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, **for the former things have passed away.**”* – Revelation 21:2-4 ESV

- **Discussion questions**

Why should we thank God that we don't have a priest like Nadab, Abihu, Hophni, or Phinehas?

Verse 6 speaks of a better covenant enacted on a better promise. How does Revelation 21:2-4 prove that the promise is truly better?

Why is it vital that we play “the long game” when it comes to the promises of God?



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SPRING SERIES 2024 – WEEK 7 HOMEWORK

WEEK 7 – Hebrews 9:1-28: The Heavenly Holy Place

The Jewish Christians who received this letter were being tempted to return to their Hebrew roots and worship God through the ancient religion of Judaism. This would have meant a return to the sacrificial system and all the feasts and festivals associated with Temple worship. But the author goes out of his way to establish the new covenant as superior to the old covenant by describing Jesus as having fulfilled His priestly duties in a far superior “tabernacle” in heaven. As a result, the atonement Jesus made possible was far better than the blood of bulls and goats. Jesus’ sacrificial death provided full forgiveness of sin, something the old covenant could never do. And Jesus’ sacrifice made justification with God possible.

- Read Hebrews 9. Write down any thoughts that jump out at you from these verses.
- Over the week, read pages 53-58 of Ken’s Devotionary™ on Hebrews.
- Look at Exodus 25:8-9 and Exodus 25:40. According to these verses, what was the “pattern” or model for earthly Tabernacle that Moses was to build?

Take a few minutes to consider the significance of this. Why should the presence of this heavenly Tabernacle be important to us as Gentile Christians?

- In verses 1-5 of Hebrews 9, the author describes features of the earthly Tabernacle but confesses, “Of these things we cannot now speak in detail” (Hebrews 9:5). God back and look through Exodus 25-27 to see what he has left out. Why do you think he concentrated his attention on the Most Holy Place, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy seat?

- In verses 6-10, the author points out some of the duties of the priests under the old system. According to verse 7, who was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place and how often could he do so?

Based on this passage, could any other Israelite or priest enter the Most Holy Place?

What does this say about their access to God Almighty?

- In verse 9, it states, “gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper.” What do you think this means?

Read the following passages and write down what they teach about these sacrifices and offerings made under the old covenant.

Hebrews 5:1:

Hebrews 7:19:

Hebrews 10:1-4:

- Now read Hebrews 9:11-14 and write down the differences in the sacrifice that Jesus offered on our behalf.

According to verse 13, what did the sacrifices under the old covenant accomplish?

But verses 14 tells us that Jesus’ sacrifice accomplished something far more significant. What is it?

- Read verses 15-22. Why do you think the author puts so much emphasis on blood?

What is impossible without the shedding of blood?

- Read verses 23-28. What is different about the sacrifice that Jesus made for us?

Why should this better sacrifice by the better high priest amaze us?