

## Hebrews 8-6-13

### The glories of the New Covenant

#### Introduction:

I'm really glad I was not old enough to buy a home in 1982. Why? In 1982 interest rates on home loans were at an all-time high. How high?

They hovered around 16%.

This week interest rates were 4.1%.

How much of a difference does this make? A huge difference.

At 4% on a \$300k 30-year loan (with 5% down) your monthly payment will be \$1700.

At 16% on a \$300k 30-year loan (with 5% down) your monthly payment will be \$ 4,200. Nearly 2.5 times more...

But...

Over the life of a \$300k loan at 4% you will pay a total of \$204k in interest

Over the life of a \$300k loan at 16% you will pay a total of \$1.1 million in interest

Which contract would you rather sign? The 4% contract or the 16% contract. Probably the 4% contract!!! Why, it is a way better contract with way better terms.

A contract is another word for a covenant.

This brings us to this morning's text. The author of the Hebrews is trying to persuade his audience to stick with Jesus. Many of them are tempted to leave Jesus and go back to the Old Covenant. This is very foolish since, the new covenant, under Jesus, is a way better covenant.

The old covenant kills but the new covenant brings life.

Who wants to experience life?

Who wants to experience internal transformation, knowledge of God, and the forgiveness of sins? These things are only found in the new covenant.

If you forsake Jesus, you give up these amazing blessings. Don't do that!!!

To help us understand the glories of the new covenant we will look at two things-

*The necessity of the new covenant.*

*The superiority of the new covenant.*

#### First, the necessity of the new covenant.

*Before I address the necessity of the new covenant, I need to define things.*

## What is a covenant?

The word covenant is used several times in our text. In the Bible there are many covenants.

So, what is a covenant? One theologian writes,

*“A covenant is an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship. (Grudem, 515)”*

Covenants are so important that the English Bible is divided into two covenants (the old testament and new testament).

In its simplest form, a covenant is a legal binding agreement between two parties that defines their relationship.

God’s covenant with man, describes how God relates to man and how man relates to God.

### **Illustration:**

The closest thing we have to biblical covenants are marriage covenants. When two people get married, they make a covenant together. In other words, they agree on the terms of their relationship. This is a legally binding agreement, which is why you sign legal paperwork at your wedding and register your marriage at the court house. Furthermore, it is why you have to go to the courthouse to get divorced. You are breaking your legal contract.

After a year of dating, I asked my wife to marry me, I was asking her to enter into a legally binding covenant relationship with me (which I did not mention when I proposed). This is much more serious than asking her to go to Starbucks with me or asking her to cohabitate with me. Why did I want to enter into a marriage covenant with her? Because I loved her, and I wanted to prove how serious I was about committing to her for life.

Why does God want to enter into a formal, legally binding, relationship with us? Because he loves us. He could have said, “I want to be your friend, I want to hang out with you, I want to do stuff with you.” But that is not what happened. What he did was so much more formal, and serious, and loving. He entered into a covenant with us. Why? Because he loves us.

*What is a covenant? A covenant is a legally binding agreement between two parties!*

### **Why was a new covenant needed? The first one had faults.**

**Hebrews 8:6–7 (ESV) — 6** 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. **7** For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

The author mentions an old covenant and a new covenant. The old covenant was the covenant made with Israel around 1450 BC. It is often called the Mosaic covenant or the old covenant.

This covenant failed because Israel could not keep her end of the bargain. It was not God’s fault, or the covenants fault, it was Israel’s fault.

When God saved Israel from Egyptian bondage, he entered into a covenant with them and gave them laws to obey (613 to be precise). In the book of Exodus, God says, “Israel, I love you, I have redeemed you, I

have called you by name, now I want you to show me that you love me by obeying my commands. These commands are not burdensome. If you obey them you will be blessed, if you disobey them you will be cursed.”

This was the essence of the Mosaic covenant.

The covenant blessings and the covenant curses are laid out in graphic and glorious detail in **Leviticus 26 and Deut. 26-28**. You should read them this afternoon. Here is a summary...

Covenant Blessings... (God promised land, offspring, peace, happiness, joy, prosperity, victory, etc...)

Covenant Curses... (God promised Rape, famine, pestilence, war, sickness, drought, starvation, etc...)

What happened? Israel disobeyed God over, and over, and over again. They bowed down to idols, they offered up their little children to false Gods, they married foreigners, and they ignored orphans and widows. This went on for hundreds of years. God was exceedingly patient with Israel, but God always keeps his promises, and eventually he allowed them to experience the full weight of the covenant curses as described in **Lev. 26 and Deut. 26-28**.

**This brings us to the prophet Jeremiah...**

Jeremiah lived under the old covenant during Judah's darkest days (the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC). He lived in a time when all the covenant curses were finally coming to pass. For 40 years he called Judah back to their covenant obligations. But Judah refused to listen. Instead, they mocked him, beat him, and placed him in stocks for days. Eventually, they threw him in an empty cistern when Babylon attacked.

The mosaic covenant was not working. Jeremiah witnessed the full strength of the covenant curses first hand, as he watched Babylon utterly destroy Jerusalem in 586 BC. I can't describe the violence witnessed by Jeremiah with children present, but I can say this, everything happened exactly as God said it would. In other words, all the covenant curses came to pass.

Jeremiah was a wreck. He was in chains and he was miles and miles away from his homeland. Why? Israel did not keep covenant with God.

The Mosaic covenant was not working. A new covenant was needed. In this hour of great darkness, gloom, and despair. God gives Jeremiah a prophecy about a new and better covenant.

The author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31 in Hebrews 8:8-9. This is from Jer. 31:31-33...

**Hebrews 8:8-9 (ESV) — 8** 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, **9** 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. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

What hope!!! In the midst of Judah's covenant breaking, God promises a new and better covenant.

But when would this covenant arrive?

**Luke 22:20 (ESV) — 20** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

See also- 1 Cor. 11:25, Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, 2 Cor. 3:6.

Jesus inaugurates the New covenant with his life, death, and his resurrection.

But how is the new covenant better? This brings us to the next point...

*First, the necessity of the new covenant.*

## **Second, the superiority of the new covenant.**

**How is the new covenant superior to the old covenant?** *It is superior in four ways...*

**It is superior because it promises internal transformation.**

**Hebrews 8:10 (ESV) — 10** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts,...

Again, the author of Hebrews quotes from Jeremiah 31.

In Jeremiah 31 the blessings of the New Covenant are described.

The new covenant is superior because God promises to write his laws on our minds and hearts. Under the old Covenant the law was not written on one's heart or mind, it was written on tablets of stone. This did not enable Israel to internalize the law. Under the new covenant things are so much better...

How does God write his laws on our hearts and minds under the new covenant? Through the Holy Spirit. The parallel passage to Jeremiah 31 is Ezekiel 36:26-27. Describing the New covenant Ezekiel writes,

**Ezekiel 36:26–27 (ESV) — 26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

### **Illustration:**

In high school I despised country music. One of my good friends loved country music. He had a massive crush on Reba McEntire. I used to love making fun of him, pointing out all the stereotypes of country music. Then I went off to college. I got a job mopping floors in one of the university bakeries. All of those employees loved country music. They played country music all the time. I could not escape it. The first few weeks I mocked them. Then I started to recognize songs. Then I started to sing the songs. Then I started to want to hear certain songs. Then I started to go to a country bar with friends in Moscow Idaho to participate in country swing dancing.

I now loved what I once hated... what happened?

The same thing happens when we are converted. We go from despising the things of God to loving the things of God.

How does this happen? the new covenant. God writes his laws on our hearts, gives us a new nature, and fills us with his spirit.

God changes our desires... not only that he gives us power to obey his law. Internal Holy spirit power...

## **Application:**

The old covenant did not offer this amazing benefit. This explains why Israel kept breaking the Mosaic covenant. They did not have the laws of God written on their minds or hearts and they did not have the indwelling Spirit. This helps us make sense of Israel's history...

But under the new covenant God transforms us from within.

Under the new covenant God gives us power to do what he wants us to do.

This is the expulsive power of a new affection (Thomas Chalmers)

The life of God in the soul of man (Henry Scougal)

What are you struggling with this morning?

Anger

Anxiety

Lust

A difficult marriage

An addiction

Crippling depression

Road rage

Lying

Indifference

Stinginess

Self-centeredness...

God wants to help you obey his commands. He wants to help you so much that he created a new covenant to ensure that his laws would be written on your hearts and the holy Spirit would permanently dwell inside of you to change you from the inside out.

*The NC is superior because it promises internal transformation.*

**The NC is superior because it promises universal knowledge.**

**Hebrews 8:11 (ESV) — 11** And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

Everyone in the new covenant will know the lord. Why is this better? The old covenant community was a mixed community composed of believer and non-believer (or believers and their non-believing children). Everyone was given the covenant sign of circumcision regardless of faith.

The new covenant is so much better. Why? Everyone in the new covenant community knows the lord. Everyone has the law written on their hearts, everyone has their sins forgiven, and everyone knows the lord. As a result, we will not have to tell other members of the covenant community to repent of their sins and trust Jesus.

## **Application:**

Let me address my paedobaptist friends. And I have many of them. This is one of the main reasons I don't think we should baptize babies. We should only apply the new covenant sign of baptism to those who are in the new covenant. who is in the new covenant? only those who know the lord, only those who have had their sins forgiven. Only those who have the law written on our hearts.

*The NC is superior because it promises internal transformation.*

*It promises universal knowledge.*

**It promises complete forgiveness.**

**Hebrews 8:12 (ESV) — 12** For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

Didn't God forgive sins under the Old Covenant? Yes.  
Wasn't God merciful under the Old Covenant? Yes....

Then, how is the new covenant better?

Here is the short answer- God forgave the sins of all the Old covenant saints because the new covenant was coming.

What do I mean?

All the animal sacrifices in the old covenant did not ultimately remove sins.

**Hebrews 10:4 (ESV) — 4** For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The guilt of King David, and Moses, and Samson were not forgiven during their lifetime. They were passed over until Jesus came.

**Romans 3:25 (ESV) — 25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

When Jesus came, the sins of the OT saints were finally and fully paid for through. Jesus Christ was their propitiation.

The entire OT sacrificial system pointed to Jesus Christ, the perfect lamb of god.

When Jesus Christ came, he took on his shoulders all the cruses of the covenant described at the end of Leviticus and Deuteronomy so that the OT saints could be his friends.

When Jesus came he made it possible for members of the Old and New Covenant to have all their sins forgiven.

### **Application:**

You too can be forgiven of all your sins...

According to our text, when sins are truly forgiven, they are remembered no more.

Does God really forget stuff? Isn't he omniscient?

If you owe someone money, more than likely your friend will not forget. He will probably remind you every time he sees you. But if someone else comes along and pays the debt for you, chances are your friend will not bring it up again. He has forgotten your debt because he has been paid in full...

Jesus paid your debt in full on the cross, so God the Father will not bring it up again. In this sense your guilt has been forgotten.

In marriage people often bring stuff up...

I will never forget what you said 20 years ago...

I will never forget what you did 30 years ago...

God will never do this with us!!! Why?

Jesus paid the price for our sins. It would be unjust of God to bring up our guilt again...

*The NC is superior because...*

*it promises internal transformation.*

*It promises universal knowledge.*

*It promises total forgiveness.*

**It promises intimate access.**

This is the crowning blessing of the New Covenant...

**Hebrews 8:10 (ESV) — 10** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

This was always God's intention from the beginning. The Mosaic covenant promised the same thing.

This was meant to be an intimate and permanent relationship leading to joy, peace, and God's glory.

But the old covenant was conditional. Select members of Israel experienced this blessing, but most of Israel broke aspects of the Mosaic covenant and God rejected them. They did not experience intimacy with God, but the curse of God. They were no longer his people, because their hearts had never truly been changed.

But under the new covenant we don't have to fear no longer being God's people. Why? God has written his laws on our hearts. God has filled us with the Spirit. God has forgiven all of our sins. Therefore, it is impossible for members of the new covenant to break covenant with God.

In other words, the new covenant is unconditional. Once we are in, we are in!!! Oh, yes, we will break God's laws, but Jesus the mediator of the new covenant takes our covenant curses upon himself.

We will always have intimate access to God.

**Application:**

If you are a citizen of the new covenant you have intimate access to the triune God.

What are you doing to cultivate intimate access with God?

**Conclusion:**

We have looked at two things-

*First, the necessity of the new covenant.*

*Second, the superiority of the new covenant.*

How should we respond to Hebrews 8:6-13? Let me make a few brief suggestions-

### **Make every effort to enter the new covenant-**

This covenant was made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. But according to the NT anyone who trust in Jesus Christ is an offspring of Abraham and a member of the Israel of God by faith.

See Galatians... 3:13-14, 28, Romans 2:28-29, Eph 2:11-13

In a covenant relationship both parties have a part to play... What does God do in the New Covenant? Everything. What do we do? Believe! That is it....

### **Give thanks for the new covenant-**

“Are we new covenant believers, inclined to take those stunning promises for granted? Do we assume that forgiveness and cleansing are trivial matters, granted cheaply? That access to the holy one is our right rather than a privilege bestowed in his mercy on us who deserve wrath, banishment, and destruction? Rivers of blood from countless animal victims and daunting restrictions circumscribing approach to God were designed to impress on Israel both the gravity of their sinful pollution and the magnificence of God’s reconciling mercy. Pause to savor those promises- deep cleansing, open access, complete forgiveness- and give thanks to the Lord who made them and who kept them through Jesus, his son and our priest forever.” (Johnson, 117-118)

### **Celebrate the new covenant-**

How do we do this? We don’t have to guess. God tells us how to celebrate the new covenant. he gives us a specific meal to partake of together, the lord’s supper...