

The Hebrews Initiative:
Don't Miss the Main Point
Hebrews 8:1-13

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: We are in a series that we are calling the Hebrews Initiative. It is an important journey. Though not exactly the same, our circumstances are similar to that of the original recipients of Hebrews. As such, it has been my prayer that this study will provide significant encouragement for us to persevere in this post-Christian and at times anti-Christian world in which we find ourselves living.

We have arrived at chapter 8 today.

Text: Now the main point of what is being said is this: We have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ²a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that was set up by the Lord and not man. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; therefore it was necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if He were on earth, He wouldn't be a priest, since there are those offering the gifts prescribed by the law. ⁵These serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was warned when he was about to complete the tabernacle. For God said, Be careful that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain. ⁶But Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree He is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been legally enacted on better promises.

⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second one. ⁸But finding fault with His people, He says:

Look, 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—
⁹not like the covenant
that I made with their ancestors
on the day I took them by their hands
to lead them out of the land of Egypt.
I disregarded them, says the Lord,
because they did not continue in My covenant.

¹⁰But this is the covenant
that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord:
I will put My laws into their minds
and write them on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be My people.

¹¹And each person will not teach his fellow citizen,
and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord,"

because they will all know Me,
from the least to the greatest of them.

¹² For I will be merciful to their wrongdoing,
and I will never again remember their sins.

¹³ By saying, a new covenant, He has declared that the first is old. And what is old and aging is about to disappear.

Introduction: Once, when President Ulysses S. Grant was visiting Scotland, his host gave him a demonstration of a game, at least new to Grant, called golf. Carefully, the host placed the ball on the tee and took a mighty swing, sending chunks of turf flying but not touching the ball.

Grant watched the exhibition quietly, but after the sixth unsuccessful attempt to hit the ball, he turned to his perspiring, embarrassed host and commented: “There seems to be a fair amount of exercise in the game, but I fail to see the purpose of the ball.”

Whether in golf or preaching, when we fail to communicate the main point, we are in great danger. Sometimes, we think we have communicated the main point, but if our listeners have not received the main point, we have not communicated the main point. Of course, that is something that I constantly think about. Clarity of the main point seems to be something in which the writer of Hebrews was concerned.

This phrase, “Now the main point of what is being said is this...” points us back to several things that we have obviously already read in the book of Hebrews. A passage like this one helps us to clarify the heart of the message.

A Review of the Superiority of Christ

When we began our study weeks ago, we started out with a message titled, “It all Starts with Jesus.” The writer of Hebrews has continued to explore how a relationship with Jesus is so much better than anything else religion has to offer. That message continues in this passage, but this message is revealed in some ways that we perhaps have not thought about so far.

- His Sanctuary is Heaven.

In the above sections of Hebrews, much has been made about the comparison of Jesus with the Old Testament priesthood. The point again is that Jesus really cannot be compared with that priesthood. Jesus is better/superior in every way. Just last week we said that He was better in that His priesthood was permanent—He never died. We said, secondly, that His priesthood was perfect—He was without sin.

Now the writer turns to something that has been hinted at all along the way with phrases like “and seated at the right hand of the Father.” That is, Jesus serves as priest in the Sanctuary of Heaven. The listeners were familiar with the fact that priests on earth served in a sanctuary—a sanctuary made by human hands. One of the numerous reasons that Jesus’ priesthood is indeed superior is that His sanctuary is Heaven—and that sanctuary is one that the Lord, not man, established.

- His Sacrifice is Himself.

The priests offered gifts and sacrifices, but Jesus offered Himself. The priests offered sacrifices over and over again, Jesus offered Himself once-for-all.

All of this has a point.

- Therefore, He is the initiator of a better Covenant.

We get three words in this passage that we really haven't seen before: copy, shadow, and covenant. These become really important words moving forward.

A Reminder about Covenants

Verses 8-12 are a direct quote from the Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah. Jeremiah, in the midst of an immediate prophetic word to Israel, begins to see, from God, a day that he calls A New Covenant.

Let's briefly trace this idea of the covenant because covenant is a word that figures prominently into any discussion about God's relationship with humanity.

- Abrahamic Covenant—God promised Abraham descendants, land, and to be his forever God. The covenant was sealed with male circumcision.
- Mosaic Covenant—The important thing to note about the Mosaic covenant is that it is based on the law, the 10 commandments, along with other laws. The covenant reminder is sacrifice and offering.
- Jeremiah indicates a day is coming when "I will make a new Covenant."

There are some other covenants in the Old Testament, but let's get to the covenant referenced by Jeremiah.

Luke 22:20—At Last Supper, Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant established by My blood; it is shed for you."

Therefore, The Blood of Jesus Christ is the inauguration of the New Covenant.

The Cross is the fulfillment of the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah.

How do we know all of this? The writer of Hebrews tells us. Hebrews 9 and 10 fully spell out these details. Read Hebrews 9:11-10:18.

The Results of this New Covenant (The Main Point)

- Familiarity with our Savior personally.

Notice these things about the personal relationship we can have with our Savior.

- Initiated by the Father—“I will...”
- Internalized—“put My laws into their minds, write them on their hearts”
- Intimacy—“I will be their God and they will be My people.”
- Individual—“They will all know Me.”
- All are invited—“from the least to the greatest.”

There is a visual on crucifixion day that communicates this personal relationship. Matthew’s Gospel gives it to us in Matthew 27:51—“The veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” The veil in the temple was a barrier. There were two in fact. The first veil kept non-Jews from entering the inner courts. The second veil kept all, except the most High Priest, and this only once a year, into the Holiest of Holy Places.

- Forgiveness of our sin totally.

There is a barrier between every human and God caused by our sin, but this new covenant knocks down that barrier. Let’s go back to our visual of that curtain or veil in the old Temple. Sin is our barrier, but at the tearing of Christ’s flesh on the cross, the Temple Veil miraculously tore apart as well, thus symbolizing the removal of the barrier.

So What?

1. Admit that you are in need of forgiveness.
2. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Confess Him as Lord and Commit your life to Him.
4. Do unto others as the Lord has done unto you.

An evangelist of another generation, D.L. Moody, preached on the evening of the Great Chicago Fire in Chicago. He sent his listeners home that evening without extending a formal invitation. Instead, he sent them home to think about it one week. He regretted that decision the rest of his life.

I can’t do that this morning. I must call you to a response. Many of you are Christians already, and we rejoice in that. Not of works, lest we boast, but out of the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ, have we been saved.

Here are our three choices:

1. I am already a follower of Jesus Christ and because of that I am not going to hell and instead going to heaven.
2. I am deciding today to follow Jesus Christ so that I will not go to hell and instead go to heaven.
3. I still have questions.