

Hebrews - A Letter Addressed to Modern-Day Christians

Part 12

Hebrews 8:1 –13

Hebrews 8:1-2 [NIV] *“The point of what we are saying is this: **We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.**”*

The writer of Hebrews has finished describing the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek in all its glory.

- 1 A priesthood without beginning or end
- 2 A priesthood that God confirmed with an oath
- 3 A priesthood founded on personal greatness and character, **not** on any legal appointment or racial qualification
- 4 A priesthood that death cannot touch
- 5 A priesthood that has offered a sacrifice that never needs to be repeated
- 6 A priesthood so pure that it needs to offer **no** sacrifice for any sins of its own
- 7 A priesthood that we have in Jesus Christ the Son of Man and the Son of God

Jesus Christ is a priest who has sat down indicating that His work is complete.

Physical priests of the earthly tabernacle never sat down, for their work never ended, was never complete.

Jesus is the minister of the real tabernacle, He is unique in both majesty and service, both divine.

Jesus knew He had been given this supreme position to enable Him to serve others and help them to share in the priesthood.

Revelation 5:9-10 [NIV] *“And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.**”*

All who accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a substitute for their own deserved death are being prepared to become priests to serve all who will be called to become disciples of Jesus Christ in the future.

Revelation 20:11-13 [NIV] *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. **And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.** Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”*

“White throne resurrection,” [Revelation 20:11].

These are people who have never even heard of Jesus Christ.

Constantly in the mind of the writer of Hebrews is the thought that religion is a means of access to the Creator God.

Religion is a relationship with the Creator God.

Religion is the means of entering into the presence of the Creator God.

This access to the Creator God is the supreme function of a priest.

The priest removes any barriers between the Creator God and human beings.

The priest builds a bridge across which human beings can go into the very presence of the Creator God.

The writer of Hebrews calls the throne of the Creator God in Heaven the “*true tabernacle*.”

So instead of talking about access to God we are talking about access to reality.

It is difficult for us to accept, but the world we live in, the world of space and time is only a world of “*shadows*”, pale copies, unreal temporary reflections of the real world which is spirit and eternal.

Exodus 25:8-9, 40 [NIV] *“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” ... “See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”*

God revealed to Moses the real eternal tabernacle and commanded him to make an earthly copy using the heavenly as a pattern.

Hebrews 8:3-5 [NIV] *“Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. **They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.** This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”*

The earthly tabernacle and the priests who served in it were a copy or shadow of what is in heaven, not the real thing.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that only Jesus can lead us into this reality, the all-satisfying real world.

Hebrews 8:6-7 [NIV] *“But the ministry **Jesus** has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is **mediator** is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.”*

The writer of Hebrews gives Jesus the great title of mediator.

The Greek word translated mediator is “*mesitēs*” – a go-between – one who stands in the middle, between two people and who brings them together, with the view of bringing about peace.

1 Timothy 2:5 [NIV] *“For there is **one God and one mediator** between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus,**”*

For salvation, the mediator has to be more than one human bringing together two other humans into a peaceful situation.

The mediator must himself possess the nature and the attributes of both God and human beings.

Only Jesus Christ can do this as the Son of Man, with human nature its attributes, but also the Son of God, with the very nature and attributes of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 [NIV] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*

It is Jesus Christ our high priest who brings about the reconciliation between all human beings and God.

We now, and more so in the future as priests, are to bring about reconciliation between human beings and Jesus Christ.

This is the message we are to proclaim to all humans.

Jesus Christ is the perfect mediator for He stands between the unreality of this physical world and the real spiritual eternal world.

John 10:10 [NIV] *“... I [Jesus Christ our good shepherd] have come that they [all humanity] may have life, and have it to the full [eternal real life].”*

Hebrews 8:6-13 [NIV] *“But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: “The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant “new”, he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear.”*

We have in these verses a comparison between the Old and New Covenants.

The New Covenant which Jesus Christ introduced is superior to the Old in major ways.

- 1 A more excellent ministry to serve humanity as Jesus Christ is the high priest in the heavenly eternal sphere **not** the temporal earthly sphere.
- 2 Part of that superior ministry is that Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and humanity, the only person who can relate perfectly with both God and human beings.
- 3 The New Covenant has better promises for those who enter into it, eternal promises **not** limited to this life.

A New Covenant was not needed because the Old was faulty.

The Old Covenant was based on perfect laws, but it was limited in what it could accomplish.

The fault was with human beings and human nature, so a New Covenant was needed for God the Father to accomplish what He set out to do.

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, **“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”**”*

To create children in His image and with His character.

Hebrews 8:8-12 [NIV] *“**But God found fault with the people and said:** **“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”**”*

This is a direct quotation from **Jeremiah 31:31-34**.

Romans 7:4 [NIV] *“So, my brothers, **you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.**”*

Paul is saying when Christ died we died to the Law, so that we may be united with Christ to bear fruit through that union, likened to a marriage union.

The ultimate thing that the Law can do is to put us to death, after that the Law has no hold over us.

The Law applies to the living not the dead.

The only way out from being under the Law is death.

The death referred to was Christ’s death.

Romans 6:3-7 [NIV] *“**Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.**”*

Paul is repeating this to ensure that we “get the message.”

We die with Jesus Christ so that our future union with Him will not be adulterous.

Romans 7:1-3 [NIV] *“Do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to men who know the law, **that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.**”*

The physical example of the future spiritual union of the church to Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:7-9 [NIV] *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! **For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.**” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, “Write:*

‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

This future marriage of the church and the Lamb [Jesus Christ].

The New Covenant is likened to a marriage covenant, an intimate personal relationship.

The Old Covenant was more like a business arrangement.

God told Israel obey certain laws, perform certain rituals and I will bless your crops, also you and your children with prosperity.

Romans 7:5 [NIV] *“For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.”*

The rebellious human nature we inherited with our human body.

Psalms 51:4-6 [NIV] *“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. **Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.** Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.”*

King David understood this human nature. He had just committed adultery with Bathsheba and expressed his shame and repentance in this psalm.

God has only got one remedy for the rebel in our nature, crucifixion.

The Good News is that Christ’s crucifixion can be a substitute for our deserved death, on our confession and repentance.

Luke 23:38-43 [NIV] *“There was a written notice above him, which read: **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise.”*

This rebellious criminal recognised Jesus as the Messiah [Saviour] and knowing this, asked for God’s mercy, and received a promise from Christ that he would eventually be in God’s presence.

The original Greek text has **no** punctuation and this has to be inserted by the translator.

To move the comma as we have, allows this scripture to harmonise with others referring to the resurrection of the “*dead in Christ*” at Christ’s second coming, **not** before.

Romans 7:5 [NIV] *“For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, **the sinful passions aroused by the law** were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.”*

“The sinful passions aroused by the law.”

Without the knowledge of the Law of God we are unaware that what we do is sinful.

Romans 7:6 [NIV] *“But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve **in the new way of the Spirit**, and not in the old way of the written code.”*

We are resurrected from “*death in Christ*” to a life directed by the Holy Spirit **not** a set of laws.

Romans 7:7 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For **I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”**”*

Paul defends his gospel message of grace from those who look to law-keeping for salvation not the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:8 [NIV] *“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.”*

The law has to be used correctly not as a means of salvation but a revealer of what is sinful.

Romans 8:3-8 [NIV] *“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, **God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.** And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. **Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.** The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; **the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.**”*

The rebellious human mind **cannot** be subject to the law and cannot therefore please God. God dealt with this rebel in us by the death of Jesus Christ.

Romans 7:8-12 [NIV] *“But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. **Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.** I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. **So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.**”*

The problem is not in the law it is in the people.

The purpose of the law is to bring the rebel in our human nature out into the light, and point us to Jesus Christ as the only Saviour from our deserved death.

Romans 3:20 [NIV] *“Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his [God’s] sight by observing the law; rather, **through the law we become conscious of sin.**”*

The same principle stated in this scripture. The Law brings out our problem into the open.

Jeremiah 50:4-5 [NIV] *“In those days, at that time,” declares the LORD, “the people of Israel and the people of Judah together will go in tears to seek the LORD their God. They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces towards it. **They will come and bind themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.**”*

This New Covenant is also predicted in this scripture.

This is the eventual response that humanity will have to this New Covenant when it is revealed to them.

The idea of a covenant is **not** new as far as human relationship with the Creator God.

We find many covenants made between God and human beings recorded in the Old Testament scripture.

What is new is that the covenant revealed by Jesus Christ and ratified by His blood, is that it is:

- (a) universal – not, as the Old Covenants were, with individuals and with only one nation, Israel;
- (b) the Old Covenants depended on obedience to externally imposed laws.

The New Covenant was to be internal, “*written on the heart and mind of human beings.*”

In other words, under the New Covenant humans would obey God, not because of the fear of punishment, but because they loved God in their hearts and minds.

Humans would obey God, **not** because the law ordered them unwillingly to do so, but because of a desire to obey and please Him that was in their hearts and minds.

- (c) The New Covenant is based entirely on the love of God, not on the efforts of human beings.

Our part is to accept this love that God has for us and seek to reflect that love in our lives.

1 John 4:19 [NIV] “*We love because he first loved us.*”

A physical example of this is the relationship between the sun and the moon.

The moon has **no** means of creating light in itself, moonlight is the reflection of the light generated by the sun.

How do we do this on a spiritual level?

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*”

The resulting fruit of our relationship with the Holy Spirit, who is God, will be first and foremost love.

Springing from that love will be the other “*fruits*” of this relationship with the Holy Spirit.

For this relationship with the Holy Spirit to exist and continue, certain things must take place.

- (1) The Holy Spirit will not relate to anyone who is **not** also holy.

We are only made holy by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cleanse us of all unholy sins.

1 John 1:8-9 [NIV] “*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*”

Confession and repentance is needed.

Abraham’s example of faith in God’s promises caused him to receive credited righteousness.

Romans 4:21-24 [NIV] “*being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.*”

This is how we become righteous in God’s eyes.

Luke 11:13 [NIV] “*If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*”

Now with confidence we can claim this promise of God to send the Holy Spirit to work with us, producing fruits of love in us.

Other conditions are essential.

John 7:38-39 [NIV] *“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

This love that is generated by the Holy Spirit in us must flow out to others in the form of loving works and words.

Ephesians 4:30 [NIV] *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

We must **not** grieve the Holy Spirit.

What does grieve the Holy Spirit?

Ephesians 4:22-29 [NIV] *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”**: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must **steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.**”*

Examples of things that would grieve the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;”*

How would we do this?

Romans 8:14 [NIV] *“because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*

We put out the Spirit’s fire by not allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us, not responding to his promptings.

John 16:13-14 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me [Jesus Christ] by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”*

We insult the Holy Spirit if we do not acknowledge that it is He that is leading us into understanding God’s Word, thus bringing glory to Christ and the Father.

1 Corinthians 12:4-5 [NIV] *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.”*

We put out the Holy Spirit’s flame in our lives if we do not use the gifts and the opportunities that the Holy Spirit gives us.

Joel 2:28-29 [NIV] *“And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”*

Eventually all human beings will have access to the Holy Spirit and have their chance to be part of the Kingdom [created family] of God.

Acts 2:16-21 [NIV] *“No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “**In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.** Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**”*”

Peter confirmed the Holy Spirit being available to all who accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

This is the newness and wonder of the Covenant that Jesus Christ preached and ratified with His own sacrificial blood.