The Book of Hebrews

Chapter 8

The writer, as we are seeing, seems to be, step by step, showing his readers why the old ways are over and a new way has come. That they should now, not follow the old way, but follow the new way, and then he explains just how the old order of the priests, from the beginning, has lost it favor, and the new order under Christ, has become the way to follow. The whole of chapter 7 is telling the people, that the old order of the High Priest had a physical life span, were acting high priests for only a season, were sinners as the people were, thus had to offer up their own sacrifices and atonement gifts before they could even entertain the peoples’ atonement gifts and sacrifices. In other words, they were fallible humans.

Therefore, the writer then tells the folks that there is a new Way and better Way because this Way is infallible. With this Jesus as the High Priest, He then is eternal, He was not an ‘acting’ High Priest, because He was THE High Priest, without sin, (therefore, He doesn’t have to offer sacrifices because He, Himself, offered up Himself as the ultimate sacrifice.) Also, being eternal, His sits right next to God the Father, on the right-hand side of course, and does intercede for all. Sounds simple enough, doesn’t it? So, why do people make it so complex?

A] Hebrews 8: 1 through 6; (read)

1] “*Now, this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;”*

Right here, the writer pulls all that he has written, together, and offers THE explanation for the former statements. That, what he just said of this new High Priest is, He, this new High Priest, IS in Heaven sitting at the RIGHT HAND of the FATHER!!! He is a part of the overall Majesty that IS IN heaven. Do we understand this? Do you think they did? After all the writer has been describing, regarding the difference between the old Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood, and Yeshua Messiah (Jesus the Christ), with this new eternal priesthood, and this he now culminates into the next verses.

2] “*A Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord erected and not man.”*

This gets difficult for even the scholars, who over the years have tried to grasp the real or total meaning of this. (Greek) ‘ton hagion leitourgos’ here the Greek translated says, ‘In the Holy Place or set apart place for a specific purpose (hagion), ‘leitourgos’ which we get our word ‘litergy’ is that public servant or one who ministers the liturgy or religious rituals to the worshippers. Now the next word in Greek is ‘Skenes’ which in actual Greek renders out as a theater, but for the Hebrew equivalent is a temporary structure where religious programs were carried out. So He is the minister in the Holy Place of God’s own tabernacle specifically for the purpose of handling all the duties of serving with the Holy implements

Now did the Lord build this ‘tabernacle’? No, He did however, design it for the purposes of religious events that included all the rites the Law of God demanded, this also included all the implements and tools required to carry out the worship. He ‘gathered His people’ to be a part of that which the Law required, by their atonement and sacrifices. Are we talking, then, about this physical Tabernacle?

No, after all this, a further explanation regarding what some scholars make this to be is needed, and that is, the third heaven. (1) the sky, 2) above the sky and 3) ‘third’ heaven, comes in as the ‘(Hebrew) ‘Shamayim’, this is God’s House’). This is what God had created, all the heavens, and THIS is where Jesus our High Priest actually functions as High Priest for all time. I like this explanation. (I guess some day we will have to do some studying on what and how many of these ‘heavens’ are there.---some say 7.)

3] “*For every High Priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, therefore, it is necessary that This One also have something to offer.”*

The writer explains further, that according to the Law, all the priests had their proscribed duties, and the High Priest had the job of offering the gifts and sacrifices of the people to God in the Holy of Holies on their Day of Atonement, after they themselves had made their atonement with gifts and sacrifices. But what, then, does Jesus have to do if He were to be the High Priest? After all, he already offered Himself up as THE sacrifice for all the people instead of a sacrifice for Himself, instead of offering other gifts for sacrifice.

4] “*For, if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the Law, who serve the copy and the shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle, for he said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’*

Let us look at the whole context here. The Hebrew faith and relationship with God were summed up in the covenants God gave to Abraham and His descendants and then in the covenant and complete Law God gave to Moses, along with The Tabernacle and all the implements of worship which were copies shown to Moses, of what God had in Heaven. This is the ‘copies and shadows of heavenly things’ as the writer described.

Now if He were on earth how could Jesus be an ‘acting’ High Priest when all things used were but imitations of worship in heaven and He cannot offer the Sacrifices since he already was the Sacrifice, thus He was already the real and all time High Priest. In other words, He can no longer minister in the temple, as all was a sham, as He had pointed out during his earthly lifetime and ministry.

5] “*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”*

Okay, since Jesus was crucified, dead and buried, then risen and taken on up to be with the Father, ON HIS OWN THRONE, Jesus is, then, in His real position of authority, and is the real High Priest and intercessor, and mediator. Do you remember when Jesus drank the wine at the Seder Supper, and declared that drinking it, it declared they were drinking it to the New Covenant? Well there you are, He is the mediator of THAT new covenant. Now this is what the writer is moving on to. There is a New covenant, they cannot go back to the old promises, because there is a better one.

Would you go back to that old beaten up clunker of a car simply because the new one didn’t ride the same? Or go back to wearing an old pair of shoes just because the new ones had not gotten broken in yet? These things just don’t fit anymore and no longer serve their original purpose, do they? Except for the fact we got used to them and they grew comfortable on us. As for those ‘better promises, we are coming to that explanation, and let us not get ahead of ourselves.

B] Hebrews 8: 7 through 13; (read)

1] “*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.”*

I am going to delineate what this New Covenant is here and also provide a 2 page statement with a complete explanation of the New Covenant:

The New Covenant (or New Testament) is the promise that God makes with Humanity that He will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him.” This also reminds us of John 3: 16 and 17: “For God so Loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that who-so-ever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life. God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

What this covenant does, is turn the promises from a corporate nation’s relationship with God, to an individualist relationship with God. Does that make sense? God created, out of a chaos of humanity, an individual nation that started with one man, Abraham, and with God’s covenants and nurturing, grew into a mighty nation, but a nation that always seemed to be at odds with God, and God always having to restore them from one infraction after another.

The writer begins a treatise about the fading validity of the original covenants. Why do I say fading? Because as we have studied over the years, we saw Israel break these covenants time after time and God restoring them time after time. The covenants were just fine, it was the people, including the leadership and priesthood who were not.

2] “*Because finding fault with them, He says, ‘Behold 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-,”*

This starts the words spoken to Jeremiah the prophet located in the book of Jeremiah 31: 31 through 34. According to the ‘David Jeremiah Study Bible’, apparently the covenants God had given were not permanent, and had an ending, when this New Covenant would take over. So, now, who was God finding fault with, the Covenants or the people? If we say the covenants, that might mean that God issued faulty covenants, and we know that God would not do this, He knew all that Israel would do.

However, if with the people, He finds fault, this would tend to make the covenants more semi-permanent on purpose so that a more permanent and lasting covenant could be put in place when it was ready to do so. The interesting thing to note, was that originally, there was one nation only, yet this was addressed to two nations Israel and Judah, so initial covenants were already compromised, weren’t they?

So, what we are saying is, the covenants are permanent, but the people are not, and are more prone to breaking promises where God does NOT break a promise or an oath. However, in His Love and in His mercy, he adapts and issues one more covenant, and this is for those who will keep the oath or promise and this covenant is for All mankind that will hear and call on His name.

3] *“-not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the Land of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.”*

Continuing the previous thought, God will make a new covenant but not like the one He made with the Israelites under Moses as He brought them out of Egyptian captivity and stayed with them the whole journey, and even then, they were a contentious people. However, God had given an oath and covenant to Abraham, that his, (Abraham) seed would eventually become a great and mighty nation and under Moses that was happening, over three million strong. And they would become just as God had promised, that nation, even a great empire for a bit.

Now because the Jews have essentially trashed God’s promises, He has moved on to other promises, that will be made. Now it will be individual. So, was it the covenants God disregards or the people of Israel? Well a little item caught my eye, (at the urging of Scholars Commentaries), in Jeremiah 31: 32, the word ‘disregarded’ was actually rendered, I was a ‘husband’ to them, (Curious turn, eh?) however the meaning might be, that as the nation disregarded His covenants, he turned His back on them as a nation. They broke the covenant, He didn’t. Then in the fullness of time another covenant would come forth.

4] “*For this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel after those days Says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

A continuing of the Jeremiah quote; Note this is a reunion or reuniting of Israel; and in Israel of the writer’s day, Israel is one nation, although under the Roman authority. The leadership of the Jews is corrupted as has been the worship, and the laws have been overwritten, as we have studied before, by the Pharisees and Sadducees, into the books of Traditions, and THIS, among other things, is what Jesus railed about during His time on earth.

God is saying that at a specific time He will issue the New Covenant and that time is when He announced Jesus at the Jordan Baptism. Then notice this point, ‘I will put MY LAWS in their mind and write then on their hearts. The Law has never gone away- It IS the moral basis of all law today. But what is being said, is all who follow Jesus, because their hearts have turned away from the sinful lives of the past, they have their built-in moral compass. And as we belong to Jesus, we, then, belong to God, and we ARE HIS, and His Laws are in our minds and in our hearts. In other words, WE know the Law and WE LOVE the Law.

5] “*None of them will teach his neighbor and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them.”*

With this new relationship, with Jesus and with God the Father, and having that Law in our minds and in our hearts, that for our brothers and sisters in the faith, we don’t have to constantly be teaching to them about Jesus because we already know Jesus and that is ‘preaching to the choir’ isn’t it? The ‘neighbor’ is the people around you, and the brother is family, in this case.

We don’t have to teach them, but we can and should be lifting up and encouraging each other in the faith. We also can and should be teaching those who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior, bringing them to the Cross and to their Salvation. (Each person witnesses according to the Holy Spirit Gifts God has given you. Be careful with this)

6] “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more.”*

According to Bishop Ellicot; ‘Of this New covenant, ordained on the three promises of an inward revelation, universal knowledge of God, and free pardon of sin, Jesus is the mediator.’ The writer is now getting into the new relationship man has with God, and how we can approach the throne, with Jesus as the High Priest and mediator.

Let’s explain this; because I have this new relationship with God, what exactly IS this new relationship? As we have studied before; we become as children of the Heavenly Father, even to be brothers and sisters with Jesus. We are now part of the Family of God. But as children we still sin and do wrong in God’s sight, ‘but He is quick and just to forgive us our sins’. We come to Jesus as sinners in need of redemption, and He forgives us through the forgiving shed Blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and brings us to Him in Agape Love. When God forgives, that forgiveness is unconditional, and all past deeds are fully forgotten.

Are we catching on to this? Now remember the writer is writing this to recalcitrant Jews who are wavering in their faith because of pressure from both Jewish leaders and Roman authoritarianism, and are in danger of returning to the old faith, which offers them nothing at all. The two important parts of the Jewish history, are the Temple Priests who govern the faith of the people and the Covenants that by which the Jewish nation is governed. The writer has aimed at these two very important items that every Jew should know and shows them standing strong, and recognizing a new edition of God’s love through the true High Priest Mediator, Yeshua; and the new Covenant as foretold in Jeremiah the prophet.

7] “*In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”*

This is telling the folks there, that with the New Covenant in place, there was no need for the old covenants because the people rejected them, they broke the rules, so to speak, and all that was promised under those covenants is passing away because the new covenant is taking the place of the old. So, what is the reason for going back to the old promises or covenants, when they have been broken and are to be null and void.