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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 8 (Continued)



Part 12/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

As I was sitting here before the meeting, before my part in the meeting began, I was very vividly reminded of something which I feel God wants me to share with you. I was reminded because I was thinking of the responsibility that rested upon me here tonight to try to interpret to you these Scriptures. I assure you, I feel it to be a very solemn responsibility.

The incident I'm going to describe briefly took place in Wales in the year 1913, one year before World War I. A well-known evangelist of that generation, Steven Jeffries, was preaching in a little chapel in Wales, a very simple structure with whitewashed walls, practically no kind of ornaments of any kind and behind him was a bare, white wall. I have this from people who were personally acquainted with the people who were witnesses. As the evangelist was preaching, he noticed that the eyes of the people were fastened upon him with extraordinary attention. He wondered what he was saying or doing that was causing them to be so attentive. Only when he had finished preaching and stepped down from the platform did he discover that supernaturally on the white wall behind him there had been projected in glowing colors the head of a lamb. This lamb's head was there clearly on the wall behind him. Then, after awhile, the head of the lamb changed to the head of Christ as a man of sorrows. Particularly people noticed that his hair was prematurely flecked with gray. This remained on the wall after the service had closed. Ladies went up with scarves and held them and the light shone through the scarves and remained there probably on into the night but it was gone the next day.

What particularly brought this to my mind was that the people told Steven Jeffries that both while the head of the lamb was there and then when it became the head of Christ, the eyes moved continually watching every movement that the preacher made. For me as a preacher, that spoke to me in a way that I think hardly anything else has done about the fact that the eyes of the Lord are on those who minister His Word. He's checking every move, every gesture, every word spoken. It's left me always with a sense of responsibility to the Lord as I interpret His Word to His people.

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I think it came back to me tonight because as we go into the 8th and 9th chapters of Hebrews we're moving into a very strange realm. A realm which is outside that of natural experience and sense knowledge. This epistle to the Hebrews is a very remarkable book because it's dealing with things that most of us have never seen with our natural eyes. It's dealing with them as absolutely real. As I prayed with my wife before I came tonight I prayed that the Holy Spirit would make these things real and vivid to all of us, myself not least. Because, without the Holy Spirit this will just be words. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal these unseen but eternal realities which are the theme of the next chapters of Hebrews. Chapter 9 particularly and also, to some extent, chapter 10.

All the practical teaching in Hebrews is derived from these eternal unseen realities. Unless the Holy Spirit makes the unseen real to us, the practical will not have the impact on us that it ought to.

I was blessed when Brother Jim Croft just before I spoke led us in that beautiful chorus "Holy, Holy, Holy," because I think there's probably no other passage of Scripture which more fully unfolds the holiness of God than this epistle to the Hebrews.

You've probably heard it said—and I may have quoted it before—that Hebrews is the Leviticus of the New Testament. Or, Leviticus is the Hebrews of the Old Testament. They go parallel in many ways and both of them unfold this service of God and what is required to be in God's presence and how we come into God's presence and how we can avoid transgressing against the holiness of God. This is a very solemn thought because even those who served only in the tabernacle of Moses which we were told was a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, if they transgressed they were instantly struck with death. Two of Aaron's sons died instantly because they didn't observe the requirements of holiness.

We're not talking now about the mere copy but we're talking about the actual heavenly realities. How much more does that demand holiness in us?

We'll turn now to the outline of chapter 8 which you'll find on the page marked 8/1. The page numbers all refer to the chapter which the outline relates to. We will very quickly go over the outline for the first six verses which we did deal with last time. The first two verses of chapter 8 extract the main points about Jesus as high priest from the foregoing elaborate comparison of chapter 7. These are the four main points: He sat down because He never needed to repeat His sacrifice—unlike the Levitical priests who always remained standing. Second, He sat on a throne. He was not only a priest, He was a king. That's the order of Melchizedek, not of Levi. Third, it's in the heavens, not on earth. And fourth, it's in the true tabernacle which was pitched by God and not by man.

Verses 3 and 4 reaffirm the function of a priest. The Lord seemed to cause me to dwell on that last time rather to my own surprise. To emphasize that nobody can give God a gift or a sacrifice without a priest. Nobody just walks up to God and slips something into His hand. The function of a priest is to take the gifts and the sacrifices of God's people and transmit them to God. Only if the priest is accepted will the gift or the sacrifice be accepted. We need always to bear in mind as Christians our gifts are accepted much more because of our priest than because of ourselves.

Verse 5 points out the Levitical priests served only in a tabernacle that was a copy of the heavenly one. We need continually to remind ourselves the heavenly is the original, the material and earthly one is the copy. We are so earthbound that we tend to think about the earthly one as real and the heavenly one as shadowy. It's the other way around.

Then from verses 6 through 13, which we will be going through now, we come to the fourth passage of comparison and all the passages of comparison are listed in the introduction which we will not turn to. This comparison is between the Old and the New Covenant. Bear in mind when you read your Bible, the same word that's translated "testament" is also "covenant." Both in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New. Our Bible comes to us in two covenants: the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. In verse 6 we looked at briefly last time the writer states three aspects of the superiority of the new order. First, Jesus has a more excellent ministry. It's heavenly, not earthly. Second, He's mediating a better covenant. It's an eternal, not a temporary, covenant. And thirdly, it's enacted on better promises.

There's promised much more than was promised under the Old Covenant. Now I think the best thing I can do is translate verses 7 to the end of the chapter. Then we'll work through them. My translation is off the cuff and it may not be very elegant but it probably will bring out some meanings which might not be apparent from the more elegant translation that's printed. I'm going to start at verse 7.

> "For if that first covenant was without fault [or there was nothing wrong with it or if it

> had been adequate] ..."

I think the key word is inadequate. We'll look in a few moments why it was inadequate. We could translate it this way: "If that first covenant had been adequate ..."

> "No place would have been sought for a second."

That's obvious. If the first one does the whole job why look for a second? That's logic, it's Talmudic logic, but it's very real. Then the writer, as he so often does, proceeds to quote from the Old Testament to show that what he's saying is based on the Old Testament Scriptures and fully in line with them.

> "For blaming them He says [He is God and them is Israel] ..."

And notice, we'll look at this further, He's not blaming the covenant, He's blaming the people. This is what He says. Now this is quoted from the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 31, verses 31–34. You're welcome to turn there if you'd like. If you do turn you may discover if you look at it rather closely that there are certain quite significant differences between the version we have in the Old Testament in Jeremiah and this one which is a quotation here in Hebrews. The reason, which I have dealt with before in this series, is that the writer of Hebrews does not normally quote Old Testament Scriptures directly from the Hebrew text but he quotes them from what we call the Septuagint, which was the Greek translation of the Hebrew text made in about the first or second century BC. It was probably made in Alexandria in Egypt, made with the authorization of the Jewish leaders. That was probably more widely disseminated in the world of the New Testament than the Hebrew version because everybody who had any education read Greek. Comparatively few people read Hebrew.

Why there's a difference is a problem which I think we better not try and get into. We have enough to deal with without getting into that one. It's possible that the translators of the Septuagint had the same Hebrew text and understood it differently or it's possible that there were some alternative variations in the Hebrew text at that time. This has been brought to the floor again by the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in Qumran, which happened, as you know, in about 1948 because there are some Hebrew texts, especially in 1 and 2 Samuel and in Jeremiah which are not in full agreement with the accepted standard Hebrew text that is familiar today which is called the Masoretic Text, which is the text that the Jewish people decided to adopt as their official version about the ninth century of the Christian era. The whole question of texts is somewhat complicated and I think it's better that we don't get too deeply involved in it. One reason being I'm not qualified to speak on it in detail.

I'm going to translate from the Greek of chapter 8. It might be quite interesting to you—if you've got enough fingers and you can partition your brain enough—to turn back also to Jeremiah 31 in the Old Testament. You may be able to read them both simultaneously. I'm now starting Hebrews 8:8:

> "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, that I will accomplish [or completely make, I will finish it off] with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant ..."

Notice, it's with the entire people of Israel. The house of Israel, that's the descendants of the northern kingdom. The house of Judah, the descendants of the southern kingdom. It's not some part of the Jewish people, it's the entire Jewish people.

> "... not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not abide in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. Because this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: Giving My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be to them a God [or God or their God], and they will be to Me a people. And they certainly will not teach each one his fellow citizen, and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the smallest to the greatest of them."

It's interesting that the Bible, when it has small and great nearly always puts small before great. Very, very few places can you find great put before small.

> "For they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. Because I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins I will no longer remember."

We might as well read verse 13, which is not a quotation from Jeremiah but a comment.

> "When He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first one old. But that which is becoming obsolete and old is near to vanishing away."

Let's go back and go through that with our outline, which I trust you will find helpful. We're going to the bottom of Page 8/1 and my comment there, which requires some amplification, is: The covenant based on the Law was rendered ineffective or inadequate not by any fault in the law, but by the weakness of man's carnal nature. It's very, very important to understand that. That's why it says, "He found fault with them," not "He found fault with the covenant."

There are a number of passages in the New Testament that bring out this fact. We'll look simply at the two that are quoted there. The first is in Romans 7. I have a problem. When I'm in Hebrews and I get into Romans it's sometimes difficult for me to get out of Romans but I'm going to try. Romans 7, this is an elaborate passage of Paul's writings here. We just have to dive in, that's all. I hope we can come up for breath! Verses 4–12:

> "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ..."

Paul is saying: When Christ died, you died. His death was your death and His death was to the Law. You see, you've got to bear one thing in mind about the Law. The ultimate it can do to you is put you to death and after that it has no more. Once you're dead, the Law doesn't apply to you. The law applies to the living, not to the dead. That's the only way out of being under the Law, is by death. But the death was Christ's death. I hope you get that.

> "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another [that's a metaphor from marriage], to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God."

It's a union that will bring forth fruit. He's pointed out earlier that if the Law were alive and they were married to the Law, they couldn't ever get free because it's "until death do us part." But when the Law died in Christ, then they were released from that marriage union and without being adulterous they could be united to the resurrected Christ to bring forth fruit. I can see from your faces that's a new thought to some of you, we cannot dwell on it.

Verse 5:

> "For while we were in the flesh..."

And the flesh does not mean merely our physical bodies. It means the nature that we inherited with our physical bodies. And that nature can be summed up in one key word which is rebel. Every one of us has inherited a nature that contains in it a rebel. That nature is called "the flesh." Some of you may not yet have come face to face with that fact. It's a very important one. It'll make a lot of difference in your life when you discover it. God has only got one remedy for the rebel. Those of you that have heard me preach know what that is. He does not send him to church or Sunday school or teach him the Golden Rule or how to memorize Scripture. God's only remedy for the rebel is execution! The message of mercy is the execution took place when Jesus died.

Verse 5:

> "For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death."

That's an astonishing statement, isn't it? The sinful passions which were aroused by the Law. We'll go on reading.

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound... Remember the only way out from under the law is death.

> "... so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."

And there, by implication, are the two covenants: the Old, the letter; the New, the Spirit.

> "What shall we say then?"

Now Paul's going to defend himself. Much of Romans is written in answer to imaginary accusations from people—presumably Jewish people—who didn't accept his version of the gospel of grace. They're saying to him, he imagines, "So, the Law was bad." He says, "Oh, no, not at all. Nothing wrong with the Law." Verse 7:

> "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be!"

If you know anything about the Jewish people, that's so typical. ?Ha-lee-la? is what they say. Far from it, never let it be.

> "On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting [or lusting] if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'"

"To the Law," Paul says, "I owe the fact that I can identify sin." The particular sin that he's referring to is coveting or lusting. He's referring, of course, to the tenth commandment which says, "Thou shalt not covet." I have to confess, for the first time today I realized specifically that the first thing you're not to covet is your neighbor's house; the second, his wife. I've always thought, Why did Paul put lust instead of covet, but that's the answer. When you covet your neighbor's wife, that's lust. Paul says if there had never been a commandment that says don't covet (don't lust), I wouldn't have recognized lust. It was the commandment that brought lust to light in me.

I don't know whether you have experienced that. But in a small way I experienced it as a boy of 15 when I was confirmed in the Anglican Church. This is no criticism of the Anglican Church. I was not instructed in the essence of the gospel. That's to say, mentally I could repeat the various things that were said, but no one had ever made it personal to me. I never had had a personal application of what the death of Jesus was intended to do in my life. But at that time I decided, "This has come at just the right moment. I'm really not nearly as good as I ought to be. From now on, I'm going to be a whole lot better." That was my view of what would happen through confirmation.

Well, it actually worked out exactly the opposite. The more I tried to be good, the quicker I got bad and the worse I got. See, I made the same discovery. You don't know how bad you are until you try to be good. As long as you're content with being bad there's really no struggle. But when you see the standard of goodness and aim at that, something is triggered inside you. That rebel says, "Not me! I'm not going that way and you can't make me!" He's quite right; you can't make him. There's no way you can make him. Paul says in Romans 8, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. The carnal or fleshly mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."

Going on reading in Romans 7:

> "But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."

That's the essence of what I wanted to say. The problem is not in the Law, it's in the people—in Israel then, and in every son of Adam now. It's the rebel. What the Law does in the purposes of God is to bring the rebel out into the open. Paul says, "I wouldn't have known sin if the Law hadn't said, 'Don't covet.'"

And in Romans 3:20 he says: "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." The Law is God's diagnostic. It brings out the problem into the open.

We'll look also, for a moment, in Romans 8:3–8.

> "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

The essence of that is we cannot do what is pleasing to God as long as we are in the flesh, as long as we are controlled by the carnal, unregenerate, Adamic nature. Because, that's a rebel. The rebel has to be dealt with before we can please God. God dealt with the rebel in Christ. Our old man—that's the Adamic rebel—was crucified with Him.

I'm sure for some of you that's perhaps the first time you've ever been confronted with that fact. But, it's a historical fact, it's true whether anybody believes it or not. Until you know it and believe it, it's not going to work in your life. Paul says, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin on the basis of Christ's death." He died our death. He paid our penalty. He got us out of the Law. No other way out but death.

Going on in Romans 8:5:

> "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh [but I prefer the King James Version, 'the carnal mind'] is death, but the [spiritual] mind ... is life and peace, because the [carnal] mind ... is hostile toward God; [Okay? It's at enmity with God.] for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so..."

That's a very important statement. Even if it tries, it can't do it. Verse 8:

> "... and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

All that we went into at some length—perhaps longer than we should have done—because of the statement that the problem was not with the law, it was not with the covenant, it was with the people.

Now we're going back to our outline and we've at last got to Page 8/2. We've already seen the transition from the Old to New Covenant is predicted in Jeremiah 31:31–34. It's also predicted in Jeremiah 50:4–5, a reference which is not in your outline but is worth looking at for a moment.

> "'In those days and at that time,' declares the LORD, 'the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah [notice again, it's the total people, Israel and Judah] as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be the LORD their God they will seek. They will ask the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.'"

I prefer the alternative reading in the margin: "Saying, come ye, let us join ourselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten." That speaks about the other side. Jeremiah 31 speaks about what God will do. Jeremiah 50 speaks about the response of Israel to what God will do.

That's a very vivid passage to me because when I was originally learning Hebrew from a young Jewish man in Jerusalem who was killed in the war of 1948 (but he was my Hebrew teacher at that time). I wrote him a composition in Hebrew explaining that I thought this was what was going to happen to the Jewish people—that they were going to come and say, "Let us join ourselves to the LORD" and ask the way to Zion. And I said, "That is the way to Zion." Ultimately, the only way to Zion is the everlasting covenant. He pointed out something to me which I've never forgotten which I cannot explain in detail. The punctuation in the Hebrew indicates precisely that. The way to Zion is to say, "Let us join ourselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant."

So there we have the two aspects: God's declaration in Jeremiah 31 and the response of the people when God's time comes in Jeremiah 50.

Now we'll go through the points of contrast between the two covenants bearing in mind this is one of the passages of comparison and contrast. First of all, the Old consisted in external commandments on tablets of stone. Stone is a very significant word. It's something very hard and unyielding, external. The New consists of laws written inwardly in hearts and minds. I think perhaps the key word is external and internal. We've already seen from Paul's analysis of what the law could not do that as long as it remained outside and couldn't deal with the rebel, it could never get the job done. People could look at it and say, "We'll do it all," but they never did do it.

How is the law written inwardly on hearts and minds? This is very, very important. We'll look at 2 Corinthians 3:3. We need to read verse 2 as well. Paul is writing to the Corinthians Christians who were a very bad lot by their natural state in life. They were all sorts of things: prostitutes, homosexuals, extortioners, blasphemers. He lists all their problems. It says:

> "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men..."

I always appreciate that. Paul said, "If you want to know what I believe, if you want my theology, just go to Corinth and look at the people there. That's my theology demonstrated. Find out what they were, look at the way they live now and you'll know that's my letter." That's the kind of letter I think preachers need to be able to write. Verse 3:

> "... being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of [flesh or of] human hearts."

What is it that can write God's laws on hearts of men and women? The Holy Spirit. That's tremendously important, because many, many times in the Christian church we've gone back to a situation which is just like the Ten Commandments only we've probably substituted our own silly little list of rules for the Ten Commandments—or added to it. See, if the Holy Spirit doesn't do it, it will not work. There is no way you can change the human heart without the Holy Spirit. All preaching that is just words without the Spirit is wasted time. It accomplishes absolutely nothing of permanent value. The only agent in the universe that can transmit God's laws to the heart of men and women is the Holy Spirit. If He isn't on the scene, if He isn't working, all our religious activities are just a waste of time and we're deceiving ourselves.

You can have the fundamentals of your faith up on the walls of your church but that won't stop people being liars and hypocrites and cheats. In fact, it tends to make them, if anything, somewhat more hypocritical. The only thing that can change people is the Holy Spirit when He has access to our hearts. I am so conscious these days when I speak that if it isn't the Holy Spirit I could just as well stop. I tell you, tonight I have prayed earnestly that it would be the Holy Spirit that would do the writing because if it's just a human voice or human rules or regulations or fundamentals or statements of doctrine that are written external, they will not change the human heart. There is no power in the universe that can change the human heart from sin to righteousness, from rebellion to obedience except the Holy Spirit. Ink won't do it. It's not with ink; it's with the Spirit of the living God.

The second difference is the Old Covenant ended in rejection by God. The New ends in permanent acceptance. We'll illustrate both those facts from the prophet Hosea. If you want to turn there to Hosea 1 and we'll only look at verse 9 although you really need to see the context. Hosea's wife had just given birth to a son and as with various children of the prophets he was given a name which had a message.

> "The Lord said, 'Name him Lo-ammi [Lo-ammi in Hebrew means 'not my people'] for you are not My people and I am not your God.'"

God there rejected the people and said, "You don't belong to Me and I don't belong to you."

However, thank God that isn't the last chapter of Hosea. In chapter 2 there comes the promise of a new and eternal covenant and it's found in verse 16. We need to note that in the two previous verses, verses 14 and 15, the Lord has indicated how He intends to deal with Israel to bring them back into a relationship with Himself. He says He will allure them and bring them into the wilderness. The word allure is a word that suggests the possibility of a very intimate relationship. Then He says He will give them the valley of Achor for a door of hope. Achor is "trouble." The phrase "a door of hope" in modern Hebrew is pethach tiqvah, which is the name of a major suburb of Tel Aviv. The Jewish people have seen their return to the land as the door of hope which God promised to open to them. I'd like to point out to you that that is one of the ways God deals with people, not just Israel. He allures us, He entices us.

Then we find ourselves in the valley of trouble and we say, "Lord, how did I get here and why have You brought me here?" Then the Lord says, "But I'll open for you out of the valley of trouble a door of hope." That's a principle of God's dealings. I'm sure there are many of us here this evening who could look back on experiences where the Lord enticed us and we ended up in the valley of trouble and said, "What's happened?" Then it turns out the Lord had a secret door that we didn't know about called the door of hope. That's the beginning of this promise of reconciliation.

We go on reading now in Hosea 2. Some of the most beautiful words, I think, that are found anywhere.

> "'And it will come about in that day,' declares the LORD, 'that you will call Me Ishi and will no longer call Me Baali.'"

That's very hard to translate. Both the word Ish and the word Baal can mean "husband." But Baal also means "owner" or "master" and, of course, it was also the name of an alien god that Israel was often enticed into worshiping. It had some bad associations. But, it was the regular word under the Old Covenant for a husband. God says when we come into the New Covenant there'll be a new kind of relationship with you and Me. No longer will I be your Baal, your master, but I will be your Ish, which is your man, your husband. It's very hard to go into all the associations of those two words, but it speaks about a more intimate, personal relationship.

I think it would be true probably to say that whereas when the word Baal is used, it was legitimate under the Old Covenant for a man to have more than one wife. I think when the word Ish is used it probably implies a monogamous relationship.

Verse 17 we might as well read.

> "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, so that they will be mentioned by their names no more."

I'd like to point out to you, incidentally, that there's a lot said in the Bible about not taking the names of alien gods on your lips. I think that applies to us. I think there are some words that we'd just better not use. They're not swear words but they're just God dishonoring words. I'm not going to give examples but I've often heard Christians speak casually and lightly even about human personalities. I think we need to be careful of the names that pass our lips.

Going on in verse 18:

> "In that day I will also make a covenant for them [that's Israel] with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground."

That's an exciting thought to me.

> "And I will abolish [or break] the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety."

Obviously that has not yet happened. Then we come to this new relationship.

> "I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, then you will know the LORD."

The word betroth speaks of a marriage relationship. Verse 21:

> "'And it will come about in that day that I will respond,' declares the LORD. 'I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth, and the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine, and to the oil, and they will respond to Jezreel.'"

Jezreel is the great, big plain that's just east of Megiddo, southwest of Nazareth, west of the mountains of Gilboa. Those of you that have visited Israel, you have doubtless seen the plain of Jezreel. It's usually believed to be the probable scene of the last great battle, the battle of Armageddon. For many, many centuries it was an uncultivated swamp that produced nothing but malaria. Then when the Jewish people returned, they bought that land back from Arab landlords, who were absentee landlords, for large sums of money and began to cultivate it again. Today it is a very beautiful, lush, fertile area. Perhaps the most fertile area in Israel. And when I read this passage it becomes to vivid to me because in my mind's eye I can see the plain of Jezreel right now. The Lord says, "Jezreel will cry out to the earth for grain, and new wine, and oil. The earth will cry out to the heavens, and the heavens will cry out to Me. I will answer their cry."

You can picture the plain of Jezreel lying there desolate, uncultivated, uncared for, for centuries, but crying out for the crops that should be there, and the crops crying out to the earth, and the earth crying out to the heaven, the heaven forwarding the message to God. Of course, it's typical biblical imagery, but it's so very vivid. Then we go on to the reconciliation of Israel, verse 23:

> "And I will sow her for Myself in the land."

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And the name Jezreel means "God will sow." So God takes that name and says, "I will sow Israel back in that land."

> "I also will have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion..."

If you go back to the previous chapter, one of the daughters of Hosea's wife was called Lo-ruhamah which means "not having obtained mercy." But the Lord says, "I will now call her Ruhamah" meaning "having obtained mercy."

> "... and I will say to those who were not My people, you are My people!"

Whereas He had said Lo-ammi, "not My people"; now He says ammi, "My people." That's a very favorite name for a boy in contemporary Israel.

> "And they will say, 'Thou art my God!'"

So there's a picture in chapter 1 of the rejection under the Old Covenant and in chapter 2 of the permanent acceptance under the New. If you look in verses 19–20 you'll see the emphasis is on the permanence. God says:

> "I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD."

I think we need to also bear in mind that the, shall I say, the end purpose of the marriage relationship is for the man to know his wife and the wife to know the husband. The Lord has that in mind when He speaks about restoring this relationship with Israel and He said it will be a marriage relationship in which I will know you and you will know Me. We'll look back in Hebrews a little later and see that's one of the essential features of the New Covenant.

Point number three, we're back on Page 8/2. Under the Old Covenant it required continual, mutual exhortation without direct access to God. They were continually saying to one another, "Know the LORD." I think, in a sense, that's still true of religious Jews today. They're continually saying, "Know the LORD" but they don't know Him. But the New Covenant provides direct access to and knowledge of God for all. Look in Hebrews 8 again because that's important. Verse 11:

> "They shall not teach every one his fellow citizen, and every one his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them."

In the promise of reconciliation in Hosea 2, "Then you will know Me." You see, one of the themes of Hebrews is perfection or maturity and that implies direct access to God. That's within the second veil, the Holy of Holies, that's the destination of Hebrews. Anything that stops short of direct access to and knowledge of God is inadequate.

If you look back to Hebrews 7:19:

> "... (for the law made nothing perfect), [notice perfect is what we're after] and on the other hand [through the New Covenant] there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."

Or "through which we have access to God."

Notice perfection and access to God are in the same category and in terms of the tabernacle—they're both within the second veil. Any covenant that does not achieve that is inadequate, it hasn't met the need.

> "Going back to our outline now we see the Old required continual, mutual exhortation without direct access to God. The New provides direct access to and knowledge of God for all. We could, in that context, just look at the words of Jesus in John 17:3. 'This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'"

Again, Jesus is speaking about direct, personal access to and knowledge of God. He said, "This is eternal life." Less than that is not eternal life. That's the purpose of the New Covenant, to give us that direct person-to-person access to and knowledge of God which is eternal life.

Going back to our outline, 8/2. Point number four, the Old Covenant provided only a continual reminder and temporary covering of sins. The New provides final forgiveness and blotting out of even the memory of sins.

Concerning the first point, let's look in Hebrews 10:3.

> "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year."

It's very, very important to see that. That's the most the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could accomplish—they reminded people every year of their sins and provided a temporary covering for those sins which was only valid until the next year.

It's completely different from the New Covenant. We'll look now at the promise of God in Isaiah 43:25. We need to notice that this follows in Isaiah 43 on a catalog of Israel's failures. It's important to see that. I suppose we all recognize that God is as well aware of Israel's failures as any of the rest of us. Yet He hasn't changed His promises. Going into Isaiah 43:22:

> "Yet you have not called upon me, O Jacob, But you have become weary of Me, O Israel... .

[verse 24:] You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; rather, you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities."

The next verse, in the light of that, is surprising. Only God would say a thing like He said. Verse 25:

> "'I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.' When our transgressions are wiped out and God no longer remembers our sins, then logically, the writer of Hebrews says, there's no more need for sacrifice. If God has forgotten the sin, we don't need a sacrifice to cover a sin that God has blotted out and forgotten."

Notice in Isaiah 43:25 God says, "I will do it for My own sake [not: for your sake, not because you have deserved it, but for My own sake]." We could look, for a moment, in Isaiah 48:9 and 11. That's just a little further on. God is again speaking to Israel and He says in verse 9:

> "For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, and for My praise I restrain it for you, in order not to cut you off. [verse 11:] For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another."

God makes it extremely clear that what He intends to do He does not do because it has been deserved or earned, but He does it for His own sake and for the glory of His name. We need always to bear that in mind.

Going on near the bottom of Page 8/2 I just point out that the Old Testament word for atonement means "covering." The corresponding New Testament word means "reconciliation." Incidentally, the word atonement, the English word, is interesting. I wonder how many of you know how it's put together? It's put together in three parts. At–one–ment. It means God and the sinner being brought "at one." That's the meaning of atonement. At–one–ment.

Under the Old Covenant it wasn't at–one–ment. All it was was a covering. The Hebrew word is ?corfo?, which is found in the word Yom Kippur, "the day of the covering." That's all it was. It's very interesting, the same word is used of the pitch with which Noah covered the ark to make it water tight. It covered the ark, it kept them from disaster, it kept the water out. That's what the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were, they kept the water out. They were a temporary expedient to keep them from drowning, but they could not produce at–one–ment.

If you look in Romans 5 you'll see the difference. Verses 10–11.

> "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

You could say just as well "atonement." That's the consequence of the New Covenant; it's atonement, reconciliation, God and the sinner "at one." But under the Old Covenant it was a recognition of the fact of sin, a reminder and a covering that was only valid until the next sacrifice became due.

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Going to the last verse of Hebrews 8 the writer sums up what he's been saying in regard to the Old Covenant.

> "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear."

The fact that God uses the word "a new covenant" indicates that the other is becoming obsolete and will ultimately disappear.

There are two key words that are used in that passage. First of all, the Old Covenant was inadequate. Not because there was anything wrong with the Law, but because it couldn't change the hearts of people. Secondly, the covenant was old, it was on the way out, it was not permanent. The New is specifically called an everlasting covenant.

Now without further ado we're going on to chapter 9 which is where I expected to be a long while ago! Chapter 9 contains the fifth comparison. The fourth comparison was in chapter 8 between the Old and New Covenant. The fifth comparison is between the tabernacle of Moses and the heavenly tabernacle.

I think I'll read verses 1 through 5 and we'll look at them and there is a great deal in them. I don't know whether we'll even be able to get through.

> "Then also the first covenant had ordinances [or regulations] of divine service and its sanctuary belonging to this world."

It says "earthly" but it really means more accurately "belonging to this world." It had a sanctuary in this world.

> "For a tent was prepared, the first one [which is generally called the holy place], in which were the lampstand and the table and the setting forth of the sacred bread [or sacred loaves]; which is called the holy place. And then after the second veil or curtain, there was a tabernacle [or a tent] which is called the Holy of Holies ..."

Elsewhere it's also called The Most Holy. Those of you that know any Hebrew, ?Kedish ko-da-shim?, the most holy. Verse 4:

> "... having the golden [or a golden] altar of incense and the chest of the covenant overlaid all over with gold, in which were ..."

It's very interesting, because in Greek you have to put in the verb "to be." My brother is a cook. You've got to put in "is." In Hebrew you don't have to put in "is." My brother, a cook. That's all you have to say. It means "is a cook." This person is writing Greek but thinking Hebrew. Consequently, although the words are Greek, the structure is Hebrew. He doesn't put in the verb "to be," which is incorrect Greek but shows where his thoughts are.

Verse 4:

> "... in which were a golden jar having the manna, and the rod [or the staff] of Aaron that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. And above it the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat [the place of propitiation]; concerning which it is not possible now to speak in detail."

Have you regretted that that was there? The reason it's there, apparently if you read the earlier chapters, is because they couldn't have understood, they were too sluggish and too unspiritual to be able to accept this teaching. So they just had to pass on.

In a cassette series of mine called "The Way into the Holiest," I have spoken about them in considerable detail. So, that shows my faith in contemporary Christians that they've got to be more able to receive than the Hebrews were.

I'm not going to take a lot of time now, but I'm just going to begin to open up this whole area of the tabernacle. I'd like you to look at the outline on Page 9/1, the outline that is for verses 1–5. It describes part of the tabernacle of Moses, it doesn't describe the whole tabernacle. The references, if you want to see the original description, are given there in parenthesis. In the first compartment, that's the Holy Place, there was the lampstand, the table of showbread, and the golden altar of incense, giving access to the second compartment; then, behind the second veil/curtain, in the Holy of Holies, was the golden ark or chest which had the mercy seat and the two cherubs.

There is a problem there which I have to be honest and face you with. If you look at what the writer of Hebrews says in

verses 3 and 4, behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense. But if you read the description in the book of Exodus, the golden altar of incense was in front of the second veil, not behind it. My understanding is it means though it was in the Holy Place it was there to get you into the Holy of Holies because you couldn't enter the Holy of Holies without some incense off the altar of incense. The high priest had to put it in a censer, put coals on it and then swing it so that the fragrant white smoke rose up and covered the mercy seat. If that didn't happen and he went in without that, he would have died. So, you understand, the altar of incense was there to get you into the Holy of Holies. The writer says, "Having the golden altar of incense." It doesn't say that the golden altar of incense was inside the second veil. I don't know whether my reasoning is too Talmudic for you, but that's the best I'm able to do.

Inside the Holy of Holies there was really only one piece of furniture which was this golden chest which had the lid, which was the mercy seat, and on either end of the lid attached to the lid were the cherubims of beaten gold at either end facing one another with their wings stretched out towards one another, and their wing tips touching one another over the middle of the mercy seat. It always impresses me that the further you go in spiritual progress, the fewer options you have. That's what some people are scared of. They want to have a back door, they want another exit. I mean, it's so vivid to me that where are you headed when you're headed for a place that's a cube? Twenty cubits by twenty cubits by twenty cubits. In it there's just one item of furniture. If you're not interested, stay out. It's only for those who only want one thing, what's that? That's the Lord. You will find, I promise you, if you go on in the spiritual life there'll be times when if you want to go ahead there's only one thing, that's the Lord. There's no alternative attractions; there's no other inducements. See, God wants us to want Him for Himself, not just for what we get or as a way out of trouble. So, if you can picture it in your mind, here you are going through this elaborate progress inside this second veil and all there is is a golden box with a seat which has two cherubim. It doesn't even have any light. At least in the Holy Place there was a lampstand but this place is inside very thick coverings that exclude virtually all light. There's darkness—unless what? Unless God turns up in the person of the shekinah glory. Then it's illuminated by His personal presence. See, there was a risk. Suppose God doesn't turn up? You're in the dark!

Do you know what I've discovered? God blesses those who take that risk. Every time I minister to the sick I tell people, "If God doesn't turn up, this is a waste of time because I can't do it." But I've discovered when you realize it won't work if God doesn't turn up, He usually turns up. If you think you can do it without Him, that's probably what you'll have to do.

We're going on in our outline. In the time of Moses the ark contained, as the writer of Hebrews tells us, the golden jar with manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. You can just look at those Scripture references quickly. For the golden jar, Exodus 16:31–34.

> "And the house of Israel named it manna..."

This was the white thing like coriander seed that came down in the night and was there with the dew in the morning which they ate for forty years. Manna is probably, in Hebrew, ?man-na?, "what is it?" So that was its name, they ate "what is it?" How would you like to eat "what is it?" for forty years? You remember, they got tired of it. They said, "We loathe this white bread. We want the leeks and the garlics of Egypt." But that was a rash statement; it got them into a lot of trouble. Verse 32:

> "Then Moses said, 'This is what the LORD has commanded, 'Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'' And Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a jar and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before the LORD, to be kept throughout your generations.'"

Placing it before the Lord was understood to be placing it inside the golden chest. So that's the golden pot or jar that had manna.

Aaron's rod that budded, Numbers 17:10.

> "But the LORD said to Moses, 'Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony [that's the same as 'into the ark'] to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put an end

> to their grumblings against Me, so that they should not die.'"

If you read the story and the background, the other princes of the other tribes had said, "We're just as good as Aaron. Why is Aaron the only one that can offer sacrifices?" God heard this and got angry and said, "We'll settle this forever. Let every prince take his rod—which was the emblem of a ruler—write his name on it. You go into the tabernacle and put them there before the Lord in the tabernacle. Then 24 hours later go and fetch them out." Eleven rods were just the same, but the twelfth rod had budded and brought forth flowers and almond fruit in 24 hours. The name on the rod was "Aaron." God said, "Let that settle it once and for all! He's the man of My choice, I don't have to give account. It's My decision."

And, of course, that blossoming, budding and bringing forth fruit in 24 hours is a type of resurrection. It's a picture of Jesus, the heavenly high priest, vindicated by resurrection. The only man at that time to be resurrected from the dead. That was God's vindication of Jesus as His high priest. The rod speaks of resurrection.

It also speaks of rulership because—well, turn to Revelation for a moment. Chapter 1, verse 5 which gives us a description of Jesus Christ.

> "... Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth."

Notice there's a progression. First, He was the faithful witness. Then He was the first to be raised from the dead. And because of that, He's the ruler of the kings of the earth. Resurrection is a step to ruling. The rod is the emblem of rule. The rod that budded is the testimony of resurrection to God's chosen ruler.

Then the stone tablets. I think we just have time to look at that. Exodus 34:1:

> "The LORD said to Moses, 'Cut for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered.' [verse 28:] So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments [the ten words]."

Then Exodus 40:20:

> "Then he took the testimony [that's the Ten Commandments] and put it into the ark."

So, in the time of Moses there were three things put into the ark, as the writer of Hebrews correctly reminds us of. There was the golden pot that had the manna, there was Aaron's rod that budded, and there were the two tablets of stone of the Ten Commandments.

The Lord helping us, we'll go further with that very interesting situation, if you can stay the course, this time next week.

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Sermon

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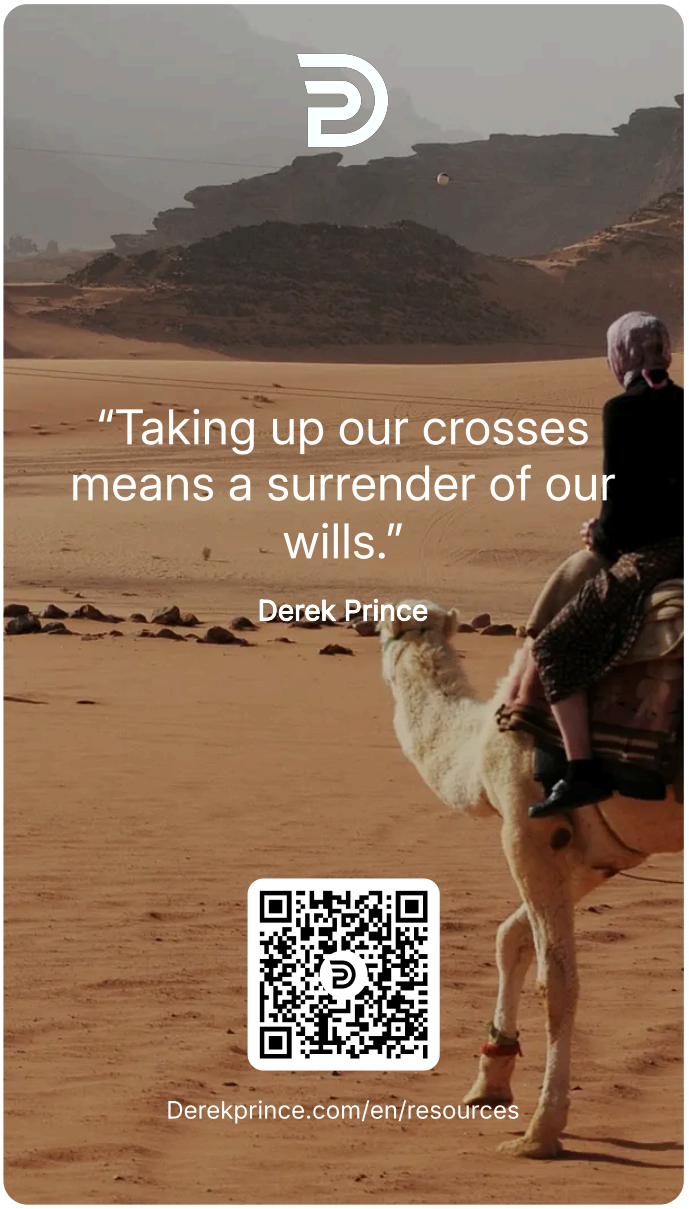

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