

HERE'S THE POINT: OUR NEW DEAL WITH GOD IS BETTER (Hebrew 8:1-13)

I have been a pastor for 30 years. During that time, I have easily preached more than 2,000 times. When you add in all the funerals, weddings, and Wednesday night devotional messages, who knows how many times I have opened up God's word to proclaim a message?

Each sermon has had an introduction. Some introductions are long. Some are short. I'm not sure whether I have ever begun a sermon with two introductions, but I am going to do that this morning.

Introduction #1: I looked up the word *point* in an online dictionary. The word *point* can be used as either a noun or a verb. Dictionary.com offered 82 distinct meanings to the word *point*. Meanings 61-82 were all verb forms of the word *point*, but the first 60 all dealt with how *point* is used as a noun. As far as dictionary.com is concerned, throughout this message, I will be using definition #22: *the important or essential thing*.

The author of Hebrews begins chapter 8 in this way: "Now the point in what we are saying is this . . ." He is telling the reader of his letter, "Now the important or essential thing that I am seeking to communicate is this . . ."

Now isn't that refreshing? Haven't you ever heard a friend or a boss or a preacher or someone else go on and on about something. They seem to be speaking in riddles or a round-about way. Finally, in exasperation, you say, "What's your point? What is the important or essential thing you are trying to say?"

The author of Hebrews delivers us from the guesswork. We don't have to wonder and scratch our head and ask, "What is he trying to say?" Since the last few verses of chapter 4, he has been dealing with and returning to the idea that Jesus is our High Priest. Since the beginning of the book, he has been stressing that Jesus is better than. He is better than the prophets; He is better than angels; He is better than Moses, and He is better than the high priests of the Jewish faith. When he gets to Hebrews 8, he writes, "Here is the point. Don't miss it." We will get to his point in a moment.

Introduction #2: One hundred years ago, our nation was in the midst of what has come to be known as the Roaring 20's. It was a time of unprecedented optimism, excess, and financial profit. During a nine-year period, the Dow Jones Industrial Average experienced a ten-fold increase. Some investors had become so certain the upward trend would continue that they saw no need to be conservative with both their investing and their spending.

The Roaring Twenties, however, came to an abrupt end on October 28 & 29, 1929. Those days are known as Black Monday and Black Tuesday. On those two days, the stock market lost \$30 billion. The repercussions were wide and long-lived. In the ensuing months and years over 4,000 banks failed, and unemployment in the United States went from 4% to 25%. We refer to that period in American History as "The Great Depression."

President Hoover believed that it was not the job of the federal government to solve the financial crisis. He believed that the market would eventually correct itself. Hoover became a one-term president because his opponent Franklin Delano Roosevelt preached a

very different message.

When FDR accepted the Democratic nomination for president in 1932, he said: “I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people. This is more than a political campaign. It is a call to arms.”

When FDR won the 1932 presidential election in a landslide, he hit the ground running with a slew of new legislation and changes aimed at turning the country around and getting people back to work. His policies and the laws that were passed were all part of what has been called “the New Deal.”

In the first seven chapters of Hebrews, the word *covenant* is only used one time. We are told in 7:22 that Jesus is “the guarantor of a better covenant.” Then, in chapter 8, the word *covenant* is used 7 times. The author contrasts the old covenant with the new covenant. *Covenant* is not a word we use often. We could say instead, “The author contrasts the old deal with the new deal, and he shows how the new deal is far superior to the old one.

Both the New Deal which FDR sought to bring about and the New Deal which Jesus established were revolutionary. They were a dramatic departure from what had previously been in place. One was a New Deal between the government and the citizens, and the other was a New Deal between God and those whom He had called to be His people.

The New Deal with the government and the New Deal with God are apples and oranges. They are not about the same thing. The author of Hebrews seeks to show that the New Deal with God is better and superior to the Old Deal with God; so, he begins the chapter by writing: “Now the point in what we are saying is this . . .” If I could summarize all of chapter 8 and his point, it would be this: “Our New Deal with God is Better.” It is better than the old.

Based on our passage, let me give you three reasons why our New Deal with God is better.

Our New Deal with God Is Better Because It Is Mediated by a Better Priest

Unlike the priests of the Old Deal who did their work in a tent or temple made by men, our High Priest is seated at the right hand of God in the abode of God that was made by God. Verse 1 pictures Jesus as being seated. He is sitting down. Sitting is something that the ancient Jewish priests did not do while they were at work. The chief reason they did not sit is there was no place for them to sit. The Old Testament gives us in great detail the furnishings with which the tabernacle was to be adorned. There were tables, and lamps, and large bowls, and a bronze altar, and of course, in the Most Holy Place, there was the Ark of the Covenant.

There was one thing that was conspicuous by its absence. There were no chairs: no office chairs, no benches, no folding chairs, no La-z-Boys, no sofas. There was not even an ottoman. There was no place to sit down because their work was never done. There was always one more sacrifice to be made.

Ahh! But Jesus. He sat down because when He undertook the work of making a

sacrifice for sin, He got 'er done. He proclaimed, "It is finished." The work of atonement was completed. The payment for sin had been paid in full. Because He finished the work the Father gave Him to do, He sat down. And He didn't just sit down anywhere. He sat down at the right hand of God.

In the ancient world, there was no greater honor than to be seated at the King's right hand. A King would often surround himself with nobles, with counselors, advisers, men of authority and responsibility. Of all those prestigious and powerful men, the one who was most exalted and most favored was the one who was seated at the King's right hand.

My son's name is Benjamin. That name means "son of the right hand." Jesus is God's Benjamin. He is God's right-hand man. Philippians 2:8-11 tells us why Jesus is seated at the Father's right hand and what that means for all humanity.

- ⁸ [Jesus] humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.
⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest
Honor and gave him the name above all other names,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father (NLT).

In heaven, the Father is seated on a throne, and on His right hand is seated His Son who also happens to be the King, our King, and the King of all creation.

The last verse of Psalm 2 says, "Kiss the Son." That means, "Embrace the Son. Honor the Son." Why? The verse continues, "Lest He be angry, and you perish in the way." Those who refuse to honor the Son who is the King, place themselves in great danger, and they await the King's judgment. Psalm 2 ends with this promise, "Blessed are all who take refuge in Him."

Take refuge in King Jesus. The New Deal that He offers with God is better than the old one because He is a better priest. He is better priest because He is a Son not a servant.

He is also a better priest because He offered a better sacrifice. We read in Hebrews 10:4, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." If the blood of bulls and goats don't take away sin, why did God require that such sacrifices be offered? Those sacrifices pointed forward toward the one sacrifice that really mattered. Hebrews 10:10 tells us, "We have been sanctified through offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

In a previous sermon from Hebrews, I told you about Red Auerbach, the famous coach of the Boston Celtics. Phil Jackson is the only head coach to have won more NBA Championships than Red Auerbach. Phil has 13. Red has 9. I told you that when he knew his team had won the game, that there was no way the other team could make a comeback, he sat down, lit a big cigar, and calmly smoked it. I told you how demoralizing it was to the other team to see the coach of their opponent kicked back smoking a cigar.

I didn't tell you why he did what he did. He didn't do it to demoralize the other team.

Here's how Red Auerbach explained why he sat down and smoked a cigar:

It's like this: I got sick and tired of coaches playing for the TV. They'd be 20 points ahead with two minutes to go and they'd be calling plays, waving their arms, showing off. My feeling was, when you knew the game was over, then sit down and shut up.

When Jesus successfully completed the work of salvation, what did he do? He sat down and smoked a cigar. Does the Bible say that? Is that in the text? I think it is implied. Maybe. Here's the point: Our New Deal with God is better because it is mediated by a better priest. This priest happens to be a King and the Son of God. His name is Jesus.

Our New Deal with God Is Better Because It Is Executed in a Better Place

Look again at vv. 2-5. In the Jewish religion, the focus of their faith was on a place. That place was the temple. The temple was where the sacrifices were made. The temple was where the priests ministered. The temple was where God's abode on Earth was. In the Temple was the Most Holy Place, a place where only one man could enter and do so on only one day—the Day of Atonement. On that day the High Priest would enter, and he would sprinkle blood upon the Mercy Seat that was atop the Ark of the Covenant. That was believed to be the throne of God on Earth.

In AD 70, all of that ritual ended because in AD 70 the Roman Army breached the walls of Jerusalem; they tore down the walls of the temple and set it on fire. There is no more temple. There is no more Most Holy Place. There are no more priests who offer sacrifices. All of that came to an end.

God instituted a New Deal. Now, we are the temple of God. God dwells within us. We don't have to go to a building and depend on a man to act as a go-between between us and God. Now, we are priests. We can come to God on our own because Jesus is our Mediator. We have open access to God through Him.

I am afraid that we have made the mistake of making the Church too Old Testament. We have made the Church building the temple and the pastor a priest. I am not your priest. This building is not the temple. You are each a priest, and together we make up the holy temple God is building.

Look at what v. 5 says about all that Old Testament stuff. It says, "They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things."

Let me offer an illustration. Do you know what foosball is? Have you ever played it? You stand at a table, and you turn knobs. Connected to the knobs are rods, and connected to the rods are tiny wooden figures painted to look like tiny, little soccer players. There is a little ball on that table. Your job is to make those little men kick the ball into your opponent's goal and keep you opponent from kicking the ball into yours.

Foosball is pattered after soccer which the rest of the world calls football. Foosball is just one letter away from everyone in the world but Americans call football. There are some big differences, though. Instead of being played on a vast field, it is played on a

table. While football is played with your feet, foosball is played with your hands. Instead of a team consisting of 11 men on the field as in soccer, a foosball team is made of either one man or two if the board is really big. In reality, foosball is not much at all like soccer. It is a dim shadow of soccer.

Likewise, the Old Deal with God is just a dim shadow of the New Deal with God. Just as real soccer is better than foosball, the New Deal is better than the Old one. It is better because it is mediated by a better Priest, and it is executed in a better place.

Finally . . .

Our New Deal with God Is Better Because It Is Enacted on Better Promises

The Old Deal was based on the obedience of God's people. They were to fulfill and follow all that God prescribed for them. If they obeyed, they would be blessed. If they disobeyed Him, they would be judged. A quick reading of the Old Testament clearly shows that God's people lived in terrible disobedience to Him. They failed, and so too have we. The Bible tells us, "For all have sinned and fallen short (or missed the mark) of God's glorious standard." What is God's standard? It is perfection. Jesus said in the last verse of Matthew 5, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." No one has lived up to that standard. We have all failed.

The Old Deal with God showed that we are incapable of living up to God's standard of perfection. Look at Hebrews 8:6-7.

In the passage that follows we discover that unlike the Old Deal, the New Deal no longer is based on the obedience of God's people. Instead, it is based on what God's promises to do. Let's read vv. 8-12, and as we do, I want you to pay attention to the words "I will."

Those words are used a total of 6 times with half of them coming from just the 10th verse. The New Deal is not based on what you and I do; it is based on what God does.

Many churches adhere to a performance-based religion. There are two pitfalls to such a religion. The first is shame, and the second is pride. If your performance is sub-par, you are shamed. If you manage to perform well, you puff yourself and enjoy the applause of others.

The NT teaches that our relationship with God is performance-based, but it is all about His performance, not ours. Since it is about Him and not about us, both shame and pride are eliminated. That being the case, don't let others shame you on the one hand, and on the other, don't let yourself become proud thinking that you are where you are because of what you have achieved on your own.

In his commentary on Hebrews, R. Kent Hughes, the pastor of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois claims that our new covenant with God is superior in four ways. I am going to save the first thing he says for last.

Among the four, we have a **superior relationship**. He says, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (v. 10b). We have a give and take relationship with God. God gives Himself to us, and He takes Himself to us.

This new covenant is marked by a **superior knowledge**. Look at v. 11. There is a

difference between those on the inside. Those on the outside don't know the Lord, and we should proclaim Him to them. We want them to come to know the Lord. Those on the inside, however, do know the Lord because God has revealed Himself to them. In His prayer to His Father that is recorded for us in John 17, Jesus prayed: "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ who you have sent" (17:3). We know God because He has revealed Himself to us. Now that we know Him, we yearn to grow in that knowledge.

This New Covenant offers **a superior forgiveness**. Look at v. 12. The Old Deal promised judgement. The New Deal promises mercy. When we confess our sin, God cleanses us from that sin, and then He forgets it. If you were to ever pray to God, "Lord, you know that sin that I have confessed again and again," and He will say, "No, I don't recall that."

What I like best is what Kent Hughes noted first. He wrote that our new covenant is superior because it promises **a superior inwardness**. Look at the first half of v. 10: "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts." The Old Deal gave us no power to live out its commands. In the New Deal, God performs heart surgery on us.

I began this message with two introductions; so, I am going to end it with two conclusions.

Conclusion #1: Do you remember the name Christian Barnard? He was the first man to perform a heart transplant. The first heart transplantation took place in December of 1967. The patient lived only 18 days. The second man received a new heart in January of 1968. He lived 18 months. His name was Philip Blaiberg. He was a dentist. Not long after the surgery, Dr. Barnard asked Dr. Blaiberg, "Would you like to see your old heart?" Dr. Barnard went to a cupboard, pulled out a glass container. Inside the container was Dr. Blaiberg's old heart. Dr. Barnard handed it to him. Dr. Blaiberg stood there in silence looking at his own heart. He was the first man in history to hold his own heart. For ten minutes he asked Dr. Barnard questions. Finally, he took one last look at his heart and said, "So this is my old heart that caused me so much trouble." With that said, he handed it back to Dr. Barnard.

Your old heart, my old heart has caused us so much trouble through the years. If you have never done so, let Jesus give you a new one, one that is tender, one that beats in concert with His. It is part of the New Deal. It is yours for the asking.

Listen to Ezekiel 36:26, "And I will give you a **new heart**, and a **new spirit** I will put within you. And I will remove the **heart** of stone from your flesh and give you a **heart of flesh**."

You don't have to live with the old one, the one that is hard, the one that is diseased, the one that is opposed to God's will. Jesus died so that He could give you a new heart, one that is fashioned after His.

We must remember that for someone to receive a new heart, someone has to die. We can't create a real heart in a laboratory. It must come from someone who has died. Jesus died so you and I can have a new heart. That's the point of the New Deal.

Conclusion #2: A few years back, the comedian Howie Mandel was the host of a game show called "Deal or No Deal." At various points, contestants were offered a

certain sum of money. They were then asked, “Deal or no deal?” They could take what they were offered or risk it in an effort to get more money.

You and I have been offered a New Deal. I implore you, “Take the deal.” There is no better one.