

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions.

Today's topic is: A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM HEBREWS 7-8.

Hebrews 7 teaches *a change of priesthood* and Hebrews 8 teaches *a change of covenant*.

(S) **SHARING FROM HEBREWS 7-8.**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Hebrews 7-8. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from Hebrews chapter 7.

(T) I want to share from Hebrews chapter 7 about **the change of priesthood**. In the Old Testament, God prophesied that in the future there would come another priest, whose priesthood would be of another order. In Psalm 110:4, he says, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest *forever*, in the order of Melchizedek.'" Hebrews 7:11-12 says, "If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood - for on the basis of it the law was given to the people - why was there still need for another priest to come - one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For *when there is a change of priesthood, there must also be a change of the law*".

It was God's purpose that there should be a mediator between God and man that performs an absolute necessary obligation. The writer of Hebrews argues that the Old Testament priesthood did not exhaust the functions of a mediator. If God had intended the Aaronic priesthood to be perfect, then that priesthood would have secured an unfettered access to God for the people. Then there would have been no need for God to announce the coming of another priest, whose priesthood would be of a different order. The writer of Hebrews teaches that the Aaronic priesthood was neither designed nor competent to inaugurate the age of fulfilment. The Aaronic priesthood was designed to be *temporary and only for Israel during the Old Testament period*. God himself decreed that the Messiah would be *the only priest and high priest forever* long before it went into fulfilment!

Let us take turns to describe the several reasons that the writer of Hebrews gives for **the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus Christ to the priesthood of the Old Testament**.

(S) **First. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior, because it is not based on the law with external rules, but on the gospel.**

The Old Testament law and its priesthood made nothing perfect, because it was designed to keep people at a distance from God. Hebrews 7:16-17 says that the Aaronic priesthood was instituted on the basis of *the law of a carnal commandment*, that is, on the basis of *a system of external rules*, like the physical descent of the priests, the hand-made sanctuary and animal sacrifices. Hebrews 7:18-19 clearly teaches that the former commandment concerning the Aaronic priesthood was *cancelled or set aside* (Mk 7:9), because it was *weak and useless*. It was weak and useless, because the law of the Old Testament made nothing perfect. The ministry of the Old Testament priests did not bring real peace of conscience and therefore also no immediate access to God. This does not mean that faithful men and women in the Old Testament period did not enjoy peace of conscience and a sense of the nearness of God. In Psalm 32:1-2 David says, "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not account against him". And in Psalm 73:28, Asaph says, "It is good to be near God". But these men experienced peace of conscience and the nearness of God *not because of keeping the law, but because they believed* (Rom 4:6-8)! Their experience had nothing to do with the law. It had nothing to do with the Aaronic priesthood or Levitical sacrifices! The whole ceremonial (ritual) law of the Old Testament was calculated *to keep people at a distance from God* rather than to bring them near to God.

In contrast to the Old Testament priesthood, the priesthood of Jesus Christ was instituted on the basis of *the power of an indestructible life*, that is, on the basis of his perfect and immortal life (7:16). Hebrews 7:19 says that a better hope was introduced through the gospel in the New Testament, because it accomplished what was impossible under the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, *all people who believe in him*

receive forgiveness of sins, a clear conscience and therefore also uninhibited access to fellowship with the living God! That is why Hebrews 10:22 urges, "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience".

(T) **Second. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior, because it has been confirmed by God's oath.**

Hebrews 7:20-22 says that Jesus Christ became the guarantee of a better covenant, because of God's oath. What was the purpose of God's oath? Hebrews 6:17 gives the answer. "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath". The institution of the Aaronic priesthood was never accompanied by God's oath, but in Psalm 110:4, the appointment of Jesus Christ was confirmed by God's oath. The purpose of God's oath is to show *the unchanging nature of his purpose* with Jesus Christ and to suggest the superior dignity of his priesthood.

(S) **Third. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior, because it is based on his perfect character.**

In the Old Testament, the high priest of Israel was not personally free from sin. He had to offer an animal sacrifice for his own sins in order to make him ceremonially 'clean' and 'set him apart from' the other Israelites for the proper discharge of his sacred functions. According to the Bible, he did this once a year on the Day of Atonement. Later it became traditional that he did this every day, as a precaution against possible sins (Heb 10:11).

But Jesus had no need to present a daily sacrifice, nor even a yearly sacrifice, either for his own sins or for the sins of his people. He had no need to be set apart in any such ceremonial manner. His separation from sin is *inward and moral*, not merely outward and ceremonial. Hebrews 4:15 says that, although Jesus Christ was tempted in every way people on earth are tempted, he remained without sin. In his human nature he remained completely separate from sin in all its forms and completely dedicated to God the Father. Although Jesus lived among sinners, received sinners, ate with sinners and was known as a friend of sinners, he was still set apart from sinners! He was in a total different class than sinful man. His separation from sin was *total*, because he had withdrawn from sin and sits exalted at the right hand of God. Hebrews 6:26 says, "Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens".

(T) **Fourth. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior, because it is based on his resurrection from the dead.**

In the Old Testament, there were many high priests, because death prevented them from continuing in their office (7:23). Generation after generation, the high priests in Israel died and their office passed on to another high priest. The historian Josephus calculated that there had been 83 high priests in Israel from Aaron to the fall of the second temple in A.D. 70. Their high priesthood was *temporary*.

But the high priesthood of Jesus Christ is far superior, because it is *permanent*! It is permanent, because he was resurrected, ascended into heaven and lives for ever! Hebrews 7:24 says, "Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood". Hebrews 9:24 says, "He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence". Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ has Jesus Christ as his High Priest right at the right hand of God the Father. Because Jesus Christ lives forever, his saving power is available without end! His saving power cannot be hindered by any of the changing circumstances on this earth. His task is to eternally save, protect and bless every Christian. The way of approach to God the Father is always open, because Jesus Christ represents his people as *a priest for ever* in the presence of God.

Sharing quiet times from Hebrews chapter 8.

(S) I would like to share from Hebrews chapter 8 about **the first characteristic of the new covenant: There is a change of covenant, because the new covenant is superior to the old covenant.**

In the Old Testament, after he delivered them from their slavery in Egypt, God made a covenant with the people of Israel at Sinai. In Exodus 24:1-8, this covenant was confirmed by animal sacrifices and the sprinkling of blood on the altar, on the Book of the Covenant and on the people. Moses called it *the blood of the covenant*, that is, the shedding of blood that ratified the covenant. Hebrews 9:18-22 refers to this same ratification of the covenant.

In Jeremiah 7:23-26 we read how the people of Israel disregarded and disobeyed this covenant. God said, "From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my servants the prophets. But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers". Prophet after prophet recalled the people of Israel to their covenant loyalty. In Jeremiah 11:10-11, God says, "Both the house of Israel and the house of Judah *have broken the covenant* I made with their forefathers. Therefore ... I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape".

In Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah predicts the inauguration of a new covenant. Hereby he also in effect announces the impending cancellation of the old covenant and the dissolution of the Old Testament order. Hebrews 8:7-8 says, "If there had been nothing *wrong with the that first covenant*, no place would have been sought for another covenant. But God found fault with the people". Hebrews 8:9 says, "Israel did *not remain faithful to God's covenant*". What was

wrong with the first covenant was that the people of Israel broke it! They *did not* keep the covenant! They *could not* keep the covenant in their own power, because they were not regenerated.

Although the formulation of God's covenant with his people remains the same throughout the ages, it is given a much deeper meaning and fulfilment in the New Testament, so that it is called *a new covenant*.

Let us take turns to describe the several reasons that the writer of Hebrews gives for **the superiority of the new covenant to the old covenant**.

(T) First. The implanting of God's law in their hearts is much more than the external law written in a law book!

In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, God commands the Israelites that his commandments should be on their hearts and they should impress them on their children. However, the reading of the law and even the memorising of the law could not guarantee the performance of the law! What was needed was not an external written law, but regeneration, a new nature, a heart liberated from its bondage to sin! The people needed a heart that not only spontaneously knew and loved the will of God, but had the power to do it! Through the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah God prophesied the coming of the new covenant. Ezekiel 11:19-20 and 36:25-28 teach that the new covenant would consist of a new relationship to God. In particular it would be characterised by the following: God would remove all their sin, remove their heart of stone and give them a new heart and new spirit. God would put his Holy Spirit in them and thus cause them to obey his commandments. Jeremiah 31:31-34 teaches that the new covenant would in particular be characterised by the following: God would implant his laws in the hearts of his people; their knowledge of God would be a matter of personal experience; and God would blot out their sins. The covenant was called *a new covenant*, because it could impart this *new* heart, this regeneration through the Holy Spirit!

(S) Second. The knowledge of God is a personal an intimate experience that goes far beyond the national acknowledgement of God!

The second generation of Israelites living in Canaan did not know the Lord or what he had done (Judg 2:10). Just before their exile to Assyria, the prophet Hosea says that there was no faithfulness, love or acknowledgement of God in the land of Israel (Hos 4:1). There was only an ignoring of God's law (Hos 4:6). God desired mercy towards people and acknowledgement of God rather than sacrifices and offerings (Hos 6:6). The prophet Jeremiah explained *knowing God* as *doing what was right and just* and *defending the cause of the poor and needy* (Jer 22:15-16).

Thus, in the old covenant, the knowledge of God was simply a national acknowledgement of God without a change of character or conduct (1 Sam 2:12).

However, in the new covenant knowing God is a personal and intimate experience. Each individual of God's people will possess this knowledge, because of the new heart he has received. Hebrews 8:11 says, "They will all know me". 1 Corinthians 13:12 teaches that this knowledge of God grows until it reaches perfection when they see Christ face to face.

(T) Third. The blotting out of sins was known in Israel, but becomes essential to the new relationship with God under the new covenant!

Under the old covenant, God was incomparably a pardoning God, blotting out transgressions (Isa 43:25), sweeping away sins like the morning mist (Isa 44:22), treading sins underfoot and hurling all iniquities into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:18-19). He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness to thousands, forgiving their wickedness, rebellion and sin (Ex.34:6-7). However, under the new covenant, forgiveness and eternal acquittal is written into the very terms of the covenant. In verse 12 God says, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more". When God remembers sins, his holiness takes action against sins and he punishes sins (Rev.16:19). But if God does not remember the sins of people, then it is because his grace has determined to forgive them, not in spite of his holiness, but in complete harmony with his holiness. Therefore the writer of Hebrews teaches in Hebrews 7:22 and 8:6 that the new covenant is "a better and superior covenant" than the old covenant, because of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. He is the mediator of the new covenant, fulfilling all the shadows of the Old Testament and making complete salvation a reality for every believer! The above three promises are "the better promises" on which the new covenant is based. Based on the completed work of Jesus Christ, God first regenerates people and puts his laws in their hearts. Second, they will all know God personally. Third, God will remember their sins no more!

(S) I would like to share from Hebrews chapter 8 about the second characteristic of the new covenant: There is a change of covenant, because the new covenant is extended from Israel to all the nations.

Let us take turns to describe this change.

First. The Old Testament prophesies the extension of the covenant to all nations.

The prophet Jeremiah says that the new covenant is made with *the house of Israel*, because at that time they were the only people of God. However, the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 42:6 prophesies that God would make the Messiah *a covenant and light for all the nations!* In the Old Testament God's covenant promise to his people, Israel, was: "I will be your God and you will be my people". In the New Testament in 2 Corinthians 6:16 God's new covenant promise is exactly the same, except that it is now made to his people in every nation in the world! Revelation 21:3 clearly teaches that in the new heaven and new earth all the Christians from all the nations will be God's people and God himself will dwell with them!

(S) Second. The New Testament teaches that the new covenant has made the old covenant obsolete.

In the New Testament, in Mark 14:24, Jesus instituted the new covenant with the cup at the Lord's Supper and calls it *the blood of the covenant*. Jesus intended to announce the replacement of the old covenant with Israel by the new covenant with all Christians from all nations. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross definitely had the effect that Jeremiah said the new covenant would have. In Romans 8:3-4, Paul says "What the law was powerless to do ... God did by sending his Son ... to be an offering. So ... the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us ... who live according to the Spirit". It is absolutely clear that in the New Testament, the new covenant is extended to people from every nation that are regenerated by the Holy Spirit! The age of the Law and Prophets of Israel is past. Hebrews 1:1 says that the age of the Son is here and is here to stay! Therefore, Hebrews 8:13 says, "By calling this covenant 'new', he has made the first covenant obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear"!

(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.

First. Divide Hebrews 9-10 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net.

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".