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THE NEW COVENANT

Hebrews 8:6-13

Introduction: "Till death do us part"

I. Understanding Covenants

- A. Definition of "Covenant" (διαθήκη)
 - o Covenants are like a contract or treaty between two parties (God and his people)
 - o Covenants have terms and conditions, blessings/curses, and covenant signs
- B. The History of the Bible is a History of God's Covenants
 - o Ever since the fall, God has saved his people through the *Covenant of Grace*
 - People are always saved in the same way: by faith in the coming redeemer
 - OT saints were saved by believing in Jesus! (e.g., Abraham)
 - o The *Covenant of Grace* has various stages
 - Abrahamic Covenant: promises of salvation made to Abraham
 - Old (Mosaic) Covenant: promises to Abraham partially fulfilled in nation of Israel
 - New Covenant: promises to Abraham fully realized in Jesus

Key point: God does not reveal his plan of salvation all at once, but in stages. And you are in the final stage!

II. Understanding the Glories of the New Covenant

- A. The New Covenant was promised long ago by God (v.8)
 - o The author quotes Jeremiah 31:31: "Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah"
 - o For generations, Israel had been waiting for God to do something new and special
 - o Notice the promise of the New Covenant is made with Israel/Judah: Followers of Jesus are the true Israel!



B. What was wrong with the Old Covenant? (v. 7, 9)

- o Problem #1: The Old Covenant itself was faulty (v.7)
 - This doesn't mean old covenant was bad, sinful, or wrong
 - It just means the old covenant could not accomplish what it promised
- o Problem #2: The Old Covenant people were faulty (v. 8-9)
 - "They did not continue in my covenant" (v.9); Also: "For he finds fault with them" (v.8).
 - The Israelites broke their "wedding vows" to God and ran off with idols
 - God knows what is like to be a rejected spouse!

C. What's new about the New Covenant? (v.10-12)

- o New Power: The new covenant focuses on the heart by the power of the Spirit (v.10)
 - Old Covenant was marked by external rites and a focus on commands, causing many Israelites to only participate outwardly
 - But in the New, God "writes them [his laws] on their hearts" (v.10)
 - **God still cares about law-keeping, but now we are empowered to do it by the pouring forth of the Spirit in greater measure (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Acts 2:1-4)
 - Real change must begin internally!
- o New People: The New Covenant renews and unifies the people of God (v.11)
 - In the OT, large portions of Israel did not have a personal relationship with God
 - But under the new covenant, there is a revival among God's people so that "all know me" (v.11)
- o New Priest: Jesus provides real/final forgiveness of sins (v.12)
 - The Old Covenant looked forward to the forgiveness of sins, but never actually accomplished it because animals can't take away sins
 - Through Christ, true/full forgiveness is realized: "I will remember their sins no more" (v.12)

III. Key Implication: The New Covenant is Better than the Old

- A. "The covenant he [Christ] mediates is better" (v.6)!
- B. The old covenant is "obsolete" (v.13)
 - o Don't need to go back to the old covenant! Example: Blue prints vs. the real house
 - o Does this mean the OT is irrelevant? No! It is an important stage in God's redemptive plan, just not the ultimate stage



Discussion Groups

1. In what ways do you still struggle with keeping God's law only on an external basis? How does this passage help you?

2. How does the new covenant actually make us (perhaps unexpectedly) better law-keepers! What does that say about the role of grace in our lives?

3. How does the rejection of God by Israel help you handle rejections in your own life? How does God's persistent pursuit of his wayward people encourage you today?

