



Growth Group Curriculum Lent 2021  
Week 6 – March 28, 2021 – Hebrews 8

**Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at [connect@ljpres.org](mailto:connect@ljpres.org). Thank you for loving and caring for each other.**

Throughout Scripture, God displays His relationship with humanity through covenantal promises. Two of these promises are known as the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. In Genesis 15, “the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates...” Through these words, and an act of animal sacrifice, the Lord bound himself to Abraham and his descendants through the promises of land and offspring. God expounded on this covenant in Exodus through Moses and the Law. The Mosaic covenant further confirms what it means for the Israelites to be in covenantal relationship with a Holy God.

The covenantal relationship between God and his chosen people in the Old Testament was often strained and rarely followed by the people of Israel. As time went on, the people fell away from God and from this covenant. They chose their own desires and gods over the Holy God of Israel. The prophets, judges, and religious leaders of the time attempted to heal this relationship by creating more laws and higher standards for worship. However, as we know, none of this could sufficiently put imperfect people in the presence of a perfect God.

In the gospels, through the person of Jesus Christ, we see what will eventually become the New Covenant. This covenant would not be based on a person's ability to follow it well, but rather based on the mercy and forgiveness of the cross. Jesus Christ was the new reality and the New Covenant. The “shadows” of the temple and law paled in comparison. This idea of shadows and reality, that was made popular by Plato, is one that helps us understand how the Old Covenant and New Covenant are not in direct opposition, but rather a clearer vision of the same reality.

The New Covenant has three important factors. First, it is not only in the books of the law, but written on our very hearts. Second, it is an act of ownership by God. We cannot do anything to earn our way into the covenant, nor can we be excluded from it. Finally, it is a personal covenant. God does not just tell us about the covenant, he sends the Holy Spirit to dwell within and among us. This dwelling makes the covenant real and intimate.



When Jerusalem was captured and the temple destroyed in 70 AD the Old Covenant way of thinking (temple, sacrifices, Levitical priests, the law...) came to an end. The New Covenant had been revealed through Jesus. Through him we have un-qualifiable access to God.

The center of the Christian faith was not a place, but the people who followed Jesus. The Old Covenant was based on the tabernacle, priesthood, family lineage etc., the New Covenant was based solely on having a personal, dependent, spiritual relationship with Jesus, the ultimate high priest. This is one of the reasons Christianity was able to spread so quickly. It was no longer based on a specific location or building, but rather was available to all people, in all places.

## Exploring the Text

### *Read Hebrews 8*

8 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being. 3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” 6 But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. 7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said: “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. 9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. 10 This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 11 No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” 13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

## Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) It is the week before Easter. Do you have a favorite Easter memory?
- 2) In verse 1, the preacher defines the “main point.” As Pastor Paul said, the preacher stops circling and lands the plane. What would you say is the “main point” of the Christian faith?
- 3) What is the first thing you think of when you hear the word covenant? How would you define covenant? How is a covenant different than a friendship or relationship?



- 4) Do you think God is different in the Old and New Testament? In the Old and New Covenant?
- 5) What could the Old Covenant not accomplish? (see verses 6-9)
- 6) Verses 10-11 tell us how God is going to take care of the shortcomings of the old covenant. What sticks out to you in those verses?
- 7) Do you feel like your faith is based more on the Old Covenant (following commands, attending church, completing a check list...) or the New Covenant (having a deep, personal relationship with Jesus)?
- 8) As Christians we carry Jesus around with us. He is not found in a certain place. In a sense we are walking “temples” and “representatives” of Christ. How does this understanding impact the way in which you live and speak?

