

**HARRINGAY UNITED CHURCH-BAPTIST
SUNDAY MAY 6, 2012**

TOPIC: The New Covenant

TEXT: Hebrews 8:1-13

Introduction:

God found problem with people who administer and on behalf of whom sacrifices and being administered but not what He instituted with Moses.

His people were not faithful to the covenant hence He devised another covenant which would be better than the former.

So today, we will look at why and how the new covenant was better than the former.

Question: "If the Jewish people do not offer animal sacrifices, how do they believe they can receive forgiveness from God?"

Answer: For the most part, the Jewish practice of animal sacrifice to receive forgiveness stopped in the year 70 A.D. when the Roman army destroyed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the place where sacrifices were offered. The practice was briefly resumed during the Jewish War of 132-135 A.D., but was ended permanently after that war was lost.

Essentially, Jews stopped offering sacrifices because they didn't have a proper place to offer them. The Torah (The Law of Moses) specifically commanded Israel not to offer sacrifices wherever they felt like it. They were only permitted to offer sacrifices in the one place that God has chosen for that purpose (see Deuteronomy 12:13-14).

Today, modern Jews believe that forgiveness for sins is obtained through repentance, prayer and good deeds. They use verses like the one found in Hosea 6:6 which says, "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."

Hebrews 8:1-13

Why was the former covenant inadequate?

1. It was earthly, made and erected by people. Though God instructed Moses to be careful to follow the exact specification of what was shown him on the mountain. It will need maintenance and refurbishment.

2. it was a shadow or model of something greater. Therefore it is temporary. Let us quickly look at the symbol of the first covenant which is the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle contains two sections demarcated by veils. The first part is the Holy place which contains three furnishings: the Table of presence on which the Bread of presence were laid. There are 12 loaves of this bread representing each tribe of the Israel. On each Sabbath, the bread is changed with new ones while the priests eat the old ones in His presence.

This is a type of Christ who is the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48) that when people eat they will never go hungry and thirsty.

The second Furnishing is a seven arm lamp stand called Menorah on which olive oil was poured and lights up the Tabernacle. This a model of Christ who is the Light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5) and in turn called the believers the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

The third furnishing is the incense alter which is not for the service of the Holy place but of the Holy of holies. From this alter the high priest takes coal to burn incense when he is going to the Holy of Holies once a year to atone for his own sins and that of the people.

Christ is the superior priest who offered His own blood as atonement to appease the wrath of the father. He did not need to offer any sacrifice for his own because He is sinless. All other high priests are dead but He is alive for evermore.

The sacrifice of old covenant was physical and external could not cleanse the conscience. Once the people offer their animals and were sprinkled on with its blood they are declared clean and forgiven but only for a year.

Therefore with these explanations, the old covenant was inadequate.

The New Covenant

The new covenant is far more superior than the old because Jesus Christ is our High Priest who mediates for us before the Father for the following reasons:

1. His moral adequacy - every high priests from Aaron to Phinehas Ben Samuel in 70 AD were not perfect, sinners and had their inadequacies.

But Jesus was morally adequate because He committed no sin but was made sin for us. So He is the right one to be our High Priest.

2. The work of atonement He did on the cross was a finished work, hence no need to repeat it every year. It is once and for all and has completed the work that everyone who believes this may have eternal life and inheritance.

3. After was raised from the dead, He ascended into heaven and now seated at the right of the Majesty and he is not only sitting at the right hand of God he is enthroned and crowned the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

4. His supreme exaltation: "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." All because He has been enthroned in heaven and highly exalted..

Why is this a better covenant?

1. It was founded in a better place -

Heaven where things are eternal, Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Heaven is the best place where things don't get old or worn out, no sickness or pain and nothing to worry about. No bailiffs, No water bills or council tax. In fact, accommodation is free there but you need to secure one by putting your faith in Jesus Christ and ask Him to be your Lord and Saviour, then you are guaranteed a place. If you have not done so I urge you to please consider it now because tomorrow may be late. The decision you take today has great influence on your tomorrow.

2. Founded on a better promise:

Not only physical blessings but eternal blessings and inheritance. All the Father has belongs to the Son and we are joint heirs with the Son. And here are the promises that comes with the New Covenant

a. Promise of Grace

Romans 3:23 has given us God's verdict "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and Romans 6:23 has given a remedy "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is grace. God has given us favour that we do not deserve through the death of Jesus on the Cross that anyone who believes in Him will not die but have eternal life (John 3:16) Despite that we do not deserve to live because of our sins, he gave us live through Jesus. It is an amazing grace.

b. Promise of internal change

The Old covenant cleanses the outside because the blood is sprinkled to the outside hence has no ability to cleanse the conscience. But the promise of the new covenant is that He will put His spirit in us, write His laws in our hearts and we will all know God's was because our conscience will be cleansed. The Holy Spirit indwells us and he will guide, lead and teach us how to behave, speak and act at all times if we allow Him.

I remember last year when I had an accident with my car. I was given a courtesy car. I obtained a temporary permit to this car and right in front of my house, I was given a ticket. As I was trying to contest this ticket by the end of the second week, another ticket was given.

I was extremely angry and decided to pursue the traffic warden. I spent the whole morning to track him down. Although I have determined what and how I was going to talk to him, the Holy Spirit took absolute control, instead of lashing out at him I spoke gently and calmly. The officer in turn said to me to check the number of the car and the number that was written on the permit and apparently they were different.

Now look at me if I had spoken harshly and angrily, I would have made a fool of myself, my office and the Church of God. And being a public figure and well known in this area, I would have been a disgrace to all Christians. But thank God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who prevailed against me from making myself a fool.

c. Promise of forgiveness

Since Christ has paid for all our sins, we do not need to bring any animal for sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins any more. All what we need to do is to repent, i.e. change our minds to stop the bad and make our minds up to do good. Then as God to forgive us in the name of Jesus and He will surely do because He has promised that in 1 John 1:8-9 "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

No other religion gives assurance of forgiveness except Christianity and that relieves us of great burden of guilt.

d. Promise of eternal blessing.

The Old covenant is characterised by physical blessings. When the people of Israel obey God, He brings rains on their crops, gives them plenty harvests and He prevents their enemies from troubling them. Giving them rest from their enemies. But the moment they disobey, He withholds the rain and allow their enemies to invade them and take them into captive and take their possessions as plunders.

This new covenant is not about physical blessings only it includes spiritual and eternal blessings. Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

We therefore have an inheritance with God through and with Christ which will never perish and endures forever.

Conclusion:

God promises are irrevocable and they are always YES in Christ Jesus and everything in heaven and on earth are subject to the Lordship of Jesus and so we say AMEN to what He has done and will do in future of which we are all partakers.

We are blessed generation who have the real thing and not a shadow. The best is yet to come. Receive Jesus into your life today