



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

HEBREWS

Lesson 8

In chapter 7:22 we were introduced to the word "covenant" for the first time in this book. Now, in chapter 8 the writer expounds on that word, explaining what it means and the importance of this "New Covenant" that you and I have the privilege of enjoying. I want to warn you about something before we go any further. When you first read this chapter, you might think it's boring or redundant. You might be tempted to just skim it, thinking you already understand its significance. Well, ladies, I'm here to say, "Don't do it!" As we look a little deeper into what the New Covenant is all about and what privileges and blessings we have as a result of it, believe me, you will be blown away! I certainly was. I actually was brought to tears as I began, once again, to understand more fully what the writer was so desperately trying to get across to his readers. It's so easy to take for granted the spiritual privileges that Christ has made available to us. We can become unappreciative or lack a sense of gratitude and thankfulness. As we study this week, I challenge you to allow the Holy Spirit to open your heart to all He has for you and rekindle a passion that can so easily fade. Don't give in to the temptation to just answer the questions quickly and half-heartedly. Let Him dig deep into your soul. So ... are you ready?

First Day

1. Begin today by reading Hebrews 8:1-13. Observe and list any facts you find.
2. List any repeated words, thoughts, or phrases.

3. What is the main point or thought of this chapter?

4. How many times is the word "covenant" used?

Let's define the word "**covenant**" before we go any further. A covenant is a "binding relational agreement." It can be an agreement between men, or in our context, it's a spiritual agreement between God and man. Snell wrote, "Our covenant with God is like a treaty between two unequal parties, therefore, our covenant with God is relational, but not level. He sets the terms of the deal. We are free to accept or reject, but we can not negotiate. Hebrews 8 reminds believers that the new covenant forms the basis upon which God relates to people. It is not "a" way or relating to God; it's "the" way of relating to God. A right relationship with God requires an acceptance of the terms He offers. This in turn requires embracing Jesus, the One through whom God put the new covenant into effect." This covenant is offered to us solely on the initiative and grace of God.

A covenant is drawn up when two parties agree on a contract. The contract spells out the stipulations that each party must honor and a condition that, in case either party fails to meet the requirements of the contract, the contract loses its binding force.

5. The word "covenant" is a legal term. From **Hebrews 6:13 through 8:13**, the writer uses several other legal terms. **List the ones you can find.** How can this "legal" imagery help you understand our relationship with God? How can this thinking possibly hinder it? Write your thoughts.

6. In verses 8-12, the writer quotes the prophet Jeremiah. (This is the longest Old Testament quote in the New Testament.) Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. God is using Jeremiah as His mouthpiece to His people. This prophecy heralds the coming of the Messiah and the establishing of the new covenant in His blood. In Jeremiah 31:32, what does God refer to Himself as? How does that relate to the whole "covenant" idea?

7. Upon first reading, do you see any immediate application for yourself?

We'll end here for today. I pray that the concept of the "covenant relationship" we have with God begins to make a lot more sense than maybe it ever has. And with that knowledge, I pray that our love for this huge, magnificent, majestic God grows even more!

Memory Verse of the Week: "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises." Hebrews 8:6

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 8:1-13. Reread verses 1-6. The writer has been talking a lot about Jesus as our High Priest, and now he reminds his readers of another function/role that Christ embodies. What is it?
2. What is Christ's position, according to verse 1?
3. What is the significance of this?
4. What title does the writer give God the Father?

The writer is showing us that since Christ is superior, the covenant that He ministers must also be superior. He reminds us that Jesus is morally superior in verse 1 by obviously referring back to His qualifications in 7:22-28. Our text tells

us that Jesus was "seated" at the right hand of God, which is extremely significant. He is seated because His work is completed, as we heard Him triumphantly cry from the cross, "It is finished." (John 19:30). Kistemaker wrote, "Sitting was often a mark of honor or authority in the ancient world: a king sat to receive his subjects, a court to give judgment, and a teacher to teach." Weirsbe wrote, "There were no chairs in the Old Testament tabernacle because the work of the priests was never finished. Each repeated sacrifice was only a reminder that none of the sacrifices ever provided a finished salvation. The blood of animals did not wash away our sin or cleanse the guilty conscience; it only covered sin until that day when Jesus Christ died to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29)."

5. "Where" is Christ seated, according to verse 1? (Colossians 3:1) Why is that significant as well?

Many verses describe God as being seated on His throne (Revelation 4:2, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10), and Jesus, who shares His throne (Revelation 1:4-5; 3:21; 7:15-17; 12:5), sitting on His right hand.

6. Verse 1 is a fulfillment of Psalm 110:1, which the writer quoted back in Hebrews 1:13. What was the prophecy and how was it fulfilled?
7. Looking at verse 1 again, what wording does the writer use to show us that Christ was exalted?
8. According to verse 2, what is Jesus doing in the sanctuary? (Do you remember what the word "minister" means?)

The fact that Jesus is sitting down doesn't mean He wasn't active. He "serves" in the sanctuary. Serving is part of His divine being and character. He serves on our behalf.

9. How does the fact that "Jesus is serving on your behalf" make you feel? What emotion does that stir within you?

10. What is the sanctuary and the true tabernacle (vs 2)?

The writer has been consistent in his style of writing. In our chapter he throws out the term *tabernacle* but explains it in the next chapter. For now, we need to understand that the tabernacle and the sanctuary are basically the same. "The true tabernacle has been set up by the Lord. What he means is that God gave Moses a copy of the tabernacle which the Lord God showed him (Exodus 25:9, 40). The copy was on earth; the true tabernacle is in Heaven. Does Scripture mention a tabernacle in Heaven? Yes, Isaiah says that he saw 'the Lord seated on the throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple' (Isaiah 6:1). The sanctuary has not been erected by man, but by God. God would never have set it up if He had not appointed Christ to serve in the tabernacle. After His atoning work was accomplished, Jesus entered God's sanctuary and there represents the interests of all His people. From God's tabernacle flow blessings that surpass any blessings from the Levitical sacrificial system." (Kistemaker)

11. There is a lot of great stuff packed into these first two verses. Write your thoughts...

See you tomorrow, ladies. Meditate on the awesome truth that Jesus is serving us right now, continually making intercession for us no interruptions, no pauses... continually serving.... That's a **"Reason to Rejoice!"**

Third Day

What's your memory verse?

1. Read Hebrews 8:1-13. Read verses 1-6 again. In your own words, what is the writer saying in verses 3-4? (Also, read 9:24-28)

Because Jesus is the High Priest, He must offer gifts and sacrifices, in God's appointed places (Deuteronomy 12:13-14), which is in the sanctuary. Christ is in Heaven, so, obviously, His sanctuary is also in Heaven. He offered Himself "once and for all" (Hebrews 9:24-28), so He is our living sacrifice in Heaven! The tabernacle and temple were imitations or copies of the true sanctuary, with limitations. The word "copy" refers to substance, and the word "shadow" means a "reflection of the Heavenly original." Jesus serves in the "real" tabernacle, in the presence of God!

2. In verse 3 the writer says that Jesus has "something" to offer. According to 9:14, what is that "something"?
3. Jeff Snell describes the New Covenant (vs 6) as a "free upgrade in our relationship with God." What do you think he means?
4. How was Moses the "mediator" of the old covenant? (Galatians 3:19-20, Exodus 20:19)
5. Read Hebrews 8:6-7. The old covenant wasn't wrong or bad; it just wasn't perfect. It was flawed. But the problem wasn't with the Law; it was with our sinful natures, for by ourselves we couldn't keep God's Law, because it couldn't change the human heart. (Romans 7:12; Hebrews 7:19) Why, do you think, was the law made to have "fault"?

6. What was the new covenant "established" on, according to verse 6?

7. I've heard it said that some people "like to use the new covenant as the means of their salvation, yet choose to live under the old covenant for their sanctification, while expecting others to do the same." What does that mean? How is that dangerous?

8. Does living under the freedom of the "new covenant" give us a license to sin? Are we now "free from observing the law?" (Read Galatians 5:1, 13-14; 1 Peter 2:15-17, and 1 Corinthians 8 for help.) Why is this principle so important, especially in light of what we learned in Hebrews 3 about being "partakers of Christ's nature"? (If we're free, what are we free from?)

9. Can you give a present-day example of the above scenario?

10. Take a minute and examine your own life. Are you rejoicing in the freedom you have in Christ, yet abusing that freedom in some area, sinning yourself or causing others to sin? Think about it ...

That's it for today. God bless you, ladies!

Fourth Day

Are you working on your verse?

1. Read Hebrews 8:1-13, focusing in on verses 7-13. What is the writer's "logical" argument for the establishing of the New Covenant, in verse 7?

With his usual style, the writer now quotes the Old Testament, specifically Jeremiah 31:31-34. It must have been really important because he partially quotes it again in 10:16-17. It was a direct quotation from God in the first person. Hughes writes, "The quotation dates back over 600 years to Josiah's reign, when after the rediscovery of the Law, a national time of repentance, and a public covenant to keep the Law, Israel failed again. In the midst of this dark failure, God promised a New Covenant, not conditional like the old, but unconditional, totally dependant upon the work of God."

2. How many times is the phrase "I will" used in this section?

Remember that the old covenant was dependent on man's faithfulness. It was about the Israelites "obeying God's Word" (Exodus 24:3), which we know they broke over and over again. The New Covenant emphasizes God's "I will." It doesn't depend on man's faithfulness to God but on God's faithful promise to man. God says "I will" on behalf of those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

3. The first "new" promise the writer brings to our attention is an "inner" understanding of the truth and an inner change, rather than simply an external one. What verse supports that? (Also, read 2 Corinthians 3)

The Old Covenant couldn't fulfill the conditions of the law or give them the power to obey. That can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-4). After we accept Christ under the New Covenant, we are "new creatures" in Christ and have a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17). We also now experience the inner struggle between our flesh and the Spirit that Paul talks about in Romans 7:15-19. We have a new understanding of both good and evil. We've changed inside.

4. The next "better promise" is that we can have an intimate relationship with God. We are now part of the family and can know Him directly and deeply. How does verse 11 show us that?

5. According to verse 12, what is the third "better promise" of the New Covenant? How is it the basis of the other two?

We know that the old law only "covered" man's sins, awaiting and pointing to the true forgiveness through Christ's death. So now under the New Covenant, we have complete forgiveness available to us. Verse 12 tells us that He will "remember our sins no more." That phrase means to "not hold them against us." He deals with us on the basis of grace and mercy instead of law and merit. It is a legal term. Once God forgives us, it is settled once and for all. When God sees us, He sees Jesus' payment for our sin, and because the debt has been paid, the debt is forgotten. He treats us like we never did it. How can that be? Because He treated Christ as though He had done it.

6. So, how are our sins forgiven? Read 1 John 1:9.
7. Because we are forgiven, we are called to forgive others. What do these verses say about that?
- A. Ephesians 4:32
 - B. Matthew 6:11-15
 - C. Matthew 18:21-22
8. Is there someone in your life that God has called you to forgive and you're holding on to it? According to these verses, what do you need to do? (How serious an offense is it to hold on to bitterness and refuse to give the gift of forgiveness to others?)
9. Maybe the person who wronged you has never asked for your forgiveness. What should you do? What does Psalm 86:5 tell us about God's nature? (How is that our example?)

10. Have you wronged or sinned against someone? Is there someone you need to go to and ask forgiveness from? Will you do that this week? What's holding you back?

I will admit, I don't like this topic. I tend to be a grudge-holder, which I hate about myself. What about you? I almost didn't even want to write these words because I knew I would have to do some heart-work. I pray that each of us will allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and give us an honest assessment of its state. Unforgiveness will hinder our fellowship with God. I don't want that, do you?

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 8:1-13. What is the writer's point in verse 13?
2. Does the writer mean that the Ten Commandments are done away with? What does Jesus say about that in Matthew 5:17-18?

When the New Covenant takes effect, there's no reason to rely on the old one. Verse 13 tells us that the law's work is finished when a man or woman comes to Christ. The Law couldn't make them perfect, but they can now come to the One who can! We no longer need the "condemning" work of the law (Romans 8:1). Now the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals sin to us and brings us to a place of repentance and restoration.

The old covenant was made by God with the nation of Israel and was written on stone tablets; the new is established with the believer in Christ and is written on their hearts.

3. Looking back over this chapter, what specifically spoke to your heart?
4. Are there any aspects of the old or new covenant that you still don't fully understand?
5. Do you think you fully appreciate the spiritual blessings that you've received through this New Covenant with Christ?
6. Let's think back to verse 2 where we see Jesus "serving" in the tabernacle. Was Jesus a servant here on earth as well? Read John 13:1-20. It's a very familiar story to most of us. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you read it with "new eyes." Pick out some verses or phrases that specifically minister to you.
7. What attitude is needed to be a true servant of others? Why?
8. Do you think you are following Christ's example of service? Do you put the needs of others before yourself? Do you consistently humble yourself to serve others, or is that an area of struggle for you?

William Barclay reminds us that by taking His seat at the "right hand of the throne of majesty in the Heavens, it was final proof of His glory. But it was also proof of His service."

I love this paragraph by Barclay because it is very thought-provoking. As you read through it, pray and ponder all that he's saying.

"Jesus never looked on majesty as something to be selfishly enjoyed. One of the greatest Roman Emperors was Marcus Aurelius; as an administrator he was unsurpassed. He died at age 59, having worked himself to death in the services of his people. He was one of the Stoic Saints. When chosen to succeed in due time to the imperial power, his biographer Capitolinus tells us, 'He was appalled rather than overjoyed, and when he was told to move to the private house of Hadrian, the Emperor, it was with reluctance that he departed from his mother's villa. And when the members of the household asked him why he was sorry to receive the royal adoption, he enumerated to them the toils which sovereignty involved.' Marcus Aurelius saw kingship in terms of service and not of majesty.

Jesus is the unique example of divine majesty and divine service combined. He knew that He had been given His supreme position, not jealousy to guard it in splendid isolation, but rather to enable others to attain to it and to share it. In Him the supreme majesty and the supreme service met."

9. In your own words, explain the point Barclay is making.

10. Are you a leader of any sort? Are you more concerned with "leading" or "serving"? Do you think you have a good balance of both?

11. Of this chapter, Andrew Murray said, "A Heavenly sanctuary and a Heavenly High Priest ask for a Heavenly Christian and a Heavenly Heart." What do you think that means? Do you have a "heavenly heart"?

