

What Kind of a Deal Has Jesus Made For You?

Hebrews 8:1-13

Just before a college athlete advances to the professional level, what does he or she obtain? An agent. What is the job of the agent? To secure the best possible contract for the athlete. Not every agent has equal abilities. Some are known for being particularly skilled at obtaining the very best deal possible. Now, I am not going to get into the fact that the greed of these agents are a big reason for the demise of professional sports. You can ask me about my frustrations with that at another time. Nor am I going to make a case that the concept of a covenant in Scripture is precisely like a contract in today's sports world. There are some very clear differences. But there are some similarities and I want to draw upon those today as we consider the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Hebrews, chapter 8. As you do so, I want you to consider the question, "What kind of a Deal has Jesus made for me?" In this chapter we will be comparing and contrasting the Old Covenant under Moses with the New Covenant under Jesus Christ.

Without sounding too crude or simplistic, we are going to look at the nature of the deal which Jesus has secured for us. In a sense, he has worked as our agent and procured for us a deal, a contract, which we now live under. The writer of Hebrews wants us to know that the deal which Jesus has made is far better than the deal which God made through Moses. I think we would agree in general, but just like in contracts today, sometimes the fine print may surprise us.

Read Hebrews 8:1-2, *"Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man."*

Now what is the main point we are to understand? The main point really of the whole book of Hebrews so far:

1. Jesus serves us in the heavenly tabernacle.

Now this is very instructive. The tabernacle was a tent which was constructed in the wilderness after the Israelites were brought up out of Egypt by God's powerful hand. The Tabernacle was God's residence on earth. Every Jew knew that God's true throne was in heaven, but the tabernacle was nothing less than his representative earthly throne.

Israelites would go to the tabernacle to draw near to God and to worship him. Under Moses, God made a deal with the Israelites. He would temporarily reside in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and God's people could approach him through the ministry of the priests. This is a pretty nice deal when you take into consideration the holiness of God and the sinfulness of the Israelites.

But Jesus does not serve in this tabernacle, nor does he serve in what would later become the Temple. Jesus serves his people right up in the throne of heaven; in the sanctuary which was not built by human hands, but by the Lord himself.

I have said this before, but I don't mind repeating myself because it is important. True worship of God takes place in heaven. When we come into Church on Sunday morning to give praise to God, it is not so much that God comes down into our building and receives our worship. In a very mysterious, yet real way, we are lifted spiritually into the very throne room of heaven. The heavenly throne is where Jesus ministers today. The heavenly throne is where you worship today. Remind yourself of this when you come into the worship service. Through faith and the working of the Holy Spirit, your worship is taken by Jesus into the heavens and brought before the throne of God. Simply amazing!

Read Hebrews 8:3-6, *"For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.' 6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises."*

OK, we have just learned that the true place of worship is in heaven

and this is where Jesus serves. Now, we are told that the earthly tabernacle was set up as a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. What does he mean by “copy and shadow”? Well, everything about the Old Testament tabernacle was patterned after the heavenly reality. If you read the book of Exodus, it becomes clear how important it was that the Israelites followed the blue print exactly. The tabernacle on earth was to be a replica of the tabernacle in heaven. So, which tabernacle existed first: the heavenly reality or the earthy copy? The obvious answer is the heavenly one.

Which covenant came first, the Old Covenant or the New Covenant? Answer is the Old Covenant came first, BUT both the Old and the New Covenant have their foundation in the heavenly reality. I want us to keep in mind the terminology of Scripture: copy and shadow. These terms will be very helpful in keeping us from going astray when it comes to the nature of the Old Covenant in contrast with the nature of the New Covenant.

Verse 6 explicitly declares that Jesus' ministry is superior to the ministry of the priests who worked at the earthly tabernacle. God emphasizes that Jesus' ministry is superior because the covenant he mediated is superior. Or using my analogy of the agent. Jesus has procured a better deal for us. The text tells us that this new deal is based upon better promises.

In other words God is going to do more in this new deal than he did in the old deal. This is where a large portion of the church has gotten things a bit confused in recent years. It is common for Christians to think that the nature of the New Covenant is opposite that of the Old Covenant. The thinking goes something like this: Under the Old Deal God required obedience from his people. He gave them lots of laws and warned them that if they did not keep these laws they would indeed be punished. But under the New Deal God no longer requires this obedience. In its place he has required something far more gracious and doable. Under the New Deal we are simply to trust in Jesus and to love.

Now to be fair, it is certainly true that love to God and neighbor is the summation of the entire law. But notice how this thinking tends to pit the Old Deal against the New Deal. This type of thinking makes the New Deal to be the very opposite of the Old Deal.

But remember the Scriptural wording used to describe the Old Covenant: copy and shadow. This is far from contradiction. Both the

copy/shadow and the reality flow from the heavenly reality. God never said, "I think I will set up a form of worship which will be entirely opposed to the final form of worship, but it will be good for the people because they will discover for themselves that the Old way was a bad way." No way! The Old Deal is not the opposite of the New Deal. Let this sink into your heart and mind. The obligations upon God's people have not somehow lessened under the New Deal.

Just for honesty sake, I am not unfamiliar with the passages in Paul which seem to contrast the law with grace. What is being contrasted in those passages is the human attempt to justify oneself before God through one's actions: the idea that we could ever earn God's favor. Grace is utterly opposed to this way of thinking. And the writer of Hebrews would be opposed to it as well.

Still, the truth is that the Old Deal is not opposed to the New Deal. But if they are not opposite to one another, the question still remains: In what way is the New Deal better than the Old Deal? Or to ask it the negatively: In what way did the Old Deal fall short?

Read Hebrews 8:7-12, *"For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.*

8 For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,

when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel

and with the house of Judah 9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant,

and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,

and write them on their hearts,

and I will be their God,

and they shall be my people And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor

and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me,

from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their

*iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more."*

There was something wrong with the Old Covenant. In some sense it was a bad deal. Where exactly did the fault lie? With the people (v. 8). What happened with the people? They did not remain faithful. Listen to the progression of the Old Covenant:

1. God took Israel by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Do you see how far this is from the work's righteousness which Paul opposed? God never said, "Obey me perfectly and then you will earn your right for me to redeem you out of Egypt." No way, he graciously and mercifully took Israel by the hand and brought them out of Egypt, in the midst of their great sinfulness. By the way, he does the same for us today. You do not have to clean yourself up to come to God. He will take you just as you are, no matter how sinful. And then he will do the cleaning up.

2. God expressly lays out the requirements of all who would be his people promising great blessing. It is not explicitly stated in the text here, but it is quite clear in the book of Exodus, that only after God redeemed Israel did he begin to express his covenant standards to his people in detail. It was because they were his people that they would have to abide by his standards. In this Old Deal, God promised to bless Israel in every way if they would remain faithful to follow his commands. But he also warned them severely that if they did not follow his commands, he would curse them and cut them off as his people. Again, the Deal under the New Covenant is not diametrically opposed to the Old Covenant deal. It is as God's adopted children that we are called to live a new life of obedience to God's express will contained in the Bible.

3. The hard reality is that the people failed to remain faithful and God turned away from them. The history of the nation of Israel is not a good one. There were some promising exceptions, but by and large Israel walked in unfaithfulness. God's laws were good, (they had to be: they flow from his character). But the corruption within the hearts of God's people hindered them from having the desire or the power to follow those laws.

Instead, they continually rebelled against them. Now where exactly does the Old Deal fall short? The Old Deal consisted of written standards to be followed, but it lacked the power to change the hearts of the people. It was ONLY an external code. It had no power to change the desires of the people.

So, when God had had enough of Israel's rebellion; he poured out his covenant curses upon his own people and cast them out of the land of Israel. At the time when God was turning his back, he also gives a ray of hope. This prophecy in Jeremiah 31 speaks of a New Covenant; a New Deal.

Listen carefully to the promises of this New Deal: There are basically three promises laid out in these verses:

1. *"I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts."*

This is not just a promise that we will be better able to memorize Scripture. God is promising that he will be the one to work on the level of wants and desires. He will actually work in our hearts such that we will delight to obey his laws. This is both an encouragement and a challenge.

Let me explain the encouragement first. If you are here today and you have thought God's Deal for you was that it is entirely up to you to have good desires and a passion for Christ, you have misunderstood the nature of God's New Deal. The promise of this New Deal is that if you will look to Christ, he will indeed plant within you desires which you could never have produced on your own. The Old Deal never made these kind of promises. That is not to say that God did not work through his Spirit in the hearts of Old Testament saints. He most certainly did. Just like he forgave people of their sins under the Old Covenant. He did both of these in anticipation of the work of Christ.

So, the free gospel of Christ is that Jesus will cleanse you from your sins and he will implant within you a new heart which will grow in greater and greater devotion to Christ.

Those of you who have never turned to Christ. Now is the time. You will never get a better deal.*I will take moment in silent prayer to give you a moment to cry out to him to be your Savior.... some look to Christ only for forgiveness. Look now to Christ to save you from your sin. If you prayed to trust in Christ, tell someone. Don't keep it to yourself

because you will begin to question whether you ever really trusted in him in the first place.

Now, remember that I said it was both an encouragement and a challenge. Here is the challenge: If you are sitting here today comfortably assuming that you are in Christ, and yet you are not experiencing in some degree the supernatural work of God's Spirit to change you in your deepest desires, you may not be in Christ. You see the promise of the New Deal is that God will ensure that his law is increasingly written on you heart. You will be able to love God more and more.

Now to be sure, even true Christians fail and fall far short of perfection. But are you pressing on with all the strength Christ gives you? Don't ever think it is OK to become complacent as a Christian. It surely is not.

We live in a culture of humanism. One problem with this is that we simply assume that if good is to come out of us then we are the ones who are going to make it happen. We are constantly told to choose to follow the good which is in you. This is so entirely contrary to biblical Christianity that sometimes I want scream. Not really. But it does frustrate me, because so many people think that Christianity consists of people choosing to follow the good in themselves.

Christianity is about recognizing that there is no "good" in myself. At my very core, I am corrupt. It is about trusting in another, Jesus Christ, to implant good desires where there were none before. And this is not a one time deal. Every day I recognize aspects of my heart which are still horribly corrupt. I must daily call upon Jesus to pour out his Spirit in my heart to purify that which was corrupt.

It is a foreign power, the Holy Spirit, who changes me. And that is why the Christian never has room to boast if he is growing in obedience. Rather, he can only be humbled that his God would graciously work in such a way, and he can give thanks.

How do you attack the remaining sin in your life? Do you do it as one who is under the New Deal given to us in Jesus Christ? Or do you still fight against sin like you are under the Old Deal? But this is not the only promise of the New Deal, there are more:

2. *"I will be their God and they will be my people"*

This is simply a renewal of the promise of the Old Deal.

Turn to Exodus 6:7.

And Lev. 26:12.

And Jer. 7:23.

And II Cor. 6:16.

And Rev. 21:3.

What this tells us is that the Old Deal and the New Deal are essentially One Deal after all.

3. The third promise is: *"No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord.' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* (Hebrews 8:11,12, NIV)

No longer will sin separate God's people from himself.

Think again about what I said earlier about worship. Under the Old Deal the inner sanctuary of the earthly copy was separated from the people. Now, under the New Deal, every worshipper has total and free access, not into the copy, but into the heavenly reality itself. How is this possible? Only because our sins have definitively been dealt with on the cross. The fullness of forgiveness and complete cleansing is only clearly seen as we place our faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus. My sins are punished in his death. And his righteousness is applied to me.

When we get to that final judgment day and Jesus is pouring out judgment so that full and complete justice is met, why will he not punish the believer? There is only one reason. He not only will not punish the Christian, but cannot for it would be wrong for him to do so, why? Because he has already fully judged every sin of the Christian at the cross. The full justice of God's wrath that would have fallen on the Christian, has already fallen on Jesus when he hung on the cross. There is no wrath left. God will not punish the same sins twice.

The Deal which Jesus has made for you will never get any better. He has taken away your sins and enabled you to have fellowship with God. And rather than change your obligations, he now works to give you the will and the power to keep them.

Philippians 2:12-13, *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out*

your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Read Hebrews 8:13, “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

What is the end result of the New Deal? The Old Deal is obsolete. It has disappeared. This is nothing less than a death blow to that way of thinking which maintains a separate deal for the nation of Israel. Many earnest believers teach that God has two basic deals: One for Israel and one for the Church. The deal for Israel has been suspended for a time, but will reappear again after the Church is raptured out to heaven.

How much better to proclaim to Jews the wonderful New Deal that is in Jesus Christ. Because the Old Deal is truly obsolete and will never be resurrected. The Bible is filled with lots of difficult "fine print" so to speak. I know that there are some books of the Bible which are difficult to grasp. You may even wonder why they are so important. But the truth is that they all work together to help us better understand the greatness of this new deal which Jesus has made on our behalf. Your spiritual life will flourish in proportion with how well you apprehend and actively trust in the New Deal. Knowing the Bible should not be a head trip. It is essential for you to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is real and it is practical.

Reflect for a moment on your own struggle to overcome nagging sin. How often do you fall into the trap of trying to defeat sin in your own strength? You feel awful for not being a better person and so you tell yourself that you must do better.

The New Deal provides a better way to conquer sin in your life. Not through your own strength, but through the life- giving power of the Holy Spirit, received by faith. When we acknowledge our sin to God and our utter helplessness to truly change ourselves at the very core, faith begins to look outside ourselves, to a supernatural source. And the Holy Spirit is not simply external, but lives within our hearts and promises to win the victory over every sin.

As you leave here today and go through your week, feeling certain on many days you will actually lose in your battle to overcome sin, remember the better promises of the New Deal. Trust in those promises

rather than in your own pitiful strength. Remember that Christianity is not a human religion. Unlike any other religion in the world, it is a supernatural faith.

The Holy Spirit is not a concept. Or a good idea. He is the God himself. And He is the means by which the blessings of the New Deal come to you. Seek his help. Seek him in the morning when you first wake up. Seek him throughout the day. And call upon him at night before you go to sleep. Dare to believe in someone other than yourself. This is the privilege of all who are included in the New Deal Jesus has made.

Amen.