

**Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**  
**First Quarter 2022: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews***  
**Lesson 8 “Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant”**

**Read for this week’s study**

Hebrews 7:11–19; Hebrews 8:10–12; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:1–6; Exodus 24:1–8; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

**Memory Text**

“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” (Hebrews 8:6, ESV).

**Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. The Need of a New Covenant
- III. New and Renewed
- IV. The New Covenant Has a Better Mediator
- V. The New Covenant Has Better Promises
- VI. The New Covenant Has Solved the Problem of the Heart
- VII. Further Study

**Questions and Notes for Consideration**

**Facilitator: Daniel Duda**

1. “By living a perfect life, and then by dying in our place, Jesus mediated a new, better covenant between us and God. Through His death, Jesus canceled the penalty of death that our trespasses demanded and made possible the new covenant. [...] Jesus embodied the obedience of the new covenant. He is our example. We have been saved, not only because of His death but also because of His perfect obedience.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The word “better” occurs more in Hebrews than in the rest of the New Testament put together. The author of Hebrews is choosing passages and institutions from the Old Testament that show what we had was good, but now God is doing something better. Therefore, the author consistently contrasts not something bad with something good, but something good with something better.
3. Sunday’s lesson explores the need for a new covenant. Why was a new covenant needed? (Hebrews 7:11-19)

4. Why did the Levitical priesthood need to be replaced with something better? Hebrews, and especially our text (7:11-19), has a lot to say about 'perfection'. The danger is that we will read *moral* perfection into that and then try harder to achieve it (which is a dead-end street). However, 'perfection' could also be translated as '*completeness*' – what you get when the final great purpose of all is achieved. What was the purpose of the Levitical priesthood (and sacrifices and the temple)?
5. The discussion of Jesus' priesthood brought us to the longest biblical quotation of the whole New Testament: the promise from Jeremiah 31:31-34 that God will make a new covenant to replace the one made with Moses. What is the significance of the discussion about a 'new' and 'renewed' covenant? (Monday's lesson) How can we separate what this meant for the original readers from discussions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century among the American puritans?
6. How does understanding Jesus as a better Mediator meaning 'guarantor' help us see the benefits of the new covenant? (Tuesday's lesson) In what sense is Jesus also an 'intermediary' – the one who establishes common ground between two parties? (cf. 9:15)
7. What is the significance of the new covenant being based on better promises? (Wednesday's lesson) How is this developed in the letter? (cf. 8:6.8-12; 10:15-18)
8. How does the new covenant bring complete forgiveness and write God's laws in people's hearts? (Thursday's lesson) How does this work? Is this something magical?
9. The author of Hebrews contrasts the old and new covenants by emphasizing the superiority of the promises, sacrifice, mediator, blessings and inheritance involved in the new covenant. The new covenant renders the old as "obsolete," because its focus was on the temple, land, and nation (Hebrews 8:13). While the necessity of the new covenant demonstrates that the old was in some sense deficient, the fault was not in the covenant itself, but in those who failed to keep it. This intrinsic inadequacy is rectified by the Spirit in the new covenant (8:10-12; 10:16-17).
10. The author of Hebrews is trying to tell his audience: "What we have is true, but it is not the whole truth. What we know at the moment is important, but the most important thing is that God is planning to do something more. (And by the way, it was all said and prefigured in our Scriptures!) Thus, trying to go back to the old things will mean missing out on what God has to offer." Are we in the same danger today? What does it mean to be open to what God wants to do for us today as individuals and as a community of faith?

## Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now what is this light, which Jesus often used as a synonym for truth? “I am the way, the truth. I have brought light.” Light on what subject? Look at Jeremiah 31 for the statement of the new covenant, the new agreement God would make with his people, which later on is quoted in the New Testament. If we were to read it all, Jeremiah 31:31 and on, we would read those familiar words how someday God will be able to do for his people what he’s wanted to do all along. And his law is written in their hearts, which means they’re doing what’s right because they agree it’s right. They delight in the law of God. Well, note what goes with that kind of obedience, the real kind. Verse 34, when people behave like this: “No longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD;”

Right behavior and the truth about God always go together, for most significant reasons. But you notice how they’re always associated here. When people are very religious but have a wrong picture of God, it may totally pervert what it is they’re doing, and even their Sabbath keeping could become a curse to them rather than a blessing; a burden and a wall between them and other people in the world. And Ephesians and Colossians talk about eliminating that artificial wall. The Sabbath was never supposed to be a barrier. The Sabbath should remind us that we’re all members of the same family. Isn’t that true? Every seventh-day Sabbath we should realize that everybody on this planet traces their lineage back to the same beginning. The Sabbath is the great leveler, the great unifier in the whole human race. The Sabbath was never meant to be a barrier. But when it becomes a sign that we are the *one* true people, it can become a barrier, even something we wear with a false kind of a pride. We have to watch that with great care. I think Sabbath keeping, without a true picture of God, may do us more harm than good.

Evidence of that? Once again, the people who crucified Christ rushed home to get ready to keep a seventh-day Sabbath holy. It seems insane. That’s because they didn’t have a true picture of God. Jesus said, “If only you knew my Father, you would have recognized me and you wouldn’t be trying to kill me.” You remember his words there in John 8, which we’ll come to later. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Isaiah, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

\*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

What an awful moment in God's family, when he had to gather his children around and say, "I want all the murdering and the hating to stop. And I want all the stealing, and the cheating, and the lying, and the immorality to stop. Please!" That means it was going on. There was a day when God didn't have to do that, and there's a day coming when he won't have to do it again. You remember the new covenant? It'll all be written in our hearts, and we'll do what's right because it is right. God will not have to lecture us a million years down the line and say, "I want all the murdering up here in heaven to stop." We won't have hated a soul for a million years. We'll be doing what's right because it is right.

Now if you heard your children behind the door saying, "Let's do what our folks want. I mean, you'll have to admit that everything they've asked us to do makes such good sense, we ought to want to do it anyway." And you get the impression that even after you're dead and gone, your children will go on doing what's right because it is right. Because now they're maturing, and they've come to see.

Now, we're not that perfect as parents, so this doesn't quite work. But let's imagine it, for the moment. With God it does. When we say, God, the longer I live the more I find that everything you've ever asked me to do makes such good sense, I ought to want to do it anyway. And now I tell you I do." Leading to the day when, sometime, we'll stand in the presence of God and say, "God, I agree with you. And I am pleased to do all these things that I used to do just because you told me to. I agree with you." And God can say, "At last you're free. You've learned the truth, and the truth set you free." And now the law is written in our hearts and we do what's right because it is right, and not because we're told to. But until we've reached that point, we need the law, and we need reward, and we need threats. We need all those things, don't we? But isn't that a condescension to our lawlessness and our immaturity and our ignorance? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

And later in this chapter, I think he states what the promise is. The promise is the new covenant. And what he promises is to write his laws in our minds and in our hearts because anybody who'd like to overcome being a sinful, untrustworthy rebel, an unloving person who doesn't even love himself, and often he's punishing himself because he's not pleased with his performance. It's not a very peaceful existence. And in our sanest moments we really would like to have the law of love which says love is always patient, it's always kind, it's never arrogant, it's never rude, it's never even irritable. It never insists on having its own way. It not only never kills, it never hates. It not only never commits adultery, it never even wants to be immoral. A person who never even wants to do anything wrong the tenth commandment says. Now in our best moments, we really would like to be that way. And is there anything we would like better

than for God to write that where it belongs, in a place where it can really function and affect the way we live—in our minds and in our hearts. And don't make too much distinction between the mind and the heart. A person thinks in both places. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Hebrews, #10, recorded November 15, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/15MMHEBREWS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMHEBREWS66> (Part 2)

### Further Study with Ellen White

Each law of God is an enactment of mercy, love, and saving power. These laws, obeyed, are our life, our salvation, our happiness, our peace [Psalm 119:165 quoted] (Letter 112, 1902). {3BC 1153.6}

When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. {COL 311.4}

Christ has made every provision for us to be strong. He has given us His Holy Spirit, whose office is to bring to our remembrance all the promises that Christ has made, that we may have peace and a sweet sense of forgiveness. If we will but keep our eyes fixed on the Saviour and trust in His power, we shall be filled with a sense of security; for the righteousness of Christ will become our righteousness. {ML 45.5}

That law of ten precepts of the greatest love that can be presented to man is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in promise, "This do, and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan." There is not a negative in that law, although it may appear thus. It is DO, and Live (Letter 89, 1898). {1BC 1105.2}

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

The Saviour ignores both rank and caste, worldly honor and riches. It is character and devotedness of purpose that are of high value with Him. He does not take sides with the strong and worldly favored. He, the Son of the living God, stoops to uplift the fallen. By pledges and words of assurance He seeks to win to Himself the lost, perishing soul. {6T 268.1}

Through the plan of salvation a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {TMK 366.4}

Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. {TMK 366.5}

But the people were slow to learn the lesson. Accustomed as they had been in Egypt to material representations of the Deity, and these of the most degrading nature, it was difficult for them to conceive of the existence or the character of the Unseen One. In pity for their weakness, God gave them a symbol of His presence. "Let them make Me a sanctuary," He said; "that I may dwell among them." Exodus 25:8. {Ed 35.1}

While engaged in our daily work, we should lift the soul to heaven in prayer. These silent petitions rise like incense before the throne of grace; and the enemy is baffled. The Christian whose heart is thus stayed upon God cannot be overcome. No evil arts can destroy his peace. All the promises of God's word, all the power of divine grace, all the resources of Jehovah, are pledged to secure his deliverance. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. And God was with him, a present help in every time of need. {GW 254.2}

Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. {AG 137.5}

The Messiah was to be hid in God, and God was to be revealed in the character of His Son. Without a knowledge of God, humanity would be eternally lost. Without divine help, men and women would sink lower and lower. Life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world. Man's necessities could be met in no other way. {PK 693.1}

Moses was a type of Christ. As Israel's intercessor veiled his countenance, because the people could not endure to look upon its glory, so Christ, the divine Mediator, veiled His divinity with humanity when He came to earth. Had He come clothed with the brightness of heaven, he could not have found access to men in their sinful state. They could not have endured the glory of His presence. Therefore He humbled Himself, and was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3), that He might reach the fallen race, and lift them up. {PP 330.4}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {MH 419.4}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. "The truth shall make you free;" and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is "the law of liberty." James 2:12. {DA 466.5}

Satan is constantly urging men to accept his principles. Thus he seeks to counterwork the work of God. He is constantly representing the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power he is constantly using against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles. {6T 11.2}

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. {COL 363.1}

Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence,

some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question. {PP 42.3}

The truths of God's word are not mere sentiments, but the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding is removed. {CT 452.2}

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. {OHC 159.5}

To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons, is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. The Lord says, "A new heart will I give unto thee." The image of Christ is to be stamped upon the very mind, heart, and soul. The apostle says, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). {3SM 190.2}

The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy,—joy in the Holy Spirit,—health-giving, life-giving joy. {MH 115.3}

Our Saviour's words, "Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), are a prescription for the healing of physical, mental, and spiritual ills. Though men have brought suffering upon themselves by their own wrongdoing, He regards them with pity. In Him they may find help. He will do great things for those who trust in Him. {MH 115.4}

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. {DA 324.1}