



## Hebrews 8

### 'Jesus, not ritual'

### Meditation 2.

The writer to the Hebrews has demonstrated what Jesus has done; He has fulfilled the old covenant completely and amazingly. By His finished sacrificial work, of Himself(!) He has opened the way into the presence of God in the true tabernacle.

So it's done! The Hebrews, nor us, don't need to try to come to God by our religiosity or ritual, or anything else.

So why was it that what Jesus did achieves what the old covenant could not? *Understanding the why of what Jesus did shows us the heart of God all the more as he responds to our sin and suffering. It helps us understand all the more how much we need Him and all the more how he has supplied that need so wonderfully and the result that comes – finally we are God's people, and He is our God forever!*

Look at Hebrews 8:7-8. "For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people."

The old covenant itself couldn't achieve God's heart desire of bringing His people back to Himself because there was a problem. And the problem was that "*God found fault with the people*". Paul spells this out in Romans chapter 7; it's the human heart that's the problem in that in our sin we are powerless to respond to God in the right way, even when we know we should.

Yes! How true is this, do you reckon?!

The old covenant with the law and the sacrificial system was a good thing given by God; it could reveal the people's heart for what it was, it could show the people where they went wrong, it could even convict them of their guilt and of God's holiness, but it was never going to be able to do what was required to finally and completely bridge the gulf between God and His people - it was pointing to a better way that would deal with the fault of the people.

So, "*God found fault with the people and said*" .....said what?

>What did he say? It is what you or I would say?

> When you come to God, yet again for the thousandth time, confessing your guilt and shame, your weakness, your struggle, what sort of picture do you have in your mind of how God is responding?

The writer of Hebrews over and over and over shows us that when God sees our sin and suffering *He wants to act to save us*. He isn't reluctant, He isn't standing there with his arms folded, rolling his eyes saying "fine, I'll

help you because I have to," which I think is often how we see it. No, he his arms are open wide, he longs to save us. And that's what we see again here, in verses 8 to 12, as the writer quotes the promises of God from Jeremiah chapter 31.

> What do verses 8 to 12 (from Jeremiah 31:31-34) say to you about God's heart? About his response to our sin and suffering?

What is driving him in establishing the new covenant through Jesus?

Our religiosity, our ritualism might make us look okay on the outside but that's just externals - it's only God himself who can deal with our real problem of sin, He's the only one who can put his law into our minds and hearts, *it's only what He does for us that means we can be His people and He will be our God.*

*That's why what Jesus did works because we need to be transformed from the inside out by our sin being dealt with and what the writer is saying is that has been done for us by Jesus* - look at verse 12; how does this all happen, how is it that God makes a new covenant and will write his law on our hearts so that he will be our God and we will be his people? Verse 12, "For I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more" and that is all and only through the One who offered Himself as the sacrifice in our place.

> When we look at God and we look at ourselves our sin and shame is never far away – but in Jesus he completely forgives us and remembers our sin no more!

So then how much do you remember your sin no more?

What about when someone has sought your forgiveness; how much do you remember their sin no more?

Coming to church, serving your Christian brothers and sisters and people in need around you; worshipping our King; all these things, *or anything else that we do*, don't make us right with God, they don't make us acceptable to him, make him love us more, make us more worth saving. And when we understand this chapter you realise how absurd it is to even think that. How could I, by anything I ever do atone for my sin before our holy God? But Jesus has done it for us, in our pride and shame, our great King and our Great Prophet is also our Great High Priest offered himself for us to bring us to God!

And that means that we are God's people and He is our God now and forever. And that's why we make being a part of the church family the priority, we worship Him as the source and object of our worship, why we serve one another and help those in need around us and live *every part of our life for His glory* – not to make us right with Him but *because we are made right with Him, all through Jesus*. We don't have to strive and strain, we just need admit that we need Him, that we need His sacrifice and then through Him we can live in the very presence of God as His people even now and one day face to face.

> We spend our entire lives grasping the wonder and enormity of this.

How would someone's life (*on the inside and the outside*) who 'gets this' look different?

Write out a few lines responding to God about this and then pray it back to Him.