

Introduction:

I probably shouldn't have done it. I have no doubt if I had talked to wiser people, they would have told me not to. But back in February, I bought an iPhone anyway. I love it. Aside from knowing I could have spent the money more wisely, I didn't regret getting it until a week ago. I happened to be talking to a guy about iPhones and he said the rumor was the next generation is coming out in a few months. It will have fewer bugs, better power, better memory, better features, better strength, better stability and a better price. All in all, it is just going to be better. When I heard that, I kicked myself. However, what would have happened if I waited until a few months from now and bought an iPhone? A few months later I would have heard about a faster, slicker, newer, better model coming out. That is the story of technology—planned obsolescence. There will always be something newer, faster, better coming out.

Wouldn't it be nice to have something that is just the best in its class and nothing would get any better? Actually, that is what **Hebrews** is all about. This week we read most of **Hebrews** in our "Give Attention to Reading" plan. Did you notice how many times the word "better" was used? 11 times in the ESV. When it was all said and done, the Hebrew writer was explaining that Christianity is better. It is better than Judaism, humanism, materialism, reincarnationism or any other "ism" you might address. Christianity is better than every other option out there. There is no "Christianity 2.0" despite what our Muslim or Mormon friends tell us. Nothing better has come along since Jesus and nothing better will come along from now on. Brethren, we need to be Christians because Christianity is just better.

Discussion:

- I. A better covenant
 - A. **Hebrews 7:22** and **8:6** make claim Christianity is a better. Most of the other "better" statements throughout this book an explanation of how the covenant through Jesus Christ is better than any covenant that came before or after. To fully grasp this, we need to understand what a covenant is. At its heart a covenant is a solemn mutual agreement with binding force. The two parties agree to certain terms and through the covenant bind themselves to it. A great example of covenant agreement is seen in **Genesis 31:44-54**. Laban and Jacob made a mutual agreement and built a memorial pillar to be a memorial witness. The agreement was Jacob would not oppress Laban's daughters and he would not marry anyone else. Further, neither man would pass the pillar with the intent to harm the other one. They offered a sacrifice to ratify the covenant and then parted ways bound to this agreement.
 - B. According to the ISBE, there are four major components of a covenant.
 1. *A statement of the covenant's terms:* For example the covenant between Laban and Jacob in **Genesis 31:44-54**. Jacob would not mistreat Laban's daughters or marry anyone else and neither Jacob nor Laban would pass by the heap of stones in order to harm the other.
 2. *An oath or commitment to the covenant:* Notice Jacob's oath in **Genesis 31:53**.
 3. *A curse upon the parties if they violate the covenant:* In **Genesis 31:53**, this is implied by Laban's statements that God would judge them if they violated the covenant.
 4. *An external act of ratification:* In the Old Testament, this usually took the form of a sacrifice and sharing in that sacrifice in some way. This is seen in **Genesis 31:54**.
 - C. In a covenant between man and God, the force was even stronger. However, this was not a covenant between equals. Rather, God is the superior and man the inferior. The covenant's terms would not be a mere agreement of equal responsibility. Rather, God offered certain promises that would be conferred on the lesser men if they met certain conditions. Consider the great covenant with Israel. Read **Deuteronomy 27-28** sometime to witness the promises of God for obedience but the curses on men for disobedience.
 - D. God made covenants with people repeatedly. He had a covenant agreement with Adam and Eve. There was a covenant made with Noah, with Abraham, with David. Of course, the great covenant was the one administered with Israel through Moses, explained in **Exodus 19-23**, ratified in **Exodus 24:3-11**. What an amazing covenant. God had selected, out of the entire world, this little, seemingly insignificant people to be His special people. He had brought them into a special relationship and offered them a special agreement. He would be their protector, their king, their guide and their God. They need simply obey His will and He would bring them

into the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. What a covenant. But the Christian covenant is better. Consider some of the other statements to learn why.

II. Given through a better revelation

- A. **Hebrews 1:1-4** explains God had revealed His past covenants and agreements in many different ways. He most often spoke through prophets—consider Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, etc. But now, the revelation came through God's Son.
- B. In **Matthew 21:33-39**, Jesus told a parable demonstrating the significance of the Son versus the prophets. The prophets were servants, they were even good servants. But they weren't the Son. The Son, by the fact that He is the issue of the Father, is of greater importance. God no longer merely relied on servants but on His Son to reveal this New Covenant.
- C. Additionally, this Son was not only better than the prophets through whom the Old Covenant was revealed. He is better than the angels. **Hebrews 2:2** teaches angels were involved in the revelation of the former covenants. However, Jesus is the revealer of this New Covenant and He is better. The Hebrew writer drew a conclusion from that. If the Old Covenant proved reliable and transgression received the appropriate judgment, how much more this New Covenant? If Jesus, who is better than prophets and angels revealed this covenant, how much more important is the covenant and how much more necessary is it to heed the words of the covenant. While the Hebrew writer was highlighting the covenants prior to Christ, this makes a significant point for those newer religious covenants based on a lesser revelation. Consider Mormonism and Islam, both based on revelations that came to supposedly special men through the hands of angels. Why would we choose something that claims to be better but comes from a lesser revelation? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the revealer of our covenant, why would we want anything else?
- D. The ancients had the collections of Scripture that came through angels and prophets. We have a final and completed Scripture that came from the Son of God Himself. Yes, He used men to write down these words, but the revelation is not merely the words. The revelation is the Son and His message for us. As Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (**John 6:68**, ESV). This leads to our next point.

III. Providing a better hope

- A. Our covenant with Jesus gives us a better hope according to **Hebrews 7:19**. The verse says the Old Covenant through Moses could not make anyone perfect. In fact, **Romans 3:20** says no human will be justified by the works of the law. Rather, the knowledge of sin comes by the law. In **Acts 15:10**, Peter called trying to live by that Old Covenant of the law a yoke no one had been able to bear. According to **Galatians 3:22**, the Old Covenant merely imprisoned everyone under sin. **Galatians 3:10** explains that living under that Old Covenant merely brings a curse because no one lives it perfectly. This, of course, means the greatest hope one can have by following that Old Covenant is death. **Galatians 3:21** shows that life cannot come through the Law. However, death can and did. That is what Paul said the Old Covenant produced in him in **Romans 7:7-9**—death.
- B. Our covenant through Jesus, however, has a great hope. As we read moments ago in **John 6:68**, Jesus' revelation contains the words of eternal life. As **John 14:6** says, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. **Titus 3:7** nails down that our hope as Christians, by the blood of Jesus, is eternal life.
- C. We need to take this a step further, however. Not only does the covenant with Jesus surpass the covenant made through Moses because of its hope of life. The covenant with Jesus surpasses everything else because Jesus' is the only means to any real hope. According to **Ephesians 2:12**, if we are separated from Jesus Christ, then we are without God and have no hope. I don't care how Satan has lied to you and what fantasies fill your head about the hope you have. If you are separate from Jesus, you have no hope. You have only the certain expectation of death and eternal damnation.

IV. Offering better promises

- A. The covenant agreement with God always asks for a requirement from man in order to receive promises from God. We noticed that in **Deuteronomy 27-28** with the Old Covenant. According to **Hebrews 8:6**, the New Covenant is better because it offers better promises. The promises of **Deuteronomy 28:1-14** show that the Old Covenant provided blessing in the fields, with children, in the face of enemies, with physical prosperity, etc. These are great blessings. What could be better than material prosperity?
- B. No doubt, in the New Covenant we can look to passages like **Matthew 6:33** and learn that if we seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, He will take care of us physically. Interestingly, however, the New Covenant promises are not material. Under the New Covenant, God never promises us material prosperity. He only promises us material adequacy. In fact, the model prayer shows us only praying for our daily bread (cf. **Matthew 6:11**). We might be tempted to think we have lesser promises. We do not. We have a much greater promise.
- C. Our promises are mostly spiritual. Yes, I know the promise of **Matthew 19:29** about receiving a hundredfold in this life for all that we have lost in serving Jesus. However, the great promises of God for us are spiritual as seen in **Ephesians 1:3-14**. We will be made holy and blameless, adopted as God's children, redeemed by Jesus' blood, forgiven of our sins and made heirs of God's grace. The fact is, nothing offers these kinds of promises and rewards. There is no covenant with anyone at any time that offers this. How wonderful to have our slate wiped clean of sin. How wonderful to be adopted by God. How wonderful to be redeemed and set free. That is God's promise to us and it is much better than having a good crop.

Conclusion:

This is hardly the end of learning how much better Christ's covenant with us is than anything else. I will share more with you in the next lesson. However, let's simply consider these improvements found in the New Covenant. Let us remember that nothing better is going to come along. There is no need to wait. There will be no Christianity 2.1. We don't have to fear that we will miss out on something better because we have invested our time in Jesus' covenant. This is the best there is. No other covenant is better. No other covenant has such a great revelation, provides such awesome hope or offers such amazing promises. Why not share in Jesus' covenant today? As the covenants we read about in the Bible were ratified by a sacrifice and by participation in that sacrifice so is this one. **Romans 6:1-4** shows, when we are baptized, we share in the sacrifice of Jesus. We are buried into His death and we are raised up in the newness of life. Take part in this better covenant; receive the adoption, redemption, forgiveness and blessing of Jesus' New Testament right now. Don't wait. The covenant with Jesus promises a lot, but it doesn't promise tomorrow.