



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC	The Supremacy of the New Covenant— Hebrews 8	SPEAKER	Elder David Foo
THEME	Hebrews	DATE	30 Sep and 1 Oct 2023

MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In his sermon, Elder David Foo covered Hebrews chapter 8. This chapter describes the new covenant that God created, with Jesus as its mediator.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE NEW COVENANT

1. Confirmation on the supremacy of Jesus' priesthood

Verses 1 to 5 of Hebrews chapter 8 underscore the supremacy of Jesus' priesthood. Jesus lives forever and is the ultimate and perfect High Priest. His intercession is the only one that counts, as He serves in the true tabernacle in heaven. We need to go to Him, call on Him and count on Him.

2. Supremacy of the new covenant

Through Jesus, God established a new covenant that rendered the old one obsolete.

A covenant is an agreement where two or more parties agree to keep their promises to each other.

The old covenant, mediated by Moses, was made between God and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. This was after God had redeemed and rescued them from Egypt. Israel had promised to obey God, worship Him as their only God and perform animal sacrifices. In return, God promised to prosper and protect them. They would be His special people among all others on the earth.

However, Israel failed to uphold their end of the covenant and fell into sin. God turned away from them as He was unable to tolerate their evil deeds. Israel experienced a civil war and split into two kingdoms. Israel was eventually conquered by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians.

Just before the Babylonian invasion, God spoke to the people through the prophet Jeremiah about the new covenant—these verses from Jeremiah are quoted directly in Hebrews 8: 8-12.

During the Babylonian invasion, the temple was destroyed and the Ark of the Covenant was lost. Even though the temple was eventually rebuilt, it did not have God's presence as the Ark was

missing. Priests went through the ceremonial motions but these were meaningless without the presence of God.

Jesus later established the new covenant at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20) which rendered the old covenant obsolete. Under the new covenant, we do not need to rely on good works—we just need to be willing to enter into the covenant with God, with Jesus as our mediator. God in return will keep to the same promises He had agreed to in the old covenant, with three additional aspects:

- a. A new heart: The Holy Spirit will empower us to keep to God's laws. We can rely on His strength when we are faced with the temptation to sin.
- b. A personal relationship: All people can now have a personal relationship with God.
- c. A clean slate: We should come confidently and boldly before God and trust that we are righteous in His sight as Jesus has sacrificed Himself for our sins.

These promises are applicable for Gentiles as well because Israel rejected the new covenant.

Israel's rejection of the new covenant and insistence on following the obsolete old covenant, even though it was impossible to do so, may have been because it gave them a false sense of control. They felt that performing the old ceremonies would improve their standing with God. Likewise, we may be tempted to think that our achievements (e.g. success in growing in a ministry) will contribute to our acceptance before God. However, we need to guard against this notion (Eph 2:8-9). We should also refrain from berating ourselves for past sins as Jesus' sacrifice has wiped our slates clean.

CONCLUSION

We should always be cognisant that God's work is far superior to anything we can achieve by ourselves. God will empower us to obey Him and know Him personally. He will also forgive our sins and remember them no more. Faith is the key to receiving and experiencing the new covenant. We should simply submit to God's righteousness and He will fulfil the promises of the new covenant.

QUESTIONS

1. What stood out the most to you in the comparisons between the old and new covenants? Which aspect of the new covenant can you relate to the most? Why?

2. Share about the times where we felt like we needed to perform in order to receive God's acceptance. Do we also feel the need to punish ourselves when we sin? Do we struggle to forgive ourselves?

3. In order to keep to our end of the new covenant, with Jesus as mediator, we need to have faith and submit to God's righteousness. Is there an area you are struggling to trust God in? How can you release control and exercise faith?