

May 23, 2010 by Steve Brandon



A Better Covenant

Hebrews 8:7-13

1. Finding Fault (verses 8-9)

2. Better Promises (verses 10-12)

Let's begin by considering our text.

Hebrews 8:6-13

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming," says the Lord, "When I will effect a new covenant With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them," says the Lord. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete but whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

The title of my message this morning is "A Better Covenant." It comes right out of the phraseology used in there verse 6, ...

Hebrews 8:6

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

Over the past eight months in our exposition of the book of Hebrews, we have seen the writer lift high Jesus. He is better than the prophets. He is better than the angels. He is better than Moses. He is better than Joshua. He is better than Aaron and all the priests. And today, we are looking at the covenant that came with Jesus. His covenant is better than the covenant that God made with Israel. My aim this morning in my message is to convince you of the greatness of the new covenant. I want to be like the salesman, who points out the bad in the competitor's product and the good in his. You will have no choice, but to purchase his product. Similarly, I want to demonstrate how the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant, that you might never have any desire to trust in the old covenant. Verse 7 begins to point this out.

Hebrews 8:7

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

The argument goes like this: God made a covenant with Israel. But later, God made another covenant with Israel. The only reason to make another covenant is if there is a problem with the first one. You don't go to the bank and renegotiate your mortgage, unless there is a problem with your current mortgage. You don't write up another contract, unless there was a problem with the first contract. You don't purchase another furnace in your home unless there is a problem with your current furnace. You don't make a new covenant unless there is a problem with the Old. The writer to the book of Hebrews has made this same argument on other occasions.

Consider Hebrews 4:8, "If Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that." The mere fact that God spoke of another rest in the days of David demonstrates that the rest in Joshua's day was not the perfect rest. He uses the same logic in Hebrews 7:11, "If perfection was through the Levitical priesthood ... what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not to be designated according to the Aaron." The mere fact that God spoke of another priesthood in the days of David demonstrates that the priesthood of Aaron was not the best priesthood.

I hope that you catch the significance of these arguments here. It's not that he is taking anything about the life of Jesus and pushing it back upon the Old Testament, as valid as that is to do. Rather, he's taking the Old Testament at face value, and making some observations containing the words of the Old Testament. His observations bring his readers to the conclusion that the Old Testament is anticipating something better. And of course, this "better" is fulfilled in Jesus.

Pertaining to our text this morning, the mere fact that God spoke of another covenant in the days of Jeremiah demonstrates that the covenant to Israel in the days of Moses was ultimately insufficient. In fact, in verse 7, the writer says that the covenant with Moses had fault. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second" (verse 7).

My message has two points this morning. For my first point, I want to take the verbiage of verse 7. Here's my first point, ...
1. Finding Fault (verses 8-9)

Beginning in verse 8, we see a quote from the Old Testament that continues on for five verses. It is the longest Old Testament quotation found in the New Testament. It comes from the book of Jeremiah. It comes from Jeremiah 31.

In order to fully grasp the impact of this quote, it's helpful for us to know a few things about Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet in Judah for about 50 years. He prophesied during the days when Babylon came and conquered Judah. His days of prophesying weren't glory days. They weren't days in which things were going well for Judah. Rather, they were days in which things were going poorly for Judah. They were losing power. And eventually, the Babylonians came and conquered them. Jeremiah's message to the people of Judah was simple: "Repent!" He said it in many, many different times. He said it in many, many different ways.

Jeremiah 3:11

"Return, faithless Israel," declares the LORD; "I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 4:14

Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts lodge within you?

Jeremiah 8:4-5

Thus says the LORD, "Do men fall and not get up again? Does one turn away and not repent? Why then has this people, Jerusalem turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to deceit. They refuse to return.

Despite the many, many warnings, the people of Israel refused to heed the cries of Jeremiah. And so, as is always the case with those who refuse the call of God, "He gave them over" to their own sin (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). In this case, it meant, the destruction of Jerusalem. It meant the destruction of the temple, the very center of their culture. It meant, many of their sons and daughters being carried away into Babylon to learn the ways of Babylon. It meant ruin for their country. The devastation was terrible. You simply need to read the book of Lamentations to feel the pain.

Lamentations 1:1, 3

How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer! ... Judah has gone into exile under affliction and under harsh servitude. She dwells among the nations, but she has found no rest. All her pursuers have overtaken her in the midst of distress.

It was a bad time for Israel. And the question could easily have come up at the time of Jeremiah, "What happened? How could God's people be so overthrown? Didn't God make a covenant with them? Didn't God make a promise to them?" Indeed, He did, after delivering them from slavery in Egypt. Listen to Exodus 19, ...

Exodus 19:3-6

Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

Those are lofty promises! Israel would be God's possession! God would make them to be a kingdom of priests. God would make them a holy nation. And the people receive the promise gladly!

Exodus 19:7-8

So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

Shortly after these events, God ratified the covenant with Israel. Moses again went up upon Mount Sinai. There, God came down with smoke and fire! (Ex. 19:18). The entire mountain quaked (Ex. 19:18). God spoke as with a voice of thunder (Ex. 19:19). Upon the mountain, Moses received the 10 commandments, and various other laws to regulate the affairs of the nation. When Moses "recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; ... all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!'" (Ex. 24:3).

So, Moses built an altar and offered burnt offerings to the LORD (Ex. 24:5). He collected the blood from the bulls upon the altar. Half of it was placed in basins (Ex. 24:6). Half of it, he sprinkled upon the altar (Ex. 24:6). Then, "he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of all the people" (Ex. 24:7). The people responded with one voice, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" (Ex. 24:7). "So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Ex. 24:8).

There was the covenant: It was an agreement between God and Israel. God promised to bless. Israel promised to obey. It was sealed with

blood. God gave Israel the laws to observe. They pledged their obedience to the covenant. As they obeyed, the blessing of God would be upon them. All was well! And yet, the covenant failed. Rather than being a kingdom of priests, they became community of peasants. Rather than being God's possession, they became Babylonian slaves.

Well, you ask, "What went wrong?" The clue comes in verse 9, ...

Hebrews 8:9

"Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them," says the LORD.

Do you see it? "They did not continue in my covenant." Though the people pledged, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do," they failed. They didn't continue in their end of the covenant. This didn't happen years later. It happened "quickly" (Ex. 32:8). Shortly after the covenant was ratified, Moses turned right around and went up upon the mountain to receive further instruction from the LORD. As Moses delayed upon the top mountain, the people fell into idolatry at the base of the mountain. Upon the mountain, ...

Exodus 32:7-10

... the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

The covenant had been broken. God was through with His people. He was ready to destroy them. It was only the pleading of Moses that prevented the LORD from doing so (Ex. 33). By grace, God continued to lead them. It was not "one strike, and you're out." But, again, (as verse 9 says), "they did not continue in my covenant." Grumbling was a constant problem with the people (Num 11:1). They complained of their conditions (Num. 11). They complained against Moses (Num. 12). And, they didn't believe. When the spies returned from the land of Canaan, the people heard their report. Rather than trusting the LORD, they sided with the 10 spies, who gave a bad report.

And so, as Hebrews 89 says, "I did not care for them, says the Lord." Here's the account of the way in which God didn't care for them.

Num. 14:26-35

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey--I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness. Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness. According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, even forty years, and you will know My opposition. I, the LORD, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die.'"

And in the following generations, nothing much changed. The people in Israel continued in their wayward ways. God continued His love for the people in sending them judges, in sending them prophets. But, the people still refused His call to repent.

Now, I ask you: where was the fault with the first covenant? Was the fault with God? Certainly not! He kept His end of the bargain. It was the other party. It was the nation of Israel who was at fault. They were the ones who broke their end of the deal. The very ones who said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8; 24:7). They were the very ones who broke the covenant. Now, you could easily argue that the covenant itself was faulty. And in many ways it was, because it set up some conditions that nobody could ever meet. Obey the Lord completely with all of your heart? We have sinful hearts. We simply can't get it done. I don't care how hard you try, it's impossible for us to keep it.

It reminds me of the time that I spent as a camp counselor. We had a ropes course -- ropes and wires in the trees. We did a bunch of team-building activities. At times, we would create adventures in attempts to get the campers to work together, like a big wall with a rope on the other side. We would say, "You are being chased by the Heebie-Geebies. Everyone needs to get up and over the wall in 10 minutes. If any one of you fails to get over the wall, you will all be eaten for dinner, because all of your fingerprints need to be present to open the door beyond the wall to your freedom."

And so, the kids would have to figure out who should go over the wall first, and who should go over the wall last. They would have to figure out how to get the weakest of the team up and over the wall. The idea was to help them build their problem-solving skills with one another. We had all sorts of different scenarios like this. Perhaps some of you have engaged in such an activity.

Well, at times, we would setup a scenario like this in which it was impossible to complete. As the campers started making progress, we would change the rules on them. The idea was that we wanted to make the team fail in order to see how they would respond toward one another. It was really quite an interesting dynamic to see what would happen. They would start complaining. They would start yelling at each other when

they failed. They would be blaming others for the faults of the team. Afterwards, we would always sit down and talk with them and tell them what we were doing. It often made a big impact in their lives.

This is a bit like the law. Although the law was established as a covenant, God's purpose of the law wasn't to bring reconciliation between God and man. Rather, it was to show us how far we fell in keeping up with God. Romans 3:20 says, "Through the law comes the knowledge of sin." In many ways, God wanted the law to act as a giant spotlight in their lives that they might cry out to the Lord for help, being unable to walk in accordance with the law.

But, rather than doing so, the Hebrew people continued in their rebellion. They disregarded the law of God. They walked in their own ways. Eventually, God gave them over to their sin. Israel, in the north, was conquered by the Assyrians. Judah, in the south, was carried away in exile by the Babylonians. But, in the middle of the exile, God came to Jeremiah and said, "Hope is not lost. Yes, you are experiencing the fruit of your sin. Yes, you will go into exile. But, I'm going to do something to give you hope." Here's the hope, ...

Hebrews 8:8

Behold, days are coming," says the Lord, "When I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah

And this new covenant would help solve the problem of their sin. I love the way that one commentator puts it: "The Old Covenant failed because of the sinfulness of the nation, for which it had no remedy. The new covenant, however, has such a remedy" [\[1\]](#) And we know the remedy. It is the cross of Christ. The remedy is Jesus dying in our place. The old covenant had no remedy. The new covenant has a remedy.

It's because the new covenant is based upon ...

2. Better Promises (verses 10-12)

Again, I take the verbiage for my point from the text of verse 6: "Better Promises." Verses 10, 11, and 12 are filled with the promises of God that would come in the new covenant. As we go through them, I'm sure that you will realize the blessings that have come to us in Jesus Christ. My first point was the bad news. But, here comes the good news. It's very good news. There are four promises here in these verses.

Promise #1: An Inner Desire (verse 10a)

God says, "I will put my laws into their minds, And I will write them on their hearts" (verse 10). This is what God does in the heart of all who believe in Jesus Christ. He gives us an inner desire and a heart to live for Him. This is more than a promise of mere memorization, of mere intellect. It has all to do with giving us a heart that knows God's word and wants to obey God's word.

When someone believes in Jesus Christ today, he is made a new creature. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17). "He saved us, not on the basis of deed which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Perhaps you remember the night in which Jesus was talking with Nicodemus. Jesus said to Him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). When Nicodemus demonstrated that he didn't know what Jesus was talking about, Jesus said, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?" (John 3:10). "Nicodemus, you don't understand what it means to be changed? Nicodemus, you don't understand what it means to have a new heart?"

This is what Jeremiah wrote: "I will put my laws into their minds, And I will write them on their hearts." The old covenant was written on tablets of stone (Ex. 32:15-16). The new covenant is written on the tablets of our hearts. The old covenant was a list of rules (Ex. 20-23). The new covenant is a heart of desire, and this is so much better.

I'm thinking of two teenage boys. Both of them have similar qualities. They have both been born into church-going families. They have both come to church almost every Sunday in their life. They have both attended a Christian school. They have both behaved well and have received fine grades. They have both kept from evil influences in their lives. On the outside, you could hardly tell them apart.

But, should you go into their hearts, you can discern a difference. The first boy has been compelled his entire life by his domineering father and oppressive mother. He has never missed church in his life, not because he really has a heart for God, but because mom and dad would never let him miss church. He has behaved well at school, because he was afraid of what mom and dad would do to him if ever he got into trouble. He stayed away from the party scene, not because he didn't want to be partying with his friends, but because mom and dad wouldn't let him go.

The second boy has embraced the gospel of Christ. God has changed him on the inside. He has experienced the New Birth. He has received God's word upon his heart and his mind. He has never missed church, because he wants to be with God's people. He has behaved well at school, because he delights to give honor to those in authority. He has stayed away from the party scene, because he has seen how such influences would pull him away from the God he loves.

What's the difference between these two boys? There is a huge difference. It would easily show itself when these two boys go to college. The one boy will finally feel his freedom. He will do what he wants. No church. Lots of parties. School, if it's convenient. The other boy will likewise do what he wants. But, he will use his freedom to do what is right. He will find a church or a Christian fellowship group. His school will be a way to honor God, so he will work hard at his classes. He will avoid the parties, because of the wickedness that takes place there.

Such is the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. The Old had outside constraints. But, the New has internal desire placed into every believer. This is what God does to save us in our day and age in the new covenant. It's so much better than the old

covenant.

Promise #2: A Relationship with God (verse 10b)

God says, "And I will be their God, and they shall be My people." These words here are talking of relationship with God. You will identify the LORD as your God. And, most amazingly, He will identify you as one of His people.

There's more here, however, than mere relationship. There's a love relationship identified here. These are words of the lover.

I want for you to picture a man and a woman at the altar of a church. She is dressed in white. He is wearing a tuxedo. They are surrounded by all of their friends. The pastor in front of them turns to the man and says, "Do you take this woman to be your wife." He says, "I do!" The pastor turns to the woman and says, "Do you take this man to be your husband." She says, "I do." What are the man and woman saying? Song of Solomon 6:3, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." This sort of emotion rings through these words.

With the relationship, and with the love, there comes commitment. It is as if God brings us to Himself and says, we are in this together. "I am yours and you are mine." "What God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19:6). That's the idea of these words, Relationship; Love; Commitment; Unity; Oneness; Agreement.

Do you remember the motto of the three musketeers? "All for one and one for all." This is what God is saying, "I will be their God, and they will be my people." We are all for God. And God is all for us!

This is different than the covenant made on Mount Sinai. In that covenant, when the people went astray, God let them go. He said, "I did not care for them." But, not here. The promise of the new covenant is that God will care for us. He will care for us until the end because He has committed to us in loving relationship, and this is where all of history is headed. At the end of the book of Revelation, when the new heaven and the new earth appear, a loud voice will come from the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them" (Rev. 21:3).

This is the new covenant. And by the way, this is a big reason why the book of Hebrews calls us to draw near to the Lord. Heb. 4:16 says, "Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." We have a relationship with the Lord. He bids us to come, because He cares for us.

Promise #3: Knowledge of God (verse 11)

Hebrews 8:11

And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them.

These words picture the promise of the universal knowledge of God. Isaiah prophesied of the day when "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Is. 11:9). Now, certainly, this hasn't been fully fulfilled yet. There are many people who don't know the Lord in the world today. This is why we need to talk with our brother. This is why we need to talk with our fellow citizen. This is why we need to call the world to "know the LORD."

This is why I went and talked with my neighbor yesterday. Steve Lawson came to Freeport this past weekend and preached at First Baptist Church of Freeport. On Saturday, our family was there. It was a great time to listen to one of America's greatest preachers. On the way home, I saw my neighbor, two doors down, out working in the yard. So, after we pulled into the garage, I walked over to his house and began speaking with him. I remember my thoughts as I was walking over there. I quickly prayed, "God, give me a chance to share with him something spiritual."

In the course of our conversation, he spoke about his daughter receiving a full-ride athletic scholarship for college. His point was how much time she was forced to commit to her sport. And I said to him, "You know, I just got back from a Bible Conference in Freeport. The man who was speaking there told of his own experience, as a picture of the gospel of Christ. He received a full-ride scholarship to play quarterback at Texas Tech University. He described how free it was on the one hand. The moment he signed the scholarship, all things in the school were provided for him. The school paid for his tuition. The school paid for his books. The school paid for his student housing in the dorms. The school paid for his football uniform. The school paid for his cleats. Everything was free. But, from the moment that he signed the scholarship, it cost him everything. He had to work out with the team. He had to eat with the team. He had to practice with the team. He had to travel with the team."

I said, "It's a picture of the gospel of Christ. He calls us into His kingdom by His grace, believing in Him alone. The salvation that He offers to us is absolutely free. And yet, when we come, it costs us everything!" There will be a day when such a conversation won't need to take place. Because, "all will know [the LORD], from the least to the greatest of them." Now, although this will be fully realized someday, we know this in part today. We taste of it in the church. This is because the church of Jesus Christ is quite different than Israel ever was. Membership into Israel came by birth. When you were born of Jewish parents, you came into the nation. But membership into the church of Jesus Christ comes by re-birth. It's when you come to know Jesus that you are brought into His church which He is building.

Within the church, there is a measure of universal knowledge of God. The church is the community of the redeemed. The nation of Israel certainly had those who genuinely knew the Lord. But, such were in the minority. In the days of Moses, there were only 2: Joshua and Caleb. The rest were laid low in the wilderness. In the days of the judges, there were whole generations that arose "who did not know the LORD" (Judges 2:10). In the days of Elijah, there were on the order of 7,000, which was but a small percentage of the entire nation (1 Kings 19:18). In the days of Josiah, there were very few who knew the Lord, as the book of the law was lost (2 Chron. 34). And when you look at the overall

wickedness of the nation, you know that the number of genuine believers was small. Never was there a time in Israel's history when the entire nation was together in full belief of the Lord.

But, this is not so with the church of Jesus Christ. In the church, there is a measure of the universal knowledge of God. And how sweet it is to gather with the saints, where you don't have to win those you are with. Instead, you can glory in Jesus together in sweet fellowship. In such cases we taste of the fullness of the new covenant.

Now, admittedly, there are many in the external church of Jesus Christ who are not believers. They come. They faithfully attend the services. They are engaged in the Bible studies. But, they know not the Lord. This is the very warning of Jesus. Toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says this:

Matthew 7:21-23

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

Is this you? Oh, I call you to know the Lord and the fullness of the new covenant. Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

Promise #4: Forgiveness of sins (verse 12)

Hebrews 8:12

For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

In many ways, this is the crowing promise of all promises. Your inner desire for God will come only when you experience the forgiveness of sins. Your relationship with God can only take place once the barrier between you and the Lord is resolved. You will only know the Lord when you know His grace. With textual support, I say that this is the crowing promise. Notice how verse 12 begins, "For I will be merciful to their iniquities."

In other words, they will have an inner desire for Me, because I will be merciful to their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. They will have a relationship with Me, because I will be merciful to their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. They will possess a knowledge of God, because I will be merciful to their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more.

When sins are really and fully dealt with, the blessings will follow. Forgiveness of sins is the core of the new covenant, which Christ poured out for us upon the cross of Christ. Jesus said to His disciples (in Luke 24:46-47), "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

This is what the apostles preached. On the day of Pentecost (which is celebrated today--50 days after Easter), Peter preached to the Jews who had gathered, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:42). The people repented, and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the fruit of that was that those in Jerusalem were compelled by the Lord to go out "every day, in the temple and from house to house ... teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

It wasn't external pressure upon them from the apostles, saying God really needs you to be a witness for Him. Rather, it was the joy of sins forgiven that compelled them to speak with others. They had this inner desire and relationship and knowledge of God that they had to share with others.

When you come to grasp the greatness of the reality of sins forgiven, it will change everything in your life! By faith in Jesus, you are no longer condemned! (Rom. 8:1) By faith in Jesus, you stand pure before Him! You have a relationship with God and will enjoy Him forever! You won't want to go back to the old covenant. The New is so much better.

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete but whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

He has taken the Old and thrown it in the garbage. It is no longer needed. Sadly, there are many who choose the ways of the old covenant above the ways of the new covenant. Oh, to be sure, they don't go back and make sacrifices as the old covenant required. However, they do live a life based upon works. They think that their works or their own goodness will merit God's favor in their life. But, remember, it is not by works that we are saved, but by God's grace through the Spirit of God.

The new covenant truly is "A Better Covenant!"

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 23, 2010 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Zane Hodges, Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 800.