

Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 7B, Hebrews 7:1-8:13: Better Priesthood, Better Covenant Part 2

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Welcome back, deep divers. We're jumping right back into the book of Hebrews, picking up where we left off with Jesus as our high priest. This time we're going even deeper into chapters seven and eight.

And to guide us, we've got some awesome insights from a lecture by Dr. David A. deSilva, ready to unlock some deeper meaning. Always ready. All right.

So deSilva starts with this really intriguing idea, and it's a bit mind-blowing when you think about it. He's talking about Jesus as high priest, but not just any high priest. He's suggesting there's this heavenly sanctuary, like a mirror image of the earthly tabernacle.

It's wild, right? What's fascinating is how deSilva connects this whole concept to the ancient Jewish understanding of the cosmos. You know, he brings in those other texts, First Enoch, Wisdom of Solomon, the two Baruch, and they all point to this idea that heaven wasn't just some vague ethereal place. It was structured.

It had significance. It was real in their minds. So are you saying that in the ancient Jewish worldview, there was actually a heavenly temple? Yeah, essentially.

They saw the earthly temple as a kind of blueprint, like a shadow or a copy of the true eternal sanctuary in heaven. Hmm. I see where this is going.

But why does this heavenly sanctuary matter so much when we're trying to understand Jesus's role? Well, deSilva argues that if we take Psalm 110.4 seriously, you know, the one where God says he made Jesus a priest, then we have to ask ourselves, where could he possibly be a priest? Jesus wasn't from the tribe of Levi, so he couldn't serve in the earthly temple. So the only option left is this heavenly sanctuary. Like a puzzle piece falling into place.

And what's even more mind-blowing is that this heavenly sanctuary isn't bound by the same limitations as the earthly one. It's eternal, superior in every way. Precisely.

It's not made by human hands. It doesn't decay or get corrupted. It's the real deal, the true dwelling place of God.

And that's where Jesus's priesthood operates. It forces us to think bigger, beyond what we can see and touch, and grasp the eternal significance of what Jesus is doing. Okay, let's shift gears a bit to this idea of a better covenant.

DeSilva uses some pretty strong language here, saying that the old covenant was faulty. Sounds kind of harsh, right? What does he mean by that? Yeah, that word faulty definitely stands out. But when you dig into his reasoning, it starts to make sense.

He points to the example of the generation that died in the wilderness. You know, that whole story from the book of Numbers. They received the covenant, but they ultimately failed to live by it.

They wandered for 40 years because of their disobedience. Exactly. DeSilva's point is that the old covenant, while it was super important in its time, couldn't fully bridge the gap between humanity and God.

It was a step in the right direction, but it wasn't enough. So if the old covenant was faulty, what makes this new covenant different? What makes it better? To get at that, deSilva turns to Jeremiah 31.31-34, and that's where we see the key differences laid out. Let me highlight a few of the really powerful parts for you.

Okay, lay it on me. This is where things get really interesting. One of the biggest differences is that God says, I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

So instead of those external laws etched on stone tablets, the new covenant promises an internal transformation. It's about having a deep personal knowledge of God that's written on your very heart. That's powerful.

It's not about following rules anymore. It's about a change that happens from within. Exactly.

And then the passage goes on to say, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest. Whoa, wait a minute.

Is that implying that we don't even need to teach each other about God anymore? That's a really good question. It's important to remember that deSilva is writing from the perspective of early Christians who are experiencing the Holy Spirit in this powerful new way. Jeremiah is pointing toward the radical intimacy with God that becomes possible through Jesus.

It's like this direct personal knowing that everyone can experience. So it's less about having to explain it and more about embodying it and living it out. You got it.

And then here's the truly amazing part. The passage concludes with, I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. This forgiveness, which is made available through Jesus's sacrifice, is what makes the new covenant so much better.

It's complete, total forgiveness, a clean slate. That's incredible. Under the new covenant, we don't have to approach God with this fear of judgment or rejection anymore.

It seems like the old covenant, even though it was well-intentioned, just couldn't offer that level of intimacy. You hit the nail on the head. It's a totally different way of relating to God.

It's not about trying to earn his favor through rituals or offerings. It's about accepting the free gift of grace he offers through Jesus. Now, this brings up a potential controversy.

DeSilva argues that the old covenant becomes obsolete in light of this new one. But isn't there also a perspective that says both covenants are still valid, like a two-covenant theology? You're right. That view definitely emerged in the 20th century, especially after the Holocaust.

Many theologians, as they grappled with the horrors of antisemitism, wanted to affirm the continuing importance of the Mosaic covenant for the Jewish people. So you have these two contrasting perspectives, one emphasizing a single new covenant replacing the old and another seeking to maintain the validity of both. Yeah, it's a complex and sensitive topic.

And I think it's important for us to just present both sides without taking a stance. Absolutely. Our job is simply to lay out the information as it's presented in the sources and then let you, the listener, engage with these ideas and form your own conclusions.

Well, this has been incredibly insightful so far. I already feel like I'm seeing the book of Hebrews in a whole new light. I'm definitely curious to explore what this all means for us in our lives today.

Me too. Let's continue this journey and unpack the practical implications of all this. You know, one thing that really stuck with me from all of that was deSilva's point about how we can approach God directly through Jesus.

Something he says just wasn't possible before. Can you unpack that a little? It all comes down to sin not being a barrier anymore. You know, remember that powerful line from Jeremiah 31 we were looking at: I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

That forgiveness, which only comes through Jesus, is like this open door for us to come to God without being afraid. Well, what about all those sacrifices in the Old Testament? Didn't people seek God's forgiveness back then too? What makes what Jesus did so different? You're right, they did. But deSilva points out that those sacrifices were necessary because sin created this separation between humanity and God's holiness.

You see, God's presence is so pure that sin can't exist in it. Those sacrifices were a way to kind of symbolically cleanse the sin, you know, as a temporary fix to deal with that separation. So it was more like a band-aid than an actual cure.

Exactly. It didn't really get to the root of the problem. What Jesus did was offer the ultimate sacrifice, the one that takes care of it once and for all.

So it's not about going through the motions of rituals and offerings anymore. It's about this personal connection with God that we have because of Jesus. That's it.

And that changes everything. We can come to God with confidence, knowing our sins are forgiven and He accepts us. This whole idea of direct access through Jesus is really the key to understanding the power of the New Covenant.

This is making me rethink my own relationship with God. You know, it's like a whole new level of intimacy that just wasn't there before. And that's the amazing thing about the New Covenant.

It's all about relationship, not just rules and rituals. But even with this incredible access, it's still so easy to take it for granted, don't you think? Oh, absolutely. Life gets in the way.

We get distracted. How do we even begin to cultivate that sense of awe, that appreciation? How do we stop ourselves from falling into that take it for granted trap? I think deSilva would say it starts with remembering how revolutionary this really is. I mean, think about it.

This was a radical concept in the first century, and it should be just as radical for us today. You know, this reminds me of a time when I was going through a really rough patch and I felt completely disconnected from God. Wow.

I can't even imagine you feeling distant from God. You always seem so strong in your faith. We all struggle sometimes, you know.

Anyway, I remember picking up my Bible, feeling totally lost, and somehow landing in the book of Hebrews and reading about Jesus as our high priest, our constant advocate in that heavenly sanctuary. It's like a light bulb went on. It reminded me that no matter how far I stray, God is always there waiting to welcome me back.

That's so powerful. We all need to hear those reminders sometimes. It's easy to get lost in our own little worlds and forget about the incredible gift we have in Jesus.

It really is. And that's why deSilva stresses this contrast between the visible material world and the invisible realm where God dwells. He wants us to see that true value and security aren't found in stuff or achievements.

They're found in our relationship with God. It's funny you say that because that's something I constantly battle with. It's so easy to get caught up in that what can I see and touch mindset, wanting more, achieving more.

That's just part of being human, especially in today's world. DeSilva reminds us that everything around us is temporary. The real deal, the true reality, is found in that invisible realm, that eternal dwelling place of God.

It's like he's saying invest in what lasts. Yes. It takes a shift in perspective, you know.

It takes a conscious effort to put the unseen above the seen, but it's a shift worth making. It leads to a deeper sense of peace and purpose that you just can't find anywhere else. Thinking about all this makes me think about those early Christians who faced persecution and rejection, even death for their faith.

DeSilva acknowledges that following Jesus doesn't necessarily make things easier, but he still says they were in a position of immense privilege. How can those two things even go together? I think it's all about taking a longer view of history. DeSilva wants us to see ourselves as standing at the climax of God's plan, to see ourselves witnessing the fulfillment of promises made centuries ago.

We're part of something so much bigger than ourselves, a story that's been unfolding since the beginning of time. Wow, that's both incredibly humbling and incredibly empowering at the same time. It really is.

It means our lives have significance. We're not just drifting along. We're players in this grand narrative, and it's our turn now, our turn to carry the torch, to build the foundation laid by those who came before us.

This deep dive has been amazing so far. I feel like my understanding of Hebrews, especially the whole idea of Jesus's priesthood, has just exploded. I feel the same way.

And there's even more to discover as we continue exploring deSilva's insights. What really resonated with you? I think what's hitting me the hardest is this idea of privilege, not privilege in the way we usually think about it, but the incredible honor of having direct access to God through Jesus. It's something we can never, ever take for granted.

That's beautiful. It's a powerful reminder to come to our faith with a sense of awe and gratitude. Are you ready to wrap things up with some final reflections? I'm ready.

Let's bring it all home. All right, so we've really dug deep into Hebrews, right? Heavenly sanctuary, the new covenant, and this amazing idea of being able to go directly to God through Jesus. It's incredible.

And the thing that keeps coming back to me is that even when things were tough, the early Christians still saw themselves as having this unbelievable privilege, almost like they had these front row seats to God's plan as it was happening. Yeah, it really is a different way of looking at things, isn't it? And deSilva doesn't just leave it there. He connects it to us today.

He challenges us to think about how believing in Jesus shapes our own view of history. It's like even though we're centuries later, we still share in that same privilege of being part of God's story. Exactly.

We're not just sitting on the sidelines watching things happen. We're actually in the game, part of something that's been in motion since the very beginning. You know, it's like we're in this relay race.

We're carrying this baton that's been passed down through generations, and it's our turn to run with it. I love that. That's such a good way to put it.

And it makes you think, doesn't it? What are our opportunities to share God's love today? How can we build on what those who came before us started? It's both humbling and exciting at the same time, right? Humbling because we're a small part of something so much bigger and exciting because we get to play a role in what happens next. You said it. And that's what's so cool about diving into Scripture like this.

It's not just about filling our heads with facts. It's about letting those truths change the way we live. This deep dive into Hebrews has been a journey, that's for sure.

We've wrestled with some really tough stuff, considered different perspectives, and ultimately, I feel like I have a much deeper understanding of the privilege and the responsibility that come with being a follower of Jesus. I couldn't agree more. It's been thought-provoking, and I hope it encourages you, our listener, to keep digging into the Bible, asking those hard questions, and searching for a deeper understanding of your own faith.

So as we wrap up, I have one last thing for you to think about. If we truly believe we're part of this grand story, that we can go directly to God because of Jesus, and that we have the power to make a real difference in this world, how will we respond? How will we live differently today than we did yesterday? Let these incredible truths from Hebrews sink in. Let them change your actions, your relationships, even how you see the world around you.

Thanks for joining us on this deep dive. We'll see you next time.