

So, Do We Not Need Teachers Anymore?

[Hebrews 8:7-13](#)

Hebrews, Day 26

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

For he finds fault with them when he says:

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,
not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.
For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.”*

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

- Hebrews 8:7-13, ESV

My wife and I were engaged for almost 27 months, from March of 1996 until June of 1998, when we were finally married. I don't recommend such a long engagement period for everyone, but we were in a rare situation: We were committed to each other and knew our relationship was heading toward marriage, but we could not get married until after she had graduated from college. So, a long engagement seemed to make sense.

Being engaged is being in a period of committed waiting, an already-but-not-yet state. Beth and I were committed to each other. I had given her a ring as a sign of my commitment, and she wore it as a sign of hers. But we were not yet married, and so our relationship was committed but not yet consummated. So it is with the church and believers living in the present age of the new covenant.

The old covenant, called "that first covenant" here in Hebrews 8, was a period of preparation, of anticipation. It was a period of promises and shadows. Compared to "that first covenant," the new covenant age is now one of reality and of fulfillment. The redemption promised by the old covenant was accomplished by Christ in His inauguration of the new covenant, as He said, "*This cup is the new covenant in My blood.*" (see [Luke 22:20 & I Cor. 11:25](#))

So, if we're living in the new covenant age, and the old Mosaic covenant has grown obsolete, as Hebrews 8 makes clear - "he makes the first one obsolete" - do we really see the full realization of the promises of Jeremiah 31 quoted here in Hebrews 8?

We have received the full forgiveness of sins. Because Jesus died for our sins, God the Father will remember them no more. God has given us new hearts and has written His moral law, the law of love, on our hearts. Each believer may have personal knowledge of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So far, so good, right? But then we hit a big question: Does this mean we don't need teachers anymore?

Should I resign as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America, because we no longer need teachers in the new covenant age? Is that what verse 11 says? Obviously, it can't mean that. Why not? Because other books of the New Testament establish clearly the offices and guidelines of teachers in the church. Scripture must interpret Scripture, and the office of elder as outlined in Timothy and Titus carries the qualification that a man must be "apt to teach" to hold this office. Likewise, James warns that not many should be quick to be teachers, implying that teachers are still needed in the church.

So, why do we need teachers if we're in the new covenant age? This question has two good answers:

1. Teachers in the new covenant age do not have the same function as under the old covenant. In the new covenant age, every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and has personal knowledge of God internally, which was not the case under the old covenant. Thus, the function of a teacher is to help shape the experiential knowledge of believers to be doctrinally correct and Scriptural.

2. While we are in the new covenant age, the church's wedding to Christ has not yet been consummated. We are still awaiting the great wedding day, the Day of the Lord. Thus, we remain in a waiting period, where we know in part and do not yet know fully, even as we are fully known. Thus, we need teachers to help us understand the Scriptures.

Teachers in the new covenant age unfold the Scriptures to help God's people understand who they are and what God has done, is doing, and will do for them. They are not a replacement for first-hand knowledge of God, which is given by the indwelling Spirit through the Word.

So, we rejoice that we live in the new covenant age, but we wait for the final consummation of the age to come! And while we wait, the church still needs her faithful teachers.