

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

◆ **Intro:** Census data tells us that in 2020 70% of Americans identify as Christian (maybe 205 million). Yet another study discovered that only 6% of North Americans that say they are Christian actually hold a biblical worldview. And only 9% of Americas report reading the Bible at least once a month. Only 1/4 of Americans have a weekly worship practice. The fastest growing sector of American population is the “non-religious.” Why might this be?

◆ In contrast, there are an estimated 234 million protestant Christians in China, which out numbers those in America even though it’s a very small percentage of China’s population. And since they are persecuted for their faith in China, facing being arrested, beaten, tortured, sentenced to years in prison, or simply disappearing, it’s a good bet that they are more serious about their faith than many who claim to be Christian in America.

◆ Why does the American Church seem so resistible? Andy Stanley poses this question in his book, *Irresistible*, and in our Life Groups for the next 6 weeks many of us at Sunrise will wrestle with how we might live and act in order to attract those far from God, nearer to him and the goodness of his ways: in other words, what would make the Church irresistible?

◆ **1.** A word of caution: This is not going to be an easy journey. I predict some of us will be deeply distressed, bothered, and even confused by some of what we hear along the way, but that’s OK. Those tend to be the times we really learn. I can tell you right

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

now that while I resonate with Andy's desire to help the Christian church be irresistible (why I chose the book), we will need to evaluate some conclusions. The largest point of contention is the position that the Old Testament(OT) is obsolete, and that the commandments/ laws of God we find there are too. In the opening pages of your study guide you will read the following:

◆"Modern Bible readers see Jesus as an extension of the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament. Jewish leaders in Jesus' day didn't see him as an extension or fulfillment of anything... From their vantage point Jesus was introducing something new. On this they were correct."

◆That's a bit confusing and even ambiguous. It's true of modern Bible readers. **Jesus most definitely is the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures *and* the extension of the covenant God made with mankind from the very beginning.** It's also true that Jesus brought something new the Jewish people did not expect or understand or want; a dying Messiah. But this does not render invalid the wisdom of God, or the path leading up to the coming of Christ.

◆"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Matthew 5:17-18

◆Jesus' first followers said as much. *"Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law,*

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

*and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” John 1:45*

◆ (“Moses and the Prophets” is a Jewish title for the the books of the OT.) Let’s look at our text...

◆ **A.** What is the writer here calling the “first covenant” in 10:1? In the OT there were several covenants that God made, differing in kind.

◆ God made a covenant with Abraham.

◆ God made a covenant at Sinai with the nation of Israel.

◆ God made a covenant with King David.

◆ The format of the covenants with Abraham and David follows what scholars call a royal-grant covenant, common in the ancient NearEast: it is a gift granted to a servant by the king without conditions, that cannot end. Jesus came in the line of David as a fulfillment that could not be undone. The covenant made with Israel at Mt. Sinai where they received the Ten Commandments and other regulations for worship follows an Ancient NearEast covenant pattern call a Suzzerign-Vassal covenant: this one is a conditional promise to protect the citizens as long as they obey the sovereign’s rules. The question then is, which covenant is our text calling the “old covenant” and “obsolete” (8:13)? Which one is over, and replaced by Christ?

◆ Back up in the context; chapter 8:9 tells us: The covenant when God *“took them...out of Egypt.”* That’s the Sinaitic Covenant, the daily habit rules and regulations, the temple

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

rules and sacrificial details, the layout of the Tabernacle worship space, etc. That's done. Gone.

◆ All this to say that what makes Christianity resistible, is something far deeper than our use of the OT. The Jewish scriptures are not the covenant that Jesus did away with. So let's just get that out of the way now. [The confusion lies in the fact that Stanley treats the Old Testament *books* (Old Testament means Old Covenant) as synonymous with one OT covenant, the covenant at *Sinai* ("first Covenant" per Hebrews 9). They are two different things. Jesus did not do away with the Hebrew Scriptures. What he ended were the religious and ceremonial rules of the Sinai Covenant with the nation of Israel.

◆ **read Hebrews 9:1-10**

◆ **2.** But what Stanley rightly emphasizes, and what we need to pay attention to is that **My faith is more irresistible when it is about the person of Jesus instead of my activity with a church or temple.** This is the same thing the Book of Hebrews teaches us. **read v.11-15**

◆ The Jewish Temple was a shadow cast on earth of a reality in heaven (v24). God lives in holiness but desires to live among people even though they sin. Sin requires ending, death (v22). God's holiness by nature destroys all that is unholy, just like bleach touching mildew! So God has a predicament. Loves humans; must destroy them, or a substitute of such value and fairness as to be worth all humanity. The only death that can

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

carry the evils of all of us, is the perfect, divine Son of God. -This is what everyone of us in the room really needs. We need know and love Jesus! In the New Covenant Jesus is the temple (10:19). He was what the old temple only pointed at, the actual sacrifice for sin.

- ◆ Now here we have something irresistible. Someone who loves people enough to die for them. Someone who can stomach living among losers like us long enough to bring us into his merit. What if we pointed to him instead of ourselves? What if we acted like him as much as possible in gratitude for his death in our stead? What if instead of telling our friends to go to church we urged them to pray to Jesus. What if we talked with Jesus so often that we had answers to share when people asked us why we believe in him?
- ◆ **A.** It's important because it's possible to participate in a local church/temple, and still not have anything to do with Jesus all the rest of your week. Just as the Jewish people were active in Temple worship but were missing God himself. Jesus himself claimed to be more important than the Jewish temple. This was indeed a radical assertion for Jesus to make among the Jews.

- ◆ The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins,

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world... Heb.10:1-5

◆ That is, *do you know why you feel guilty and ashamed when you think of the dark things you've done* that you hope no one finds out? Because being a nice person doesn't pay it off.

Because showing up once in a while in church even doesn't mean you didn't do what you did, or think what you thought, or say what you said. Wrong needs paying for, and until you accept Jesus as the real temple, presence of God, place of substitute sacrifice –you will always be guilty. (Jn3:36)

◆ **B.** But if in your heart you decide to rely on Jesus to be the force field around your soul ever protecting you from the holiness that would otherwise disintegrate your existence, and ever infusing into you his own holiness and forgiveness –your guilt is gone, as gone as the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem destroyed in AD.70 along with the existence of the nation of Israel.

◆ Hebrews 10:11-14 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ... by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

◆ The Sinai covenant was a religious and cultural way of living that would allow a sinful nation to abide closer to the presence of the one true God. But it was never a final solution because people couldn't do it. So...

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

- ◆ *God presented [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished– Romans 3:25.*
- ◆ C. The nation of Israel over time began to live as though their keeping of Sinaitic Law was making them right with God. They believed “We do the right things, therefore God is with us. Our faith is what we do for God! (Mark that idea.)
  - ◆ We don’t eat crayfish.
  - ◆ We don’t sew with two different kinds of thread.
  - ◆ We offer a lamb every Sunday for the sins we committed the week before.
  - ◆ We don’t walk more than a set number of steps on Sunday to make sure we are taking the day off in honor of God.
- ◆ And because we do the right things, God must stay in treaty with us and bless us.” This is old covenant thinking that the Temple is more important than Christ.
- ◆ C. Modern folks and even Christians often fall into the same trap of thinking its all good `cuz we do it right.
  - ◆ 1) “We read from the original KJV, not that new-fangled NIV” some Christians say, even though the original NT is in greek and the NIV is actually a better translation from the greek. But “we’re doing it right” we think. We have a temple.
  - ◆ 2) A young mom became a Christian at our church in IA. She told us that when they first moved to town she didn’t

## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

think much of Christians because some came over to reprimand her for mowing her lawn on Sunday. They didn't tell her about Jesus, just the Temple. She became a Christian later because Jesus freed her from pains satanism had inflicted on her as a little girl.

◆3) "God is pleased because we have the right stance on women being elders in the church. That makes us the true church, the one that really follows the Bible." Fill in any issue: wearing masks during covid; being charismatic; not eating out on Sunday because it makes the pagan work; back in the day it was not playing cards and not watching movies in a theater; whether you worship 1x, 2x or 3x in a week or not. – That's how people thought you told who the real people of God were. It's old covenant, suzzereign treaty: you do it right and you are safe with God. But Christ is New Covenant!

◆**D.** What we emphasize deeply affects our witness. In your study material this week you'll read about when David wanted to build a temple for God but God said no. He, God, would build a house for David. And then God predicted the Messiah! It wasn't because God had no intention of using a temple in Israel. Moses told the Israelites before they ever got to the Promise Land that God would set a place for his name to dwell (Dt.12:4-6). God's point in telling David he wasn't going to build the temple was that a life of faith is not about what we do/did for God, but what God



## ***NEW COVENANT PEOPLE, HEBREWS 9***

Irresistible #1

does for us! That's where the focus is. It's about Jesus more than the temple. What is irresistible is the love of Jesus for sinners like us, not how many good habits we have. What is irresistible is that God wants to give you life, a house, an eternity. He's not looking for you to do something for him first. He's the builder.

*◆Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day...The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.  
2Sam 7:5-13*

**◆Conclusion:** Listen Sunrise, our object is not to help people come to church(or even look like us), but to help people come to Christ! He is what is irresistible. Not us. Church is only so good as it is a place where we can meet Christ, and pray to Christ, and find forgiveness of our sin through Christ's death for us. Don't start out by trying to get your friends to adopt all your customs and habits. The point is for them to actually know Jesus. He'll take care of the rest in his time.