

# Hebrews 08 - The New Covenant: A Better Covenant with Better Promises

## I. Doctrinal Section of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:1—10:18)

### (4) Christ is superior to Aaron (Heb 4:14—10:18)

(E) Christ is superior to Aaron because He occupies a superior position of ministry (8:1-5)

(F) Christ's priesthood is superior to the Aaronic priesthood because it is based upon a better covenant (8:6-13)

(a) Superiority of Christ's covenant (8:6)

(b) Temporality of the Levitical covenant (8:7-13)

## Hebrews 8

(E) Christ is superior to Aaron because He occupies a superior position of ministry (8:1-5)

**1** Now the main point in **what has been said** *is this*: we have such a high priest, **who has taken His seat** at the right hand of the **throne** of the Majesty in the heavens,

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**1** Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we do have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven

**1** Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

- "...what has been said" - refers to Heb 7; this is a transition statement as the writer now moves on to explain Jesus' majesty and ministry more fully; Heb 7 was, in a sense, introductory and foundational to what follows.

- "...who has taken His seat" - Christ, our High Priest, has sat down, since His work of redemption is finished (Cf. notes on 1:3)

— No priest of Aaron's line ever sat down. Neither did any Levitical priest ever sit down on a throne; there were no chairs in the Tabernacle.

- "...throne" - the authority assigned to the One so enthroned was to be "a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle" (v2). Thus, He was not appointed to be a king in an earthly domain, but rather He was appointed to function as a High Priest in a new sanctuary.

- The appointment of High Priest, according to Ps 110:4, follows the enthronement of Christ at His Father's right hand
- At the present time, Jesus sits on the Throne of God the Father *not* upon the Throne of David. He now rules from the Third Heaven not from Jerusalem.

## The New Covenant

This is where the "New Testament" gets its name! Introducing a "New Covenant" (also called the "Everlasting Covenant" 8x, Is 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26) proves that the old Levitical priesthood has been done away with by the Cross. To prevent his readers from going back to Aaron and the Old Covenant, the writer proves the superiority of the New Covenant in Heb 8. See [Covenant, New](#) for an explanation of how the Gentiles/Church receive the blessings of the Jewish covenants through the New Covenant.

- 2 a minister in the **sanctuary** and in the **true tabernacle**, which the Lord set up, not man.
- 2 a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.
- 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tent set up by the Lord and not by any human.
- 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

- Since Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, not Levi, He would not have been considered to minister as a priest

- We find Christ in the courts of the temple while on earth, but never in the Holy Place or in the Holy of Holies

— This proves the superiority of the New Covenant: it is ministered from heaven and not from earth

- "...sanctuary" - the only one that does not imitate something better than itself

- "...true tabernacle" - the writer is making a contrast: The wilderness Tabernacle was a replica, a shadow of the real reality. The *real* Tabernacle is in Heaven. This True Tabernacle was pitched by the Lord, not man. Moses received the instructions from the Lord on how to build this replica.

— God explained to Moses the fact that the tabernacle he was to build was a prototype of the "heavenly" temple (Ex 25:40) when He gave him the "blueprints" for its construction.

- Jesus' entrance into the heavenly sanctuary, announced in v1-2, is developed further in 9:11-28.

## Weaknesses of the Levitical Priesthood

The first weakness of the Levitical arrangement was the mortality of the Levitical priests (7:23) and the necessity of repeating sacrifices for sins, both of the priests and of the

people (7:27). Two further weaknesses are demonstrated on the basis of Scripture in 8:1-13. First, the contrast between the heavenly tabernacle and the earthly tabernacle. Levitical priests served only as a shadowy suggestion of the heavenly sanctuary in which Christ exercises His current ministry. Second, the covenant under which the Levitical arrangement was instituted has been treated by God as obsolete. The mediation of the New Covenant demonstrates the superiority of Christ's ministry.

3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer.

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3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore, this high priest had to offer something, too.

**3** For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

- He presents the proof of the Messiah's exalted ministry with two syllogisms:

- The 1st syllogism is in v3 (a syllogism is a major premise followed by a minor premise, followed by a conclusion):
  - The major premise: the priest's office is to offer sacrifices
  - The minor premise: Jesus is a priest
  - Conclusion: therefore, Jesus must have something to offer (Cf. 9:11—10:18)

4 Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since **there are those who offer the gifts** according to the Law;

4 Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law;

4 Now if he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, because other men offer the gifts prescribed by the Law.

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

- "...there are those who offer the gifts" - this verse makes it clear that at the time the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, the temple in Jerusalem was still in existence and that priests were still going about their duties

- The second syllogism is in v4: The Heavenly Tabernacle (9:1-10)

- The major premise: the sphere of Jesus' priestly office can be either heavenly or earthly
- The minor premise: it cannot be earthly because there are Levitical priests officiating in the earthly one, according to the Mosaic Law

- Conclusion: His ministry must not be an earthly one, but a heavenly one (Cf. 9:1-10)

5 who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things BY THE **PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN TO YOU** ON THE MOUNTAIN."

5 who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."

5 They serve in a sanctuary that is a copy, a shadow of the heavenly one. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tent: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

- The earthly Tabernacle ministry was circumscribed by rigid laws, so rigid that even Moses, the originator, could not break them

— Yet, this earthly Tabernacle was only the copy; it was merely a pattern of the Heavenly Tabernacle. It was a shadow, and a shadow is something in contrast to substance. It was only a general outline without the details; it was a pattern, a type.

Therefore, the earthly Tabernacle must give way to the Heavenly Tabernacle. The temporary Tabernacle must give way to the eternal one. The system that rested on a temporary, conditional covenant had to give way to a system that rested on an unconditional, eternal covenant.

- "...PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN TO YOU" - when God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, God gave him a pattern of the original in heaven, the *true* tabernacle (v2), meaning genuine (Ex 25:9,40)

## Contrast of Priesthoods

### Aaron

A man

Of the Tribe of Levi  
king

Established after the Law of Carnal Commandments  
an endless life

His Priesthood made nothing perfect

His Priesthood was unable to bring a single sinner to God

Had many successors

### Jesus

The Son of God

Of the royal Tribe, priest *and*

Established by the power of

Made everything perfect

Jesus did

No successors

Died  
for us  
Was a sinner  
Had to sacrifice daily

Lives to make intercession  
  
Was separate from sin  
Died once for all

(F) Christ's priesthood is superior to the Aaronic priesthood because it is based upon a better covenant (8:6-13)

(a) Superiority of Christ's covenant (8:6)

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the extent that He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

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.

6 However, Jesus has now obtained a more superior ministry, since the covenant he mediates is founded on better promises.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

- The Aaronic Priesthood mediated the Mosaic Covenant; Jesus mediates the New Covenant

— Jesus has a superior priesthood because of the superior basis on which it rests. The superior basis is better promises, which are found in a better covenant

— Any covenant between God and man requires a mediator. Moses was the mediator of the Mosaic Covenant, and Aaron was the priest. Jesus is both the Mediator and Priest of the New Covenant.

— The writer explains the superiority of the New Covenant that Jesus ratified with His blood, which is better than the Mosaic Covenant that He terminated when He died

— This was introduced in Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34; Cf. 2 Cor 3; Gal 3-4; Heb 8-9; 12)

— The word Mediator is used of Jesus by the author 3x (8:6; 9:15; 12:24)

- Summary of the five points of superiority of Jesus as High Priest:

1. Better priest than Aaron (4:16-7:28)
2. Better sanctuary (8:2,5)
3. He offers a better sacrifice (8:3f)
4. He is mediator of a better covenant (8:6)
5. His work rests on better promises (8:6)

The New Covenant is superior to the old covenant because it rests upon better promises. For example, the Old Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, was based upon the Law. It brought blessing for obedience, but it brought cursing and even death for disobedience. In contrast, the New Covenant is based upon grace, and it is able to impart righteousness and

provide empowerment to keep its demands. It is this New Covenant that is the basis for His high priestly ministry in a better sanctuary.

(b) Temporality of the Levitical covenant (8:7-13)

7 For if that first *covenant* had been free of fault, no circumstances would have been sought for a second.

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

7 If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one,

**7** For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

- As with the priesthood (7:11-12), so it is with the covenant and its promises. Had the first been faultless ("adequate"), God would not have promised a second.

— The Old Covenant was faulty because of its failure to produce righteousness

8 For in finding fault **with the people**, He says, "BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL BRING ABOUT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND THE HOUSE OF JUDAH,

8 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;

8 but God found something wrong with his people when he said, "Look! 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.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

- Quoting Jer 31:31-34...

— He quotes these verses to prove that the prophets anticipated an abandonment of the Old Covenant; the Mosaic Law was never intended to be permanent

- "...with the people" - note that God does not find fault with the Old Covenant, but with the people themselves (Cf. Rom 7:12)

— The problem was with Israel, who were incapable of keeping the Law, and the Law did not provide any power to keep it

— The Law is spiritual, but men are carnal, "sold under sin" (Rom 7:14). The Law was "weak through the flesh" (Rom 8:3).

— In other words, the failure of Israel could not be blamed on any weakness in the Old Covenant, but on the weakness of human nature

— It is here, then, that grace steps in; what the Law could not do because of man's weakness, God accomplished through the Cross

9 NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO BRING THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE ABOUT THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

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.

9 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors at the time when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. Because they did not remain loyal to my covenant, I ignored them, declares the Lord.

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

- He also gave the promise of the New Covenant because the Mosaic Covenant did not have the power to enable people to remain faithful to God—namely, the presence of God (Holy Spirit) living within the believer

10 "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT WHICH 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.

10 "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.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

- God promised that the New Covenant would enable the Israelites to do four things:

1. Know and desire to do God's will (v10b)
2. Enjoy a privileged, unique relationship with God (v10c)
3. "know" God directly (v11)
4. Experience permanent forgiveness of their sins (v12)

— These are the "better (unconditional) promises" the writer referred to in v6

- The Old Covenant was written with the finger of God on tablets of stone; the New Covenant is written by the Spirit on the human heart and mind (Jer 31:31; Cf. 2 Cor 3)
- An external law can never change a person; it must become a part of the inner life if it is to change our behavior (Cf. Deut 6:6-9). "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom 8:4)
- This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who enables us to obey God's Word [Read 2 Cor 3 for additional light on this wonderful topic]

The New Covenant promises are not yet fully realized. The promises in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel describe a people who have the law written in their hearts, who walk in the way of the Lord, fully under the control of the Holy Spirit. These same promises look to a people who are raised from the dead (Ezek 37), enjoying the blessings of an eternal inheritance with God dwelling with them and in them forever. [Craig A Blaising]

11 "AND THEY WILL NOT TEACH, EACH ONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EACH ONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR THEY WILL **ALL KNOW ME**, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

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.

11 Never again will everyone teach his neighbor or his brother by saying, 'Know the Lord,' because all of them will know me, from the least important to the most important.

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

- "...ALL KNOW ME" - parallels the repeated promise of the OT that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God" (Is 11:9)

— The day will come when there will be no need for personal witnessing, for all people will know the Lord

— The ultimate fulfillment of this promise awaits the establishment of the Kingdom

12 "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TOWARD THEIR WRONGDOINGS, AND THEIR SINS I WILL **NO LONGER REMEMBER.**"

12 "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more."

12 For I will be merciful regarding their wrong deeds, and I will never again remember their sins."

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

- The Old Covenant was a yoke of bondage, demanding perfect obedience. But the New Covenant emphasizes what God will do for His people, not what they must do for Him.

- It is here, that grace steps in; what the Law could not do because of man's weakness, God accomplished through the Cross.
- "...NO LONGER REMEMBER" - under the Old Covenant, there was a remembrance made of sins but no remission of sins (Heb 10)
- The blood of bulls and of goats could cover sins, but only the blood of the Lamb of God could "take away the sins of the world" (John 1:29)
- What a wonderful promise the New Covenant gives to the burdened sinner: his sins will be forgiven and forgotten forever!

Jer 31:31-34:

- 31** "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,  
**32** not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.  
**33** "For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD: "I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.  
**34** They will not teach again, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their wrongdoing, and their sin I will no longer remember."

He quotes these verses to prove that the prophets anticipated an abandonment of the Old Covenant upon which the old priesthood rested and the introduction of a New Covenant upon which a New Priesthood would rest. If God intended the Mosaic Covenant to be permanent, then there would have been no room for another. If the old one were *faultless*, then there would have been no need to look for another; however, it was faulty because of its failure to produce righteousness.

### **"Old" Covenant**

There are two different Greek words for *old*: the first is *archaios*, which is the origin of the English word "archaeology." This word means "old in point of time." If something is only old in the point of time, it may still be usable. This is *not* the word used here. The word used here, the second Greek word, is *paleios*, which is the origin of the English word "paleontology." It means "old in the point of use," it is "worn out," "useless," "obsolete." It is in the Greek perfect tense meaning it has been made old in the sense of uselessness and

*continues to be so.* The New Covenant permanently antiquated the Old Covenant. It is obsolete, it is aged, and it has been rendered inoperative.

13 When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is **about to disappear**.

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.

13 In speaking of a "new" covenant, he has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

**13** In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

- The point is that to those who are in Judaism, the Old Covenant is not only too old but it is to vanish, to be put away. Again, we see the call to these Jewish believers to come out of Judaism.

— As soon as Jeremiah said "new covenant," he rendered the Mosaic Covenant as the old covenant. The old covenant was old under Jeremiah, and it vanished away when Jesus died.

- "...about to disappear" - *aphanismos*, the same word used for wiping out a city, obliterating an inscription, or completely abolishing a law. It indicates that but a brief time would lapse before the temple would be leveled and the priestly activities cease.

— Israel rose or fell depending upon how God accepted the high priest. At times the high priest got it together and Israel would prosper. When the high priest was corrupt or not proper, they fell. And you can trace the spiritual history of Israel by the way God responded; they are linked together.

— We are not under the Mosaic system. God says that it is an old model and He has brought in a new model—that New Covenant He has made through the Lord Jesus Christ who is our Savior. He did it, not because there was something wrong with the old covenant, but because there is something wrong with us. I feel sorry for folk today who have gone back to the old covenant.

### **The Veil Stripped Away**

The high priest was not to tear his garments (Lev 10:6). Caiaphas, the high priest at Jesus' trial, tore his clothes. That took away the priesthood from Israel! The Romans came in a few years later and leveled the city and destroyed the Temple, which has not yet been rebuilt. The priesthood was taken away!

Was it taken away because he tore his garment? In a symbolic sense, perhaps: it was superseded by none other than our Lord and the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, signifying the removal of that barrier between the Holy and Most Holy.

## **Covenants**

1. Edenic Covenant (Gen 2:16) [Covenant, Edenic](#)
2. Adamic Covenant (Gen 3:15) [Covenant, Adamic](#)
3. Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:16) [Covenant, Noahic](#)
4. Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3) [Covenant, Abrahamic](#)
5. Mosaic Covenant (Ex 19:5) [Covenant, Mosaic](#)
6. Land Covenant (Deut 30:3) [Covenant, Land](#)
7. Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:8-17) [Covenant, Davidic](#)
8. New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34) (Heb 8) [Covenant, New](#)

## **The Covenants**

God's first Covenant *nationally* with Israel was at Sinai (Ex 19:5; 34:27-28; Deut 4:13). Prior to the Mosaic Covenant, the Covenant that they were operating under was the Abrahamic Covenant (Ex 2:24; 6:3-4). Israel's response to that Covenant is described in Ex 19:8; 24:3. It was ratified by blood (Ex 24:4-8). They entered the Promise Land under the Mosaic Covenant (Joshua 7:11,15; Judges 2:19-21; 1 Kings 11:11; Jer 34:18-19).

The New Covenant started with John the Baptist (Luke 16:16) and the beginning of the Gospel (Mark 1:1; Cf. Matt 3:8-10)