

**HEBREWS 8**  
**Old and ReNewed Covenant**

During our engagement I had photos of me and Linda, mostly Linda, at my desk and I'd look at them, think of her, and write her letters. Long distance was expensive back then so we didn't talk as much as we might have today. Every few weeks I'd make the drive from the area around the GT campus up to Covenant College to see her.

Imagine if I'd said, "Linda, it is so good to see you, but you know, I really miss those pictures of you. I think they may actually be enough. It's not the real you that I want. I've come to appreciate that 5x7 picture as being better than you in person." NOT A HALLMARK CARD MOMENT.

FREE ADVICE if you are engaged or married, don't use that line (even if you think it would be true).

This is what the author of Hebrews is saying to his audience. "Don't be captivated by the picture when you have the real thing- Jesus." In our trials and difficulties, look to the real thing, the true Priest who brings us to God.

TLB - HEBREWS 8 PRAY

**8** What we are saying is this: Christ, whose priesthood we have just described, is our High Priest and is in heaven at the place of greatest honor next to God himself. <sup>2</sup>He ministers in the temple in heaven, the true place of worship built by the Lord and not by human hands.

<sup>3</sup>And since every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, Christ must make an offering too. <sup>4</sup>The sacrifice he offers is far better than those offered by the earthly priests. (But even so, if he were here on earth he wouldn't even be permitted to be a priest because down here the priests still follow the old Jewish system of sacrifices.)

<sup>5</sup>Their work is connected with a mere earthly model of the real tabernacle in heaven; for when Moses was getting ready to build the tabernacle, God warned him to follow exactly the pattern of the heavenly tabernacle as shown to him on Mount Sinai. <sup>6</sup>But Christ, as a Minister in heaven, has been rewarded with a far more important work than those who serve under the old laws because the new agreement that he passes on to us from God contains far more wonderful promises.

<sup>7</sup>The old agreement didn't even work. If it had, there would have been no need for another to replace it. <sup>8</sup>But God himself found fault with the old one, for he said, "The day will come when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and the people of Judah. <sup>9</sup>This new agreement will not be like the old one I gave to their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; they did not keep their part in that agreement, so I had to cancel it.

<sup>10</sup>But this is the new agreement I will make with the people of Israel, says the Lord: I will write my laws in their minds so that they will know what I want them to do without my even telling them, and these laws will be in their hearts so that they will want to obey them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. <sup>11</sup>And no one then will need to speak to his friend or neighbor or brother, saying, 'You, too, should know the Lord,' because everyone, great and small, will know me already. <sup>12</sup>And I will be merciful to them in their wrongdoings, and I will remember their sins no more."

<sup>13</sup>God speaks of these new promises, of this new agreement, as taking the place of the old one; for the old one is out of date now and has been put aside forever.

If you've been here or have been listening online, then you know that Hebrews is a bit tricky. It deals with some concepts that we may find confusing. Just because it is confusing doesn't mean that it isn't important. Today's passage is tricky because we hear it with 21<sup>st</sup> century ears. I'm going to try to lay out an approach that may go against the grain of some common thinking, but I'm simply trying to give the text its due weight.

This passage is complicated by our use of the terms OT and NT. Those terms came into use near the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, then later as Jerome translated from Greek to Latin and the word “covenant” became “testament.”

**We need to hear this author from the perspective of those who did not live with the distinction of OT AND NT.** They didn't have a “new testament” at the time, so when we hear that term, we must be careful that we don't load it with modern meaning. The bible itself does not refer to itself in that way. What we call the NT was not even compiled at the time of the original hearers, so they were not thinking in that way.

At the risk of being too wonky let's consider some of the issues and questions that bubble up from this passage.

A hat tip to helpful sources- Walter Kaiser, Nathan Brown, Sinclair Ferguson, Third Mill, and Dr. Robert Rayburn

This text touches on one of the most fundamental questions that believers have faced across the ages, i.e. **What is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments? Is the OT an essential part of the Christian Bible?**

You don't have to be a theologian to have pondered this question. I dare say most of you have had it pop into your head at some point. For some, it popped right back out, but for others it lingers. **At the heart of the problem is the amount of continuity and discontinuity between the OT and NT, between Israel and the church, between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.**

The problem that Kaiser, Brown, and Rayburn point out, and is evident to us as well, is that what is predicted in Jer 31 and repeated in Hebrews 8 has NOT COME TO FRUITION, yet. Not only that; we see that the contents of the “new covenant” are not really all that new. This creates a conundrum if we take the traditional approach which says, “There is a clear distinction between the OT and the NT”.

The way the common person views it is that the OT = the OC and it was about the Law and obedience. God was a bit capricious and angry, there were some good psalms, but overall it's not real helpful and we're not sure what to do with it.

One tradition (Dispensational at its most extreme) makes a bold clear distinction, almost to the point of the OT being plan A that failed so God had to come up with Plan B.

The Reformed tradition leans into the continuity of the OT and NT yet is not always sure what to do with the distinctions where Hebrews speaks of a “better” covenant. Along with many others, I prefer the term “RENEWED” COVENANT. The Hebrew word means new or renewed, and we'll see in v.12ff that “renewed” is a better fit.

**One way to see what is going on is by speaking of the over-arching covenant of Grace that God the Father made with Christ the Son (WCFLC 33ff).**

**The Old Covenant is a term used to refer to the administration of the Covenant of Grace under the Mosaic economy and the New Covenant refers to the administration of the Covenant of Grace under Christ's economy. However, there is but "one" Covenant of Grace which has been progressively revealed in these different administrations. <https://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/40555> Joe Nally**

LET'S CONSIDER CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY between the “OT & NT” (I use those terms because it is hard to avoid them. We could say OC / FC and NC/ SC).

**Significant continuity IS evident** – the NT often quotes the OT. Jesus taught that he came to fulfill the Law. He told some disciples in Luke 24 that the OT speaks of Him. Paul initially went to the Jews because he knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Matthew 28:18-20 “Go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the

uttermost parts of the earth.” The person and work of Christ as Messiah would resonate with Jewish background people. I reject the idea of a recent popular book that says that we need to disconnect the church from the OT. Jesus certainly didn’t. Given the number of OT quotes in the NT, we see that the NT authors didn’t either. BUT THEY DID HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF IT. They and we should disconnect the church from the false view of the OT –

“The OT Jews were not seeing the OT priesthood for what it really was – an instrument of God’s grace pointing to the Messiah. They were treating it as if it were the salvation itself. That was a mistake Israel made over and over again and against which the OT prophets often preached.” RAYBURN

BTW – we do the same thing in the church age. It is all too easy for us to count on some external ritual (sacrament, VBS, tithing, going to church, small group, etc) as the basis of our salvation, rather than a heart of faith in the person and work of Jesus. Remember that as we come to the Table.

While Continuity between OT & NT is evident, some discontinuity seems evident – Heb 8 quotes from Jeremiah and about a New Covenant and says that the OC is becoming obsolete. (Heb 9; Luke)

In 70 AD Jerusalem was destroyed and the whole system of Temple sacrifice was over. The institutions set up for the theocracy of Israel disappeared. The civil and ceremonial legislation dating back to the days of Moses came to an end because Israel as a nation no longer existed. The entire Mosaic legislation had a built-in expiration date because he was told that he was building a tabernacle and system that was a “pattern” or a shadow of the real thing.

Let’s go to the text:

Main point from Hebrews 8:1

Jesus is our eternal High Priest who is at the place of honor in heaven having offered a perfect sacrifice.

Verses 2-6 give the coup de grace or finishing stroke of the argument. Jesus is better and superior to all AND He actually did his High Priestly ministry in the true Heavenly tabernacle where it counted most. (9:11-14) Jesus is the minister (“liturgist”) in the heavenly sanctuary. He leads the worship and for us is a focus of worship.

\*\* God is a spirit and is not limited by space, yet scripture refers to God being manifest in specific physical locations – The tabernacle, the temple, Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem there will be a throne room (Rev 4). SO WHAT? God relates to us in terms of real space and real time. He is not aloof wandering around the galaxies – He takes thought of us in the here and now, in your joys and trials.

There is a contrast between the earthly ministry of the OT PRIESTS and the heavenly ministry of Christ. They offered bulls and goats, but Jesus offered Himself.

Cf: 9:14; 1:3 Having completed the sacrifice, He sat down at the right hand of the father.

v.5 context - (8:5b; also Exod 25:9; 26:30; 27:8; Num 8:4). This supports the fact that the tabernacle was based on a heavenly reality that is perfect—a God-made, heavenly place that is eternal.

v. 6 Better ministry, better covenant, better promises

v. 8 context (longest OT quote in the NT).

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of last four kings of Judah – 627-587 B.C.

His New Covenant prophecy follows an oracle of doom against Judah and is followed by oracles of doom against the Gentile Nations. After speaking of the coming judgment on Judah he turns to Judah’s future restoration – the promise of a return to the land in the service of Yahweh under a new Davidic kingship. This renewed future is grounded in God’s covenant love and faithfulness.

The new covenant was given because the first covenant was not faultless, but it did succeed in pointing to Christ, the guarantor of a NEW COVENANT:

Keep in mind the “now and the not yet” aspects of biblical prophecy. Aspects of the NC were inaugurated with Christ, but they have a ‘not yet’ aspect as well.

**The renewed C is NOT LIKE the FC.**

The FC was broken over and over by Israel and it did not continue.

The ReNewed C will continue and ultimately will not be broken. It is guaranteed by Christ Himself.

**v. 10-12 Content of the NC:** In what way is it “new”?

Next week we’ll pick it up with that question. But first let me give a summary as we head to the Lord’s Table.

While the language of OC vs NC may be confusing, the author of Hebrews is most keenly focused on Jesus.

**THE NEW COVENANT IS A PERSON WE MEET BEFORE IT IS A WORK IN THE HEART.**

Third Mill <https://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/39996> Ra MCLAughlin

*In summary, Hebrews quotes Jeremiah not to say that the prophecy has been fulfilled, but rather to say that Jesus is the one who will bring us the blessings offered in Jeremiah's prophecy. The broad argument of Hebrews is NOT that we now have all the covenant blessings in full, but that because we have Jesus, we are assured of receiving all the covenant blessings in full when Christ returns, if we persevere in our faith until that time (e.g. Heb. 9:28; 10:36-38). If we assume that one cannot break the renewed covenant, we brush aside the many severe warnings to Christians we find throughout Hebrews.*

HERE's the GOOD NEWS.....By grace we are bound to a Living Savior, and this table is a way to commune with Him.

Calvin on the Table

*Although Christ is in heaven, no distance can lessen the power by which he nourishes his people and by the table we enjoy fellowship with Him in a concrete way.*

*Christ gave us this table to give us a clear teaching of grace so that we can have certainty that Christ in all his riches is present with us right now.*

**Q 337** What is the significance of the Lord’s supper?

This sacrament was instituted by Christ in order to teach us in a specific manner that fellowship with his body and blood nourishes our souls and strengthens us in the hope of eternal life.

**Q: 339:** Are the body and blood of the Lord true food for us to enjoy?

Yes. Because all of our faith rests upon the obedience of Christ offered to the Father, this was presented to God as if it were our own obedience. We therefore possess Christ Himself and His benefits when we receive Him by faith.

Come if you know Christ and want to fellowship with HIM and by faith lay hold of His benefits.

If you come as a mere external act and have no intent to commune with Christ and follow him, then don’t come.

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