

HEBREWS 8  
Old and New Covenant pt 2

EX: You go fishing and take a catalog picture of a rod and reel instead of the new one you received for your birthday?

That 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.

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 God speaks of these new promises, of this new agreement, as taking the place of the old one; for the old one is out of date now and has been put aside forever.

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.

**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.**

As I mentioned last week, no matter what tradition you follow you run into some square pegs in round holes. And I say that as one who affirms the reformed covenantal viewpoint but there are variations on the theme among scholars, theologians, and pastors. One perspective worth considering is that Dr. Robert Rayburn

A big part of the problem is that the OT folks, and Jews in the NT era were not seeing the OT priesthood for what it really was – an instrument of God’s grace in Christ. 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.

The fact is, for this author, the first covenant is viewed as the Jews view it, as these readers are being tempted to view it, that is, as a system of ceremonies that, if faithfully observed, will take a person to heaven. That system is near to being destroyed. It would be utterly destroyed in A.D. 70, only a few years at most after Hebrews was written. Dr. Rayburn

That perspective makes a lot of sense as we consider the contrast of the OC AND NC given in Jer 31, quoted in Heb 8.

If we understand old Covenant through that lens, then the contrasts between Jeremiah and current New testament era make more sense. Even then we don't see the fullness that one might hope or expect to see. The now, not yet, dynamic is very much at play.

One way to grasp 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).

"Of this covenant of grace Christ was its Mediator from the beginning of the world, namely, from the giving of the first promise in Genesis 3:15, for that promise was given in view of His incarnation and all that He should accomplish by His future and actual mediation." A.W. Pink

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

v. 8-10-12 Old Covenant vs New/ReNewed Covenant

As I put it all together it seems to be saying, "The OC AND NC are both a part of the overarching Covenant of Grace (wcfhc 30ff). The OC economy was one of shadow via laws, sacrifices, priests and rituals that pointed to The Messiah, or Anointed One, who was to come. In Galatians, Paul refers to the Law as a tutor leading Israel to Christ. The NC economy is the substance - Christ, the Messiah, who fulfilled what was predicted, thus making the old obsolete.

The NC referred to in Jeremiah speaks of a future age, and biblical prophecies commonly have multiple fulfillments. The prophetic ministry is often like seeing mountain tops off in the distance. You see the peaks, but not the valleys and gap in between.

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, lived at a time of judgment on the people of God.

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.*

Walter Kaiser suggests that the word "new" is better translated "renewed" because almost all aspects mentioned have an OC echo. Hebrew has one word for "new" and "renew" so it must serve both ideas: new in time and renewed in nature. (p. 148 Use of OT in the NT).

"Almost all of the items mentioned in the renewed covenant are but a repetition of some aspect of the promise doctrine already known in the covenants with Abraham, Moses, or David."

These varying degrees of continuity/discontinuity or similarity / contrast between the "OC & NC" make things a bit murky. Before we dive into the murky waters, let me underscore the MAIN THING:

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.**

HERE's the GOOD NEWS.....By grace THROUGH FAITH we are bound to a Living Savior, and that has been God's design from the beginning. It is at the core of the "OC / FC" AND THE "ReNewed Covenant".

There is a new High Priest thus the need for a new law with it. Hebrews tells us that the FC was deficient thus the need for the ReNewed Cov. It had a limited lifespan built in from the beginning. Drawing on Jeremiah 31 the author picks up the NC promise...

The items of continuity were

- 1) the same covenant making God;
- 2) the same law; Ps 119; Ps 37, 40, Ps 1 (the word in the heart)
- 3) the same divine fellowship; "I will be your God" Ex 6; Lev 26, Jer 7, 11, 31, 2 Cor 6; Rev 21
- 4) the same people of God; and
- 5) the same divine forgiveness. (removed as far as east from the west)

The FC was mainly focused on this life – it was a national covenant with national Israel as a theocracy. Thus it related to the blessings of land, family, length of days, seed time and harvest, social and economic blessing and security i.e. SHALOM AND REST. An eternal shalom was in view, but not as the main focus.

In the NC the eternal spiritual blessings are the principal thing. – Eph 1 "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

The NC promises are "better" because they have been ratified by the blood of Christ, not bulls and goats. Also they are now proclaimed to the nations or God's elect among the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

When you consider all the OT texts that have alternate names for the renewed covenant there are new items that are added to the "renewed features":

- 1) The manner in which the love of God in Christ is made known. OC saints saw through a veil of shadows and types, but in Christ "we all with unveiled face behold the glory of God." 2 Cor 3:18
- 2) The display of grace is expanded- Noah, Abraham, Moses, Passover, David, prophets, etc knew of God's grace, but now in Christ we have an abundance of grace – Rom 5:17
- 3) In our access to God – Mt. Sinai, Tabernacle, Temple, etc access was limited, but in Christ we are called to draw near with boldness to the throne of grace to find help in time of need.
- 4) An expansion of the extent of the reign of saving grace and the knowledge of God – from national Israel to the nations

Here is where the "NOW, NOT YET" comes into play – Kaiser (Article on Jeremiah 31 Promise and Covenants p. 9)

Then too, the full realization of the promise formula is only totally realized in the eschaton, for a great voice out of heaven cries in Revelation 21:3, "Behold the tabernacle is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God."

Some might say, "That now, not yet approach is just a way of avoiding some tricky issues." Perhaps, but it is real. Aspects of the NC were inaugurated with Christ, but they have a 'not yet' aspect as well.

Jesus said his blood was the blood of the new covenant, yet we don't yet see all that is predicted in Jer 31 / Heb 8.

If all of that were fulfilled in the post-resurrection, post-Pentecost age, then most of the warnings written in Hebrews would not be needed. The bulk of what we've seen so far is the exhortation to hold fast to belief in Christ and not turn away. Unbelief and turning away from God were the problems for the people of Israel. The OC was insufficient because the people turned away in unbelief.

That problem did not magically disappear with the work of Christ. Hebrews is full of warning against unbelief. What the author is telling us is that Jesus is the mediator / guarantor of the better promises which will be fully realized in the last days.

The danger of apostasy has not gone away and we see the warning against it on into Revelation where Jesus warns the lukewarm believers that he will spew them out of his mouth.

EX: Joshua Harris – a sad example of what Hebrews 1-7 is warning against: a Christian (leader) who has turned away. At least he was honest enough to say that his new views on some issues don't square with Christianity, so rather than try to rewrite Christianity to fit his views, he puts himself outside the historic definitions of the faith. We don't know the final story for him. If he stays in unbelief it means that he was never truly known by God in the first place. If he was truly regenerate, he will one day be restored.

<https://albertmohler.com/2019/08/01/briefing-8-1-19>

Nathan Brown...88, 92

The "better promises" on which the ReNewed Cov is established are found in Jeremiah 31:31-34, which is quoted in vv. 8-12.

How are they "better"?

These "promises" include: (they have echoes in the OT!!)

- 1) God implanting His laws in the people's hearts (v. 10), which implies their receiving a new heart (Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27),

Under the FC the law is weak and useless to change us, but in the OC and the NC there is a positive aspect of the Law. It shows us how to love God and others. Far from devaluing the Law in the NC, it is now written on our hearts. That is a good thing.

EX: Ezek – remove heart of stone and give heart of flesh.

EX: Dr. Christian Barnard did first heart transplant and asked recipient if he'd like to see his old heart.

Kept in a glass container, the man held his old heart. "So this is my old heart that caused me so much trouble." Then he put it back and left it forever.

New heart with new disposition, power, and joy of obedience. The law is given to set boundaries, condemn, and expose behavior, but it has no power to bring about obedience. NB: Titus 2 – "grace has appeared..."

2) the knowledge of God as a matter of personal experience (v. 11), This goes beyond an understanding that "God exists". It speaks to a deep personal relationship with God. OT saints had this, but after Pentecost the ministry of the Holy Spirit was expanded unto the nations.

3) an announcement that the Lord will forgive His people's sins (v. 12).

Robert Capon: St. Paul never said: "While we were sinners Christ died for us, on the condition that after a reasonable length of time we would be the kind of people no one would ever have had to die for in the first place. Otherwise the whole deal is off." – Between Noon and Three

APPLICATION: (Mike Gaudet) Divine Commitment #8 Good is guaranteed to me  
"I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more." Hebrews 8:12

What does God think about when He thinks about you?

Is He thinking about that sin that you can't seem to overcome? You know the one.

God is not thinking about that sin!

In fact, He is not thinking about any of your sins. He moved past that long ago . . . about 2,000 years ago. Wickedness forgiven! Sins remembered no more!

He is not defining you by your sin. He is thinking about His commitments to you. He is thinking about the love that will flow from your heart towards Him and toward others.

Good is guaranteed to you because of your bond with God through Christ.

This forgiveness has implications for our relationship with God and with others -marriage, kids, parents, siblings, co-workers, co-worshippers, rec league, checkout line, on the interstate, etc.

Do you allow their sins to define them or do you let the grace of the NC flow from you to them?

\*\* This doesn't mean that we walk into danger, but it DOES mean that we don't allow taking offense and bitterness to dwell in our hearts. We live in a culture where taking offense is the primary pastime and FB, twitter, Instagram, etc are fertile soils for people to express and take offense. Prov 19:11 – "It is the glory of a man to overlook an offense."

Just remember Edwards Resolution #8

8. Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God.

We can and should confess freely and humbly because we have a great High Priest who has secured our forgiveness. If that is true of us, then it is true of other believers as well.

These promises are “better” in that they point to the saving sacrifice of Christ which “has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Heb 10:14). The law had a “shadow of the good things to come” but it could never “make perfect those who draw near” (Heb 10:1).

The problem was not with God or the Law, but with the people. The OC people did not believe the good news that was proclaimed to them. They did not hold fast to faith in the LORD.

The author is making the argument “Don’t be like the people of Israel in the wilderness” but hold fast and draw near to the better Priest who offers the better promises.

v. 13 – obsolete??? IN what way? “It is becoming obsolete”. Does the author have in view the coming destruction of 70 A. D. or is he seeing the rise of Gentile believers along with Jews so that the old economy is no longer needed? The text is not clear, but this we know...

**The Law is not devalued, in fact, it is so valuable that it is written on our hearts.**

But it no longer serves as an agent of condemnation, but is honey to the heart as it reveals the heart of God.

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

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