

The Book of Hebrews

8. The New Covenant



Melchizedek established in Chapters 5 to 7. The covenant established with Moses and Israel, is merely a shadow or illustration of the coming covenant, which is eternal, and administered by Christ.

The Old Testament is complete with pictures and shadows of things to come. Melchizedek set the pattern of a greater priesthood, one to succeed the priesthood of Aaron. Though only mentioned twice in the Old Testament (Genesis 14:18, Psalm 110:4), these two sections of scripture established Aaron's priesthood as inferior and temporary.

David, God's anointed King, through whom the Messiah would descend (2 Sam. 7:14) writes under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, about a greater priesthood.

The Lord has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." Psalm 110:4

In Hebrews chapter 8, the writer continues to expand on the picture of

Hebrews 8

1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

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

4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;

5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

High Priest of New Priestly Service

The Lord's Tabernacle

Verses 1-2

The main point: The Greek word used here is *kefalalon Kephalaion* (kef-al'-ah-yon) means the chief or principal thing, pecuniary sum total of a reckoning. This is the summation of everything said so far. The whole purpose of the book of Hebrews is to help the Hebrew Christians and seekers understand Jesus is supreme.

Such a High Priest: The priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek, contrasted to the priesthood under the Mosaic covenant. (Hebrews 7:22-28). Jesus' priesthood is the focus here, Jesus our High Priest is in Heaven at the right hand of the God's throne.

Minster: The Greek word *leitourgos Leitourgos* means a public minister or servant of the state. Jesus Christ serves the Temple in Heaven as opposed to one on Earth.

the true tabernacle: What is the "True Tabernacle" being referred to here? Is there a literal Temple in Heaven or is this symbolism? James Coffman writes regarding this verse,

The reference in this place to existence of a heavenly temple or tabernacle requires that any notion of a literal or actual temple or court in some particular locale beyond the earth's atmosphere be refuted. It is the conviction of this writer that such language is used by the Holy Spirit in order to bring down to the level of human comprehension¹

A literal reading of Revelation indicates the existence of a Heavenly Temple, which the Earthly is merely a shadow of. (Revelation 14:15,17, 15:5,6,8, 16:1,17)

19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.
Revelation 11:19

The heavenly Temple itself is temporary until the completion of God's plan when there is a "New heaven" and a "New Earth". (Revelation 21-22). When the saints from the Old Testament, New Testament and Millennium periods will be citizens of the New Jerusalem and dwell with God for all eternity.

But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
Revelation 21:22

The Shadow of the Heavenly

Verses 3-5

offer both gifts and sacrifices: The priest serves the role of intercessor between man and God. His job is to represent people to God, by offering sacrifice for sin and gifts for thanksgiving. (Leviticus 1-3)

something to offer: Like the earthly priest, which is a shadow or type of the Heavenly, Christ has offered both sacrifice and gifts on our behalf towards God. He sacrificed Himself,

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."
John 6:51

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.
Ephesians 5:2

Christ, like the Levitical priests, also presents the gifts of his people, their freewill offerings, service, praise and prayers before the Father, on the throne of **Majesty**. Prior to the sacrifice of Christ, we could only approach God, through the Levitical Priesthood established by God.

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.
Hebrews 13:15

He would not be a priest: Because Jesus was a descendent of Judah and not of Aaron, he could not be a priest after the order of Aaron. The role of priest is for Aaron's descendents alone. Korah, who tried to assume the role of priest became a symbol of those who try to take the role, but are not descended of Aaron. The burned censers of Korah became a covering for the altar. Korah and the other rebels priest were burned from fire from Heaven. The ground swallowed the other rebels.

39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar,
40 to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come

¹ James Coffman, New Testament Commentary., on Hebrews 8

near to offer incense before the Lord, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the Lord had said to him through Moses.
Numbers 16:39-40

From this verse, we also learn the Temple was still in existence at the time the book of Hebrews was written. The Romans, causing the Temple priesthood to cease, destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D.

serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things: The Levites serve an inferior copy and shadow of the reality, the antitype. The earthly Temple is only a representation of the Heavenly reality. This lends credence to the understanding in Revelation of a literal Heavenly Temple which the earthly is merely modeled after with its Heavenly components.

pattern shown you: The writer of Hebrews, quotes from Exodus to make his point, of the inferiority of the Tabernacle and Temple. They were merely models or shadows of heavenly reality, which Moses saw on Mt. Sinai. Moses was given a pattern from Heaven, modeled after the perfect, for construction of the Tabernacle. (Exodus 25:40).

Our Mediator

Verse 6

Mediator of a better covenant: The Greek word for Mediator is *mesites* one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant. The priest is in the role of mediator, he mediates the relationship between God and man.

The covenant Christ mediates is an eternal covenant verses a temporary and earthly covenant.

Greatness of the New Covenant

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-

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 did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

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 in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

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

13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Problems with the First Covenant

Verse 7

The First Covenant: This covenant is the Mosaic Covenant, the author of Hebrews uses logic to establish its inferiority to the coming covenant. Perfection does not require improvement, if the first covenant were the ideal, why would there be need for a second?

And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient."

8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."

Exodus 24:6-8

The word covenant in Hebrew is ברית *Beriyth* (ber-eeth'); literally meaning "Cut", which was formally sealed by walking between the halves of animals. God sealed his covenant with Abraham in just such a way. (Genesis 15). There are eight covenants mentioned in the Old Testament culminating in the New Covenant, announced in Jeremiah.

Covenant	Summary	Verses
(1) The Edenic Covenant	conditioned the life of man in innocency.	Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Genesis 1:26
(2) The Adamic Covenant	conditions the life of fallen man and gives promise of a Redeemer.	Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Genesis 3:17
(3) The Noahic Covenant	establishes the principle of human government.	So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. Genesis 9:1 (Genesis 9:1-10)
(4) The Abrahamic Covenant	founds the nation of Israel, and confirms, with specific additions, the Adamic promise of redemption	On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates Genesis 15:8
(5) The Mosaic Covenant	condemns all men, "for that all have sinned."	And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words." Exodus 24:8
(6) The Israel Covenant	secures the final restoration and conversion of Israel.	"Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. Deutoronmy 30:5
(7) The Davidic Covenant	establishes the perpetuity of the Davidic family (fulfilled in Christ), Matthew 1:1 ; Luke 1:31-33 ; Romans 1:3 and of the Davidic kingdom, over Israel, and over the whole earth; to be fulfilled in and by Christ; 2 Samuel 7:8-17 ; Zechariah 12:8 ; Luke 1:31-33 ; Acts 15:14-17 ; 1 Corinthians 15:24 .	And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." ' ' ' 2 Samuel 7:16
(8) The New covenant.	rests upon the sacrifice of Christ, and secures the eternal blessedness, under the Abrahamic Covenant Galatians 3:13-29 of all who believe. It is absolutely unconditional, and, since no responsibility is by it committed to man, it is final and irreversible	"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah Jeremiah 31:31

The New Covenant with Israel

Verses 8-9

Finding fault: If the first covenant were perfect, (Faultless) there would be no need to replace it with a "New Covenant'.

New Covenant: The author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah's announcement of a new and

better Covenant. Jeremiah wrote at a time when all hope seemed lost for Israel. Jerusalem had rebelled against Babylonian control, and Babylon had reoccupied the city and taken more hostages including Ezekiel in 597 B.C. Israel's future seemed unsure, so God encouraged Israel about its future through the hand of Jeremiah. God promised a future restoration to Israel, and his eternal relationship with the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He promised redemption, forgiveness and an eternal relationship. The provisions of the "New Covenant", are parceled out in the scriptures. This set the pattern only to be fulfilled in Christ is revealed throughout the scriptures in several ways.

- Melchizedek establishes a precedent of a greater covenant and priesthood. (Psalm 110:4).
- Isaiah foretells the death of an individual who would pay for the sin of all man. (Isaiah 53)
- Zechariah tells us this payment for sin would be accomplished in one day. (Zechariah 3:9)
- Ezekiel informs us this covenant, will be through Israel, with the descendents of Jacob, in the land of Israel. (Ezekiel 37:23-28)
- God's Spirit will eternally be with those who are established in this New Covenant. (Isaiah 59:21)
- Jeremiah writes this "New Covenant" will replace the Mosaic Covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31)

How is this Covenant to be established? Through what means will God accomplish this? The answer has caused a considerable amount of debate in churches and denominations.

Who is Israel?

Ultimately the issue comes down to the position of Israel in God's economy. Is God still working through the nation of Israel? Is his Covenant with Israel cancelled and transferred to the church?

A New Israel?

Those who view the covenant with Israel cancelled view the Church as having replaced Israel in the promises. The church becomes the "New Israel".

A description of the church, arising from the conviction that the position of Israel as the elect people of God has been transferred to the church, so that the former can no longer claim it.²

Those who hold to the replacement of the covenant with the church can find support in several verses. (See also John 8:39-44, Romans 4:11, Matthew 8:5-13)

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
Galatians 3:28-29

"I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
Revelation 2:9

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.
Romans 2:28-29

² Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Walter A. Elwell, Editor, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, pg. 571

They make four points who view the church as the "New Israel"³.

1. Christ, not any particular group of people, is the center of God's purposes. (II Cor. 1:20)
2. It follows that the people of God and the Old Testament must be understood Christocentrically. (Galatians 3:29)
3. Judgment on Israel does not cancel her election.
4. Old Testament ways of understanding God's people may be applied to the church.

The church grafted into Israel?

The other way to view Israel, is that all the promises to Israel still stand and are future. The church, the body of Gentile and Jewish believers is been grafted into the covenant promises of Israel. Paul writes about the dynamic relationship between the Church and Israel (Romans 9-11). In Romans chapter 11 he clarifies where Israel and the Church stand in relation to God's eternal plan. From this chapter we can draw several points of understanding.

1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,
7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.
8 Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day."
Romans 11:1-2,7-8

Israel as God's covenanted people has not been cast away, rather they have been blinded temporarily. This blindness to Christ will one day be removed.

- Israel is not cast off
- God foreknew His people
- The elect of Israel are saved
- Most in Israel were blinded to Christ except for the elect.

17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,
18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.
19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."
23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.
24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?
25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.
26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

- The Gentiles are grafted into the natural olive tree of Israel
- If Israel believes they will be grafted back in
- Israel's blindness is temporary
- Israel will be saved
- God's Covenant with Israel still stands.

During this period of blindness, the Gentiles have been grafted into the covenanted promises of Israel. There is a day when Israel as a nation will be restored to the position they had prior to their rejection of Christ. Israel will be

³ ibid

restored, and the promises of God fulfilled.

House of Israel...Judah: Israel and Judah comprise the division of Israel after Solomon. Judah and Benjamin became the southern kingdom and Israel the northern kingdom. In 722 B.C., the Assyrian army attacked Israel and removed the 10 northern tribes to a place in Assyria. (II Kings 17:6) The Assyrians were unable to defeat Judah whom God saved from destruction (Isaiah 37), Judah would be defeated by the Babylonian and taken into captivity for their own sins. Israel and Judah would later become one nation, known as Judah and its people known as Jews.

With Israel scattered in 722 B.C. and Judah defeated, and Jerusalem about to be destroyed by Babylon (587 B.C.), Jeremiah wrote about Israel and Judah's restoration. The restoration would not only be physical, but spiritual. The people would return to the land of their forefathers and God would again be their God.

'For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'
Jeremiah 30:3

After Israel restoration as God's people, Jeremiah proclaims they will also be given a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-38). Israel rejection of Messiah, allowed the Gentiles to be grafted into Israel's promises until the day of their restoration (Luke 14:15-24). Israel will be grafted back into the promises as Paul writes in Romans. (Romans 11:23)

Not according to the Covenant: The New Covenant will differ from the Old Covenant (The Mosaic Covenant), because it will eternally restore man's relationship, and sin will not be remembered.

They did not continue: Both Israel and Judah broke the Mosaic Covenant, and as a result they suffered the provisions of the promised curses. (Deuteronomy 28:15-68) Israel was scattered in 722 B.C. (I Kings 17) and Judah was defeated, the Temple and Jerusalem destroyed in 587 B.C. They would again be scattered in 70 AD by the armies of Rome, but this would take place after the book of Hebrews was written.

*Provisions of the New Covenant
Verses 10-13*

After those days: Quoting from Jeremiah, this refers to future time in Israel's history after it is restored to the land, brought back from its captivity. (Jeremiah 30-31)

- Israel will obey God.
 “My laws in their mind and ... on their hearts” (Verse 10)
- Israel will be restored to God.
 “I will be their God they shall be my people”
- Israel will have knowledge of God.
 “for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest” (Verse 11)
- Israel's sins will be forgiven
 “their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” (Verse 12)

After the destruction of Jerusalem the Old Covenant could no longer be practiced since, there was no longer any sacrifice. Daniel informs us there will be a temporary End-Times Temple, which will result in Israel finding the Messiah. (Daniel 9:24-27)