

# Hebrews

## The Old Testament Versus the New Testament

### Hebrews 2:1-4

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Hebrews 2:1-4 (NASB95)

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## The Old Testament Versus the New Testament

### Hebrews 2:1-4

#### INTRODUCTION:

The book of Hebrews was written to the Jewish reader to exalt Jesus, to show that He was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, and to show that Christ is **superior to everything and everybody including angels**. So the writer of Hebrews begins in the first chapter dealing with the superiorities of Christ over creation. And then showing that Christ, who is the mediator of the new covenant is better than the mediators of the old covenant who were angels. Christ, then, must also be better than angels.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

##### **Hebrews 2:1-4 (NASB95)**

2 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

#### Prayer

#### BODY:

### I. Jesus was the Fulfillment of the Old Testament

##### **Matthew 5:17-19 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did **not** come to abolish **but to fulfill**. <sup>18</sup> For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the **Law** until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called **least** in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called **great** in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus’ declaration that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, not to abolish them, obviously contains two statements in one. There is something Jesus **DID do** and something He **did NOT do**. At the same time, Jesus emphasized the eternal nature of the Word of God.

Jesus goes out of His way to promote the authority of the Law of God. He did not come to abolish the Law, regardless of what the Pharisees accused Him of. In fact, Jesus

continues His statement with a praise for those who teach the Law accurately and hold it in reverence.

Consider what Jesus **did NOT do** in His ministry. In verse 17, Jesus says that He did **not** come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. In other words, Jesus' purpose was not to render the Law and Prophets (the Old Testament) invalid. The Law will continue to accomplish the purpose for which it was given. The Prophets will be fulfilled.

### **Isaiah 55:10-11 (NASB95)**

<sup>10</sup> "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; <sup>11</sup> So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.

Next, consider what Jesus **DID do**. Jesus says that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. In other words, Jesus' purpose was to establish the Word and to fully accomplish all that was written. The predictions of the Prophets concerning the Messiah would be realized in Jesus; the holy standard of the Law would be perfectly upheld by Christ, the strict requirements personally obeyed, and the ceremonial observances finally and fully satisfied.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Prophets in that, in His first coming alone, He fulfilled hundreds of prophecies concerning Himself. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law in at least two ways: as a teacher and as a doer. He taught people to obey the Law and He obeyed the Law Himself. By living a **perfect** life, Jesus fulfilled the **moral** laws. In His sacrificial death, Jesus fulfilled the **ceremonial** laws. Christ came not to destroy the old religious system but to build upon it. He came to finish the Old Covenant and establish the New.

He was the fulfillment of Old Testament truth.

Luke records for us how Jesus appeared to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus. They were very sad and explained to Jesus, not knowing who He was, of the things that happened in Jerusalem that day. Jesus had been crucified. The women had arrived at the tomb and He was not there. Then listen to what Jesus told them.

### **Luke 24:25-27 (NASB95)**

<sup>25</sup> And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

The two men invited Jesus to join them for the evening. When Jesus broke bread with them they recognized Him and Jesus vanished from their sight. They immediately went to the disciples, who were gathered together in one room, to tell them what had happened. Later that evening Jesus appeared among the disciples.

### **Luke 24:44 (NASB95)**

<sup>44</sup> Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." <sup>45</sup> Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

<sup>46</sup> and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Don't you wish that you could have been there to hear Jesus explain all the things concerning Himself in all the scriptures?

## **II. Jesus is the Theme of the Old Testament**

In order to understand the Old Testament one must understand that Jesus, the Messiah, is the theme of the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament.

There is no way that anybody, be he Jew or Gentile, will ever understand the Old Testament until he understands it in terms of Jesus Christ. In John, for example, Jesus makes the clear-cut statement that the theme of the Old Testament is Himself.

### **John 5:39 (NASB95)**

<sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;

He is certainly referring to the Old Testament because the New Testament has not even been written by this time. Jesus says, “The Old Testament testifies of Me.”

### **Hebrews 10:7 (NASB95)**

<sup>7</sup> “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come (**In the scroll of the book it is written of Me**) To do Your will, O God.’”

The Old Testament has as its theme the person of Jesus Christ. He is the theme, the fulfillment of the Law and the revelation of the shadows. The Old Testament speaks of a Messiah who is to come and prophesies as to what He will do when He arrives so we can identify Him. The details of His life that is laid out in the New Testament testify that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah. So Jesus is also the theme of the New Testament.

John gives us the purpose of the writing of his book, which could well be the purpose of the writing of the entire New Testament.

### **John 20:31 (NASB95)**

<sup>31</sup> but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

So, both the Old Testament and the New Testament have as their theme the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is no wonder that those Jewish people who adhere to the old text, and not the new, have trouble interpreting it. They cannot understand it apart from Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed concerning Christ. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed concerning Christ.

What the Old Testament presented of Christ in shadow, the New Testament presents in substance. What the Old Testament presented of Christ in ritual, the New Testament presents in reality. The New Testament presentation of Jesus Christ, then, closes the purpose of the Old Testament.

## 2 Corinthians 3:14 (NASB95)

<sup>14</sup> But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

Do you understand? There is no way that a man will ever understand the Old Testament apart from understanding and knowing Jesus Christ, and the veil is on until they turn to Christ. That is why it is so intensely difficult for the unbelieving Jew to understand the Old Testament.

And this is precisely the message that the writer is bringing to the Hebrews. The message is this: Jesus Christ removes the veil and gives you understanding of the old covenant.

### III. Jesus is the Reality of the Old Testament

Jesus came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them. In fact, the ceremonies, sacrifices, and other elements of the Old Covenant were “only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves”. Here is how the writer of Hebrews tells it.

#### Hebrews 10:1 (NASB95)

<sup>10</sup> For the Law, since it has *only* a **shadow** of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

In His fulfillment of the Law and Prophets, Jesus obtained our **eternal** salvation. No more were priests required to offer sacrifices and enter the holy place. Jesus has done that for us, once and for all. By grace through faith, we are made right with God.

There are some who argue that, since Jesus “abolished” the Law, then the Law is still in effect—and still binding on New Testament Christians. But Paul is clear that the believer in Christ is no longer under the Law.

#### Galatians 3:23-25 (NASB95)

<sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to* Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

If the Law is still binding on us today, then it has not yet accomplished its purpose—it has not yet been fulfilled. If the Law, as a legal system, is still binding on us today, then Jesus was wrong in claiming to fulfill it and His sacrifice on the cross was insufficient to save.

It is not that everything passes away. **Some** things pass away. The forms and the types and the rituals all pass away, because the reality has come. But the principles of morality, and God’s attitude towards sin, remains the same. Now, Hebrews speaks of the temporary nature of the old covenant in the sense of its forms. For example...

#### Hebrews 8:13 (NASB95)

<sup>13</sup> When He said, “A new *covenant*,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Now, that does not mean that everything God said in the Old Testament goes by the wayside; that now you can covet, and now you can murder, and now you can do whatever you want, because all the morality of the Old Testament is gone away. No, it means the forms, and the rituals, and the types, and the pictures, and the symbols of the Old Testament, all of the sacrificial ritual in the symbolic arena, goes by the wayside, because the reality has arrived. The Messianic prophecies have been fulfilled. That is the point.

### **Hebrews 10:1 (NASB95)**

10 For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

All of the Old Testament sacrifices could not make a man perfect. They were only pictures of Christ, Who alone could bring perfection.

### **Hebrews 10:9-10 (NASB95)**

<sup>9</sup> then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

I want you to understand that the tendency in these Jewish readers was to receive Christ, and then hang on to the ritual; hang on to the Judaistic symbolism. That is why the apostles had to meet in Jerusalem to decide if Christians still had to be circumcised, as many new Jewish Christians were advocating. The writer is saying that now that you have the new, you must let go of the old. You cannot mix the two. There is no point because the first has been fulfilled.

### **Hebrews 11:40 (NASB95)**

<sup>40</sup> because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

In other words, there was no perfection provided in the old covenant. There was only a **picture** of perfection, which came in the better thing, the new covenant. Throughout Hebrews, the writer identifies those things that have been fulfilled by Christ.

### **The priesthood has changed.**

#### **Hebrews 7:12 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup> For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

The Aaronic priesthood needed to be changed because it was an inadequate priesthood. Not only that, even the rituals of Israel needed to be changed. The Old Testament priests were only a shadow of the heavenly priest, **priest**, singular. **Jesus Christ!**

### **The sacrifices were all abolished.**

#### **Hebrews 9:12-15 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup> and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats

and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

<sup>15</sup> For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

So, we see, then, that the old covenant was merely a temporary and temporal shadow of things to come. And when we open up the book of Hebrews, we meet the new covenant, which is not a shadow any more, it is the real thing. It is not a picture, it is the person. It is not the imperfect priesthood, it is the perfect priest. It is not the repeated sacrifices which could not do the job, it is the one sacrifice, once for all, which did the job. And so, in Hebrews, everything is eternal.

## **CONCLUSION:**

So you may ask, "How does the scripture reading apply to this message?" It is a warning directed at non-Christians, specifically Jews, who are intellectually convinced of the gospel but who fail to receive it for themselves.

## **ILLUSTRATION:**

John MacArthur told of a prostitute that walked into his office one day and said "I need help. I am desperate." After presenting Christ to her, John asked "Would you like to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord?" "Yes," she replied, "I've had it!" She was at the bottom and she knew it. She prayed a prayer and seemingly invited Christ into her life. John said, "Now, I want you to do something. Do you have your little book with you that has the names of all your contacts?" When she replied that she did, he suggested, "Let's take a match and burn it right now." Looking surprised, she responded, "What do you mean?" "Just what I said," he explained. "If you really met Jesus Christ as your Lord, if you really accepted His forgiveness and are going to live for Him, let's burn that book and celebrate your new birth right now and just praise the Lord." "But it is worth a lot of money, a **lot** of money," she objected. He said, "I am sure it is." Putting the book back in her purse and looking at him straight in the eye, she said, "I don't want to burn my book. I guess I really don't want Jesus, do I?" And she left.

There are many such people. They know the truth, they stand on the edge of the right decision, but they never make it. They just drift. And they are the ones to whom this passage in Hebrews is speaking. A man is a fool when he decides to put worldly things, which have no eternal value, in front of Christ. It is an eternal mistake.

## **Hebrews 2:1-4 (NASB95)**

<sup>2</sup> For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. <sup>2</sup> For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, <sup>3</sup> how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

**He is Lord.**