

Hebrews

A Superior Covenant in Christ

Hebrews 8:6-13

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INTRODUCTION:

If you have health insurance, it is helpful to be familiar with the benefits of your policy. If you do not know those benefits, you will not take advantage of them, and you may end up paying for something that the policy covers. Trying to read and understand an insurance policy is about as fun as taking a cold shower, but we should force ourselves to read them in order to know the benefits.

Many Christians are ignorant of the great benefits that they enjoy in Jesus Christ and, as a result, the enemy takes advantage of them. They end up “paying” for things that are “covered in the policy”! They are plagued by guilt, when the policy says, “I will remember their sins no more.” They feel alienated from God and His people, whereas the contract stipulates, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” They put themselves under many manmade rules, whereas God says, “I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts.”

If the Hebrew Christians were to leave the glories of the new covenant and go back to Judaism, they would put themselves, once again, under the bondage of the old covenant. So the author is showing them the contrast between the two covenants and the superiority of the new covenant that Christ enacted through His blood. He is arguing that the new covenant is better than the old covenant because it is enacted on better promises.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 8:6-13 (NASB95)

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.

⁷ For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. 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; 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. 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. 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. ¹² “For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more.”

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.

Prayer

BODY:

This passage of scripture is a quote from the prophet Jeremiah showing the Jews, to whom this letter was written, that a New Covenant with better promises had been prophesied.

As I read from Jeremiah, follow along with me in our text starting in verse 8.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NASB95)

³¹ “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in 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 “But 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 on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man 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 iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

In this morning's message, I want you to note three features that make the New Covenant better. We will be looking at this in more detail in chapter 9.

I. The First Covenant was Defective.

Hebrews 8:7 (NASB95)

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

The idea that the Law of Moses was defective in any way would have been unthinkable for the Jews! The Law was the foundation of their entire way of life. It was the basis of their religious worship and the very essence of being a Jew. In chapter 7, the author argued that the change of the priesthood required a change of the law also, since the two were inseparable. He used **Psalm 110:4** to show that David had predicted the change of the priesthood. Here, he cites **Jeremiah 31** to show that the Old Testament itself also predicted a new covenant that would replace the old, Mosaic covenant. The reason for replacing the old covenant was that it was defective.

Paul is quick to add that the problem was not with the Law itself, but with the people who failed to keep it.

Romans 7:12 (NASB95)

¹² So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

But he goes on to say,

Romans 8:3-4 (NASB95)

³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

As sinners, we are unable to keep God's holy Law. It did not supply the change of heart or the enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit that we need to obey it. As Paul explains in Galatians, the purpose of the **Law** was **not** to impart spiritual life, but rather to reveal our sin so that we would be driven to faith in Christ.

Galatians 3:21-24 (NASB95)

²¹ Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. ²² But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to* Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Another feature of the new covenant is that it has better promises.

II. The New Covenant has Better Promises.

The central focus of the New Covenant was to reunite the two houses and make them one again! This covenant would be made "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

You may ask "What does that mean?"

The united kingdom became two houses because God divided it due to their forsaking God by not doing what was right in his eyes. Ten of the tribes (the House of Israel) were given to Jeroboam, and two (Judah and Benjamin) remained for the House of Judah.

Through the prophet Hosea, God confirmed that the House of Israel would be scattered among the gentiles.

Hosea 9:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ My God will cast them away Because they have not listened to Him; And they will be wanderers among the nations.

But the prophet Ezekiel prophesied that God would mend the division between the two Houses and make them one. He illustrated this with two sticks in Ezekiel's hands, which represented the two houses restored:

Ezekiel 37:19 (NASB95)

¹⁹ say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.'"

A main point of Paul's teaching is that the two houses have been restored and the middle wall of separation has come down.

Ephesians 2:11-16 (NASB95)

¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” *which is performed in the flesh by human hands*— ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus **you** who formerly were far off have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is **our peace**, who made **both groups into one** and broke down the **barrier of the dividing wall**, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might **reconcile them both in one body to God** through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

This was prophesied in nearly every prophet and it is the heart and soul of the New Covenant: the House of Judah (Jews) and the House of Israel have been reconciled so that there is no longer a middle wall; they are no longer two sticks but one!

While the absolute fulfillment of this will only be realized completely in the age to come, the inception happened at the cross and therefore there is technically no longer any distinction between the two houses...which is what Paul repeatedly said:

Romans 10:12-13 (NASB95)

¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³ for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

When we speak of the Kingdom of God, there is no longer a House of Judah (Jews) and House of Israel (who were scattered among the gentiles). As far as tribes go, there were twelve tribes and there always will be twelve tribes, as evidenced by the twelve tribes in Revelation 7 and 14 and by the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem.

Assuming you are not Jewish, then you are no longer a “gentile”: you have been grafted in to the commonwealth (all twelve tribes) of Israel! You can enter the kingdom through the work of Jesus on the cross, who removed the middle wall of separation between the House of Israel and the House of Judah.

Romans 11:17-18 (NASB95)

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.*

In the time that is left, we will only skim over the features of the new covenant here. We will look at them in more depth next week. Note these five features.

A. The New Covenant will be Distinctly Different.

Hebrews 8:8-9 (NASB95)

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; 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.

God says, “**Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers**”. The emphasis here is clearly on the disconnection between God and the House of Israel. The new covenant will be distinctly different than the old covenant that Israel did not keep. **Also...**

B. The New Covenant will be in Our Minds and Hearts

Hebrews 8:10a (NASB95)

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. ...

Moses told the Israelites just prior to his death,

Deuteronomy 29:4 (NASB95)

⁴ Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.

They had the Law written in tablets of stone, but they lacked the heart to obey. But in Ezekiel, which parallels the new covenant promises in Jeremiah, God promises...

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NASB95)

²⁶ Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

The new covenant blessing changes our hard hearts! And it **will create a close relationship between God and man.**

C. The New Covenant will Create a Close Relationship.

Hebrews 8:10b (NASB95)

...And I will be their God, And they shall be My people.

This was a quote from God for the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:33 (NASB95)

³³ “But 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 on their heart I will write it; and **I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**”

This is really nothing new, in that God promised this to Israel at the exodus. But God, in the New Covenant, saves people in a new and definitive way through. We have been saved at the awful cost of Calvary. This is in a way never known before. **Then...**

D. The New Covenant will Allow All to Know God.

Hebrews 8:11 (NASB95)

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.

The point is not that there will be no place for teachers but rather that the knowledge of God will not be confined to a privileged few. All those in the new covenant will have their own intimate and personal knowledge of their God. And it **will provide a complete forgiveness**.

E. The New Covenant Provides Complete Forgiveness.

Hebrews 8:12 (NASB95)

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

The sacrifices of the old covenant could not completely remove sins. They were the shadow of the good things that were to come in Christ, who by the one sacrifice of Himself, completely paid the debt of our sins!

Thus the better covenant would not have been needed if the first covenant had been faultless. Since God found fault with the people, He promised **a new covenant and made the old obsolete**.

III. The New Covenant has Made the Old Obsolete.

Hebrews 8:13 (NASB95)

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.

Jeremiah’s prophecy around 600 B.C. started the countdown to the time when the old covenant would disappear. In A.D. 70, when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, Israel ceased to exist as a nation and the sacrifices, which were the heart of the old covenant system, ceased to be offered.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were not Jews; they were Hebrews. Jacob’s sons became the Israelites and when the nation split, two nations emerged known as the House of Judah and the House of Israel. God divorced the House of Israel because of their incredible adultery and then scattered them among the gentiles. He promised to remarry them back and the only way for that to happen was for the Messiah to die thereby cancelling the initial marriage contract (which was the Old Covenant). When he arose, He was free to marry her under a new marriage contract (the New Covenant) in Jesus’ blood. This new covenant brings the two houses together and the two shall never again be two nations.

Galatians 3:25-29 (NASB95)

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

Go Tell it on the Mountain