

## THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT (HEBREWS 8:6–13)

- The old covenant had a *fault* (Heb. 8:7). The fault or “problem” with the Old Covenant wasn’t that God gave them a faulty law or that his provision was lacking. The problem was with the people’s disobedience.
- The Law of Moses pointed people to Christ, but it was not powerful to save in itself. It only had the power to condemn (Rom. 8:3–4).
  - The Law was *weakened* by the flesh. It could not redeem sinners.
  - They need a redeemer—namely, one who is not already condemned. None of the Levitical priests could fill this role. They would die.
- All along, the Old Covenant was meant to point to the fullness of Christ our savior. Christ has a more excellent ministry through a better covenant enacted on *better promises*.
  - *A better life* based on the finished work of the Messiah, the one who offered *himself* as a sacrifice for sins.
  - *Based on grace*. God shows his people mercy and forgiveness.
  - *Expanded—To your children. To all nations.*

## NO TURNING BACK

- Hebrews 6:4–8 warns against apostasy, that is, falling away. This is a *very particular* type of apostasy that is connected to this important era of redemptive-history.
- The Hebrews had also been led out of slavery to sin, formed into the covenantal people of God, and are moving toward their eternal rest.
  - As part of their pilgrimage, they have been brought along by Moses and the Old Covenant from infancy and being juveniles, unto maturity.
  - But many of the Hebrews haven’t matured. They are not ready for solid food but can only digest milk.
- Christ has come and as our great high priest after the order of Melchizedek, he mediates a New Covenant in his blood. There is no turning back.
- Hebrews 6:4 speaks of “those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come.”
  - This language refers to New Covenant blessings—specifically the means of grace. In the early church, being “enlightened” was a synonym for baptism.<sup>11</sup> Many interpreters have understood “tasted the heavenly gift” as a reference to the Lord’s Supper.
  - Perhaps most powerfully, they have even shared in the Holy Spirit.
    - Here, the author is not speaking of regeneration, the new birth.

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<sup>11</sup> This is as early as the second century. Justin Martyr notes this.

- These have experienced the Holy Spirit's work in the New Covenant age yet still want to turn for the light—to go back to the shadows.
- You cannot go back to the means of the Old Covenant, because they have served their purpose. Not only are they no longer effective but going back to the old observance will prove *harmful*.
- Consider the example of Apollos, who may indeed be the author of Hebrews (Acts 18:24–19:7).
  - The problem is not that the people are believing false things; the problem is that they have not come to maturity.
  - The error of those falling away is an historical error regarding how the Old Covenant relates to the New. And getting this wrong is *disastrous to the extreme*.
- Christ is the fulfillment of the OT. His death and resurrection were climactic acts in history.
  - If the Hebrews seek salvation from some other means, they are rejecting the only fulfillment. They want to go back in time.
  - To set back the clock of redemptive-history is tantamount to saying that the Messiah we received in history is not good enough. They want a do-over, a *Messiah mulligan*.

## PRIEST OF THE NEW COVENANT: WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END

- Hebrews 7 begins to address the priesthood of Jesus Christ, comparing him to Melchizedek, an unusual figure in the Old Testament.
  - The Levitical priests are men who die. Their time in office comes to an end.
  - Jesus Christ, as the greater Melchizedek, lives and serves forever as our great high priest.
- Building his case for the supremacy of Christ, the author demonstrates how there is a need for another priest—not like the Levitical priests they know.
  - The Old Covenant order cemented the idea that perfection was necessary.
  - But it may have been shocking for many of these Jews to realize that perfection was not attainable through the Levitical priesthood.
    - Surely, they should have known that, because they had to offer sacrifices repeatedly.
    - The Old Covenant mediated through Moses was not the end-all, be-all. It was meant to point forward.
- God's people were never meant to remain in the Old Covenant. It always led them to Christ, the fullness.
  - The former priests would die, so they could not intercede for you in perpetuity. They were temporary servants on your behalf.
  - Unlike the Levites, Jesus is a priest *forever*.
- The resurrection of our Lord establishes that he serves in a fundamentally different way. Only the glorious mega-priest can attain perfection (Heb 7:11; Col 1:28)
  - You have an *indestructible* intercessor. *Nothing* can stop your priest from ministering on your behalf.

- The location of Jesus's ministry is important. Christ is a *heavenly* high priest. Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant. He serves the heavenly things, not a copy and shadow of them (Heb. 8:5).
- In Heb. 8:2, the author speaks of the true tent and then in 9:11 of the greater and more perfect tent. What is this tent?
  - To answer that question, it will be helpful to see how the New Testament speaks of the tent (John 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:1, 4).
  - The true tent is not a physical structure. It is—most specifically—the body of Christ. It is his physical body. But then by extension, it is the Church, all the members who have been incorporated into his body with Christ as the head.
- Christ is serving in the highest heavens, having reconciled us to the Father. And he always lives to intercede.
  - This brings us back to the very beginning of our series. What is God's overarching goal in covenant-history? It is to ***bring his chosen people into a glorious life in heavenly places.***
  - After the fall into sin, this is only accomplished through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

## SACRAMENTS OF THE NEW COVENANT

- Baptism
- The Lord's Supper

## MEMBERSHIP IN THE NEW COVENANT

- Are children included even before they are able to profess faith? (Acts 2:39)
- Are there unregenerate members of the new covenant?
  - Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:14—There is a category of person who has “been enlightened,” “tasted of the heavenly gift,” and has been “sanctified” by the blood of Christ yet falls away.
  - In other words, there are unregenerate members of the new covenant.
    - This is because eschatology is not fully realized. In other words, we are still awaiting Christ the return and separate the sheep and the goats.
    - He will purify his church (Mal. 3–4) so that *covenant* and *election* will be coterminous.