

THE NEW COVENANT



Hebrews 8:6-13

This week's passage drives us to ask the question, "What is the New Covenant?" Is there any specific thing that God and the Bible are referring to when The New Covenant is talked about, as it is in our passage?

This week I ran a little test. I suspected that this is one of those words that we Christians use, but really haven't come to fully understand. And I was right. I asked people in our congregation "What is the Bible teaching us when it talks about the New Covenant?" And overall, they gave the "general" idea that the New Covenant is a term to "sum" up what Jesus Christ came to do. He is the Savior and he fulfilled the Law and died for us and we can come to God thru Him, by faith in his blood.

That's all correct – generally. But I want to show you that the Bible does not just use this as a "general term" – there is a specific thing that makes this a "NEW" covenant, and it is unbelievably exciting and important. We can't live without it.

Last Week – The Replacement of Shadows with the Reality

Last week I said that Christianity is the replacement of shadows with reality. Remember from Hebrews 8:5 that the priests serve a *copy and a shadow* of heavenly things.

- The tabernacle and temple were shadows;
- the priesthood was a shadow;
- the animal sacrifices were shadows;
- the feasts and dietary laws were shadows.

And when Christ came, the shadows fall away, because Christ himself is the Reality. He is our temple and tabernacle, our focus and place of worship. He is our High Priest and Mediator and Intercessor. He is our atoning sacrifice. He is our Passover feast and spiritual food.

And we saw last week that there's a reason why the worship and focus of the New Testament is so radically spiritual, rather than *ritualistic* and traditionalistic.

The reason is that Christianity is a missionary faith. It is a "go-tell" religion, rather than a "come-see" religion.

So almost all the mandated ritualistic, formal, external aspects of worship life are gone. What remains is a radically spiritual, internal, personal joyful dependence on all that God is for us in Jesus.

And now only one thing matters – ARE WE CONNECTING WITH THE LIVING CHRIST? – not in externalities, but in reality.

Now THIS WEEK, the writer takes us down this same path a little further. He wants to tell us how this radical, personal internalization, works. How it comes about in our lives. That's the New Covenant. (You might think that God simply sending the Reality, Jesus Christ, would be enough, but it isn't.)

To see this, let's begin with verse 6:

Hebrews 8:6 (NIV)

⁶ But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs [that is, more excellent than the Old Testament priests who mediated God's grace through the sacrificial system] as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

What those better promises are we will see in a minute.

Verses 7-8:

⁷ For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, [OH, there was something wrong with the Old Covenant?] no place would have been sought for another. [which is what Jesus is now bringing]

⁸ But God found fault with the people and said:

"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

What's the fault? Notice carefully *where* the fault lies in the first covenant. **Verse 7** says that there was something wrong with first. But then **verse 8** explains this by saying, "*God found fault WITH THE PEOPLE . . .*"— not "with the Law" but "*with the people*." The fault with the first covenant was with "*the people*."

Well, who were "*the people*," and what was their fault, and what was this covenant anyway. All those questions are answered in **verses 8-9**:

Hebrews 8:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ *But God found fault with the people and said:* [now he quotes Jeremiah 31:31ff, the prophecy of the New Covenant]

"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

The faultiness of the first covenant—the Mosaic law—was not that God gave bad commands, but that the people had BAD HEARTS

(**Hebrews 3:10** ¹⁰*That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.'*)

Do not contrast the OLD and NEW as BAD NEWS and GOOD NEWS!

- It was "shadows" and "copies" but of real things of God.
- There was divine forgiveness and patience in the first covenant (Exodus 34:6-7a ⁶ *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. ..."*).
- There was the call for faith in the first covenant (Numbers 14:11; Hebrews 3:19; 4:6).
- There were promises of God's love in the first covenant (Exodus 34:7).

NO, the fault was not the covenant, but IN THE PEOPLE! By and large, these good things did not get into the people's hearts. It was mainly external rather than internal. Obedience by will-power rather than by reliance on the Spirit; and ritualistic rather than personal.

Simply Replacing Shadows with the Reality is not Enough!

If all you've got is God sending Christ as the

Reality. With God putting Him forth gloriously - It's still not enough. I in myself, have the very same problem that the Old Testament people had. I have a "hard heart" .

No matter how good God is, and he was good in the Old Testament too, I will, left to myself, eventually fall into a state of "hard heartedness."

So, it wouldn't work if God simply took away the shadows. It wouldn't work if God even set Christ before us as the great Reality and left us to ourselves to know him and love him. If all we have is a Mediator, OUTSIDE, presenting Himself to our hard hearts, we will either:

- rebel and go into sin
- or we will try to make him into a manageable, will-power religion.

NO, if God doesn't do something MORE than just set the Reality before me, namely MAKE IT REAL IN ME, I'm a goner. I'm a goner!

And THAT'S the New Covenant. (that's what did not exist in any form or copy or shadow in the OC. This is radical and great!)

Hebrews 8:10-11 (NIV)

¹⁰ *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.*

I will be their God, and they will be my people.
¹¹*No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.*

He says two things about this new covenant:

1. First, the will of God is going to be written not just on stone tablets or white Bible paper, but in the mind and on the heart. (Holy Spirit is the agent of the New Covenant) ...without it all I can do is "play religion."
2. Second, the new covenant will establish a relationship of ownership of us by God, personal and intimate.: "*I will be their God and they will be my people.*" And finally, the new covenant will be And ultimately, when it is perfected we won't have to exhort each other to know the Lord, because we will know him intimately and personally. "*All shall know me from the least to the greatest.*"

Let me sum it up.

In Christianity, the shadows of the old covenant flee. Because the Lord of glory, the fulfillment, the reality has come. The replacement for temple, and priesthood, and sacrifices and dietary law HAS COME! And there he is, THE REALITY.

And now we relate to him, not to form. Him, him, him!

BUT if it stops there, were dead! Were dead. We perish. Because my heart is still hard. Just because Jesus stands before me, I'm still not a new person.

When Christ is presented, in the gospel, or over lunch when you tell someone about Him, or when someone watches a Jesus film, he is presented in his glory, crucified for sinners, and you wonder "how could anyone not want that?"

Well, something else has to happen. Namely, the new covenant. The Spirit Has to come and take the words, either from your mouth or from the page, or even off a bumper sticker, and He's got to take the word and like a pen, go umph (and stick it – that's called conviction when he does that) and write those words on a person's heart, doesn't he?

And, when that happens, you feel, in that moment, like your whole world is changes! And for the first time in your life you say, "God is beautiful!" "I love him."

And that is the new birth, brought about by the new covenant work of God.

The Blood and the Covenant

Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant, according to **Hebrews 8:6** (also 9:15). What does that mean? It means that his blood—the blood of the covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Hebrews 13:20)—purchased the fulfillment of these promises for us. It means God works all this transformation in us through faith in all that God did for us in Christ.

The New Covenant is

- purchased by the blood of Christ,
- effected by the Spirit of Christ
- appropriated by faith in Christ.

The best place to see Christ working as the Mediator of the new covenant is in **Hebrews 13:20-21**:

²⁰ *May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,* ²¹

equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The words, "*working in us that which is pleasing in his sight*," describe what happens when God writes the law on our hearts in the new covenant. And the words, "*through Jesus Christ*" describe Jesus as the Mediator of this glorious work of amazing grace.

CONCLUSION

What we have seen in last two Sundays looking at Hebrews 8 is that Christianity means two things.

FIRST, it means shadows are replaced with Reality: Old Testament copies give way to the Original, Jesus Christ.

SECOND, it means that God goes beyond that, by the work of the New Covenant and moves powerfully into our hearts and minds to overcome our resistance to this Reality AND BROUGHT IT HOME. All the way in. That's the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is

- purchased by the blood of Christ,
- effected by the Spirit of Christ
- and appropriated by **faith in Christ**.

Prayer:

Father, I pray that's what you're doing right now.

I pray for those who have not been born of God, who have not yet heard the voice of the Master. That you would break in and deliver and transform and write your will on their heart.

The New Covenant - All the verses in the Bible...- (12 verses in 9 passages; In Hebrews -7 verses in 5 passages)

RED – What brought about the New Covenant – the Death of Christ

GREEN- The HEART of the New Covenant – God now writing his law on our Hearts (by the H.S.)

Jeremiah 31:31 “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Jeremiah 31:33 “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Luke 22:20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

1 Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

2 Corinthians 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Hebrews 8:8 But God found fault with the people and said: “The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Hebrews 8:10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Hebrews 8:13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Hebrews 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 10:16 “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

Hebrews 12:24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 13:20–21 (NIV) ²⁰ May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.