

Heb. 8:1 ¶ Now of the things which we have spoken *this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;*

Heb. 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

This chapter begins with what appears to be an emphasis of the truth being discussed in the previous chapter. Jesus, as our High Priest, is seated at the right hand of the Father in the temple in heaven.

This put me to thinking again about “heaven,” the abode of God and how massive and impressive it is according to John’s revelation. It also points out the great contrast between the earthly tabernacle/temple where the priests of Israel served and the heavenly temple upon which it is patterned. This is an area in which I need to do a lot more study.

I think the key point is that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of God the Father. This is what is represented by the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies in the earthly tabernacle/temple. The High Priest of Israel was only allowed to enter the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement after following specific preparation to do so. Jesus, however, is seated by the Father’s throne, His work completed. He has complete and unfettered access to the throne and provides that same access to those who have placed their faith in Him as Lord and Savior.

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb. 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

The high priest offered gifts and sacrifices to God for the people; these gifts and sacrifices were established to allow man to be forgiven for sin and maintain fellowship with God. Jesus, too, came with a gift on man’s behalf to establish a means by which man can obtain a permanent right standing before God. He presented His own innocent, precious blood as a gift on our behalf and forever eliminated the need for further sacrifice.

Heb. 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

Heb. 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

The priesthood as established on earth according to the law was designated to descend through Levi and Aaron. Jesus would not have qualified to serve in that priesthood; He was of the tribe of Judah.

(7/09) Note that the wording in verse 5 indicates that the temple priests were currently serving, to the temple was still in use at the time of writing.

The priesthood of Israel served as an “example and shadow of heavenly things.” Moses was specifically told that he was being given instructions according to a pattern.

Ex. 25:8-9 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make *it*.

The same was true as set forth by David concerning the building of the temple.

1Chr. 28:11 ¶ Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat....1Chr. 28:19 All *this*, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by *his* hand upon me, *even* all the works of this pattern.

Webster tells us that an *example* “resembles or corresponds with something else.” One of the definitions of *shadow* is an “imperfect and faint representation.” That is basically all the earthly tabernacle/temple could be; it is impossible for us to comprehend the limitations of our earthly understanding and capabilities regarding the glory of heaven and its reality. God carefully made a pattern for the earthly tabernacle/temple and the priesthood that served there to help us through our limited understanding to get a glimmer of the glory of the original.

Heb. 8:6 ¶ But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

The writer is declaring that Jesus’ position as our High Priest in heaven is a “more excellent ministry” than that of earthly priests because He is the mediator of a “better covenant” established on “better promises.” In the following verses he will begin to explain the comparison.

Heb. 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

The first covenant is based on maintaining fellowship with God through obedience to the law, and the second covenant is based on maintaining fellowship with God through the gift of His grace. The first covenant is with fault because it has no power to produce change in the life of the believer to overcome sin. The covenant of grace, however, provides the believer with power to overcome sin through the provision of God through His Son Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Heb. 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Heb. 8:9 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 continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

The writer clarifies that it is God that declared the need for a new covenant as he quotes from the prophet Jeremiah (chapter 31). It is clear that this new covenant will be with the houses of Israel and Judah, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. The covenant of the law was revealed through Moses after God

led the people out of Egypt. The covenant of the law provided blessing if the people obeyed the law and punishment if they did not. History records that they rebelled against God and His law.

Heb. 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: Heb. 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

In His grace and mercy God determined to make a new covenant with the people of Israel. With the establishment of this new covenant God promised to “put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.” (7/09) This is a quote from the writings of Jeremiah.

Jer. 31:33-34 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

In other words, God is promising to empower them to overcome their sinful, rebellious nature. With this new covenant He is declaring that the people will acknowledge God as their Lord and will have no need for further testimony and encouragement from others to get to know Him as Lord; ALL will know Him. Specific note is made that God’s provision will be for all the people of Israel—from the least to the greatest.

Heb. 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

God’s *mercy* is a reference to withholding just punishment. In context, the writer is specifically referring to God’s choice under the new covenant to forgive the sins, both unintentional and willful, of His people and His intention to never bring them to mind again.

Heb. 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

By declaring the establishment of a new covenant, God is declaring the first one to be old and ready to be discarded. It’s the old covenant based on the law that is being discarded, not the law itself. The new covenant empowers the believer to obey the heart of the law and not just the letter. Man adulterated the law so that it became a system of ritual rather than a response of obedience from the heart.

I can’t leave this chapter without addressing how the new covenant applies to the church as well as Israel. This should not have been an issue to those receiving this letter. Though they were being tempted to return to practicing Judaism, they were aware that Gentiles were becoming part of the “church.”

This, in fact, was to be expected from God's initial promise to Abraham that through him ALL families of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 12:3) Paul goes to great pains in his letter to the Romans to explain how the Gentiles by faith are being grafted in to become part of true Israel; they are not replacing Israel. (See my journal on Romans 9-11.)

Rom. 9:6-7 For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children....

Rom. 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

It was through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus that the new covenant of grace was made available.

Rom. 10:4 For **Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Though the *church* began with a distinctly Jewish heritage, it has grown to be comprised mostly of Gentiles.

Rom. 10:12-13 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The time is coming, however, when God will once again respond to the cry of His people as they turn to Him in faith and repentance as they acknowledge Jesus as Savior. I am reminded of the words of Jesus as He expressed His heart toward Jerusalem.

Matt. 23:37-39 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, **Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**

And in Revelation we read of His future return.

Rev. 19:11-16 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

In summary:

- It is the old covenant based on obedience to the law that is being replaced with a new covenant—not the law itself.

- It is through Jesus that the new covenant has been established for the church (part of the true Israel, spiritual Israel).
- The church has been grafted into one entity with Israel and the believing remnant of Israel will one day again be grafted in to become part of the one true body of believers when Jesus returns in response to their acknowledgement of Him as Lord and Savior.
- The church has not replaced Israel.

Old Covenant

- *Based on works
- *Temporary atonement for sin using blood of animals
- *Written record of man
- *Mediated by Moses
- *Blessing dependent on faithfulness of man
- *No supernatural empowerment to enable man to keep covenant

New Covenant

- *Based on gift of grace
- *Permanent forgiveness of sin through blood of Jesus
- *Written on hearts by God
- *Mediated by Jesus
- *Blessing dependent on faithfulness of Jesus
- *Supernatural empowerment to enable man to keep covenant