

CHRIST, THE HIGH PRIEST OF THE NEW COVENANT

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Heart Transplantation: One of the most difficult surgeries as a last resort. Serious side effects after surgery. 15-20% mortality in one year. **But who can transform the heart, the nature of a person?**

The author was convincing his readers, who were tempted to go back to Judaism due to persecution:

- ▶ Christ is supreme over angels (Chp 1)
- ▶ Christ is supreme over Moses (Chp 2)
- ▶ Christ is supreme over Levitical priesthood (Chp 5-7)
- ▶ Christ is supreme over the Old Covenant (Chp 8-10)

The author of Hebrews was trying to convince people that the new covenant in Christ is better than and replaced the old religious system of sacrifices, rituals, and rules that had been in place for over 1,400 years.

A. OLD COVENANT

I. The State of the Old Covenant:

Hebrews 7:18-19, For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its **weakness and uselessness** (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 8:7, For if that first covenant had been **faultless**, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.¹

Note: Weakness, uselessness, and faultiness of the law speak in the context of **ineffectiveness to save sinners**, not that it is sinful. [cf. Romans 7:7-12]

II. The Pattern of the Old Covenant

Hebrews 9:1, Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.

The description of the Tent or Tabernacle [later come to be known as Temple]:

a) First section [The Holy Place]

¹ Psalm 19:7, The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;

Hebrews 9:2, For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.

- ▶ Lampstand [*The lamp was to be tended by Aaron and his sons so that its light never went out. The lampstand was to give forth light day and night*]
- ▶ Table
- ▶ Bread of the Presence [*arranged in two piles of six loaves each on a table of pure gold, representing the 12 tribes of Israel*] **[SHOW IMAGE]**

b) Second section [The Most Holy Place]

Hebrews 9:3-5, Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

- ▶ Golden altar of incense
- ▶ The ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold
 - Golden urn holding the manna
 - Aaron's staff that budded
 - The tablets of the covenant [the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments]
 - Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing **the mercy seat** **[SHOW IMAGE]**

c) The Ministry of the High Priest

Hebrews 9:6-7, These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

- ▶ Priests ministry in the holy place
- ▶ Only the high priest went into the most holy place
 - Once a year
 - Sprinkle blood on the mercy seat for his own and people's sins

Why blood?

- ❖ **Hebrews 9:22**, Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.**

Now, why did the author speak that the law was weak, useless, and faulty, meaning ineffective to save sinners, not that it is sinful.

III. The Ineffectiveness of the Old Covenant

1. In the Old Covenant, the law limited the access of all the people of God to the presence of God

- ❖ **Hebrews 7:18-19**, For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); **but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.**

2. In the Old Covenant, the law chose men who were weak and mortal

- ❖ **Hebrews 7:28**, For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests

3. In the Old Covenant, the law couldn't provide the perfect sacrifice for people's sins

- ❖ **Hebrews 10:1-4**, For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, **it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.** Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**
- ❖ **Hebrews 10:11**, And every priest stands daily at his service, **offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.**

4. In the Old Covenant, the law couldn't transform people's lives

Note: Paul's struggle with sin under the law (Romans 7)

- ❖ **Hebrews 8:7-9**, For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, **not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day**

**when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.
For they did not continue in my covenant...**

Old Testament scholar J. A. Thompson: “They had not merely refused to obey the law or to acknowledge Yahweh’s complete and sole sovereignty, but were incapable of such obedience.”

- ❖ **Galatians 3:19**, Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions (i.e. to show the sinfulness of man), **until the offspring [Christ] should come** to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

Second Helvetic Confession (1536), Ch. 7; Sec. 4: This law was not given to men that they might be justified by keeping it, but that rather from what it teaches we may know (our) weakness, sin and condemnation, and, despairing of our strength, might be converted to Christ in faith.

Summary:

1. In the Old Covenant, the law limited the access of all the people of God to the presence of God
2. In the Old Covenant, the law chose men who were weak and mortal
3. In the Old Covenant, the law couldn’t provide the perfect sacrifice for people’s sins
4. In the Old Covenant, the law couldn’t transform people’s lives

B. THE NEW COVENANT

- ❖ **Hebrews 7:11-12**, Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? **For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.**
- ❖ **Hebrews 7:22**, This makes Jesus the **guarantor of a better covenant**.
- ❖ **Hebrews 8:6**, But as it is, Christ has obtained **a ministry** [priestly ministry] that is as **much more EXCELLENT** than the **old** [Levitical priesthood] as the **covenant** he mediates is **BETTER [new covenant is better than the old]**, since it is enacted on **BETTER promises**. [new covenant promises]

- ❖ **Hebrews 8:13**, In **speaking of a new covenant**, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.
- ❖ **Hebrews 9:15**, **Christ is the mediator of a new covenant**,
- ❖ **Hebrews 10:9**, then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” **He does away with the first in order to establish the second.**

How is the second covenant / new covenant better than the old/first covenant?

1. **In the Old Covenant, the law limited the access of all the people of God to the presence of God**
1. **In the New Covenant, all God’s people have direct access to the most holy place through Christ Jesus.**

The work of Christ, entering into the presence of God as our great and better high priest, on our behalf.

Hebrews 8:1-2, Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of **the throne of the Majesty** in heaven, a minister in **the holy places**, in **the true tent that the Lord set up**, not man.

Hebrews 9:24, For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, **now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.**

Grand Privilege in Christ:

► **Present:**

Hebrews 7:18-19, For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, **through which we draw near to God.**

Hebrews 5:14-16, **Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God**, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence **draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

► **Future:**

Hebrews 6:28, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **will appear a second time**, not to deal with sin **but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him**.

Hebrews 6:19-20, We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the **inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf**, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Note: We don't need weak high priests in the new covenant. Christ is our only mediator through whom we can have direct access to God.

- ▶ We don't need pastors as mediators to approach God. There is only one mediator: the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all can draw near to God.

2. In the Old Covenant, the law chose men who were weak and mortal

2. In the New Covenant, Christ is our perfect high priest

Hebrews 7:28, For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a **Son who has been made perfect forever**.

Hebrew 5:9, And being made perfect, he became **the source of eternal salvation** to all who obey him...

3. In the Old Covenant, the law couldn't provide the perfect sacrifice for people's sins

3. In the New Covenant, Christ offered Himself as a perfect and one-time sacrifice for people's sins

Hebrews 7:27, He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since **he did this once for all when he offered up himself**.

Hebrews 9:11-12, But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption**.

Hebrews 9:25-28, Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, **he has appeared once for**

all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so **Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many,** will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 10:10-14, And by that will we have been sanctified **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when **Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins,** he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For **by a single offering** he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

4. In the Old Covenant, the law couldn't transform people's lives

4. In the New Covenant, God promises a new heart to live a transformed life

Hebrews 8:7-12, For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says [**cited Jeremiah 31:31-34 in about 600 B.C.**]: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when **I will establish a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

Hebrews 8:10, For this is the covenant that **I will make** with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **[NEW COVENANT]**

I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, **[NEW HEART]** and **I will** be their God, and **they shall** be my people. **[NEW COMMUNITY]**

OLD COVENANT:

- ❖ **Leviticus 26:3,** “If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them...**26:12,** “And I will walk among you and **will be your God, and you shall be my people.**”

NEW COVENANT:

- ❖ **Jeremiah 31:** ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. **And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): “I think the difference here pointed out between these two covenants, lies plainly here, that **in the old covenant God promised to be their God upon condition of hearty obedience**; obedience was stipulated as a condition, but not promised. But **in the new covenant, this hearty obedience is promised.**”

❖ **Titus 3:5**, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...**

Hebrews 8:10, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, **[NEW HEART]** and I will be their God, and **they shall** be my people. **[NEW COMMUNITY]**

David Peterson, a New Testament scholar: This gift [of regeneration] would be for his people collectively, not just for isolated individuals, so that they might function effectively as the covenant community.

Christopher Wright, a Old Testament scholar: The whole community of God's people will at last demonstrate in their corporate life and practice that they know and reflect the character of the God they worship. God's new covenant is for God's new society...It is a vision not merely of a new spirituality, but of a new society.

- ▶ The promise of a new heart is not to live as a better individual [although this does happen] but as a better community.
- ▶ Almost the entire New Testament letters are essentially about how to live a God's covenant community.

Hebrews 8:11, And **they shall** not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, **[NEW REVELATION]**

Daniel Hays, professor of biblical studies: This verse is not saying that there will be no need at all for theological teaching or Bible study; rather, it is saying that under the new covenant there will be a new, internalized connection between God and his people that will facilitate their ability to know (worship and obey) him.

❖ **John 6:44-45**, *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.* And I will raise him up on the last day. **It is written in the Prophets, And they will all be taught by God.'** *Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me...*

Hebrews 8:11b, from the least of them to the greatest. **[NEW RELATIONSHIP]**

Thomas Edward McComiskey (Old Testament scholar): “**From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord**” —“The prophet Jeremiah pictured when even the most lowly believer will have the same rights of access to God as did the prophets who ministered under the old covenant.”

Hebrews 8:12, For **I will** be merciful toward their iniquities, and **I will** remember their sins no more.” **[NEW HOPE]**

- ❖ **Hebrews 9:7**, the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the **unintentional sins** of the people.
- ❖ **Numbers 15:27–29**: **If one person sins unintentionally**, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them.
- ❖ **Numbers 15:30–31**, **But the person who does anything with a high hand [intentionally and defiantly]**, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.
- ❖ **Hebrews 8:12**, For **I will** be merciful toward their iniquities, and **I will** remember their sins no more.” **[NEW HOPE]**
- ❖ **1 John 1:7**, the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from **all sin**.
- ❖ **1 John 1:9**, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from **all unrighteousness**.

Observe: IN THE NEW COVENANT, THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN IS OFFERED WITH AN ASSURANCE OF THE CHANGE OF HEART (I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts).

THIS NEW COVENANT IS FULFILLED THROUGH CHRIST ALONE:

- ❖ **Luke 22:19-20**, And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This

cup that is poured out for you **is the new covenant** in my blood. (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:25)

John Piper: I take this to mean that the promises of the new covenant are purchased by the blood of Christ. Or to use the language of Hebrews, “This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:22). “He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). Therefore **all the promises of the new covenant are blood-bought promises**. When they come true for us they come true because Jesus died to make them come true. This means that the particular promises of the new covenant to create a people of God and keep a people of God are what Jesus died for.