

Hebrews 8:6-13 and 9:11-15 The Covenant of the Son

In our look at some passages in Hebrews the last few weeks, we have seen the author emphasize our need to Focus on the Son, Jesus Christ, who is completely divine and completely human. He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being and is worthy of worship. He has reminded us of the Faithfulness of the Son who was sent by the Father as the builder of God's house, his people, and is the faithful eternal high priest. He has reminded us about the Service of the Son as our eternal high priest who overcame every temptation and remained without sin. He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses and come to us in our time of need. He is an eternal high priest who brings eternal salvation. He emphasized the Sacrifice of the Son as the once-for-all sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sin. In our passage today the author will emphasize the Covenant of the Son.

The word covenant is an agreement between two people or two groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other. Human covenants or treaties were either between equals or between a superior and an inferior. Divine covenants, however, are always of the latter type, and the concept of covenant between God and His people is one of the most important theological truths of the Bible. Indeed, the word itself has come to denote the two main divisions of Christian Scripture: Old Covenant and New Covenant, traditionally known as the Old Testament and New Testament.

Carey Newman writes that "Covenant implies relationship, promise and expectation. Within the biblical tradition the covenant points to the unique relationship Yahweh (the LORD) established with the world through Israel, Yahweh's immutable and sacred pledge of faithfulness to this special relationship and Yahweh's legitimate expectation for his

people to respond appropriately (to live as covenant people). The covenant thus plays a central, if not controlling, role in understanding Israel's identity, history and place within God's purposes."¹

Leon Morris notes that "The idea of the new covenant is not confined to this epistle. It is implied in the narratives of the institution of the Lord's Supper in the first two Gospels (Matt 26:27–28; Mark 14:23–24). And it is explicit in Luke's longer narrative (Luke 22:20) and in Paul's account (1 Cor 11:25)."²

8:⁶ But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. ⁷ For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 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. ⁹It 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. ¹⁰This 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. ¹¹No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the

¹ Carey C. Newman, "[Covenant, New Covenant,](#)" in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 245.

² Leon Morris, "[Hebrews,](#)" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 79.

least of them to the greatest. ¹²For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” ¹³By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

9:¹¹ When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

1. Better and Superior to the Old Covenant

The first point in this passage is that the covenant of the Son is better than and superior to the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is the covenant God made with Israel through Moses known as the Law. To illustrate this point, Carey Newman writes that “The old covenant was earthly; the new covenant is heavenly (Heb 8:1; 9:1). The old covenant ministry was a copy and shadow (Heb 8:5; 9:23; 10:1); the new covenant is real (Heb 9:24) and true (Heb 8:2; 10:1). The old covenant featured human priests who were destined to die; the new covenant possesses a high priest who lives forever (Heb 9:28). The administration of a priest under the old covenant occurred according to the dictates of the law (Heb 8:4); the new covenant is directly and divinely

administered (Heb 8:1–2). A priest under the old covenant had to offer sacrifice for his own sins (Heb 9:7); Jesus’ sinlessness means that he did not offer sacrifice for himself (Heb 9:7). Under the old covenant multiple priests had to enter repeatedly the sanctuary to offer numerous sacrifices (Heb 9:6–7, 25; 10:11); under the new covenant a single high priest, Jesus, enters the heavenly sanctuary once (through his death and resurrection) and offers a singular sacrifice once and for all time (Heb 9:12, 26; 10:10, 12). The old covenant contained the sacrificial blood of animals (Heb 9:18–22); under the new covenant Jesus offers his own blood (Heb 9:12, 26). The efficacy of the old covenant offerings was limited (Heb 10:1–2); the efficacy of the new covenant sacrifice was definitive—there are no more offerings for sins. Under the old covenant the worshiper could not be perfected (Heb 9:9); under the new covenant a process of moral transformation has been enacted that will completely purify (Heb 9:14; 10:14).”³ “Against the backdrop of the OT priestly sacrificial system and within the horizon of hope generated by biblical prophecy, Hebrews presents a sustained, expositional argument that identifies Jesus as the superior, heavenly and sinless high priest, the mediator of a new and better covenant.”⁴

F.F. Bruce notes that “the covenant of which Jesus is Mediator may be inferred to be a better covenant from the simple fact that it is a *new* covenant. If the old covenant had been perfect, it would not have

³ Carey C. Newman, [“Covenant, New Covenant,”](#) in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 248.

⁴ Carey C. Newman, [“Covenant, New Covenant,”](#) in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 248.

needed to be superseded by a new one. And the new one must be better, for there would have been no point in replacing the old covenant by another no better than itself.”⁵ Thomas Lea emphasizes that “The Law had not met the needs of sinful human beings. The Law could reveal sin, but it could not remove it. It could not justify or save sinners. The problem was with the people who lacked the power to obey the Law.”⁶

The old covenant was powerless. Raymond Brown writes that “A better covenant was necessary because the old covenant could only point the way forward; it could not provide humans with the power to meet its requirements. In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. It had been in existence for a long time and served some important divine purposes, but now it is near destruction or is vanishing away. The new covenant which Jeremiah predicted has now come to rich fruition in Christ and his work for us. The old covenant was external. It was engraved on stone tablets. The new is within us; it forms part of our very souls. It was not a new covenant in its promise (*I will be their God*), for the old covenant offered that same intimate relationship. It was new in its ability to enable us not only to learn God’s instructions but to obey them.”⁷

2. Promised in Scripture

⁵ F. F. Bruce, [The Epistle to the Hebrews](#), Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 186.

⁶ Thomas D. Lea, [Hebrews, James](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 154.

⁷ Raymond Brown, [The Message of Hebrews: Christ above All](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 150–151.

The second point in this passage is that the Covenant of the Son was promised in scripture. Warren Wiersbe writes that “The better covenant that is referred to in this paragraph was announced by the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31–34). The promise was given in a prophecy that assured the Jews of future restoration. Jeremiah ministered during the closing years of the nation’s history, before Judah went into Babylonian Captivity. At a time when the nation’s future seemed completely destroyed, God gave the promise of restoration and blessing.”⁸ Bruce Barton writes that “The old covenant was replaced because it was not eternal, not sufficient to completely deal with sin, and could not provide sinful humanity with a relationship with God. In its time, however, the old covenant was necessary. But it needed to be replaced by a better covenant, as was prophesied by Jeremiah and quoted” by the writer of Hebrews.”⁹ Thomas Lea emphasizes that “The new covenant promises new moral power, personal knowledge, and forgiveness of sin. This verse begins a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31–34. It explicitly identifies Jeremiah’s words as God’s Word to establish that divine authority lay behind his quote. God had spoken something, and this verse makes his message clear.”¹⁰ The covenant of the Son is better and superior to the Old Covenant and is promised in scripture. If God promises something in scripture, he will be faithful to keep his promises.

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 305.

⁹ Bruce B. Barton et al., [*Hebrews*](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 117.

¹⁰ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 154–155.

3. Placed Internally in our Hearts and Minds

The next thing I want to emphasize is that the Covenant of the Son is placed internally in our hearts and minds. Leon Morris writes that “the new covenant is inward and dynamic: it is written on the hearts and minds of the people. A defect in the old had been its outwardness. It had divinely given laws, indeed; but it was written on tablets of stone. The people had not been able to live up to what they knew was the word from God. It remained external. Jeremiah looked for a time when people would not simply obey an external code but would be so transformed that God’s own laws would be written in their inmost beings.”¹¹ F.F. Bruce noted that “What was needed was a new nature, a heart liberated from its bondage to sin, a heart which not only spontaneously knew and loved the will of God but had the power to do it.”¹² Bruce Barton writes that “Under God’s new covenant, God’s law is inside us. It is no longer an external set of rules and principles. The Holy Spirit reminds us of Christ’s words, activates our consciences, influences our motives and desires, and makes us want to obey. Now we desire to do God’s will with all our heart and mind.”¹³

Thomas Lea emphasizes that the covenant of the Son “would be inward. God would write its content in the minds and hearts of his people. The old covenant could reveal the paths of good and evil, but it could not supply power to walk in righteousness. The power which

¹¹ Leon Morris, [“Hebrews,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 78.

¹² F. F. Bruce, [The Epistle to the Hebrews](#), Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 190.

¹³ Bruce Barton et al., [Life Application New Testament Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1034.

enabled believers to follow these laws was none other than the power of the Holy Spirit, who frees believers from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2–3). The words mind and heart apply to the whole person. The entire life of the believer experienced the effects of the presence of God’s laws.”¹⁴ The superior and better covenant of the Son was not only promised in scripture; it was also written in our hearts and minds internally empowering us to live in obedience to God.

4. Brings Intimate Knowledge of God

The covenant of the Son also brings intimate knowledge of God. Bruce Barton writes that “The new covenant provides intimacy with God: “I will be their God, and they will be my people.” This reveals a positive, close relationship between God and his people. In the first covenant, people continually failed to live up to this relationship. In the new covenant, this relationship is secured through Jesus Christ. Although the promise was always there, it now has a newer and richer meaning because of the provision of Christ.”¹⁵ Leon Morris notes that “For “from the least of them to the greatest,” all will know God. This does not mean that in the conditions of the new covenant there will be no place for a teacher. There will always be the need for those who have advanced in the Christian way to pass on to others the benefit of their knowledge. Rather, the meaning is that the knowledge of God will not be confined to a privileged few. All those in the new covenant will have their own

¹⁴ Thomas D. Lea, [Hebrews, James](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 155–156.

¹⁵ Bruce Barton et al., [Life Application New Testament Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1034.

intimate and personal knowledge of their God.”¹⁶ The indwelling Holy Spirit will not only empower people to live for God but will also guide, direct, and instruct the people of God. The superior and better covenant of the Son was not only promised in scripture, it was also written in our hearts and minds internally empowering us to live in obedience to God, and it brings us intimate knowledge of God.

5. Brings Complete Forgiveness of Sin

The covenant of the Son brings complete forgiveness of sin. Bruce Barton writes that “The new covenant provides complete forgiveness from sins: “I will forgive their wrongdoings, and I will never again remember their sins.” People of the old covenant had forgiveness of sins, but they had experienced an incomplete, unlasting forgiveness as demonstrated by the incessant need to make sacrifices for sins. In the new covenant, sin and its effect of separating people from God are eliminated. God wipes out memory of sin and renders sin as if it had never occurred. Sin’s impact is completely overcome, making it possible for believers to receive the promised blessing. There is no longer any barrier to our relationship with God.”¹⁷ The triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have accomplished the work needed for the forgiveness of sin. The Father sent the Son to die for the forgiveness of sin. The Son died on the cross as the sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sin empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit applies what the Son has accomplished on the cross to our lives when we trust and have faith in Jesus Christ. R.T. France notes that “The mention of the Holy

¹⁶ Leon Morris, [“Hebrews,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 78–79.

¹⁷ Bruce Barton et al., [Life Application New Testament Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1034.

Spirit in connection with Christ's self-offering serves to locate it in the spiritual realm as opposed to that of earthly ritual, and in the process affords one of those intriguing NT pointers toward the doctrine of the Trinity, in that all three Persons are involved in the work of atonement. "Conscience" recalls the comment in v. 9 that the OT sacrifices were unable to "perfect the conscience"; but Christ's offering can cleanse the conscience from "dead works."¹⁸ Bruce Barton says that "Empowered and ordained by the Holy Spirit, Christ made his sacrifice. Christ willingly offered himself as the sacrifice for the new covenant. Only he could do so because only he was *without spot*, that is, without sin. Christ's all-surpassing sacrifice obtains our cleansing."¹⁹ "Now that sins are forgiven, we can worship truly and freely. We are not limited to external actions, but we can worship in spirit. Our worship does not need to be mediated through a priest, but we can worship God on our own with unlimited access to him. If we were not cleansed from our consciences, we might be inhibited from worshiping. But being freed from our dead works and having a clean conscience allows us to put off our guilt so we can serve and worship effectively."²⁰ The superior and better covenant of the Son was not only promised in scripture, it was also written in our hearts and minds internally empowering us to live in obedience to God, and it brings us intimate knowledge of God. It also brings complete forgiveness of sins.

¹⁸ R. T. France, "[Hebrews](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 118.

¹⁹ Bruce B. Barton et al., [Hebrews](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 137.

²⁰ Bruce B. Barton et al., [Hebrews](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 139.

6. Mediated through the Sacrificial Death of Jesus

The covenant of the Son is mediated to us through the sacrificial death of Jesus. Bruce Barton notes that “Jesus is described as the “mediator” of this new covenant. In Hebrews, the word “mediator” is always used in conjunction with the new covenant. The new covenant needed a new mediator—a “go-between” who could ensure that both sides fulfilled their part of the agreement. As High Priest and Advocate, Jesus ensures God’s acceptance of us; as the one who sacrificed himself for our sins, Jesus ensures our acceptability before God. “For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human” (1 Timothy 2:5). More of how Jesus mediates the new covenant is found in Matthew 26:27–28; 1 Corinthians 11:24–25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 9:15; 12:24.”²¹ Peter O’Brien writes that “Jesus’ costly sacrifice has inaugurated the new covenant, and he has become its mediator. His death *as a ransom* has set men and women free from the sins committed under the first covenant, and as mediator Jesus guarantees to the listeners that all of God’s promises will be kept.”²² Leon Morris says “Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant. “Mediator” is a legal term for one who arbitrates between two parties. The thought is that Christ mediates between men and God; it is he who establishes the new covenant. This new covenant is better than the old because it is “founded on better promises.” The new covenant is explicitly based on the forgiveness of sins, as the author goes on to show; and the better promises may be held to refer to the

²¹ Bruce B. Barton et al., [Hebrews](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 116.

²² Peter T. O’Brien, [The Letter to the Hebrews](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 326–327.

concentration on spiritual things in the new covenant and in its unconditional nature.”²³

Bruce Barton writes that “Because Christ offered himself to God (9:14), he is the one who mediates the new covenant. As our High Priest, Christ acts as the mediator, or advocate, between us and God. He intercedes for all who believe, looking after their interests and presenting their requests to God.”²⁴ “Because Christ serves as our Mediator, all who are invited can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. The phrase, all who are invited, refers to all who believe in Jesus Christ and accept his sacrifice on their behalf. That they are “invited” points to God’s initiative in giving salvation. The inheritance is the final end of the new covenant—believers one day living in heaven with God. This inheritance will last forever.”²⁵ “The purpose of all the cleansing was to allow the people to worship the living God. Now that sins are forgiven, we can worship truly and freely. We are not limited to external actions; we can worship in spirit. Our worship does not need to be mediated through a priest; we can worship God on our own with unlimited access to him.”²⁶

The superior and better covenant of the Son was not only promised in scripture, it was also written in our hearts and minds internally

²³ Leon Morris, [“Hebrews,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 76.

²⁴ Bruce Barton et al., [Life Application New Testament Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1038.

²⁵ Bruce Barton et al., [Life Application New Testament Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1038.

²⁶ Bruce Barton et al., [Life Application New Testament Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 1038.

empowering us to live in obedience to God, and it brings us intimate knowledge of God. It also brings complete forgiveness of sins, and it is mediated through the sacrificial death of Jesus.

In a moment we are going to continue our time of worship through the remembrance and celebration of the Lord's Supper. F.F. Bruce writes "When Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, gave his disciples the cup and said, "This is my blood of the covenant, shed for many" (Mark 14:24), the Passover context of the incident would surely have made them link his words with "the blood of the covenant" which God established with his people Israel in the days of Moses on the basis of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 24:8). Nor can we doubt that Jesus' intention was to announce that now at length that earlier covenant was to be replaced by the "new covenant" foretold by Jeremiah midway between Moses' day and his own."²⁷

Ray Stedman writes "On the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took a cup of wine, passed it to his disciples and said: "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:27–28). With those words and that symbolic action, he borrowed the phrase used by Moses when he took the blood of an animal, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Ex 24:8). The contrast was deliberate. Moses used the blood of an animal; Jesus used wine as a symbol of his own blood. Moses spoke of the covenant of the law; Jesus alluded to the new covenant of grace. Moses spoke of God's words which provided for the partial covering of sins so God could remain with his people; Jesus

²⁷ F. F. Bruce, [*The Epistle to the Hebrews*](#), Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 194.

promised the actual remission of sins so God could live within his people forever. It is that excellent new covenant which chapters 8–10 of Hebrews expounds.”²⁸

Billy Graham wrote that “Christ’s dying on the cross was more than the death of a martyr. It was more than His setting a good example by offering His life for His fellow man. His was the sacrifice that God had appointed and ordained to be the one and only sacrifice for sin. The Scripture says, “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief” (Isaiah 53:6, 10). Because God Himself has set forth Christ to be the covering for human guilt, then God cannot possibly reject the sinner who accepts Jesus Christ as Savior. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:25).” The idea of propitiation means that the wrath and judgment of God on sin is satisfied it is appeased through the sacrificial death of Jesus. Billy Graham says “This is what the communion table in the church is all about. Every time we eat the bread we are remembering the body of Christ nailed to the cross for us, and every time we drink the wine (in our case grape juice) we are remembering the blood that was shed on the cross as a covering for our sins. A little girl, seeing a cross on the communion table, asked, “Mama, what is that plus sign doing on the table?” The cross is God’s great plus sign of history.”²⁹ The Covenant of the Son forgives our sins and reconciles us to God.

²⁸ Ray C. Stedman, [Hebrews](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), Heb 8:1–13.

²⁹ Billy Graham, [Unto the Hills: A Daily Devotional](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010).