

Hebrews
Chapter Eight
Leon L. Combs, Ph.D.

Heb 8:1-2 Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ²a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

The author is now choosing the chief point of what has preceded and will further develop it. Jesus Christ is the High Priest of all time who has been given the name above all names (Adonai, Kurios, or Lord) and is so great that He has taken His seat at the right hand of the Throne of God. The “Majesty in the heavens” is a reverent mannerism of referring to God and being seated at His right hand is the greatest honor of all. “Heavens” refers to the dwelling place of God. The Greek word that is translated “minister” means a servant and, in this context, means a servant of God. It is very interesting that it is used immediately following the statement of Him being the High Priest who is seated at the right hand of God. This is a seat of power and authority and He exercises such for His people but primarily for the glory of the Father. The word tabernacle literally means tent and a tent was used during the wilderness wanderings for worship. Now, however, Jesus and the Father are in the true tabernacle, where “true” means the reality of what was a type in the OT. This true tabernacle is not made by man but by God. This true reality belongs to the same realm as the rest of the believers in chapters 3 and 4. This last part of verse 2 is sometimes translated as “not by any human hand” and is used in Scripture to refer to several things:

1.) The resurrection body as opposed to the body of flesh and blood:

2 Cor 5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2.) Objects of worship:

Acts 19:26 "And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.

3.) Ordinances such as circumcision:

Col 2:11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

Eph 2:11 Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—

4.) Sacred buildings:

Mark 14:58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"

Acts 7:48 "However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says:

Acts 17:24-25 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things;

Heb 8:3-7 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. ⁴Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; ⁵who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." ⁶But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

The author stated in 5:1 that the high priests have the duty to offer gifts and sacrifices. Gifts were offerings of expression of thankfulness to God and the sacrifices related to making temporary expiation for sin. Since Jesus is the High Priest seated in the heavenly places He also must offer something and he will expound on this in 9:14. His offering was of Himself and such was done prior to His resurrection and He is not continually making offerings in heaven for such was excluded in 7:27. When on earth Jesus did not function in the Temple as the earthly priests but was, from that standpoint, a layman. Jesus was not even of the correct tribe since He was from Judah. He did not take over the duties of the earthly priests for such were of no lasting value to anyone's righteousness before God. The earthly priests, the sanctuary, and the Temple were all imperfect copies and shadows of reality that exists only in heaven. God warned Moses in Exodus 25:40 that he was to make the worship things according to the heavenly pattern he was shown on the mountain. Moses may have been shown the heavenly dwelling place or a model of it but he was given all he needed to provide the acceptable copy or shadow of the dwelling place of God. *Exodus 25:9 "According to all that **I am going to show you**, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.*

*Exodus 26:30 "Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to **its plan which you have been shown** in the mountain.*

*Exodus 27:8 "You shall make it hollow with planks; **as it was shown to you in the mountain**, so they shall make it.*

Jesus has a greater ministry than the earthly priests as he is the One who can perfectly mediate between the people and God and bases His actions upon a better covenant than the old covenant. The new covenant is based explicitly on the forgiveness of all sins and is unconditional whereas the old covenant was based upon the occupancy of land and other things and was conditional

upon the obedience of the people. The old covenant was unable to bring people into permanent peace with God and therefore was faulty in that regard. Therefore there was a need for a better covenant and a single High Priest who could stand before God and arbitrate between the people and God.

Heb 8:8-13 For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; ⁹Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers On the day when I took them by the hand To lead them out of the land of Egypt; For they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care for them, says the Lord. ¹⁰"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people. ¹¹"And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' For all shall know Me, From the least to the greatest of them. ¹²"For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more." ¹³When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

This long quotation from Jer 31:31-34 makes the point that the old covenant that gave Israel its religious experiences was superseded by a new covenant. The speaker is God as clearly indicated by "says the Lord". This promise has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The houses of Israel and Judah had long been separated when Jeremiah wrote these words but his vision incorporated the time when they would be united. In verse nine God states that the new covenant will not be like the one He made with them when He led them like a father leads a little child away from trouble. The ratification of that first covenant is stated in Exodus 24:1-8. The basics of the covenant are stated earlier by Jeremiah:

Jer 7:23 "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.'

The response of the people to this commandment is then stated:

Jer 7:24-26 "Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. ²⁵"Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. ²⁶"Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did evil more than their fathers.

But the people would not persevere so He abandoned them (8:9).

The **first** significant aspect of the covenant is that the people will be one in their devotion to Him. In verse ten he elaborates by starting with the word "for". "After those days" is a way to state that the new covenant will be in their future but not explicitly stated in a specified time

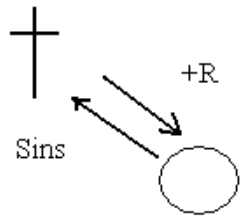
period. Here he brings out the **second** important feature of the new covenant. The difference between the covenants is vast for the old was written on stone and the new will be written in their hearts. This is far more than mere memorization for such had been made in the old as stated in Deut 6:6-9. Just memorizing is no provision for a life function in accordance with what was memorized. In the Presbyterian Church we find many people who know the catechisms and much of the Westminster Confession by heart but they know little about the Bible and their daily walk is more in accord with a secondary source rather than the true source. This implanting of knowledge in the heart is in essence the giving of a new heart as stated in Ezekiel 11:19. People need a new heart for otherwise the flesh will weaken the resolve to obey (Rom 8:3). In the old covenant God had stated that He would be their God and they would be His people (Exodus 6:7) but in the new covenant the relationship will be stronger and permanent because it is written internally rather than externally. The new relationship will form a bond that was not capable of being prepared under the old covenant. Jesus stated that the source of evil was in the heart of men but when the heart is changed the actions change:

Matt 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

Mark 7:21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

Luke 6:45 "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

In the new heaven and earth God states again that “they shall be His peoples, and God shall be with them” (Rev 21:3) but note that here the noun is plural for the people are not limited to just Israel and Judah. The **third** important aspect of this new covenant is that people will not have to be taught the knowledge of God but they will all know God. This means that all of God’s people will have a personal and intimate knowledge of the presence and purpose of God although all will still need teachers who have developed keener insights into the things of God. The perfection discussed by the author involves the people being totally known by God as well as knowing God (Gal 4:9; 1 Cor 8:3; 13:12). The **fourth** significance of the new covenant is that in it all sins are forgiven. This is the paramount feature of the covenant for in the old covenant such was never attained. If Holy God remembered their sins He would have to act against them. For God to not remember them means that, by His grace, He has decided to forgive them in harmony with His holiness. The one-time sacrifice of Jesus Christ led to complete forgiveness of sins for those given faith to trust and believe in Him so that the wrath of God was forever taken away from them: *John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* We call this process double imputation in that all the sins of the chosen people are completely exonerated by the act of Jesus and His righteousness was put permanently into the spiritual accounts of those people. Thus, before God, all the chosen people are Saints and no longer sinners.



2 Cor 5:21
Double Imputation

People do not discuss with God and come to some mutual agreement about a covenant between them and God! God alone dictates the covenant and He alone chooses the people with whom He will make this covenant. Since there now is a new covenant the old one is replaced and not one to which the people should think about returning. The only reason that it has not totally disappeared from the face of the earth is that some people insist on keeping that which no longer exists! The New Testament states this same fact in several instances:

Matt 26:27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;

Matt 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Mark 14:23 And when He had taken a cup, and given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank from it.

Mark 14:24 And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Luke 22:20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

1Cor 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

2Cor 3:6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

This new covenant refers to the fulfillment of what has been superseded rather than a distinct opposition to the old covenant. As the covenant with Moses is antiquated, so also is the Aaronic priesthood, the earthly sanctuary, and the Levitical sacrifices as all were established under that old covenant. God totally closed the door for the old covenant with the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. It is sad how few Christians understand the liberty into which we have entered with this new covenant. Even though we still sin, we are not sinners but saints before Holy God by the double imputation discussed earlier. No longer are we under the Law to earn our salvation for we have entered into the Holy Sabbath rest with God.