

**Text: Heb 8.8b-12**

So, today we turn to Hebrews 8.8b-12, where the author of Hebrews quotes the New Covenant from the book of Jeremiah.

There is a lot to say about this passage. I really want to look at the whole quotation, but I have 8 full pages of notes (including v. 13). There is more than I can fit into one sermon. (I don't know how many sermons it will take!)

Today I want to concentrate on the content of the New Covenant as quoted here. There are some very minor differences with the text in Jeremiah, so we will just ignore these. (Seem mostly consequence of translation...)

There are questions that arise from the content, but I won't answer all of them today.

In Hebrews, the emphasis is contrast.

There is the old way of relating to God

And there is the new way of relating to God

The readers are experiencing trials that tempt them to go back to the old way. Some of them may have already done this, and the author is working hard to show how useless it would be to go back.

Here, in the heart of his book, he points to the New Covenant. The New Covenant is Old Testament revelation, found in Jeremiah 31.

Last week we saw how God found fault with the Old Covenant and thus spoke to the people through Jeremiah:

NET Heb 8:8 ¶ But showing its fault, God says to them

We also talked about which OT covenant the New Covenant replaces.

NOT the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant (land, people, blessing)

NOT the unconditional Davidic Covenant (a Son to rule)

BUT the conditional Mosaic Covenant (If you will obey, you will be my people)

The issue of these two covenants is, "How can I be part of the people of God?"

Read Heb 8.8b-12

**Proposition: Hope of eternal life rests in the New Covenant alone.**

## I. Proclamation

### A. God's reasons for replacing the Old with the New

#### 1. Jeremiah 7.16-20; 21-27

“Prophet after prophet came to Israel and Judah, recalling the people to their covenant loyalty; Jeremiah himself was no exception. ‘Hear the words of this covenant, and do them,’ was his call (Jer. 11:6); and with that call went the assurance that the blessings attached to the keeping of the covenant would still be theirs if they were obedient, while persistent disobedience to it would bring a curse upon them as it had done upon their fathers.”<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. Jeremiah 11.6-8

### B. God is the one who acts to replace the Old with the New

#### 1. “I will effect” (8)

#### 2. “I will...” (10 [3x], 12 [2x])

“The speaker in this oracle of the new covenant is God: it is to him that the repeated pronouns of the first person singular—I, me, my—refer. ... So our author, as is his custom, ignores the fact that it was delivered through Jeremiah; the divine authorship is all that he is concerned with.”<sup>2</sup>

### C. “New” means the “old” is replaced

#### 1. This is not merely a renewal of the old, a new start

#### 2. This is not merely revival

#### 3. This is an entirely new thing, related to the old in one sense, but a replacement for the old in every other sense

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 188.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce, 187.

## II. Negation

### A. The day God took them by the hand

Note the tender expression, as if Israel was “but a child”

1. The exodus
2. The covenant made at Mt Sinai [God and people]
  - a. God thundered from the mountain

[the people asked Moses to speak with God for them after the opening statement of the 10 Commandments – Ex 20.18-21]

- b. God spoke to Moses (Ex 21-23)
- c. The people responded with promises (Ex 24.1-8)

### B. “They ... I” emphasis

1. Both pronouns in emphatic position
  - a. **They** did not continue...
  - b. I did not care...
2. They were in breach, I abandoned them
3. They refused, I judged
4. The broken covenant cannot form any basis of the new covenant: it is negated

## III. Affirmations

### A. “For” = “because”

1. The new covenant is contrasted with the old
2. The new covenant is entirely different from the old

### B. The New Covenant involves God creating a spiritual change in the people of the covenant

1. The Old Testament anticipated this in other prophets (Ezek 36.26-29)
2. The New Covenant reunites the nation (made with the house of Israel (compare v. 8)

### 3. The New Covenant effects spiritual change: new minds, new hearts

“The old law was written on tables of stone: the new laws are written on the heart and become, so to speak, part of the personality of the believer.”<sup>3</sup>

### 4. The New Covenant achieves what the Old could not

- a. Compare Exodus 6.7
- b. Compare Leviticus 26.12

Remember the negation: “They did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them”

### 5. The New Covenant gives the people personal knowledge of God (11)

- a. Probably not fully complete until the resurrection/millennium
- b. Nonetheless, the people of God are no longer strangers to God — everything has changed

## IV. Foundation

A. Again, “for” = “because” — this is the grounds of the spiritual change

B. God’s mercy to the iniquity of the people

1. Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve
2. Mercy is God refusing to give us what we DO deserve
3. The pledge of New Covenant efficacy:

“It rests upon forgiveness on the part of God, not on performance on the part of man.”<sup>4</sup>

C. God emphatically forgets their sins

1. Lit., “and the sins of them I will not not remember yet” — double negative
2. In Hebrew, “remembering” = more than mere mental effort, it has consequences

<sup>3</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 224–25.

<sup>4</sup> Westcott, 226.

- a. God remembered Cornelius and saved him (Ac 10.1-4, 30-33)
  - b. God will remember Babylon the great and destroy her (Rev 16.19-21, 18.4-6)
3. In the Old covenant, every sacrifice was a remembrance of sins (Heb 10.1-4)
  4. In the New covenant, there is one sacrifice for sins – there is no remembering them

The four promises: New heart, New relationship with God, New knowledge of God, Permanent forgiveness of sins — “These are the better promises that the writer referred to earlier (v. 6). Note that they are unconditional; the Israelites would not have to do anything to obtain these promises.”<sup>5</sup>

### Conclusion:

**Proposition: Hope of eternal life rests in the New Covenant alone.**

This new covenant is for you, if you receive it.

You don't have to do anything, it's all done.

Jesus obeyed the Law for you, he will give a new mind and a new heart to all who receive him.

Years ago, I spoke to a young man who agreed with me about all the theology of salvation.

- He agreed that he was a sinner
- He agreed that Jesus was God's Son and had paid for his sin
- He agreed that salvation was by faith in Christ alone

But he said, “I just don't think I can live it,” meaning, he didn't think he could live like a Christian.

What he missed was that God would give him all he needed for living.

That was a problem for him, but a worse problem is when someone says they have received, but they show no change of heart or change of mind. They think they are fine, and they blame their sins on other people.

Here the call of Christ, trust him, and he will give you everything you need to live for him.

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<sup>5</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Heb 8.8.