

The Letter to the Hebrews: A Better Covenant

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The video version is available at: <https://youtu.be/9hmFfv8ydt4>

The scripture reading is Hebrews 8:1-10:18

In the first seven chapters of the letter to the Hebrews, the author established that Yeshua was the Son of God whose position was higher than the angels. Through Yeshua, the high priest of an order higher than that of the Aaronic priesthood, believers have an inheritance described as "entering into God's rest." This is a radical concept. The sons of Aaron, under the covenant made at Mt. Sinai, act as mediators between God and man bringing the offerings and sacrifices of the people to God. However, they don't hold the office high priest in the world to come! what does it mean for the covenant made at Mt. Sinai? what is the nature of Yeshua's role as high priest in the world to come?

In the covenant made at Mt. Sinai, God took the children of Israel as His people. The covenant was mediated by Moses who traveled up and down Mt. Sinai relaying God's words and the peoples' responses. Moses acted in the role as a priest. Moses is the one who brought the covenant sacrifice and sprinkled the blood on both the people and the book of God's words. Moses set up the tabernacle and ordained Aaron and his sons to be set aside as priests to God.

The author of Hebrews established that Yeshua has a higher position than that of Moses and that He is a priest of a higher order than Aaron. The primary reason Yeshua's priesthood is greater than that of Aaron is that, unlike the sons of Aaron, Yeshua is perfect. God revealed this through David by His own oath!

Hebrews 7:28 NKJV 28 For the law appoints as high priests, men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

Yeshua's perfection is necessary in order to minister in the heavenly tabernacle erected by God.

Hebrews 8:1-2 NKJV 1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

This tabernacle in which Yeshua ministers is the true tabernacle!

Hebrews 8:3-5 NKJV 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

The tabernacle in the wilderness built by Moses and later the temple built by David's son Solomon on this physical earth were only shadows and temporary until we see the full manifestation of the eternal temple in the eternal city of Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:1-3 NKJV 1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a

loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Yeshua's role in the eternal temple is the same as that of the sons of Aaron in the earthly tabernacle. He is to bring gifts and sacrifices from the people but also from Himself. The offering that He offers from Himself is Himself!

Ephesians 5:2 NKJV 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

The author of Hebrews concludes this section with the statement that Yeshua is like both Moses and Aaron in that He is both mediator and priest.

Hebrews 8:6 NKJV 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

This is the point at which the writer of Hebrews begins a comparison between the covenant mediated by Moses at Mt. Sinai and the covenant mediated by Yeshua. He begins by describing the reason a new covenant is needed and designating the parties involved in this new and better covenant first spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah.

Hebrews 8:7-12 NKJV 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- 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 did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded 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 in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

The children of Israel broke the covenant at Mt. Sinai. This covenant did not have the power to redeem them from the consequences of breaking the covenant. Paul explains this inability to justify the sinner to the believers and others in Antioch.

Acts 13:38-39 NKJV 38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Because the original covenant did not have the power to save, a new covenant was needed. This new covenant was between the same parties as the original covenant; it was with the children of Israel described here as both the house of Judah and the house of Israel. At the time of Jeremiah's prophecy, the house of Israel had already been taken into exile by the Assyrians while the house of Judah was under siege by Babylon.

In the covenant at Mt. Sinai, God spoke the words of the covenant to the people and then gave Moses tablets containing the main points of the covenant provisions. In this better covenant, the words of the covenant provisions are to be written on the hearts of the children of the houses of Israel and Judah. This is not a new concept; David wrote in a Psalm about writing the Torah on his heart.

Psalms 40:8 NKJV 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart."

Although the new covenant began with Yeshua's death and resurrection, it has not yet been fully realized. Jeremiah stated that under this new covenant, no one would be needed to teach his brother because they would all have the Torah written on their hearts. This has quite obviously not yet been fulfilled as the writer of Hebrews then goes on to acknowledge.

Hebrews 8:13 NKJV 13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

The word "obsolete" comes from the Greek word pal-ah-yo'-o," number 3822 in Strong's Greek Concordance meaning to make or become worn out. The old covenant is becoming worn out and ready to vanish or disappear. Neither of those things has yet come to pass! Isaiah writes of the old creation vanishing away when the new creation comes into being.

Isaiah 65:17 NKJV 17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

So, we see that we are in a transition period. The new is coming into being and the old is fading away. The process will be complete at the end of Yeshua's one thousand year reign.

The author of Hebrews then goes on to describe the various parts of the earthly tabernacle. He reminds his readers that it was indeed a holy place on earth built and furnished according to God's plan. Only the priests could enter the tabernacle with the Holy of holies restricted to the high priest once a year.

Hebrews 9:7-8 NKJV 7 But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; 8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

In contrast, Yeshua enters the perfect tabernacle which is not part of this earth. Although He, also, must come into the Holy of Holies with blood. This blood is not with the blood of animals but His own blood.

Hebrews 9:11-12 NKJV 11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

It is because of the power of His blood that He is the mediator of the New Covenant. It both cleanses us from sin and establishes the New Covenant.

Hebrews 9:14-15 NKJV 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Now, all of a sudden it seems that the author abandons his discussion of a covenant and starts talking about a will or testament about the disposition of a person's property after his death and then jumps back to talking about a covenant! Let's look at the New King James translation of Hebrews 9:16-18.

Hebrews 9:16-18 NKJV 16 For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. 18 Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.

What is all this about a testament? The first thing we need to do is to look at the Greek behind our English translations. The Greek word that is translated as testament in verses 16 and 17 is the same Greek word translated as covenant in verse 18 and in the quote of Jeremiah thirty one in Hebrews 8:7-12. That word in the Greek is "dee-ath-ay'-kay," number 1242 in Strong's Concordance. It is defined as either a covenant or a testament. But those are two very different things. However, the word is used in the Greek Septuagint exclusively to translate the Hebrew word "brit" which always means covenant. This gets confusing! For instance, the King James Version translates "dee-ath-ay'-kay" as testament when Yeshua drinks the cup at His last Seder. Matthew 26:28 in the King James version reads:

Matthew 26:28 KJV 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

All of our modern translations have corrected this translation error and now correctly use the word covenant for the Greek Dee-ath-ay'-kay. In fact, every use of this word has now been correctly translated as covenant in the Apostolic writings except in this one passage in Hebrews where it is still translated as testament. The Young's Literal Translation of the Bible translates the verses correctly using the word covenant.

Hebrews 9:16-18 YLT 16 for where a covenant is, the death of the covenant-victim to come in is necessary, 17 for a covenant over dead victims is steadfast, since it is no force at all when the covenant-victim liveth, 18 whence not even the first apart from blood hath been initiated,

We can see now that the author of Hebrews is describing a covenant ceremony which is cut or put in place when the covenant sacrificial animal is slain, cut in parts, and the parties of the covenant pass through the parts. The next verses clearly apply this process to the covenant ceremony at Mt. Sinai.

Hebrews 9:19-21 NKJV 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." 21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

So, in this passage from verses sixteen through twenty one, the author has described how Yeshua establishes the New Covenant as both the Mediator and the covenant sacrifice. The word testament does not apply. This is not the last will and testament of Yeshua and the disposition of His property after death!

Not only is a covenant established by shedding the blood of the sacrifice, purification or atonement is made by shedding blood.

Leviticus 17:11 NKJV 11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'

The author of Hebrews describes how Yeshua's blood makes atonement for us.

Hebrews 9:22-26 NKJV 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. 23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies

of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another-- 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Atonement is necessary for us because we face judgment after death.

Hebrews 9:27-28 NKJV 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Yeshua's blood accomplished in the heavenly temple what the blood of animal sacrifices could not accomplish in the earthly temple. His blood accomplishes three things: it paid the penalty for the transgression of the first covenant, established the New Covenant, and atones for our sins. The sacrifices and offerings at the tabernacle and, later, the temple could not accomplish this because they were imperfect and are only a shadow!

Hebrews 10:1-4 NKJV 1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

The purpose of the earthly sacrifices is to remind the one who brings the sacrifice that he has sinned. This, in turn, reminds the person to turn back to God and be obedient to Him. This is what God truly wants!

Hosea 6:6 NKJV 6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

The author of Hebrews goes on to quote Psalm 40, a psalm of David expanding on this point.

Hebrews 10:5-7 NKJV 5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come--In the volume of the book it is written of Me--To do Your will, O God.'"

Yeshua came to do the will of the Father. The Father's will, was that Yeshua be our sin offering, our covenant sacrifice, and our atonement, making it then possible for us to enter into His rest!

Hebrews 10:10 NKJV 10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Yeshua does not need to repeat His sacrifice. It is accomplished once and for all.

Hebrews 10:11-14 NKJV 11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Even now, Yeshua is at the right hand of the Father waiting for the fullness of His kingdom to come to Earth. He waits for all His enemies to be defeated. He waits for the New Covenant to be fully realized. In the meantime, the covenant established at Mt. Sinai with the temple and sacrificial system is still in effect, even as the New Covenant is in process of coming into being.

The author of Hebrews wraps up this section on the New Covenant by once again quoting Jeremiah that this covenant is with the House of Israel and the house of Judah and will be written on their hearts. Through the promise to Abraham, it is by this covenant that the Gentiles are grafted in.

Study Questions:

1. In this teaching we pointed out the mistranslation of the Greek word *diatheke* as testament when it should be translated as covenant. Discuss the implications of this long-standing mistranslation.
2. What is the purpose of the earthly Tabernacle and the Temple? How do they reestablish the relationship between God and man? What is the significance of the long standing absence of the Temple in the place of God's choosing?
3. According to the Bible, what is the definition of "world to come" and what is Yeshua's role as high priest at that time?
4. According to the Bible, the sacrificial system established at Mt. Sinai is re established and in effect during the millennial reign of Yeshua. In the teaching we said that it served as a reminder of sin and the need for repentance. Is there more to it than that?
5. Hebrews 8:16 says that Yeshua has made the first covenant obsolete. In what way is the first covenant obsolete?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?