

**I OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS**

- PURPOSE:** To present the **sufficiency** and **superiority** of Jesus Christ.
- AUTHOR:** The Holy Spirit, through Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Philip, Priscilla, and others.
- TIMELINE:** Before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Best dates are 67-69 A.D.
- SETTING:** Jewish Christians were probably undergoing persecution, socially and physically, from both the Jews and Romans. Although the last days had begun, Christ had not returned to establish his Millennial Kingdom and the people needed to be reassured that Christianity was true and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

**BLUEPRINT:**

- 1. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST (1:1-10:18)**
  - a) Christ is greater than angels
  - b) Christ is greater than Moses
  - c) Christ is greater than the Old Testament priesthood
  - d) The new covenant is greater than the old covenant**
- 2. THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH (10:19-13:25)**

**MEGATHEMES OF HEBREWS**

<b>THEME</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
<b>Christ is superior</b>	<b>Hebrews reveals Jesus’ true identity as God and the ultimate authority. He is greater than any religion and greater than any angel. He is superior to any Jewish leader and priest. He is the complete revelation of God.</b>	<b>Jesus alone can forgive your sin. He has secured your forgiveness and salvation by His death on the cross. You can find peace with God and the real meaning of life by believing in Christ.</b>
High Priest	In the OT, the High Priest represented the Jews before God. Jesus Christ links us with God. There is no other superior way to reach God. Because Jesus lived a sinless life, he is the perfect substitute to die for our sin. He is our perfect representative with God.	Jesus guarantees our access to God the Father, interceding for us so we can boldly come before Him with our needs. When we are weak we can confidently come to God for forgiveness and help.

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
Sacrifice	Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate fulfillment of all that the OT sacrifices represented; God's forgiveness for sin. Because Christ is the perfect sacrifice for our sin, our sins are completely forgiven: past, present and future.	Christ removed sin which barred us from God's presence and fellowship. By believing in Him we are no longer guilty, but cleansed and made whole. His sacrifice makes the way for us to have eternal life.
Maturity	Though we are saved from sin when we believe in Christ, we are given the task to go on and grow in our faith. Through our relationship with Christ we can live blameless lives, be set aside for His special use and develop maturity.	The process of maturing in our faith takes time. Daily commitment and service produce maturity. When we are mature in our faith, we are not easily swayed or shaken.
Faith	Faith is confident trust in God. God's salvation is in his son Jesus, who is the only one who can save us from our sin.	If you trust in Jesus Christ for your complete salvation, He will transform you completely. A life of obedience and complete truth is pleasing to God.

**II BACKGROUND**

Because Jesus died once for all, He brought the sacrificial system to an end, forgiving all sins committed in the past and to be committed in the future. By the shedding of His blood, His death and resurrection, the New Covenant between God and man was consummated, and with that, the Old Covenant ceased to exist. The New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant in all aspects as seen in the table below.

Hebrews	Old Covenant Under Moses	New Covenant in Christ	Application
8:3-4	Gifts and sacrifices by those guilty of sin	Self-sacrifice by the guiltless Christ	Christ died for sinners
8:5-6; 10-12	Focused on a physical building where one goes to worship	Focuses on the reign of Christ in believer's hearts	God is intimately involved in your life
8:5-6; 10-12	A shadow	A reality	Eternal, not temporal
8:6	Limited promises	Limitless promises	We can trust God's promises to us
8:8-9	Failed agreement by the people	Faithful agreement by Christ	Christ has kept the agreement where people could not

Hebrews	Old Covenant Under Moses	New Covenant in Christ	Application
9:1	External standards and rules	Internal standards and a new heart	God sees both actions and motives. We are accountable to God, not rules
9:7	Limited access to God	Unlimited access to God	God is personally achievable
9:9-10	Legal cleansing	Personal cleansing	God's cleansing is complete
9:11-14; 24-28	Continual sacrifice	Conclusive sacrifice	Christ's sacrifice was perfect and final
9:22	Forgiveness earned	Forgiveness freely given by grace	We have true and complete forgiveness
9:24-28	Repeated annually	Completed by Christ's death	Christ's death can be applied to our sin
9:26	Available to some	Available to all who are called	Available to the sinner by faith

### III SCRIPTURE

A new and better Covenant with Jesus, our heavenly priest is described in Hebrews 8.

**(1-2) Summary of previous points made regarding Jesus as our High Priest:** We have a High Priest, Jesus Christ, who ministers for us from a position of all authority in heaven as He is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty.

Jesus is seated in heaven, in contrast to the continual service of the priesthood under the Law of Moses. The tabernacle and the temple of the Old Covenant had beautiful furnishings, but no place for the priests to sit down, because their work was never finished. The work of Jesus is finished as He is seated in heaven.

Jesus serves in the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, the original made by God, of which the earthly tabernacle was a copy, made by man (**Exodus 25:8-9**).

**(3) Jesus' priesthood had a better sacrifice:** Sacrifice for sin is essential to the concept of priesthood. Jesus, representing a superior priesthood, offered a superior infinite sacrifice. He laid down His own life to atone for sin. It was the only payment acceptable to an infinite God.

Though Jesus never offered a sacrifice according to Mosaic Law, He offered a better sacrifice instead: Himself.

**(4-5) Jesus' priesthood had a better temple:** Jesus is not qualified to serve in the inferior earthly priesthood. There are plenty of priests who were qualified to serve in the priesthood according to the Law of Moses.

There were plenty of priests who could serve in the copy and shadow on earth. But Jesus is the only One qualified to serve in the superior heavenly priesthood. The earthly service, though it was glorious in the eyes of man, was really only a copy and shadow of the superior heavenly service.

**Exodus 25:40** makes it clear that what was built on the earth (i.e., Moses' tabernacle) was made according to a pattern which existed in heaven which was shown to Moses on the mountain. Therefore, there is a heavenly temple that served as a pattern for the earthly tabernacle and temple. Jesus' ministry as our High Priest takes place in this heavenly temple, not in the copy and shadow.

Under the old Jewish system, priests were only chosen from the tribe of Levi and daily sacrifices were offered on the altar for the forgiveness of sins (**Hebrews 7:12-14**). This old system would not have allowed Jesus to be priest because He was from the tribe of Judah. However, His perfect sacrifice ended all need for priests and sacrifices.

**(6) Jesus presides over a superior priesthood, with a better covenant, and better promises:** No earthly priest could take away sin the way Jesus did, so Jesus' ministry is far better than the ministry of the priesthood under the Law of Moses.

Jesus has mediated for us a better covenant, a covenant of grace, not works, which is guaranteed for us by a cosigner (**Hebrews 7:22**). It is a covenant marked by believing and receiving instead of by earning and deserving. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, because he "brought the two parties together." Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, a better covenant, bringing us to God the Father.

Jesus has better promises for us, as follows:

1. Promises to see us through the most desperate and dark times;
2. Promises that become alive to us through the Spirit of God; and,
3. Promises of blessing and unmerited favor instead of promises of cursing.

Jesus is our Mediator for this greater covenant. Mediator is the ancient Greek word *mesites*, which means "one who stands in the middle between two people and brings them together." (Barclay)

#### An overview of covenants through God's redemptive history

1. The eternal covenant between the members of the Godhead that made possible the salvation of man (**Hebrews 13:20**).
2. God's redemptive plan was continued through the Abrahamic covenant (**Genesis 12:1-3**).
3. The Mosaic covenant was another step in God's redemptive plan (**Exodus 24:3-8**).
4. The Davidic covenant was yet another step in God's redemptive plan (**II Samuel 7:1-16**).
5. The redemptive plan of God was fulfilled in the New Covenant (**Luke 22:14-20**), which is superior.

**(7) The mere fact that God mentions another covenant is proves that there is something lacking in the Old Covenant:** It's in the nature of man to come up with things that are "new" but not needed. However, **God isn't like that.** If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have not been need for a second covenant. If God established a New Covenant, it means that there is something lacking in the Old Covenant.

**(8-12) The New Covenant as it is presented in the Old Testament:** In this passage from **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, the Old Covenant is compared with the New Covenant. God shows that there must have been something lacking in the Old Covenant, because a New Covenant is promised. In the days of Jeremiah, that New Covenant was still more than 6 centuries in the future, because he says "Behold the days are coming."

In its context, Jeremiah's prophecy probably comes from the days of King Josiah's renewal of the covenant after finding the law (II Kings 23:3). This renewal was good, but it wasn't enough, because Jeremiah looks forward to a new covenant.

The Lord makes it plain that this covenant originates with God, not with man. At Sinai, under the Old Covenant, the words were **if you (Exodus 19:5)**, but in the New Covenant, the words are **I will**.

**A new covenant:** This covenant is truly new, not merely a "new and improved" version in the way things are marketed to us today. When God says "new," He means new.

There are two Greek words that can describe the concept of "new." Neos describes newness as regards to time. Something can be a copy of something else, but if it recently made, it can be called neos. The ancient Greek word kainos (the word used here) describes something that is not only new in reference to time, but is truly new in its quality. It simply isn't a new reproduction of something old.

The weakness of the Old Covenant was not in the Covenant itself. It was in the **weakness and inability of man**. The reason the Old Covenant didn't "work" was because they did not continue in My covenant. The New Covenant features transformation from within through a changed heart, not regulation through external law (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**).

If our heart is not changed, following God's rules through inadequate human strength is futile and doomed to failure (John 15:5; John 6:44; Hebrews 11:6). We will remain in rebellion against following God's precepts in concert with our depraved nature. However, the Holy Spirit gives us new desires, assisting us in our desire to be obedient to God's precepts (Philippians 2:12-13). With our new heart we serve God with great joy (Romans 1:1).

**I will be their God, and they shall be My people:** The New Covenant also features a greater intimacy with God than what was ever available under the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, God's law is **inside us (II Corinthians 5:17)**. It is no longer an external set of rules and principles. The indwelt Holy Spirit reminds us of Christ's words (**John 14:26**), activates our conscience, influences our motives and desires and makes us want to be obedient to God's precepts (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

**Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more:** The New Covenant offers a true, complete cleansing from sin (**Isaiah 1:18**) which is different and better than the mere "covering over" of sin in the Old Covenant.

**(13) Significance of the New Covenant:** Now that the New Covenant has been inaugurated, the Old Covenant is thereby obsolete.

Some of the Jewish believers were still clinging to the obsolete old ways instead of embracing Christ's new covenant. Accordingly, all joy of newfound faith and all relief of fresh forgiveness had given way to a kind of boredom that was not intended to be part of the abundant life. This stunted growth and led to discouragement.

The message to these discouraged Jewish Christians, who thought of going back to a more Jewish faith, is clear. They simply can't go back to an inferior covenant, which is ready to completely vanish away. The system of sacrifice under Mosaic Law soon did vanish away with the Roman destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

### 17 Differences Between the New and Old Covenants

1. They were instituted at different times. The Old Covenant around 1446 B.C., the New Covenant around 33 A.D.
2. They were instituted at different places. The Old Covenant at Mount Sinai, the New Covenant at Mount Zion.
3. They were spoken in different ways. The Old Covenant was thundered with fear and dread at Mount Sinai (**Exodus 19:17-24**). Jesus Christ, God the Son, declared the New Covenant with love and grace.
4. They are different in their mediators. Moses mediated the Old Covenant. Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant.
5. They are different in their subject matter. The Old Covenant demanded a covenant of works. The New Covenant fulfills the covenant of works through the completed work of Jesus.
6. They are different in how they were dedicated. The Old Covenant was dedicated with the blood of animals sprinkled on the people (**Exodus 24:5-8**). The New Covenant was dedicated with Jesus' blood spiritually applied to His people.
7. They are different in their priests. The Old Covenant is represented by the priesthood of the Law of Moses and high priests descended from Aaron. The New Covenant has a priesthood of all believers and a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.
8. They are different in their sacrifices. The Old Covenant demanded endless repetition of imperfect sacrifices. The New Covenant provides a once and for all, perfect sacrifice of the Son of God Himself.
9. They are different in how and where they were written. The Old Covenant was written by God on tablets of stone. The New Covenant is written by God on the hearts of His people.
10. They are different in their goals. The goal of the Old Covenant was to discover sin, to condemn it, and to set a "fence" around it. The goal of the New Covenant is to declare the love, grace, and mercy of God, and to give repentance, remission of sin, and eternal life.

**10/19/14**

**ONLY JESUS TRANSFORMS**

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11. They are different in their practical effect on living. The Old Covenant ends in bondage (through no fault of its own). The New Covenant provides true liberty.
12. They are different in their giving of the Holy Spirit. Under the Old Covenant, God did grant the Holy Spirit, but not in the same way and extent that He is given to believer under the New Covenant.
13. They are different in their idea of the Kingdom of God. Under the Old Covenant, it is mainly seen as the supreme rule of Israel over the nations. Under the New Covenant, it is both a present spiritual reality and a coming literal fact.
14. They are different in their substance. The Old Covenant has vivid shadows. The New Covenant has the reality.
15. They are different in the extent of their administration. The Old Covenant was confined to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob according to the flesh. The New Covenant is extended to all nations and races under heaven.
16. They are different in what they actually accomplish. The Old Covenant made nothing perfect. The New Covenant can and will bring in the perfection of God's people.
17. They are different in their duration. The Old Covenant was designed to be removed. The New Covenant was designed to last forever.