

School of the Word
HEBREWS
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HEBREWS 8:7-13

Sequence

- Welcome back
- Where are we?
- Hebrews 8:7-13
- Backgrounds
- Commentary
- Conversation

Welcome back

- Why are we reading this letter?
- “New covenant”: words heard at every Eucharist
- Used for Christmas and Holy Week especially
- A deep understanding of the identity of Jesus
- A challenging understanding of cross and resurrection
- The hearers are advanced in faith, yet falling away
- Hebrews contains a great deal of encouragement

Where are we?

Section	Verses	Subject	Genre
	1:1-4	Introduction	
I	1:5-2:18	A name higher than the angels	Doctrine
II	A. 3:1-4:14	Jesus, trustworthy high priest	Exhortation
	B. 4:15-5:10	Jesus, compassionate high priest	Doctrine
III	5:11-6:20	Opening exhortation Jesus high priest according to the order	Exhortation
	A. 7:1-27	Melchizedek	Doctrine
	B. 8:1-9:28	Jesus high priest, perfected	Doctrine
	C. 10:1-18	Jesus high priest cause of eternal salvation	Doctrine
	10:19-39	Closing exhortation	Exhortation
IV	A. 11:1-40	The faith of the ancestors	Doctrine
	B. 12:1-13	The necessary endurance	Exhortation
V	12:14-13:19	The right ways	Exhortation
	13:20-21	Conclusion	

Place in the letter

- **III: B** 8:1-9:28 — Jesus the perfect high priest
 - 8:1-6: The Son is mediator of a new covenant
 - 8:7-13: The promise of a new covenant
 - 9:1-10: The worship of the old covenant
 - 9:11-28: Christ's worship in heaven
- **III: C** 10:1-18 — Jesus high priest cause of eternal salvation

Hebrews 8:1-10:18

- Reflections on Old Testament passages
- Frames using Psalm 110:

- **Heb 8:1** Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, one who *sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,*
- **Heb 10:12** But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, *he sat down at the right hand of God, 13* where he is now waiting *until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.*
- Dense series of antitheses or contrasts
- Frames using Jeremiah 31:31-34
 - Heb 8:7-13, followed by
 - **Heb 10:15** And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after saying, **16** *“This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds,” 17* then he says, *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer.” 18* Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Contrasts

true tent (8:2; 9:23)	antitype of true tent (9:24)
which the Lord made (8:2)	made by man, handmade (8:2; 9:11)
archetype (8:5)	copy and shadow (8:5; 9:23)
greater and more perfect tent (9:11)	earthly sanctuary (9:1)
most holy place (9:3)	holy place (9:2)
second covenant (8:7)	first covenant (8:7)
new covenant (8:13; 9:15)	old covenant (8:13)
better ministry (8:6)	serve in a copy (8:5)
once for all (9:27)	constantly/each year (10:1)
once (9:26; 10:10, 14)	many times (9:25–26; 10:11)
conscience (9:9, 14)	flesh (9:10, 13)
time of reformation (9:15)	present time (9:9)
his blood (9:12)	blood of bulls and goats (9:12; 10:4)

Heb 8:1 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, one who *sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2* a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up. **3** For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer. **4** Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. **5** The place where they serve is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For he says, *“See that you make everything according to the design shown to you on the mountain.” 6* But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry, since the covenant that he mediates is also better and is enacted on better promises.

Heb 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have looked for a second one. **8** But showing its fault, God says to them, *“Look, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 9* *“It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant and I had no regard for them, says the Lord. 10* *“For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and I will inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be my people. 11* *“And there will be no need at all for each one to teach his*

countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest. **12** "For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer."

Heb 8:13 When he speaks of a new covenant, he makes the first obsolete. Now what is growing obsolete and ageing is about to disappear.

Backgrounds

- Historical context of Jeremiah
- The text of Jeremiah revisited
- The new covenant in Qumran

The historical context of Jeremiah

- 621 the rediscovery of the Book of the Law by Hilkiah the priest in the time of Josiah
- **2 Kgs 23:3** The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant before the Lord, agreeing to follow the Lord and to obey his commandments, laws, and rules with all his heart and being, by carrying out the terms of this covenant recorded on this scroll. All the people agreed to keep the covenant.
- This led to a national dedication and covenant renewal but the effect was not lasting (next slide)

Hebrew Bible (MT)	Greek OT (LXX)	Hebrews
Jer 31:31 "Indeed, a time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32 It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I delivered them from Egypt. For they violated that covenant, even though I was like a faithful husband to them, " says the Lord.	Jer 38:31 Behold, days are coming, quoth the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Iouda. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not abide in my covenant, and I was unconcerned for them, quoth the Lord,	Heb 8:8 "Look, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 9 "It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant and I had no regard for them, says the Lord.
33 "But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land," says the Lord. "I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people.	33 because this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, quoth the Lord. Giving I will give my laws in their mind, and I will write them on their hearts, and I will become a god to them, and they shall become a people to me.	10 "For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and I will inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be my people.
Jer 31:34 "People will no longer need to teach their neighbours and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me," says the Lord.	34 And they shall not teach, each his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they shall all know me, from their small even to their great, because I will be	11 "And there will be no need at all for each one to teach his countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest.

"For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done."	gracious regarding their injustices, and remember their sins no more.	12 "For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer."
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Jer 3:6 When Josiah was king of Judah, the Lord said to me, "Jeremiah, you have no doubt seen what wayward Israel has done. You have seen how she went up to every high hill and under every green tree to give herself like a prostitute to other gods. **7** Yet even after she had done all that, I thought that she might come back to me. But she did not. Her sister, unfaithful Judah, saw what she did. **8** She also saw that I gave wayward Israel her divorce papers and sent her away because of her adulterous worship of other gods. Even after her unfaithful sister Judah had seen this, she still was not afraid, and she too went and gave herself like a prostitute to other gods. **9** Because she took her prostitution so lightly, she defiled the land through her adulterous worship of gods made of wood and stone. **10** In spite of all this, Israel's sister, unfaithful Judah, has not turned back to me with any sincerity; she has only pretended to do so," says the Lord. **11** Then the Lord said to me, "Under the circumstances, wayward Israel could even be considered less guilty than unfaithful Judah.

The text of Jeremiah

- The "new" covenant would be the old covenant
- It would be new, not in substance, but in effectiveness
- Nevertheless, these promises are indeed new
 - The implanting of God's law in their hearts
 - Knowledge of God as a personal experience
 - The blotting out of their sins

The New Covenant in Qumran / Dead Sea Scrolls

- For them, the current Temple priesthood was invalid and polluted
- The true line of priests (Zadok) served until 171 bc.
- The observances of the community were a substitute until God should restore the former covenant
- They looked forward to renewed blood sacrifice
- They make explicit referent to Jer 31:31-34

CD 6:18 They must keep the Sabbath day according to specification and the holy days **19** and the fast day according to the commandments of the members of the **new covenant** in the land of Damascus, **20** offering the holy things according to their specifications.

CD 8:21 to Gehazi his servant. (So it is with) all the men who entered the **new covenant** in the land of Damascus.

CD 19:33 So it is with all the men who entered the **new covenant 34** in the land of Damascus, but then turned back and

traitorously turned away from the fountain of living water.

CD 20:11 They will be condemned along with the Men of Mockery, because they have uttered lies against the correct laws and rejected **12** the sure **covenant** that they made in the land of Damascus, that is, the **New Covenant**.

1QpHab 2:3 God. It also refers to the traitors to the **New [Covenant]**, because they did not **4** believe in God's **covenant** and desecrated His holy name;

Hebrews 8:7, 13

- Verses 7 and 13 frame the citation and give the author's interpretation
- V. 7 is pure logic
- V. 13 is more tricky because of the risk of Judaism being superseded by Christianity.

Hebrews 8:8

- Originally, the prophecy of Jeremiah was meant to offer consolation to the exiles.
- The author uses the prophecy as a “finding fault” by implication.
- The argument is that the later text (Jeremiah) cancels the previous one (Exodus)
- Surprise: the fault is not with the people (only!) but with the covenant as such. The covenant failed to make people perfect and thus was itself imperfect.
- In the author’s mind, the days have come.

Hebrews 8:9

- The covenant under Moses is explicit (Hebrews makes no contrast with the Abrahamic covenant).
- NB the “husband” language is dropped, following the LXX.
- Lit. “I grew unconcerned for them.”

Hebrews 8:10

- The newness lies in the interiorisation and “engraving” in the heart.
- The earlier covenant was *meant* to be from the heart, but this did not happen.
- Listen, Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You must love the Lord your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength. (Deut 6:4–5)
- 10c is found frequently.

Hebrews 8:11

- New: the immediacy of knowledge of God — no need for intermediaries.
- *Lack* of knowledge of God is a frequent lament in the prophets.

Hebrews 8:12

- Mercy (etc.) is the mark of God throughout the Old Testament.
- God’s “amnesia” is a surprise — God is usually portrayed precisely remembering his covenant.
- Here, it corresponds to God’s earlier being unconcerned for his people.

Hebrews 8:13

- There are difficulties here.
- Obsolete: NET, NRSV, NABRev, NIV, ESV,
- Old: D-R, Luther, CEI, TEV.
- Cf. Luke T. Johnson’s translation: *By saying “new” he has made the first old.*
- A bit hard on the ageing process!!

Conversation