

Christ Is Superior to the Old Covenant

"The New Testament"

Hebrews 9:15-28

Some of what is found in this text is repeated and expanded from what we have already studied in the book of Hebrews so we will not be as long on this portion as we have been on others. As we have noted before, the value of the repetition is in the establishment of the truth about who Jesus is and what He came to do, especially relating to the Jews to whom this letter was written. Throughout the testimony of the life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, the Jews struggled with understanding and believing and Jesus was found repeatedly teaching the same valuable lessons to them before they understood. The same is the case in the book of Hebrews.

For us today, this method of teaching is invaluable. It is these repeated teachings of Scripture that strengthen our faith, and guide is in our walk with the Lord.

I. FOUNDATIONAL PURPOSE FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT - "THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL INHERITANCE" - VS. 15

This is something we have seen before in our study of Hebrews (primarily in chapter six) - the foundational purpose of the work of Christ for our redemption was to give us eternal life with Him.

A. "For this cause He is the mediator"

This was mentioned in chapter eight (8), and we paid some attention to it then.

1. A mediator is someone who stands between two parties to bring reconciliation.

2. In the Old Testament, Moses (and then Aaron and the high priests to follow) acted as a mediator between God and Israel (Exodus 19-20).
3. "By the means of his death" - Jesus, however, as we have seen on more than one occasion in our study, is a far better, perfect mediator because His sacrifice was complete and final.

B. "For the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament"

1. The old covenant revealed sin but could not fully remove it (Romans 3:20).

Romans 3:20

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

2. The sacrifices of the Law pointed forward to Christ but were insufficient for true redemption (Hebrews 10:11).
3. Christ's death retroactively atoned for the sins of those who lived under the first covenant (Romans 3:25-26).

Romans 3:25-26

²⁵ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

C. "The promise of eternal inheritance"

1. "They which are called" - we saw a similar term used in Heb. 3:1 where it is referred to as "the heavenly calling" (same root word). I made this comment then:

The calling they had to serve the Lord was not because they were Jews but because they were believers. It's called a "heavenly calling" in contrast with the earthly calling that the Israelites had historically as a people - the inheritance of the Promised Land. I believe it's given as "heavenly" to include all believers.

Considering the context of this verse, and the phrase immediately preceding it, this does not refer to the elect that are chosen (as some teach) but is referring to the Old Testament saints that believed by faith looking through the types and figures of the old covenant.

2. "Might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" - "inheritance" is used because of the audience to whom this was given. The Jews put a great deal of value to their inheritance and the Apostle uses that term rather than "eternal life" in this instance because of the Jews. The two terms are synonymous because of the word "eternal."

The term "inheritance" is used in 1 Peter 1:4 - a text also written to believing Jews as well as a broader audience that includes Gentiles. Both Jew and Gentile alike have an eternal inheritance waiting for them in their eternal life.

[1 Peter 1:4](#)

⁴ To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled,

and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

II. FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT - "WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD IS NO REMISSION" - vs. 16-22

A. A covenant (testament) requires death - vs. 16-17

1. The word "testament" (Greek: διαθήκη) can mean both "covenant" and "will" (as in a last will and testament).
2. Just as a human will only takes effect after the person dies, so too, a covenant must be ratified by the death of a sacrificial victim - vs. 17.
3. Christ's death was necessary for the new covenant to take effect, just as the old covenant was inaugurated with sacrificial blood (Exodus 24:6-8).

Exodus 24:6-8

⁶ And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. ⁸ And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

B. The old covenant was established with blood - vs. 18-20

"Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood" - vs. 18.

1. The old covenant, given through Moses, was consecrated (“dedicated”) with the shedding of blood (Exodus 24:3-8).
2. Moses sprinkled the blood of animals on the people and the book of the Law, signifying their participation in the covenant - vs. 19-20.
3. This act foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, whose blood would establish a greater, lasting covenant.

C. To be acceptable to God, all the things of worship, including the people, were purified with blood - vs. 21-22a

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood” - vs. 22a

1. Under the Law of Moses, blood was used for purification—on the altar, the tabernacle, the priests, and even the people (Leviticus 17:11).
2. This symbolized atonement—the covering and cleansing of sin before a holy God.

D. Forgiveness was only possible through the shedding of the blood of Christ - vs. 22b

1. The phrase “without shedding of blood is no remission” means that sin cannot be forgiven without a blood sacrifice.

[Ephesians 1:7](#)

⁷ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

[Colossians 1:14](#)

¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

“Every sinner has forfeited his life by his transgressions, and the law of God requires his death; the blood of the victim, which is its life, is shed as a substitute for the life of the sinner. By these victims the sacrifice of Christ was typified. He gave his life for the life of the world; human life for human life, but a life infinitely dignified by its union with God.” (Clarke)

2. The death of Christ and the shedding of His blood was necessary:

- a) To Establish the New Covenant - Just as the old covenant was inaugurated with blood, the new covenant required a perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 9:15-17).
- b) To Provide True Cleansing - Animal sacrifices could only temporarily cover sin, but Christ’s blood provides permanent purification (Hebrews 10:1-4).
- c) To Fulfill God's Justice - Sin demands death (Romans 6:23), and only a perfect sacrifice could fully satisfy God’s righteous judgment (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Romans 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Isaiah 53:5-6

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, *he* was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like

sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

III. FOUNDATIONAL PARDON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT - "BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF" - VS. 23-26

A. Verse twenty-three (23) restates the contrast between the earthly tabernacle and the heavenly.

1. The earthly tabernacle and its rituals were only a shadow (pattern) of heavenly realities (Hebrews 8:5).
2. The purification of the earthly tabernacle was done with the blood of animals (Exodus 29:12, Leviticus 16:14-16).
3. However, the true heavenly sanctuary required a greater sacrifice—not the blood of animals, but the blood of Christ.

B. Verse twenty-four (24) restates the truth that it was necessary for a greater, perfect sacrifice to enter heaven's sanctuary to satisfy all the requirements for mankind's sin.

1. The Levitical high priest entered the earthly Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-34).
2. Christ, however, entered heaven itself, standing in the very presence of God as our mediator.
3. He appears "for us," meaning that He intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:34).

Romans 8:34

³⁴ Who is he that condemneth? *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

C. It was a once-for-all pardon - vs. 25-26

More repeated truths in these verses.

1. "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others." - vs. 25
 - a) The Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices repeatedly because their offerings could never fully remove sin (Hebrews 10:1-4).
 - b) Christ's sacrifice was final and complete—He does not need to offer Himself again.
2. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." - vs. 26
 - a) "Once in the end of the world" - Christ's sacrifice occurred at the climax of history, fulfilling God's redemptive plan.
 - b) "Put away sin" (to annul or make void) - Unlike the temporary covering of sin in the old covenant, Christ's sacrifice fully removes sin.

"Put away" (ἀθέτησις) is the same word translated "disannulling" in Heb. 7:18 (only used in these two places in the Greek).

IV. FINAL PRONOUNCEMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT - VS.

27-28

A. Pronouncement of the certainty of judgment - vs. 27

1. Death is unavoidable - "appointed unto men once to die"

a) It uses the word "once" because there is a "second death" spoken of in the book of Revelation that only those that reject Christ will see (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

b) The word "appointed" (Greek: *ἀπόκειμαι*) means set, destined, or fixed - death is a divine appointment for every human being.

c) Death is universal - no one can escape it (Psalm 89:48, Ecclesiastes 3:2).

Psalm 89:48

⁴⁸ What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

Ecclesiastes 3:2

² A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted;

d) There is no reincarnation or second chance after death. This verse directly refutes the idea of multiple lives or opportunities to change one's eternal destiny after death.

2. Judgment follows death

a) After death, there is judgment - there is no soul sleep, purgatory, or annihilation.

b) Two types of judgment in Scripture:

- (1) For unbelievers - The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15), where those who rejected Christ will be judged by their works and cast into eternal separation from God.
- (2) For believers - The Judgment Seat of Christ (Bema Seat) (2 Corinthians 5:10), where believers are rewarded for their faithfulness, but their salvation is secure.

Romans 14:10

¹⁰ But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be good or bad*.

- c) The certainty of judgment calls for urgency in responding to the gospel (2 Corinthians 6:2).

2 Corinthians 6:2 [quote from Is. 49:8]

² (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

B. Pronouncement of Christ's coming - vs. 28

1. He came the first time as a sacrifice for sins - "so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

- a) "Christ was once offered" - His sacrifice was one-time and final, unlike the repeated animal sacrifices of the Old Testament (Hebrews 10:10-14).
 - b) "To bear the sins of many" - This echoes Isaiah 53:12, where Christ is described as bearing the iniquities of His people.
 - c) His death satisfied God's justice, removing sin for those who believe in Him (Romans 3:25).
2. He is coming again - not to atone for sin any longer but to receive those believers to glory.

Ephesians 1:14

¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Romans 8:23

²³ And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

- a) "Unto them that look for him" - This refers to believers who eagerly wait for Christ's return (Titus 2:13, Philippians 3:20).
- b) "Shall he appear the second time without sin" - His first coming dealt with sin; His second coming will not be to suffer again but to bring final redemption.
- c) "Unto salvation" - This refers to the completion of our salvation:
 - (1) Justification (past) - We were saved when we trusted in Christ.

- (2) Sanctification (present) - We are being transformed into Christ's image.
- (3) Glorification (future) - When Christ returns, we will be made perfect in His presence (1 John 3:2).

Conclusion: The book of Hebrews repeatedly emphasizes the foundational truths about Christ's role as our mediator, His perfect sacrifice, and the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. Just as Jesus patiently taught the same lessons to the Jews until they grasped them, so too does Scripture reinforce these truths to strengthen our faith. The promise of eternal inheritance, the necessity of Christ's blood for forgiveness, and the finality of His sacrifice all point to the complete and perfect work of salvation He has accomplished. His first coming secured redemption, and His second coming will bring the fulfillment of that promise. As believers, we are called to hold fast to this hope, knowing that our faith rests not in temporary rituals but in the finished work of Christ, who intercedes for us and will one day return to bring us into eternal glory.