

OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW

Hebrews 8:13 — *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*

Keeping with the language leading up to this, the first covenant is identified, not with the first covenant of all time, but the first of which we are speaking. It is the Mosaic covenant, the one that formed Israel as a nation.

I don't think that it could be any clearer than what is said in this verse, that the first covenant — the old by virtue of a new and better one replacing it — is decaying and ready to vanish away. It is done. This is being said after also in the previous chapter that there is a very disannulling of the commandment (7:18), and that is because the people under it broke it, making it a covenant of condemnation. The people now need a covenant that brings salvation.

As we have said previously, the extended quote from Jeremiah that foretells a new covenant, is there to show that the promise of a new covenant is from the Scripture written under the old covenant.

This we also must understand the target audience of this epistle.

As we have discussed already, we as Gentiles were not under this old covenant. This was between the LORD and the children of Israel. Exodus 19:3–6 spells this out specifically:

"And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the HOUSE OF JACOB, and tell the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL."

Now in making this covenant with them, He made them His special people — if they would continue in the covenant. We know that they did not from the continued record, and their place under that covenant became a place of cursing and not of blessing. That is the place where the people of Israel were when this epistle to them was written. That is the place where they were when Jeremiah said by the word of the LORD "Behold, the days come...I will make a new covenant."

As Gentiles, these blessings and curses were not our relationship to God. We had none. Remember we are told plainly that *"ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ... without Christ, being aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in world"* (Ephesians 2:11-12).

In the next verse (13), we are told the "but now" truth, indicating a change in that relationship. *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."*

This does not say that we are now included in that covenant from Sinai. It says that we Gentiles are nigh to God by Christ. By His blood. His blood is not the blood of the old covenant, but of the new. We as Gentiles are saved as Gentiles and brought nigh to Christ by Him, and by Him alone. There is no path that is made for us to come by Israel, or by the law, or by circumcision. It is by Christ. As the Apostle says

in Ephesians 2:15, Christ has made in Himself one new man. The Gentiles who come to Christ are *“no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household OF GOD”* (Ephesians 2:19).

So now we as Gentiles come to Christ free from the law and all that is attached to it. In Colossians chapter 2 we again read how the ordinances that kept us far off from God have been taken down and nailed to the cross.

It is possible to continue for a long time to address our former place as Gentiles and that which we have that is a new and unheard-of position for former strangers. But for the Hebrews, there is something else to address.

They were not strangers to the covenants of promise, but the children of them, Acts 3:25, Exodus 19, etc. So, in coming to Christ as the one promised and the one *“exalted with [God’s] right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 5:31), does that bring them simply back into a right standing under the old covenant?

The answer to the issue in this epistle is ABSOLUTELY NOT! It is the epistle of explanation that they needed, written plainly as the word of God, that the promised new covenant taking away the old is better because it is established upon better promises, verse 8:6.

That they were still living — even those that were believing in Jesus the Christ — under the law is evident from Acts 21 in Paul’s interaction with James. *“Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe: and they are all zealous of the law”* (Acts 21:20). Paul found himself in a predicament being all things to all men, and went into the temple (the old covenant system) and was partner with them in the purifying ritual to show that he wasn’t teaching the Jews to apostatize from Moses. This, I believe, is the whole thrust of this epistle, and that incident being the impetus for him to write it, directed by the Holy Spirit.

The Old Covenant, with its ordinances of divine service and worldly sanctuary with figures and types and shadows and rituals was not to continue, now that the new and living way is established. It *“decayeth, and waxeth old, and is ready to vanish away”*

This is the problem that the “Torah observant” Christian sects, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Hebrew Roots, and even in some ways the Reformed churches have not come to see. We are not saved to be put under the law. The Israelites who were and are saved are not saved to live better under the law. The Apostle is now going to move to comparing the worship under the old covenant with the worship under Christ, *“Being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle”* (Hebrews 9:11).

COMPARING WORSHIP UNDER THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

Hebrews 9:1–15 — *“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.*

{This was a holy place (sanctuary) that you could look at. It was on the earth, in this world. We often think of worldly in its sense of being of this world’s anti-God system under the god of this world, but the sense used here is simply that it is here, on earth. This covenant had not just the Ten Commandments,

but an entire system of spelled out worship. That is what is meant by “ordinances”. There was a correct way of approaching God. We could and should understand this as a religion. It was the only religion that ever was from God imposed on men.}

“For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

{This tabernacle which is called the first is where the priests did the service of God. Inside of this tabernacle, there was a second tabernacle. This first tabernacle was the place of all of the priests. The second was off-limits to all but the high priest, and that only once a year}

“And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

{Under the Old Covenant, God was “so nigh” to the people of Israel, and that was much nearer than any of the other nations (Gentiles), but it was still a worship that was restricted. The people could only approach the mercy seat by way of God’s appointed mediator (the high priest), and he could only approach once a year with a blood offering that was a temporary atonement for sins. It had to be repeated yearly. That this was the divinely ordained approach, or religion, the Holy Ghost gave the people a sign that way to God was restricted. Further, the priests, the high priests and all of the people who were approaching God in the person of the mediator (priest) knew instinctively that their sins were never really removed. The signification of this is that they never could really approach God, whereas we read in Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” In coming to Christ, who said “I am the way”, the worshiper under the New Covenant comes through Him. In that He said I am the way, He restricted the access to one way, but made a way where there was none. He is the way that any can approach God — “a new and living way” (10:20). The believer has access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, Romans 5:2.

The worship under the Old Covenant stood in a diet and ritual washings. These ritual washings are baptisms. In chapter 6 verse 2 we read about the doctrine of baptisms which were part of a foundation that was not to be laid again, because the Apostle is making the case to go on to perfection. The believing Hebrew could not stay stuck under the Old Covenant but must move on. When John the Baptist came with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, the people understood that, because that was a cleansing ritual that was an inherent part of the law. But that was a repentance to walk under the first covenant, to make ready a people prepared to meet their God (Luke 1:17, Isaiah 40:3). We read again of “carnal ordinances”. This is not carnal in the evil nature of man sense as it is

often used in scripture, but carnal in the sense that the people had to do a physical thing. It had carnal ordinances that were actually the offerings of the flesh of sacrificial animals to allow their distant approach.

That these were temporary is evident from this verse that there is an “until”. These ordinances were imposed until the time of reformation. The time of reformation is the time of the New Covenant, with Christ as the High Priest}

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

{Now we have yet another of the better things in Hebrews. A greater and more perfect tabernacle which is not fleshly, but made by God. It is not of this earth. It is in Christ.}

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

{This is freedom from the restrictive, divinely imposed religion that kept the worshiper at a distance. Jesus, the High Priest, brought in a once for all sacrifice that did not just push out sins to a further date, but did away with them and obtained eternal redemption. Note this is ETERNAL redemption, in the epistle that many run to in order to claim eternal insecurity. The “us” should be understood as the Hebrews specifically, as the people who were under the Old Covenant. They would be joining alongside and in the same place as the Gentiles made nigh by the blood of Christ. God would forbear with them living under the former worship no longer now that there was a revelation of the new and living way, through the flesh of His Son. That they did not realize all that was accomplished right away was understandable. They know now.}

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

{Again, we have here an eternal inheritance. This is not an inheritance that must be renewed yearly. It is done, complete, finished, and once for all. Under the Old Covenant, all things had to be renewed. Under Christ, it is done.}

In Christ, the Jews and the Gentiles are one. This Epistle is the declaration that brings the mind of the people under the Old Covenant into their new and better place experientially, in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17 — *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*