

A Priest Of A Superior Covenant

Hebrews 8

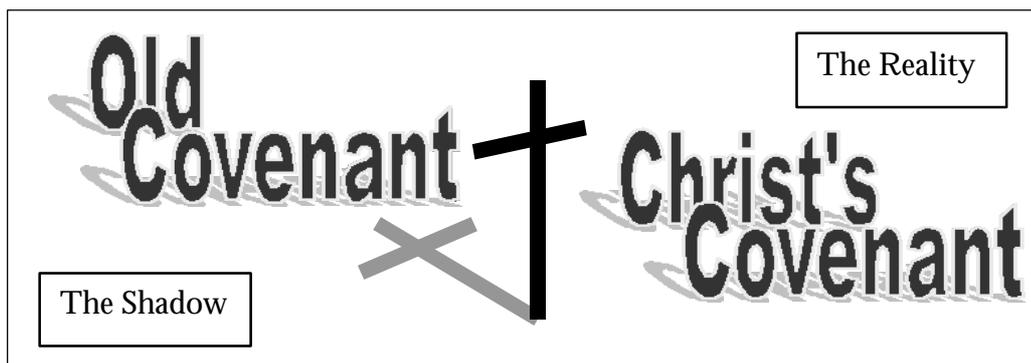
The Book of Hebrews to this point has highlighted the difference between Christ and the Old Covenant. This chapter now draws to a conclusion all that has been stated, and adds some convincing theology to show that Christ is indeed superior to the Old Covenant and its trappings (the Law, the Priesthood, the Temple, and Covenant).

1. Note Hebrews 8:1. If you saw two people and one was seated while the other was standing before the seated one, who would you assume is superior, and who would you assume was still required to work?

“When you’re done, sit down.” Hebrews 8 introduces Christ as the One who is seated. His work is finished. This is contrasted with the work of the Old Covenant priests who continually stand (to minister) before God.

2. While the Old Covenant priests ministered before God, where does Hebrews 8:1 state that Christ is positioned, and how does this emphasize His superiority to them?

Shadows



The writer to the Hebrews states that the Jewish Priests were only ever going to be temporary. They were merely a shadow of the reality. The reality was indeed Christ. Old Covenant Priests stood between God and mankind to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of mankind. But Christ *is* God who has offered *Himself* to bring mankind into relationship with the Father. All the sacrifices, ceremonies, and utensils (including the Tabernacle) of the Old Covenant were types of Christ and His redemptive work. But now Hebrews shows us that not were these trappings only ever going to be temporary, the entire Old Covenant itself was temporary.

3. How does Hebrews 8:6 state the New Covenant is better than the Old one?
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The New Covenant and the New Israel

Some Jews may have tried to persuade Jewish Christians that the New Covenant may well have been established with Jesus, but all Jews were still required to keep the Old Covenant. Now the writer to the Hebrews shows that the New Covenant was always intended to supersede the Mosaic (Old) Covenant. He does this by referring to the prophets who foretold of another covenant which God would make.

4. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and determine who God was speaking to.
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Another question further arises from this passage in Hebrews 8:7-12 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. Was the New Covenant only ever intended to be for the House of Judah and the House of Israel?

5. Note Isaiah 11:10; 42:1, 6; 49:6; 60:3; 66:19; Jeremiah 16:19; Malachi 1:11. What did these prophets seem to predict about the scope of the New Covenant?
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Israel had become a divided nation after the death of King Solomon. From then it endured repeated civil wars and strife. Eventually the Northern Kingdom ("Israel" or "Ephraim") abandoned worship of the LORD and were then exiled from their land and made captives of Assyria (note that God had warned this happen if they abandoned Him, Deuteronomy 28:64).



The Southern Kingdom later likewise also abandoned the LORD and were exiled to Babylon. In the pursuit for global domination, Babylon was eventually taken over by the Medo-Persians (Assyrians). Emperor Cyrus decreed that all Jews were allowed to return to their land (read the book of Nehemiah). So after 70 years some Jews returned to the Land just as the prophets had also prophesied. Suggestions that these prophecies also relate to a recent modern Jewish return

to Palestine are wrong. It seems then that God was saying the New Covenant would unite people previously estranged from each other.

6. The New Covenant is described as being between God, Israel and Judah. But since it clearly encompasses more than just Hebrews (note Ephesians 2:11-15), what can the expression in Galatians 6:16 “the Israel of God” possibly refer to?

Hebrews 8:13 makes the astounding statement that while the New Covenant had indeed been instituted but the Old Covenant had not been made entirely obsolete. Something was about to happen which would without doubt make the Old Covenant obsolete. When we understand the history of this period I believe we gain an incredible insight into the Spirit’s urgency for Jewish believers to remain loyal to Christ.

