

In Heb ch8 I see four sets of opposites or four comparisons to be made. The first was **[slide] Majesty and Service** so we see Jesus as Lord of All and Servant of All simultaneously. And we said that *though we are Children of the King we are called to service for the sake of Love, not the sake of gain.*

Our second pairing in Heb8 **[slide]** is **Copy and Reality**. The tabernacle and the temple were embraced by the Hebrews as The Reality. But they were just a shadow of the Reality- which turns out to be Jesus Christ who is Priest, Sacrifice and Temple. The **Copy** is not to be idolized. The Copy is to prepare us for the **Reality** so when it comes- like Jesus did- we recognize it and let the copy disappear as outdated and obsolete.

The remaining pairings I see in ch8 are **[slide] Men and God** and, of course, **Old Covenant and New Covenant**.

At the end of this chapter our author says something that would be hard for his Jewish audience to hear. **[slide]** He tells them **the first covenant, the original partnership, that God made with Israel** [including the law and the priesthood and the temple] **is obsolete and outdated and in time it will fully disappear**. Not an easy thing to hear that the centerpiece of your life, the framework for your understanding of the entire world, is outmoded and superseded by some new thing. It's bad enough with the insignificant stuff.

So how many 8-track tapes do you have around the house? **[slide]** Do you still like your Betamax video tape player? By the way, where do you go to get your photos developed or flashcubes for your instamatic camera? How about slides and a carousel slide projector? Pagers? Dot matrix printers? I think I still have a couple floppy discs in a box somewhere. I've got nothing to read them, though. I've also got a Strong's Exhaustive Concordance made obsolete by Bible software. And remember those happy little bottles of white-out. I think you can still get it but I suspect their days are numbered. I still have cassette tapes and an aging player that belonged to Mom but I really need to get those digitized because working cassette players are becoming hard to find. **The NEW has come along and made them OBSOLETE and outdated- and soon they will disappear** –if they haven't already.

[slide] Things become obsolete when they no longer accomplish any necessary task. Flashcubes, wristwatches, 8-trac tapes all gone because they don't get the job done. **It's the same with the Old Covenant.** Heb7:18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless 19 (for the law made nothing perfect), 7:12 For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. 8:6 says the Covenant of which Jesus is mediator is superior to the first one. Later ch9 **[slide]** will say: 9:9b the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the

conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

The first covenant -the covenant established at Mt. Sinai and re-established before finally entering the promised land- is a batch of weak and useless external regulations that accomplish nothing. So the first covenant, the original partnership, that God made with the people is obsolete and outdated and in time it will fully disappear.

The first covenant is broken. It has a problem. It's faulty. The First Covenant has one vital part that fails every time. Know what that part is? **It's us: humans.** Which brings us to the third pairing I see in Heb8:

****MEN and GOD.**

The reason the first covenant could never work is because no matter how many chances God gave them, humans couldn't be faithful to the law. [slide] 8:7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. **8 But God found fault with the people.** And what was the fault God found? 8:9 ... they [men and women] **did not remain faithful to my covenant, ...**

The issue here is that the covenant was dependent on Israel's obedience.

Deut 28 is crystal clear [slide] : 1 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands ...the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you... followed by 13 verses of great blessings.

And then... [slide] **Deut. 28:15** However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Then comes a list of bad stuff that runs from v15 to v64 and includes: futility of work, plagues, loss of income, broken families, driven from the land by foreign nations, being scattered among the nations, and winding up back in a state of slavery just like they escaped in Egypt.

And that's what happened. The Israelites -called to the vocation of being God's people- could not do it. They failed. They worshipped idols, indulged their appetites and allowed and engaged in terrible injustice, which led to the precise outcome God predicted.

That's what's described in the first portion of our author's quotation from Jeremiah where he describes the promised New Covenant [slide] saying... 8:9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. **They couldn't keep it.** The Israelites [shoot, all humans] could not ever begin to keep God's partnership agreement. **And God knew this.**

[slide] **And one might ask why the first covenant then?** Why not go straight to the second? What was the point of the first covenant? Romans answers that by saying: **Rom. 3:20** For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

And Romans 7 says: 7 ...it was the Law that made me know what sin is. If the Law had not said, “Do not desire what belongs to someone else,” I would not have known such a desire. 8 But by means of that commandment sin found its chance to stir up all kinds of selfish desires in me...

In a more generous wording Paul tells the Galatians: [slide]

Gal. 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor [blend of nanny and teacher] *to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.* 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Okay so the first Covenant's existence made it crystal clear what sin was, and that Humans, even God's chosen humans –no matter how hard they tried- couldn't help but break the commands and thus the covenant. *But, in another sense, the Old Covenant [the Law] was like a guardian or tutor preparing us for the day when Jesus would come and we could put our faith in Him.* So the law had an important but temporary role

Then one might ask: **why so many hundreds of years between the obvious failure of the first covenant and the beginning of the New at Jesus' coming?** I don't know. But there are hints that *the New Covenant, mediated by Jesus, was ordained to begin at a particular time:* [slide]

Rom. 5:6 For while we were still helpless, **at the right time** Christ died for the ungodly.

Gal 4:4 But **when the right time finally came**, God sent his own Son. ...5 to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's children. Hebrews 9:26 tells us Jesus Christ 26..._has appeared once for all **at the culmination of the ages** to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The mysterious implication of these statements is that the **New Covenant** was God-ordained to begin at **“Just the right time.”**

The big picture point here is God had all this in hand- which brings us to the other half of this pairing.

Men and Women were certain to fail and break the Agreement. So **God made a way.** Yes it was God who found fault with the people [v8]. They didn't keep the agreement and so God let their choice have it's consequences: futility, slavery, & exile. [slide]

9...they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, **declares the Lord**

But it was also God who declared he would make a New Covenant. 8 ... “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. **And 10** This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord.

It's significant that we have three repetitions of “declares the Lord,” in this quote from Jeremiah. And the significance is: **This New Covenant** -that replaces the First - **is the intended plan of God.** [And while that's no big Ah HAH! Item for you. It was a huge thing for Jewish Christians to grasp.]

[slide] The First Covenant -with it's external lists of laws and it's priests and temple- **was ALWAYS intended to be temporary.** And this New Covenant was always intended to permanently take it's place- at just the right time, at the culmination of the ages.

This passage from Jeremiah declares **MEN** could not be faithful to the first covenant so **GOD** took it upon himself long, long ago to establish another covenant. In the language of their own prophet is the declaration of God the Father's intent to establish a New and utterly different Agreement with All Israel and, in fact, all Humanity.

And **Hebrews** has made it clear that **Jesus was appointed by God to establish this New Covenant.** Jesus is the exact representation of God and He is fully Human in every way. He is our Great High Priest and our perfect "once for all" sacrifice. Superior to angels, to the Law, to Moses, He, alone, is the SOURCE of God's Sabbath Rest, and the Mediator of God's New Covenant. **[slide]**

MEN are unfaithful covenant breakers. GOD knows it, and He's the New Covenant Maker. Which brings us to our final pairing from Hebrews 8:

****Old Covenant and New Covenant.**

Jeremiah tells us exactly what the New Covenant will entail **[slide]** : **10** ...I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. **11** No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. **12** For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Two simple things I want you to see in this comparison, this morning. **[slide]**

First, while the **old covenant was EXTERNAL, the New Covenant is INTERNAL.** Consider the language in v10-12 God puts his laws "**in their minds,**" and writes them "**on their hearts.**" "I will be their God and they will be my people" reflects **an internal determination from both parties** to be and remain united. And the declaration "they will all know me" is all about **an internal awareness of God** and our place with Him.

The First Covenant -between God and Israel [Moses as Mediator]- was an external set of requirements: *Laws written on stone tablets or penned by Moses.* Follow this list of rules perfectly and you're in. Break them and you're out [as we saw earlier]. Hebrews itself describes the first covenant as EXTERNAL. Heb9 talks about the duties of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies and then says the limited access to the Holy of Holies illustrates: 9:9 ...that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—**external regulations applying until the time of the new order.** A few verses later ch9 says the ongoing sacrifices only made the people "**outwardly clean.**" *A surface cleansing by external regulations* was the best the 1st Covenant could accomplish -which isn't enough.

For all who embrace it, **the New Covenant** promises to effect us internally, to make us New Creations in Christ- with His laws in our minds and hearts, an internal knowledge of God, and our relationship with Him and our status as forgiven.

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This is accomplished by the power of God's Holy Spirit who "fills us up" [Eph 5:8] comforts us, brings us peace, abides with and in us and helps us remember all we know about God. [John 14]. God's Spirit also assists us in not sinning and in our prayer efforts [Rom8]. [slide] And the Fruit of God's Spirit grows up inside us [love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control- Gal 5] enabling us to live as God intends from the inside out! [slide] *The Old Covenant was external. The New Covenant is internal- within us.*

And the 2nd thing I want to share with you about the **Old Covenant and New Covenant** pairing [slide] is that while the Old Covenant is something that: [v13] "is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear," **the New Covenant – like our salvation- is both "now and not yet."**

The New Covenant was established at the death of Jesus and universally validated by His resurrection. And its end of the age fulfillment is assured by Jesus ascension to the throne of God and his promise to Return. But as in this diagram shows [thanks Dan] we live in a period in which the present age and the age to come overlap. The New Covenant has invaded the present age at Jesus' death, resurrection & ascension; so that some of the New Covenant is present Now but some is not yet present, and won't be until the "Age to Come" comes in full.

Some of the "better promises" of the New Covenant are settled and fully active. While others are partially fulfilled in the present with complete fulfillment yet to come. And some await fulfillment at Jesus' return when we all will be changed and the salvation of all creation is completely fulfilled. [slide]

For instance: ¹² For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." This is a done deal. **Eph. 1:7** For by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. **1Pet. 3:18** For Christ also died for sins **once for all**, *the* just for *the* unjust,... **Jesus, once-for-all-sacrifice settled forgiveness for every person to ever exist on this earth.** And that is just as true now as it will be at Jesus' return.

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. **In my assessment both of these promises are partially but not completely fulfilled just now.** By the Life of God's Holy Spirit within us we have the Gifts of the Spirit and the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives here and now assisting us [as we submit] in living not just the letter of God's expectations but the spirit of them. And by the Holy Spirit also we are encouraged in faithfulness to be God's people.

But still, in our present broken world we might squelch the Spirit's instruction or indulge ourselves in unfaithfulness. Our consistency might be uncertain. But Jesus, the mediator of the New, has made it so the day will come when **we'll be changed** and our **Salvation complete** and those two promises **fulfilled absolutely.**

Finally the promise: ¹¹ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. **This one seems to reflect the picture of Is. 11:9b ...** For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea; or the promise from 1Cor 13 that tells us ^{12b} ... Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. In that moment when the Kingdom finally comes in ALL it’s completeness no one will need to be taught: “Know the Lord!” But that’s not yet so.

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MEN are unfaithful covenant breakers. GOD knows, and He’s a New Covenant Maker

The Old Covenant an external set of requirements is obsolete and disappearing.

The New Covenant is a Holy Spirit empowered internal understanding of God and His expectations, which has come in part but will come in full at the return of Jesus, our Mediator- who is “the guarantor of this New and better covenant.”

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In Luke 19 Jesus pauses for a moment before riding down into Jerusalem.

He becomes emotional because it’s been revealed to Him either by the Spirit or simple wisdom what will happen to the City. He prophesies **44 ... they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”** **He sees forward to the year 70 and the time the Romans will breach the city of Jerusalem and destroy the Temple utterly.** The destruction of that Temple was a dark and terrible end to the first Covenant, the Old Covenant.

The destruction of His “temple” –Jesus’ body- will be **the terrible beginning of the New.**

He rides in to shouts of Acclamation [Hosanna, Blessed is the King...] but he, the Perfect Son, Forever Priest, our Covenant Mediator will die to the accompaniment of wailing and jeering and in so doing will establish the New- forever.

And **Rev. 21:5...** He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”