

**HEBREWS 26**  
**(Hebrews 9:1-15)**

**OLD COVENANT AND NEW COVENANT CONTRASTED**  
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INTRODUCTION

You will notice in Hebrews 8:6 that there is a better covenant. It is better than that former covenant. And in verse 7 it is clear that that former covenant was a faulty covenant and so another covenant was needed that was not faulty. And in verse 13 that former covenant is called an old covenant. It is old because something new has come along.

That worse covenant, that faulty covenant, that old covenant is nothing less than the Mosaic Covenant which God made with Israel when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. God brought them out of the land of Egypt and they crossed the Red Sea and God led them by the hand to Mt. Sinai where he spoke to Moses and imposed a covenant upon the people of Israel.

God didn't ask Israel what they thought about it. God didn't negotiate the terms of the covenant. God said, "Here is my law. If you obey it you will be blessed and if you disobey it you will be cursed." (See Deut. 28)

And you will notice that this covenant was imposed on Israel.

*Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*  
Hebrews 9:10

This is the way God makes covenants with men. God imposes them. God knows the times and the seasons. God knows the divine purposes. And in 1500 BC God imposed a covenant upon a nation.

Now this covenant was not a covenant of grace. It was not imposed upon Israel to save them. But it was imposed on them to demonstrate their utter hopelessness. The law pronounced a curse on them for their every failure. It showed them to be utterly without righteousness.

Paul called this covenant a ministry of death. And he also called it a ministry of condemnation. This is the purpose of the covenant imposed upon Israel. It took sinners and showed them their sins.

For 1500 years Israel tried to obey the terms of the covenant. They failed before they ever crossed the Red Sea. They failed at every step in the wilderness. When they crossed over Jordan into the land they failed. In their long history they utterly failed. And they suffered the awful curses that were promised under this covenant. This was a covenant of works and not a man passed the test. Moses didn't pass, Aaron didn't pass. The people didn't pass. Every man stood condemned under the holy terms of this covenant.

Were men saved during the administration of this covenant? Yes. Were they saved under terms of the Mosaic Covenant? No.

If they were saved during this 1500 years, they were saved under the terms of another covenant. They were saved by a covenant of grace. All men in all ages have been saved by a covenant of grace. If God saved Adam it was by a covenant of grace. Seth and Enoch were saved by a covenant of grace. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

You see, a covenant of works can never save. A law cannot save a sinner. It only shows his sinfulness. And this is a great Bible principle that we all would do well to remember often.

*For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. (Gal.3:21)*

If a law could save a sinner, then God surely would have done it that way. God would not have sacrificed his own Son. If a law could save a sinner, Jesus, who prayed, "Lord, if it be possible let this cup pass from me," would have never endured such suffering.

But it is not possible for a law covenant to save sinners. And it was not possible for the Mosaic Covenant to save sinners. Sinners are always saved by an eternal Covenant of Grace which springs from an eternal Covenant of Redemption. God determined to save sinners before the foundation of the world. And when God manifests a saving disposition toward any man or toward any people it is an outbreak of his grace, it is an

administration of his grace and it is evidence of a wonderful covenant of grace.

Now the Mosaic Law was not a covenant of grace. It was a covenant of law. And, it was a temporary addendum. It was added alongside his covenant of grace – but only for a short time and only for a tiny nation. And it was not given to save, but to enslave.

Read Galatians 4 and see how Israel under the law is compared to that outcast Ishmael and not to Isaac. Isaac was a child of promise, but Ishmael was a child of bondage. And it says Ishmael answers to Mt. Sinai and to earthly Jerusalem.

Now this faulty covenant, this covenant of works to Israel, is further described in Hebrews 9:1-10. And we have already studied many of these things and you should feel like you are on familiar ground here. But let's summarize this Mosaic Covenant from our text:

1. It is ceremonial in nature. (9:1, 10)

A ceremony is a religious ritual that has no particular effect in and of itself, but it symbolizes something that does have an effect. A priest had to wash himself before he could legally offer a sacrifice. Did the washing have any effect? No. But it was a picture that a true priest must himself be clean. How can a sinner offer sacrifices on behalf of sinners? Why he can't do it. So, these typical priests cleansed themselves ceremonially and then they offered sacrifices.

This Mosaic Covenant could not save men of itself, but it pictured that reality that was coming in Christ.

2. The Mosaic Covenant was earthly in nature.

- a. It had a worldly sanctuary. (v.1)
- b. It had carnal ordinances. (v.10)
- c. It had earthly blessings and curses (Deut. 28)
- c. It had an earthly people.

3. The Mosaic Covenant had an inferior priesthood.

a. They were inferior by their qualifications. They were qualified to serve under the Mosaic Covenant by physical birth alone. There was no requirement that they be of a high moral caliber – only that they be Aaron's sons.

b. They were inferior because of certain limitations.

(1) They were subject to death. They served for a little while and then they died. They offered sacrifices to keep the people from dying, and then they died themselves.

**Example: I often wonder how faith healers explain it when they get sick and die.**

And these Mosaic priests also were full of infirmity themselves. And they were also limited because of where they served.

(2) They served in a tent. Now these priests were supposed to be representing the people to God. They offered sacrifices to God himself. And where did they do it? They did it in a tent, in a cubicle in the desert. And it should be obvious that this is a mere picture.

(3) They were sinners themselves. (v.7)

So, the Mosaic Covenant had an inferior priesthood.

4. The Mosaic Covenant had ineffectual offerings.

*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

Hebrews 10:4

And because the offerings were ineffectual, it was necessary to repeat them over and over. Sacrifices were made every day. And even the High Priest, when he made atonement, it was not a permanent removal of sin. He had to repeat it every year on the Day of Atonement.

The sacrifices under the Mosaic Covenant were only ceremonial. If they had any effect at all, it was only a carnal effect. They were “carnal” ordinances. (v.10)

The Mosaic Law was not able to cleanse a person on the inside.

*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.*

Hebrews 9:9

5. The Mosaic Covenant was a figure. (v.9)
6. The Mosaic Covenant came to an end.

Verse 1: The first covenant had ordinances of divine service.

Verse 2: There was a tabernacle made

And the Mosaic Covenant is here referenced in the past tense.

So, in terms of furnishing a way of redemption for sinners, this Mosaic Covenant was ineffectual.

And now let's look more closely at our text starting in Hebrews 9:11.

It says, *but Christ*.

- I. Christ stands in stark contrast with those things in the Mosaic Covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant was faulty and weak. It was ceremonial only. It was earthly. It was temporary. It has priests who had infirmity.

But Christ, it says. Christ and his new covenant is not faulty and weak. It is not merely ceremonial – it is the substance. It is not temporary – it is permanent. And it has a priest who is qualified after the order of Melchisedec to be a priest forever.

Thank God there is something better. There is a true priest. There is a true sacrifice. There is, after all, substance behind the types. There is one

who can do all that the Mosaic Covenant could not do. And so it says, the Mosaic Covenant was faulty, “But Christ.”

And notice who it is that comes to put away that first covenant.

II. This one who the Mosaic Covenant prefigured is the promised Messiah.

This is not some strange, new phenomenon that has appeared on the scene. This is not some Gentile religious figure. This is not some enemy to the Jewish nation. This is the Messiah that was promised all along. It is Christ – the anointed One. He has appeared in the last days to take away sin. This is that root out of Jesse. This is Immanuel – God with us. This is the One who was prefigured all along in the Mosaic law. Every lamb that was slaughtered was a picture of Him. The showbread was a picture of Him. The High Priest himself, strutting in his glorious garments, was a picture of Christ.

And look. It says in verse 11, that Christ is come.

After all the promises, after all the shadows, after all the types, after all the lessons learned, after 1500 years under the bondage of the law, He has finally come.

III. And Christ is come a high priest.

This was only one of his chief offices. He also came as a King and a Prophet. But in Hebrews he is chiefly a Priest. And he came to mediate between man and God.

Now notice that Christ came as a high priest. Now in Israel there could only be one high priest at a time. And Christ came a high priest. This effectively put an end to all other high priests. Caiaphas thought he was high priest when Jesus was brought before him in the temple. Little did he know that he had been set aside by a better high priest. That is why it says, “But Christ is come a high priest.

But why does it say, Christ is come a high priest of good things to come? This is because,

IV. Christ is come to administer a new dispensation of God's redemptive plan.

It says,

*But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come. . .*

This speaks of a new dispensation. It is a new economy. It is a more excellent dispensation which the Messiah was to inaugurate. Israel labored long in bondage under a faulty covenant, but now, it is a new time. There is a new covenant and Christ has come to bring it in.

Now this covenant was spoken of long ago in Jeremiah 31:31.

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

And Jesus has now come as the high priest of this new covenant.

And the author of Hebrews will now show us in what ways this new covenant is superior to that old one.

### How the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant

I. It is superior first of all because it has a better tabernacle.

The Old Covenant tabernacle was a portable tent. It was made with posts and rope and it was walled with linens and hides and various cloths. But the new tabernacle is different.

It is a different type of tabernacle. It is not made with hands like the old tabernacle. (v.11) It is not the same kind of a building. (v.11) Now notice that the old tabernacle was made with hands. That is, it was made with human hands. It was built by human beings. But the new tabernacle is not

made with human hands. (v.11) The new tabernacle is of divine building.

Now the Old Tabernacle was the place where God typically resided. The cloud came down and hovered over the tent and above the mercy seat. And it symbolized God's presence. But the New Tabernacle is not such a building. So what is the new Tabernacle.

It seems that the New Tabernacle is the human body of Christ himself. Formerly God dwelt in a tent (ceremonially), but now God dwells in Christ. In Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Col.2:9)

In the Old Covenant, people came to the tabernacle made with hands to worship God and to meet with him. But in the New Covenant, people come to a person, and that person is Christ. God now walked the earth in a human body and people must come to Christ to worship God.

So you see that the New Covenant is better because it has a greater and more perfect tabernacle.

But also,

II. It is better because it has a better sacrifice.

*Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood . . .*  
(v.12)

Not much needs to be said here. Under the Old Covenant, they brought animals to be sacrificed. Now I hope no one supposes that the death of animals can really atone for sin. It never could put an end to sin. It never could permanently atone.

*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.*

Hebrews 10:4

Now there are several reasons why animal sacrifices cannot take away sins.

A. To be an acceptable sacrifice to atone for the sins of man, the sacrifice must be a man. The penalty for the sin of a man is the death of

that man. And if someone is to stand in his place and be a substitute and to take that penalty upon himself, that someone must be a man.

See Hebrews 2:17

Secondly, an animal is an inappropriate substitute because,

B. There is no moral perfection in an animal.

An animal is an amoral being. An animal has no concept of right and wrong. It just acts by instinct or by behavioral reinforcement. If you want to teach your dog to do something, you give him treats or, you pet him when he does right or you punish him when he does wrong. And all of this teaches him what you want him to do. But the animal has no sense of moral duty at all. And because an animal is not a moral creature, he is not an acceptable sacrifice.

C. An animal does not make a willing sacrifice.

Now when the lambs were brought to the altar, they had no idea of what was about to happen to them. And if they did get a sense of it, they surely would pull against the leash.

For all of these reasons, Jesus Christ was a better sacrifice. Jesus became a man for the express purpose of being an acceptable sacrifice. And in him was moral perfection. He was righteous in every way. And because he was righteous he could serve as a substitute for others. Had he been a sinner himself, then he could not be a sacrifice for others. And Jesus did not come to the temple like those dumb lambs. Jesus came knowingly. He knew every stripe that would be laid on him. He knew that he was being turned over to sinful men for the purpose of death. And he came willingly. Thus, Jesus was a much better sacrifice than animals.

But we are talking about how the New Covenant is better than the Old.

III. It is better because it is effective unto redemption. (v.12)

*He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (v.12)*

When a goat was slain, redemption was not obtained. We don't give thanks daily for all the bulls and goats and lambs that Israel offered. The best you can say about those sacrifices were that they purified the flesh. (v.13) It was an earthly purification. It cleansed them ceremonially. It put them in line for earthly blessings perhaps because they were being obedient to God.

But look at what the sacrifice of Jesus Christ did for us.

*Having obtained eternal redemption for us. (v.13)*

The Lord Jesus Christ had a people in mind when he offered his sacrifice. Just as Jewish priests had a people in mind when they offered their sacrifices, Jesus had a people in mind. And when he died, he took his sacrifice and passed into the heavens. And he offered his sacrifice to God on behalf of his people. And God was satisfied. The sacrifice was accepted on behalf of the people. And so it says,

*He obtained eternal redemption for us. (v.12)*

Christ did not merely make redemption possible for the whole world. Rather, he obtained redemption for his people.

It was a glorious and most efficient entrance that Christ made into heaven that day when he offered the sacrifice of himself as payment for the sins of his people. And God accepted his sacrifice once for all. You will notice in verse 12 that he entered in once into the holy place. That is, he offered himself once for all for the sins of the people. And God's wrath was turned away forever from Christ's people.

Now all of this obviously happened before you and I were ever born. "He obtained eternal redemption for us." This is why the Scriptures say,

*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 3:24

Now Jesus did something the law could never do. He procured the legal remedy for the sins of his people. "He obtained eternal redemption for us."

Now by and by, when the Holy Spirit applies that reality to our hearts, when he regenerates us, when he brings us to faith and repentance there is another great benefit that is the fruit of this New Covenant and renders it better than the Old Covenant.

IV. It is better because it purges the conscience. (v.14)

The law never pierced into the inner man. But by the sacrifice of the New Covenant, the conscience is purged. By the great sacrifice of Christ, our sins are forgiven. And when the Holy Spirit impresses that truth upon our conscience, it wipes it clean. Our sense of guilt is removed because our sins are forgiven. The slate is clean. My penalty is paid. My sins are cast away. And they are cast away once for all and forever. And I have peace with God forevermore.

What a Savior we have. What a priest we have. He had my name in his pocket when he passed into the heavens. And he offered the sacrifice of himself for me in particular.

Let me say, if you think that Jesus merely died in general, you are missing one of the great truths of the Bible. Jesus died for people in particular. And he has obtained redemption for people in particular. And the sins of people in particular have been cast as far as the east is from the west. And God is propitiated toward people in particular. People in particular are justified by the blood of Christ. Jesus Christ is a priest for people in particular. And in particular, he is a priest for me.

Christ loves his people in particular with a surpassing love. He loved them when he died. And he rose again to love them still. And he works every day in the sanctuary in heaven as their mediator. He will never let them perish.

You say, "How do I know if he died for me in particular?" And the answer is: If you find yourself believing in him, then he has died for you in particular. For how could you ever come to faith in him unless he give it to you.

And furthermore, if you find yourself in deep godly sorrow over your sins such that you think God could never love you, then he has given you repentance unto life and he has died for you in particular.

If you find yourself loving Christ above all others, then he has died for you in particular.

If you find yourself longing to be with the people of God, then perhaps he has died for you in particular.

If you find yourself longing to know the Word of God and if you find yourself reading it with a personal interest, then perhaps Jesus died for you in particular.

And if he died for you in particular, he will give you faith and repentance and a clear conscience. And he will be your God and you will be his people.