

THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO THE OLD COVENANT UNDER THE LAW

THE NEW IS BETTER THAN THE OLD:

But first things first. We must not forget that the law is holy. We need to understand that the old covenant being inferior to the new covenant does not mean that the old covenant was bad, as it served its purpose in showing us our sinfulness.

- (Romans 7:12 ESV) So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

But the new covenant is superior to the old covenant. Of that, the Scripture leaves no doubt.

- (Hebrews 8:6 ESV) But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.
- (Hebrews 8:6 NIV) But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.
- (Hebrews 8:6 NASB95) But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

What is the Papa John's catch phrase? "*Better ingredients, better pizza!*"

The new covenant is 1) a more excellent ministry, 2) a better covenant mediated by Christ, and 3) a covenant is established on better promises.

THE NEW MAKES THE OLD OBSOLETE:

God is God, and the old covenant served his purpose, but its time had come. The "serve by" date has expired.

- (Hebrews 8:13 ESV) In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.
- (Hebrews 8:13 NLT) When God speaks of a "new" covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.
- (Hebrews 8:13 NASB95) When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW COVENANTS IN 2 CORINTHIANS 3:

- (2 Corinthians 3:4–6 ESV) Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The first thing we see established in these verses is that there is a new covenant. Then we have the comparisons or contrasts. The new covenant is not of the letter of the law but of the Spirit. This shows superiority in the greater fullness of the new covenant as it is "of the Spirit." And also as the letter kills but the Spirit gives life. The "letter" fulfills its purpose in "killing" us, showing us our true spirituality—our dead, sinful condition. The "letter kills" if we attempt to find salvation in doing and not in grace.

- (2 Corinthians 3:7–11 ESV) Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

Continuing with contrasts and comparisons from 2 Corinthians 3:7-11.

The old covenant of the law:

- Is the ministry of death
- Is carved on letters of stone
- Has some glory
- Is the ministry of condemnation
- Was brought to an end

The new covenant in Christ:

- Is the ministry of the Spirit
- Is the ministry of righteousness
- Far exceeds the old covenant in glory
- Is permanent with much more glory

From this last section in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, I would like us to look at the comparison/contrast of interaction with the covenants and the powerful aspects of the transforming character of the new covenant.

- (2 Corinthians 3:12–18 ESV) 12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being

brought to an end. 14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Possibly the greatest area of the superiority of the new over the old is in its transforming power. Which makes sense, doesn't it? That is what the gospel is—the transforming work of God, making dead people alive, and then transforming us into the image of Christ until we see him one day and God's work of glory in our lives is complete.

So what do we learn from 2 Corinthians 3:12–18 about the new covenant?

- **TREMENDOUS HOPE:** We should have tremendous hope—“such a hope”—from the exceeding, surpassing glory of a covenant which is permanent—eternal—and of which we are a part because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- **HOLY BOLDNESS:** This powerful, glorious, permanent hope produces boldness—“we are very bold.”
- **SPIRITUAL SIGHT:** Christ removes the veil—our blindness and the hardness of our hearts—when we turn to him in belief.
- **GRACE:** Not stated explicitly here but we cannot miss the undertones of grace as we learn more and more of so great a salvation.
- **INTIMACY & ACCESS:** The Spirit is now resident in our lives.
- **FREEDOM:** Where the Spirit is there is freedom.
- **MORE GLORY:** Because of the access and intimacy we now share with God, we behold his glory with seeing eyes.
- **TRANSFORMATION:** The more we see Jesus Christ in his glory, the more we look like him.
- **SECURITY:** This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Praise Our Father in Heaven!

Warren Wiersbe thoughts on Hebrews ...

IT IS A BOOK OF EVALUATION ...

The word *better* is used thirteen times in this book as the writer shows the superiority of Jesus Christ and His salvation over the Hebrew system of religion. Christ is “better than the angels” (Hebrews 1:4). He brought in “a better hope” (Hebrews 7:19) because He is the Mediator of “a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6).

Another word that is repeated in this book is *perfect*; in the original Greek it is used fourteen times. It means a perfect standing before God. This perfection could never be accomplished by the levitical priesthood (Hebrews 7:11) or by the Law (Hebrews 7:19), nor could the blood of animal sacrifices achieve it (Hebrews 10:1). Jesus Christ gave Himself as one offering for sin, and by this He has “perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

So the writer is contrasting the Old Testament system of Law with the New Testament ministry of grace. He is making it clear that the Jewish religious system was temporary and that it could not bring in the eternal “better things” that are found in Jesus Christ.

Eternal is a third word that is important to the message of Hebrews. Christ is the “author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9). Through His death, He “obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12) and He shares with believers “the promise of eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15). His throne is forever (Hebrews 1:8) and He is a priest forever (Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21). “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

When you combine these three important words, you discover that Jesus Christ and the Christian life He gives us are better because these blessings are eternal and they give us a perfect standing before God. The religious system under the Mosaic Law was imperfect because it could not accomplish a once-for-all redemption that was eternal. [*Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2, p. 276). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.*]

- (Hebrews 1:3 ESV) He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Wiersbe again ... Paul used the word image to make this fact clear. It means “an exact representation and revelation.” The writer to the Hebrews affirms that Jesus Christ is “the express image of His Person” (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus was able to say, “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). In His essence, God is invisible; but Jesus Christ has revealed Him to us (John 1:18). Nature reveals the existence, power, and wisdom of God; but nature cannot reveal the very essence of God to us. It is only in Jesus Christ that the invisible God is revealed perfectly. Since no mere creature can perfectly reveal God, Jesus Christ must be God. [*Ibid. (Vol. 2, p. 116).*]

- (John 1:18 ESV) No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.
- (John 14:9 ESV) Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”

The law is the abstract, the moral code, the written word of God. Jesus Christ is the truth, the concrete reality. He perfectly lived the abstract truth of God in the flesh. He is the exact representation of God in the flesh. Don't miss the point: he is the exact representation of God because he is God.