

One of the great themes of our letter is the newness of what God is doing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus' superiority over every other being in the universe.

• *What God is doing in the Lord Jesus Christ is new and superior to all that has gone before*

1. In Hebrews 1:1–2a, Jesus is a new and final word from God.
2. In Hebrews 1:2b–14, Jesus is greater than the angels.
3. In Hebrews 2:1–4 we discover that rebellion against Jesus is more dangerous than rebellion against the Mosaic law.
4. In Hebrews 2:5–18 we discover the newness and greatness of our destiny. Jesus is bringing many sons to glory.
5. In Hebrews 3:1–4:13 we are looking at one who was greater than Moses. Moses was building an earthly tabernacle; Jesus is bringing a family of God's people to sabbath-rest.
6. In Hebrews 4:14–7:28 we find that Jesus is vastly superior to any high priest. Like Melchizedek he is entirely unique and greater than any rival.
7. In Hebrews 8:1–12 we have been seeing that Jesus is the mediator of a covenant which is superior to the Mosaic covenant and which has new and greater promises in it.

Verse 13 draws a conclusion from the points he has been making. *In saying 'new' God has made the first covenant obsolete; and that which is antiquated and decaying is near to disappearing altogether.* If the Mosaic covenant was as weak and as defective as he has been saying, and if the new covenant is so vastly superior, it implies that the old covenant is obsolete. It has been around for a long time but it is aging and will soon disappear. The Mosaic covenant is utterly obsolete. True, we still **read** it. We see Jesus in it. The character of God revealed in the Mosaic law still remains the same. But the detailed requirements of the law are generally entirely abandoned, or in Christ are made to be altogether greater. It was about to disappear altogether, says our writer.

• *The Mosaic covenant was weak and defective and is now obsolete*

• *Written in anticipation of, and before the destruction of the temple*

• *A dramatic confirmation*

Quite likely our author knows of the prediction of Jesus that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. If Hebrews was written after Paul's death but before AD 70, then the day of the temple destruction was very close at hand. Within a few months the writer's teaching will be vindicated. It will become much more clear that the cross of Christ abolishes the old covenant. But will they believe it **before** the temple falls? Their faith would be more impressive if they believe now. In a few months or a year or so, there will be a dramatic confirmation of the writer's teaching. But will they believe what he says **before** the vindication comes? What does it all mean for us practically?

**1. Rejecting the old, the lesser, the legalistic**

1. **We are to reject the old, the lesser, the legalistic.** 'Mosaic' religious life is not for us. When the Christian gospel becomes full of legislation or overmuch admiration of holy buildings or rituals or excessive symbolism, we are becoming 'Old Testament' Christians. It is even worse if we set up a system or priests and reintroduce repeated 'sacrifices' of Jesus (I am thinking of 'mass' in the thinking of some sincere people).

**2. Holding on to the new, the greater, the superior**

2. **We must hold on to the new and the greater and the superior.** This is a way of saying we hold onto Jesus! It begins by seeing him with the eye of faith. 'We see him ...' <sup>□1</sup>. 'Consider Jesus...' says Hebrews 3:1. 'We have a great high priest...Jesus, the Son of God...' <sup>□2</sup>. We are to be 'looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of faith' <sup>□3</sup>, 'Jesus, the

□1 2:9  
□2 4:14  
□3 12:2

• *Hold onto Jesus!*

mediator of a new covenant'<sup>4</sup>, 'Jesus...the same yesterday and today and for ever'<sup>5</sup>, 'Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep who will equip us with everything good'<sup>6</sup>, 'Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever'<sup>7</sup>. It is not old covenant ritual, old covenant rules, not even old covenant morality (for we go higher than that!). It is Jesus himself that we need.

4 12:24  
5 13:8  
6 13:20-21  
7 13:21

**3. A life of constantly drawing nearer to him**

3. **It is a life of constantly drawing near to him.** 'Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...', says this pastor-friend of ours<sup>1</sup>. We have 'a better hope...through which we draw near to God'<sup>2</sup>. He is able to 'save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him'<sup>3</sup>. 'Let us draw near with a true heart...' <sup>4</sup>. 'Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he is there and that he rewards those who seek him'<sup>5</sup>. Drawing near to God through Jesus, with confidence in the power of his blood, is the entire secret of the Christian faith.

1 4:16  
2 7:19  
3 7:25  
4 10:22  
5 11:6

• *Dependence on Jesus*

It is vital that we learn to depend on Jesus in this way. John Calvin said, 'as we are too sluggish, we must be stimulated by God to pray earnestly whenever the occasion requires'. The more severely grievances, annoyances, fears and other kinds of trial press upon us, the freer is our access to God, as if he were inviting us to himself. 'When will the many sins of which we are conscious allow us to sit secure...?' 'When will temptation give us a truce, making it unnecessary to hurry to God for help?'<sup>a</sup> When an evil conscience shuts the door against us we turn again to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We put aside all self-confidence and come to God in faith. It is persistent faith which obtains everything that is granted to prayer. We need great confidence that we shall obtain every good thing that we ask. The only prayer acceptable to God is that which springs from boldness of faith. 'Call upon me in the day of trouble', says God<sup>1</sup>. All the passages throughout Scripture in which we are commanded to draw near to God, are set up before our eyes to inspire us with confidence. It would be presumption to go forward into the presence of God, did he not anticipate us by his invitation. But this is what he constantly says to us. Draw near! He says it to us again and again. Draw near! Draw near! Draw near! Forget the obsolete religiosity of any kind of 'Mosaic' way of living. See Jesus and draw near to him with full assurance of faith!

1 Psalm 50:15

• *Putting aside all self-confidence*

• *In the full assurance of bold faith*

**Note**

a. The quotations in this paragraph are taken from *Calvin on Hebrews*.

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