

• *Greater promises – some soon – others take longer*

**1. Jesus' new covenant ministry is a powerful ministry**

• *A covenant of grace – God takes the promise*

• *Cannot be broken*

• *Internal*

• *Chastening and gratitude*

• *The Holy Spirit's power*

• *Legally based promises*

• *Hundreds of promises:*

• *Secure position in Christ*

• *Purpose and destiny*

• *Enablement*

• *Protection*

• *Reward*

<sup>6</sup>But now Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry, and it is more excellent just as he is the mediator of a better covenant, which is legally based on better promises. Jesus has altogether greater promises for us than anything that could be received under the Mosaic law or through Levitical priests. Some of them are soon obtained; others require much faith and patience.

1. **Jesus' new covenant ministry is a powerful ministry.** There is a more excellent ministry. The covenant with Moses involved holy buildings and ritualistic ceremonies and detailed legislation sometimes about quite minor matters. The covenant of God's graciousness towards us through the Lord Jesus Christ involves the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross and his continuing ministry to us from the heavenly sanctuary.

There is a better covenant. It is a different **type** of covenant. The covenant with Moses was a law-covenant in which the people took the oath. The covenant of God's graciousness towards us is one where God is giving us promises and is ready to take an oath saying that they have been obtained. But there are many other differences. The old was breakable; the new cannot be broken. The old was largely external (except for the tenth commandment) and was maintained by courts and councils of elders. The new covenant is internal and spiritual and has to do with Jesus giving us a new heart. The old promoted morality and worked by fear of punishment. The new promotes spirituality (including morality!) and works both by fear of chastening and by gratitude and the power of the Holy Spirit. The old gave earthly life; the new gives eternal life.

There are better promises. 'Covenant' is based on promises. Oath-taking is a way of making promises more secure. The old covenant is legally finished. Our writer uses a word (*nomotheteo*) meaning 'legally-based'. *Nomotheteo* is connected with the word *nomos* meaning 'law'. It means not simply 'based' but '**legally based**'. Jesus fulfilled the law keeping its demands and bearing its punishments. It has no further claims on us and we have been legally transferred to a different covenant. 'I through the law died to the law', said Paul<sup>1</sup>. The law had some promises (national stability, the presence of God as Israel's God), but Christ is ready to minister to us much greater promises. There are hundreds of them, and Hebrews is about to tell us of some of them. But they can be put into groups!

- The promise that our position in Christ is secure. He will never leave us or forsake us. We on our side shall be given an inner inclination to obey God, a firm relationship with God, based upon the forgiveness of sins. Jeremiah will soon mention this aspect of the matter<sup>2</sup>.
- The promise of purpose and destiny. Like the people of Hebrews chapter 11 each Christian is given a calling.
- The promise of enablement **within** our calling. God's power has given us all things that relate to 'life and godliness'<sup>3</sup>. We have 'precious and exceeding great promises'<sup>4</sup> of abundant provision.
- The promise of sufficient protection. God will be our shield when necessary.
- The promise of 'exceeding great reward'. The promise given to Abraham (as the result of Melchizedek's praying!) is given to us<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 2:19

<sup>2</sup> in 8:10-12

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter 1:3

<sup>4</sup> 2 Peter 1:4

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 14:19; 15:1

## 2. The old covenant was a failure

- Preparatory – intended to fail

The **old covenant was a failure**. The law of Moses restrained Israel for many centuries but slowly the nation deteriorated. Eventually it was quite obvious that the law was a failure. It came from God, and God had definite reasons for it. It prepared the way for the gospel and was not **against** the gospel. But nevertheless it failed – and was intended to fail! Jeremiah could see it hundreds of years before Jesus came. Our writer says:

<sup>7</sup>For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one. <sup>8</sup>For he finds fault with them when he says,

*'Behold, the days are comings, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*

<sup>9</sup>*It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant and so I ignored them, declares the Lord.'*

- The people were incapable of keeping it – they needed more help – greater power and a more powerful high priest

God brought the old covenant into being. It was he who rescued the people from Egypt and took them to Sinai. The law revealed many aspects of God's character. It was good so far as it went. In a few sentences (the tenth commandment; Leviticus 19:2, 18b, and maybe a few more sentences) it was a perfect expression of God's will. Yet it still failed. It did not have enough of God's gracious help in it. The people had to swear obedience<sup>1</sup>, yet they were not capable of such obedience in their hearts. It went on for a long time and yet eventually they did not continue in keeping it. The law did not sustain itself. There was in the law no 'spring of water welling up into eternal life'. It eventually became clear that a new covenant was needed, one which would work with much greater power and would be maintained by a much more powerful high priest.

Exodus 19:8

## The Modern Christian

- Needs to live in the provision of the New Testament

The modern Christian has to make sure he is not living as if he were an 'Old Testament Christian'. We do not live on vows of obedience or holy buildings or ritualistic ceremonies. We do not need animal sacrifices. Even the ten commandments are too low a level for Christian spirituality. In our Lord Jesus Christ we have an altogether higher kind of life, empowered by the Holy Spirit, sustained by Christ's heavenly intercession.



slices.org.uk

Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world <b>where resources are scarce and unaffordable</b></li> <li>• In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available <b>free of charge</b></li> <li>• Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the <i>Slices</i> web site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For those in more prosperous circumstances who <b>can afford to contribute to the development</b> of this material and its distribution with a <b>small monthly donation</b></li> <li>• The same material as <b>Slices for the Nations</b></li> <li>• Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the <i>Slices</i> web site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For those who wish to <b>sample</b> the material or dip into it from time to time, a <b>proportion</b> of the PTTB series is available <b>free of charge</b></li> <li>• <b>Slices for Everyone</b> (as a download) or <b>Slice of the Week</b> (attached to a weekly email)</li> <li>• The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive <b>Slices for the Nations</b></li> </ul>

To subscribe please contact: [slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk](mailto:slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk) stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at [www.slices.org.uk](http://www.slices.org.uk)  
 Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on [www.ibtr.org.uk](http://www.ibtr.org.uk)