

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEW COVENANT IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN: AN  
EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF HEBREWS 8:6-13**

**PATRICK BAKKABULINDI**

**M22M05/029**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER  
OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**August, 2025**



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**

*A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

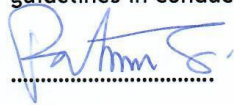
DECLARATION .....	iv
APPROVAL.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background and motivation for the study.....	1
1.2 Research Problem.....	1
1.3 Research questions.....	2
1.4 Research Objective.....	2
1.5 Research Specific Objectives.....	2
1.6 Literature review.....	2
1.7 Research methodology.....	8
1.8 Dissertation Structure.....	9
<b>CHAPTER II. CONTEXT OF HEBREWS 8:6-13 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	10
2.2 General Background .....	10
2.3 Literal Context .....	19
2.4 Themes in Hebrews 8:6-13.....	24
<b>CHAPTER 3. MESSAGE OF HEBREWS 8:6-13.....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	32
3.2 Preliminary analysis.....	32
3.3.1 Translation variation .....	32
3.3.2 Textual analysis .....	36
3.3.3 Textual variations of HEBREWS 8:6-13.....	38
3.3.4 Summary of key issues in the exegetical study of HEBREWS 8:6-13.....	59
3.3.5 Exegetical Synthesis of HEBREWS 8:6-13.....	63
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE SIGNIFICANCE RESEARCH TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH .....</b>	<b>65</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	65

4.2 The Doctrinal Significance .....	65
4.2 The practical significance .....	72
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION .....	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	78
APPENDIX (PLAGIALISM CHECK) .....	83

**DECLARATION**

I, BAKKABULINDI PATRICK, solemnly declare that this dissertation entitled “Significance of the New Covenant in the Life of a Christian: An Exegetical Analysis of Hebrews 8:6-13” is the result of my own independent and original research. To the fullest extent of my awareness and integrity, it excludes any prior published material or external authorship, except where proper citation has been appropriately given.

I further declare that I have properly acknowledged all external sources of information and assistance used in this dissertation. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other academic award. I have abided by all relevant ethical guidelines in conducting and reporting this research.



.....

BAKKABULINDI PATRICK

DATE: 29/08/2025  
.....

**APPROVAL**

This dissertation titled "Significance of the New Covenant in the Life of a Christian: An Exegetical Analysis of Hebrews 8:6-13" submitted by Bakkabulindi Patrick has been reviewed and approved by:

SIGNATURE: ..........

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR EDISON KALENGYO MUHINDO

DATE: ..........

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Diocese of Mukono, particularly the Retired Bishop Rt. Rev. James William Ssebagala, for identifying my potential and recommending me for this theological training. I also give sincere thanks to Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology at Uganda Christian University for awarding me a scholarship to pursue his Master of Divinity. My academic journey was profoundly shaped by my supervisor, Rev. Canon Professor Edison Kalengyo, whose constant support, critique, and encouragement greatly contributed to the quality and depth of my research.

I further extend my appreciation to the academic and non-academic staff of BTS DT for their mentorship and contributions. I also recognize the tremendous work done by my classmates throughout the study process.

Above all, I acknowledge God's guidance and favour as the ultimate source of my strength and perseverance.

## ABSTRACT

This study presents an exegetical engagement with Hebrews 8:6-13, aiming to explore its relevance and application within the context of the contemporary church. In response to the rising phenomenon of nominal Christianity, particularly cultural Christians, the research sought to demonstrate how the New Covenant message in Hebrews can offer transformative guidance and practical solutions for cultivating genuine godliness.

The study was guided by two questions: What is the message of Hebrews 8:6-13? and How does this passage offer a framework for fostering spiritual transformation in today's church? The core objective was to ascertain the enduring relevance of Hebrews 8:6-13 in confronting the spiritual superficiality found in cultural Christianity, and to apply its covenantal themes toward nurturing authentic discipleship in Uganda.

Methodologically, this library-based study employed a commentary-based exegetical approach, offering verse-by-verse analysis grounded in both historical and literary context.

The Major study findings are: 1) God's Promise of New Covenant is Fulfilled in Christ; 2) The Role of Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant; 3) A Call to embrace a "better" covenant; 4) The Divine Commitment is Fulfilled in Christ's New Covenant; 5) Transformation is Through the Power of the Holy Spirit; 6) Personal Knowledge of God is for All Believers; 7) God's Mercy Remembers Sin No More; 8) the need to Live in the Reality of the New Covenant.

The study concluded by noting that the church should: (1) encourage Liturgical transformation; (2) Reimagine Faith Formation in the Ugandan Churches; (3) Redeem Faith from the Prosperity Gospel Trap; (4) have church Leadership Rooted in Presence and Communion of God; (5) Proclaim Christ Amid Confusion through Biblical Preaching; (6) encourage members to walk Together in Grace through Contextualized Discipleship.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RSV: Revised Standard Version

NIV: New International Version

GNB: Good News Bible

ESV: English Standard Version

NASB: New American Standard Bible

UCU: Uganda Christian University

cf: Compare

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background and motivation for the research

In Uganda, Christianity is widely embraced, but for many, it remains a cultural identity rather than a transformative faith. As the dominant religion, it is often inherited rather than personally pursued, leading to Cultural Christianity, where religious affiliation is shaped by tradition rather than deep spiritual conviction. Many Ugandans participate in church activities—baptism, Holy Communion, marriage, and fasting—not as a response to a personal relationship with God but as social obligations tied to family and community expectations. While churches remain full, engagement with biblical teachings and discipleship often lacks depth, resulting in a faith that is ceremonial rather than transformational.

This study applies biblical exegesis to Hebrews 8:6-13 to uncover its message and offer practical ways to address cultural Christianity, ensuring faith moves beyond tradition into genuine spiritual renewal. Some professing Christians continue engaging in ancestral worship, consulting spiritual healers, and observing traditional rites that contradict biblical principles, treating faith as a convenience rather than a life-changing commitment. Even though Uganda is widely regarded as a Christian nation, corruption, social injustices, and unethical leadership persist, highlighting a disconnect between Christian identity and genuine Christian living. True Christianity, as outlined in Hebrews 8:6-13, invites believers to fully embrace spiritual renewal through the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.

#### 1.2 Research problem

Cultural Christianity in Uganda challenges spiritual depth, ethical integrity, and the church's transformative role in society, as inherited faith often leads to nominal Christianity rather than genuine transformation. This study seeks to critically examine Hebrews 8:6-13 in relation to this anomaly, emphasizing the New Covenant's superiority

over inherited traditions by establishing a direct and transformative relationship between God and His people. Through theological exegesis and practical ministry insights, the study aims to develop solutions that cultivate a generation of believers whose faith is not merely cultural but reflects authentic spiritual renewal rooted in Christ's redemptive work.

### **1.3 Research question**

1. What is the message of Hebrews 8:6-13?
2. How does Hebrews 8:6-13 provide a framework for fostering genuine spiritual transformation in the church today?

### **1.4 Research objective**

To ascertain the theological message of Hebrews 8:6-13 and examine its relevance and application within the church today

### **1.5 Specific research objectives**

1. To analyse Hebrews 8:6-13 and its implications for the New Covenant and authentic Christian faith.
2. To examine how Hebrews 8:6-13 presents the New Covenant as a solution to cultural Christianity in the contemporary church

### **1.6 Literature Review**

The cultural Christian identity in Africa has deep historical roots, shaped by both indigenous traditions and external influences. Christianity first arrived in Africa in the 1st century AD, with early Christian communities emerging in North Africa, particularly in Egypt and Ethiopia.<sup>1</sup> Over time, African Christianity developed unique expressions, blending biblical teachings with local customs.

---

<sup>1</sup> B. Sundkler and C. Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

During the colonial era, European missionaries introduced Christianity to Sub-Saharan Africa, often dismissing indigenous religious practices as heathenism.<sup>2</sup> This led to tensions between Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), as many African converts sought ways to reconcile their faith with their cultural heritage.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars argue that this interconnectedness was a response to missionary pressure, while others see it as a search for a genuine Afro-Christian uniqueness.<sup>4</sup>

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church stands as a distinctive example of indigenous African Christianity, having developed independently of European missionary influence.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, many contemporary African Christian movements show a blend of Christian doctrine and African spirituality, sparking ongoing debates about integration and authenticity in faith practice.<sup>6</sup> This blending gave rise to cultural Christianity, where religious identity often became an indicator of social belonging rather than a reflection of deep personal conviction.<sup>7</sup> Over time, Christianity evolved into a dominant force, shaping governance, education, and societal structures, leaving a lasting impression on the spiritual and cultural landscape of Africa.<sup>8</sup>

Several root causes gave rise to cultural Christianity in Uganda which include inherited faith without personal commitment; colonial legacy and social incentives; syncretism with African Traditional Religion (ATR); and cultural conformity and ritualism.

---

<sup>2</sup> L. Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> B. Bompani, "Christianity and Public Culture in Africa," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64, no. 1 (2013): 206–207,

<sup>4</sup> Englund, H). (2011). *Christianity and public culture in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Sundkler, B., & Steed, C. (2000). *A history of the church in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>6</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> B. Bompani, "Christianity and Public Culture in Africa," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64, no. 1 (2013): 206–207,

<sup>8</sup> B. Bompani, "Christianity and Public Culture in Africa," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64, no. 1 (2013): 206–207,

One of the most significant roots of cultural Christianity in Uganda is the prevalence of inherited religious identity. Mokhoathi (2017) argues that in many African contexts, including Uganda, faith is often transmitted through family and community structures rather than through personal conviction or spiritual transformation.<sup>9</sup> In such cases, individuals are born into Christian households, socialized within Christian norms, and participate in religious practices without ever making an informed or intentional commitment to the faith. This inherited religiosity, though socially stabilizing, tends to lack theological depth and fails to cultivate a personal relationship with Christ. As a result, Christianity becomes a nominal label—affiliated with birthright and cultural belonging—rather than a life-defining commitment grounded in the gospel.

During colonial times, Christianity came to Uganda not just to help people grow spiritually, but also as a way to control society and politics.<sup>10</sup> Missionaries worked closely with colonial leaders, and becoming a Christian often gave people access to things like education, healthcare, jobs, and political support. Many people chose Christianity to improve their lives, not because they truly believed. This helped Christianity spread quickly, but it also led to shallow conversions based on benefits, not faith. Over time, Christianity became linked with modern life, success, and progress. It was seen as useful, rather than life-changing. Today, Christian identity is deeply built into Uganda’s schools, hospitals, and political speeches—but this doesn’t always mean people have a deep, personal relationship with Christ.

A major reason for cultural Christianity in Uganda is the mixing of Bible-based Christianity with African Traditional Religion (ATR).<sup>11</sup> When early missionaries came, they strongly rejected local religious practices, calling them evil or wrong.<sup>12</sup> But these traditions like honoring ancestors, giving special names, and using spiritual healing were

---

<sup>9</sup> J. Mokhoathi, “From Contextual Theology to African Christianity: The Paradox of Cultural Identity and Spiritual Conviction,” *Scriptura* 120, no. 1 (2017): 1–15.

<sup>10</sup> I. Musana, “Religiosity, Indigenous Contributions and Martyrdom Misconstructions in the Growth Process of Christianity in Uganda,” *African Multidisciplinary Journal of Research* 8, no. 1 (2023): 44–64.

<sup>11</sup> J. Mokhoathi, “From Contextual Theology to African Christianity: The Paradox of Cultural Identity and Spiritual Conviction,” *Scriptura* 120, no. 1 (2017): 1–15.

<sup>12</sup> L. Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

deeply part of African life.<sup>13</sup> Instead of disappearing, many of these customs were quietly added into Christian life. This created a mixed kind of faith that combines Bible teachings with traditional beliefs. For example, some Ugandan Christians pray to God but also perform ancestral rituals for protection.<sup>14</sup> Others use Christian symbols like the cross in ways that reflect traditional ideas of spiritual power. This blending makes it hard for people to clearly tell the difference between cultural traditions and true Bible teachings.

In Uganda, Christian practices have become part of everyday culture. Things like going to church, having weddings or funerals in church, and using Christian symbols are often done to show respect in society but not always because of deep personal faith.<sup>15</sup> Many people follow these traditions because they are expected, not because they have a strong relationship with God. As a result, Christianity is sometimes more about fitting in than about true spiritual change. This shows how Christian identity has become part of social life, but it can weaken clear Bible teaching and real spiritual renewal.

While the historical roots of cultural Christianity in Uganda created a foundation for a shallow and mixed form of faith, several modern factors continue to keep it going. These include influences from philosophy, society, church practices, and politics. As a result, many people claim to be Christian, but their faith is often weak, loosely followed, and not deeply personal.

One of the strongest ideas shaping Christianity in Uganda today is the belief that all religions are equally true (pluralism and relativism).<sup>16</sup> As the world becomes more

---

<sup>13</sup> K. A. Arinaitwe, "The Dilemma of Syncretism in the Church of Uganda: Christian Faith Development from 1877 to 2019," *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education* 7, no. 3 (2023): 45–50.

<sup>14</sup> H. I. Mulepi, *The Rising Trend of Religious Syncretism in Uganda* (Mbale: New Eden Ministries International Press, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> P. Royal L., *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians among Roman Catholics*, Lausanne Occasional Paper 23 (Lausanne Movement, 1980),

<sup>16</sup> P. Royal L., *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians among Roman Catholics*, Lausanne Occasional Paper 23 (Lausanne Movement, 1980),

connected and people are exposed to many different views—especially in cities and schools—many Ugandans now think that no single religion is better than others. They believe that every religion shows some kind of spiritual truth. Because of this, fewer people feel the need to follow Jesus Christ alone. Christianity is often seen as just one choice among many, not the only way God has revealed Himself. This way of thinking weakens the clear message of the gospel. It leads to a kind of faith that mixes different beliefs and focuses more on personal opinions than on the Bible’s teachings.

As Uganda changes socially and economically, people’s spiritual lives are also changing. Many now focus more on getting money, comfort, and success than on growing in faith.<sup>17</sup> Because of this, things like prayer and worship with others are often ignored. In cities, family and community support for moral and religious values has become weaker. People now practice Christianity more privately, like a personal lifestyle, instead of living in a deep relationship with Christ and the church. Faith becomes more about what is easy or useful, rather than truly following Jesus.

In Uganda, the way churches operate has helped cultural Christianity continue. To stay connected with local people, many churches use worship styles, leadership methods, and ministry approaches that fit the culture.<sup>18</sup> This is important, but often it’s done without strong biblical teaching to guide it. As a result, churches may focus more on emotional experiences, growing large numbers, and having popular leaders rather than teaching the Bible clearly and helping people grow spiritually. Many pastors preach messages that motivate or promise prosperity, but don’t always help believers understand and follow God’s Word deeply. Because of this, many people call themselves Christians but haven’t truly been changed by the gospel. Their faith stays shallow, and churches often don’t help them see the difference between being part of a Christian culture and having a real, personal relationship with Christ.

---

<sup>17</sup> P. Royal L., *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians among Roman Catholics*, Lausanne Occasional Paper 23 (Lausanne Movement, 1980),

<sup>18</sup> K. Ward, *A History of Christianity in Uganda*, *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (2023).

In Uganda, Christianity is often used by leaders to look honest and gain public support. During elections or national problems, politicians talk about Christian values and use religious symbols to win trust.<sup>19</sup> They also seek support from churches and religious leaders to boost their image.<sup>20</sup> But many times, this use of religion is not sincere but it is more about looking good than living faithfully. When leaders claim to be Christian but act in corrupt or dishonest ways, it sends a message that Christianity is just for show. This makes it hard for people to see the difference between real faith and cultural habits. It also weakens the Church's role as a moral guide and turns faith into something shallow and used for personal gain.

In Uganda, cultural Christianity continues because people still follow religious customs that look Christian but are often done out of habit, not deep faith. For example, many hang crosses in their homes, give children Bible names, or take part in church sacraments, not always because they believe strongly, but because it's expected in society.<sup>21</sup> These actions keep the Christian appearance but often lack real spiritual meaning. At the same time, traditional practices like naming children after ancestors, trying to please spirits, or doing special cultural rituals are quietly mixed into Christian life. This blending of Christian and traditional customs creates a confusing spiritual picture. It allows people to say they are Christian without truly living by the Bible, because the faith becomes more about culture than about a changed life with God.

The New Covenant in Hebrews 8:6-13 gives a strong answer to the problem of cultural Christianity in Uganda. Unlike the Old Covenant, which focused on outside rituals and church systems, the New Covenant focuses on changing inside of the person. It is about

---

<sup>19</sup> A. Mayambala, "Religion's Influence in Ugandan Politics: Power, Impact, and Controversy," *Nile Post*, August 22, 2024, accessed

<sup>20</sup> J. P. Kasujja and H. Hassan, "Religious Affiliations and Political Leadership in Uganda: The Case of Iganga District," *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 11, no. 6 (2023): 24–36.

<sup>21</sup> K. A. Arinaitwe, "The Dilemma of Syncretism in the Church of Uganda: Christian Faith Development from 1877 to 2019," *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education* 7, no. 3 (2023): 45–50.

having a new heart, a renewed mind, and a close relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. This covenant is not just about changing religious practices but it is about being transformed into a new person through a personal encounter with Christ and ongoing spiritual growth.

The New Covenant challenges the habit of following Christianity just because it is part of culture or tradition. It calls for real commitment, turning away from sin, and living by the power of the Spirit. In Uganda, where faith is often mixed with culture and social status, the New Covenant invites people to go deeper; to become true disciples and to build their faith on solid biblical teaching.

To fight against shallow Christianity, churches need to focus on strong Bible teaching, real discipleship, and helping people grow spiritually. It is still important to make the gospel fit the local culture, but this must be done with clear understanding of the Bible. If not, trying to connect with culture can weaken the gospel's power to change lives. The New Covenant is not just a promise from God but it is also a mission for the Church. It calls believers to move from tradition to real transformation, from empty rituals to true relationship with God, and from inherited religion to living, active faith.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

This study will employ a qualitative, library-based research approach using secondary data to examine Hebrews 8:6-13 in relation to cultural Christianity and spiritual transformation in the contemporary church. The exegetical method will proceed verse by verse, presenting theological observations and analyzing linguistic, grammatical, and intertextual references to clarify key themes. Textual analysis and variations will aid in understanding the passage within its original historical and literary context.

Additionally, historical criticism will be applied to situate Hebrews 8:6-13 within its broader biblical context, identifying its relevance for both ancient and modern audiences. Literary criticism will help assess the structural and thematic aspects of the text, while contextual analysis will integrate theological and practical significance,

demonstrating how the New Covenant addresses nominal Christianity and fosters genuine transformation. Data collection will involve primary biblical texts, translations, and scholarly sources, including commentaries and theological works. By synthesizing these approaches, the research will aim to provide a comprehensive theological and practical framework for overcoming cultural Christianity and embracing the transformative power of the New Covenant.

### **1.8 Dissertation Structure**

The research is structured into five chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive theological and exegetical analysis. Chapter One outlines the study's background and motivation, articulates the research problem, questions, and objectives, reviews relevant literature, and details the methodology and structure of the research. Chapter Two provides contextual insights into the book of Hebrews, exploring its historical, literary, and theological themes to establish a foundation for interpretation.

Chapter Three examines the message of Hebrews through preliminary analysis, translation variations, textual criticism, and exegetical synthesis, identifying key theological issues. Chapter Four highlights the study's significance for the modern church, offering practical and theological applications. Finally, Chapter five presents the conclusion, synthesizing key findings and implications for theology, discipleship, and church renewal.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with historical background of the book of Hebrews with special emphasis on authorship, audience, dating, destination and message. It also discusses the literal context of the book with special focus on 8:6-13. Major Theological themes of the book of Hebrews are also discussed with focus on how they feed into 8:6-13.

#### 2.2 General Background

The Epistle to the Hebrews emerged during an unpredictable yet spiritually fertile period when the early Christian movement was gaining momentum amidst the vast cultural and political expanse of the Roman Empire. It was written within a Greco-Roman world marked by religious pluralism and imperial dominance. Jewish communities, scattered throughout the empire, maintained their distinct monotheistic identity within this polytheistic context.<sup>22</sup> Religiously, the epistle speaks into the crossroads of Judaism and Christianity. Drawing upon deeply Jewish themes like priesthood, covenant, and sacrifice, the author reinterprets them in the light of Christ's final and superior priestly ministry.<sup>23</sup> Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, inaugurating a New Covenant rooted in internal transformation and direct relationship with God.<sup>24</sup> The anonymous nature of the letter, coupled with its rich theological content, reflects both the mystery of its authorship and the complexity of its audience.<sup>25</sup>

While the Epistle to the Hebrews does not identify its author, both tradition and internal evidence offer meaningful—though inconclusive—clues. Some argue that history and

---

<sup>22</sup> D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

tradition shed little light on the matter, yet others contend they provide valuable insights.<sup>26</sup> Internally, the text points to a Hellenistic Jewish Christian: a Greek-speaking believer deeply immersed in Jewish worship, traditions, and especially the Septuagint<sup>27</sup>. His polished Greek style—arguably the most refined in the New Testament—bears resemblance to Luke’s and reflects a sophisticated fusion of Hebrew theology and Greek philosophical thought, particularly reminiscent of Philo.<sup>28</sup>

Though the author remains unnamed, his intellectual brilliance, pastoral concern, and intimate relationship with his readers are unmistakable. He demonstrates a masterful command of rhetoric and persuasive technique, hallmarks of classical training in the ancient world. His deep knowledge of the Old Testament and the historical experiences of his audience enables him to present the story of salvation with clarity and urgency.<sup>29</sup> Rather than asserting apostolic authority, he appeals to shared experience and inherited faith, urging his readers to remain steadfast in their devotion and public confession of Christ. He acknowledges having received “so great a salvation” through those who had heard the Lord directly.<sup>30</sup>

The author’s theology aligns closely with Pauline and Johannine traditions, particularly in his exalted view of Christ, emphasis on His sacrificial death, and ethical exhortations.<sup>31</sup> Yet, unlike Paul, he quotes exclusively from the Septuagint and treats

---

<sup>26</sup> P. H. R. Van Houwelingen, “Riddles Around the Letter to the Hebrews,” *Fides Reformata* 16, no. 2 (2011): 151–162, accessed January 15, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> K. Bense, *The Melchizedek Typology in Hebrews 7:1–28: Its Relationship to Contemporary Melchizedek Traditions and the Principles of Jewish Scripture Exegesis* (PhD diss., Evangelical Theological Faculty Leuven, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> K. Bense, *The Melchizedek Typology in Hebrews 7:1–28: Its Relationship to Contemporary Melchizedek Traditions and the Principles of Jewish Scripture Exegesis* (PhD diss., Evangelical Theological Faculty Leuven, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> D. A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> (Hebrews 2:3).

<sup>31</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

the Old Testament not as law in contrast to the gospel, but as covenant—foreshadowing the New Covenant fulfilled in Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Hebrews lacks the typical epistolary greeting, prompting some to question whether it is truly a letter. Scholars argue that it is best understood as a homiletic treatise—a sermon-like exhortation that transitions into an epistle by its conclusion (Hebrews 13:22).<sup>33</sup> The absence of a greeting may be intentional, perhaps reflecting the author’s anonymity or the audience’s familiarity with him.<sup>34</sup>

The question of authorship remains unresolved. Tradition has offered various possibilities. The Alexandrian tradition, supported by Clement and Origen, attributed the letter to Paul, suggesting it was originally written in Hebrew and translated into Greek by Luke.<sup>35</sup> The African tradition, led by Tertullian, championed Barnabas as the author—a view that aligns with Barnabas’s Levitical background, Hellenistic upbringing, and theological interests. Though compelling, this tradition was eventually overshadowed by the Alexandrian view. Meanwhile, the Roman tradition, or Western church, largely regarded the epistle as anonymous. Figures like Irenaeus and Hippolytus rejected Pauline authorship, and Clement of Rome, though familiar with the letter, never attributed it to anyone. Other candidates have included Apollos, Priscilla, Luke, Silas, and even Zenas the lawyer yet none with definitive evidence.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the multitude of theories, many scholars have abandoned the search for a specific name. As Moffatt observed, nearly every major New Testament figure has been proposed, yet the true author remains unknown. Perhaps this anonymity is intentional. The beauty of the message, the exaltation of Christ, the call to perseverance, the

---

<sup>32</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>33</sup> P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>34</sup> F. V. Filson, “Yesterday: A Study of Hebrews in the Light of Chapter 13” (London: SCM, 1967).

<sup>35</sup> D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> D. A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

unveiling of the New Covenant, renders the author's identity secondary. As Origen wisely concluded, "Only God knows" who wrote Hebrews.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, we can reasonably conclude that the author was a second-generation Christian, well-versed in the Greek Septuagint and trained in sound exegetical principles.<sup>38</sup> His rhetorical style and mastery of vocabulary were exceptional, enabling him to articulate the relationship between Christian faith and Judaism with clarity and conviction. He was likely a Hellenist, possibly associated with figures like Stephen and Philip, who were active in mission to the Gentiles (Acts 6-8; 11:19ff).

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents a complex puzzle regarding both its authorship and intended audience. While early church figures such as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian were familiar with the text, neither the author nor the precise recipients are clearly identified.<sup>39</sup> The title "Hebrews" itself may reflect an editorial tradition rather than the author's own designation, and its meaning is debated; possibly referring to Hebrew-speaking Jewish Christians in Palestine, as opposed to Hellenistic Jews of the diaspora.<sup>40</sup>

Internal evidence strongly suggests the recipients were Jewish Christians. The epistle assumes deep familiarity with Old Testament scriptures, Levitical rituals, and covenant doctrine. The author appeals to these traditions with confidence, indicating that the audience would be persuaded by their authority even as they struggled with waning faith (Hebrews 5:12; 6:10; 10:32-34).<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> D. A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> B. Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>40</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>41</sup> K. Bensele, *The Melchizedek Typology in Hebrews 7:1–28: Its Relationship to Contemporary Melchizedek Traditions and the Principles of Jewish Scripture Exegesis* (PhD diss., Evangelical Theological Faculty Leuven, 2005).

Some scholars propose that the audience may have included former Jewish priests who were well-versed in ritual law and capable of teaching others (Hebrews 5:2).<sup>42</sup> Others, like DeSilva and Cockerill, argue for a more diverse ethnic composition, suggesting the recipients were Hellenistic Christians fluent in Greek and embedded in a broader Greco-Roman context.<sup>43</sup> The reference to Timothy (13:23) and the Pauline circle supports this diasporic setting.<sup>44</sup>

Despite being written in Greek, the possibility of a Palestinian audience cannot be ruled out, as Greek was widely used in first-century Judea.<sup>45</sup> However, the tone of the letter, the cultural fluency, and the nature of the persecution described (10:32-34; 12:4) suggest a community outside Palestine; possibly a local church within the Hellenistic world that had not seen Jesus firsthand (2:3) but had received the gospel through apostolic witnesses.<sup>46</sup>

The author writes with pastoral urgency, concerned that his readers who were once vibrant in faith and service are now at risk of apostasy. He exhorts them to spiritual maturity (5:11-14), warns of the consequences of falling away (6:4-6), and encourages perseverance in light of their heavenly inheritance (2:1-4). The closing greetings (13:17-24) imply the letter was directed to a specific group within a local congregation, not the entire church.

The latest possible date for the composition of Hebrews is around A.D. 96, while the earliest remains uncertain, though it likely falls after A.D. 50, especially if the epistle

---

<sup>42</sup> K. Benschel, *The Melchizedek Typology in Hebrews 7:1–28: Its Relationship to Contemporary Melchizedek Traditions and the Principles of Jewish Scripture Exegesis* (PhD diss., Evangelical Theological Faculty Leuven, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

<sup>45</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century. Festschrift for D. A. Carson*, ed. by A. J. Köstenberger and R. W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 196–216.

draws upon themes found in Paul's letters.<sup>47</sup> Most scholars place its writing between A.D. 61 and 85, with estimates ranging from Ebrard's pre-58 dating to Moffatt's suggestion of A.D. 85.<sup>48</sup> Despite this broad range, there is strong internal evidence to support a pre-70 A.D. date which is prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout Hebrews, the author refers to the Jewish sacrificial system as still active (Hebrews 7:28; 8:3-5; 13:11-12), and he consistently uses the present tense when describing temple rituals. This suggests that the temple had not yet fallen. Had the temple already been destroyed, it would have likely served as a compelling argument within the author's exhortation to abandon the old covenantal system. Furthermore, his remarks in Hebrews 8:13 regarding the old covenant "becoming obsolete and aging" indicate a process still underway, not yet complete—an insight that would make little sense after the temple's fall. In Hebrews 10:1ff, the wording would have shifted if the sacrificial system had already ceased.<sup>50</sup>

The author's silence regarding the destruction of the temple which was one of the most significant events in Jewish history, further supports an earlier date. If the temple had been destroyed, such a momentous theological and symbolic event would almost certainly have been leveraged in the author's argument for the supremacy of Christ's high priesthood. Thus, several internal clues, though not conclusive, strongly point to the temple still standing and Mosaic rituals still ongoing at the time of writing.

Schuyler English affirms this perspective, stating: *"It is also obvious that the epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. For at the time of its composition, Mosaic institutions were still being observed—priests were offering gifts*

---

<sup>47</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 196–216.

<sup>48</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, repr. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

<sup>49</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, repr. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

<sup>50</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

according to the Law (8:3-5) and the temple was still standing (13:11, 12)".<sup>51</sup> Godet adds a poetic theological insight, noting: "This epistle, without introduction or subscription, is like the great High Priest of whom it treats, who was without beginning of days or end of years, abiding a High Priest continually. It is entirely fitting that it should remain anonymous."<sup>52</sup>

In terms of reception, Hebrews was already widely circulated by the second century. Early Christian figures such as Clement, Justin Martyr, Hermas, and Tertullian were familiar with it and quoted from it; Clement, in particular, at considerable length.<sup>53</sup> It was first formally accepted by the Eastern Church, with Athanasius affirming its authority, and later, the Council of Carthage recognized it as canonical in A.D. 397.<sup>54</sup> By the time it began to circulate widely, Paul's name had become loosely associated with it, though not universally accepted.

As for the destination or origin of the epistle, Hebrews 13:24 hints at a connection with Italy: "Those from Italy greet you." This could imply that the letter was either written in Italy or sent to Italy. If Rome was indeed the destination, and given the absence of references to martyrdom, it is possible the letter was written before Nero's persecution of Christians began possibly around A.D. 60 (cf. Hebrews 12:4, which notes suffering but not yet to the point of bloodshed).

The message of Hebrews centers on the profound scandal of the Cross in the life of the believer. The recipients of the letter are on the verge of yielding to worldly pressure, tempted to compromise rather than endure in faith. Yet, the epistle calls them to resist, pointing to Christ as their example in overcoming such trials.<sup>55</sup> The author's chief concern is to revive their spiritual zeal and guard them against "attempting impossible

---

<sup>51</sup> A. C. Gaebelain, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Annotated Bible* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1970).

<sup>52</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>53</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>54</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>55</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

compromise with the world." According to McConnel (1952), the author assumes that the world was originally good and that man was created immortal. The world was designed to reveal God and serve as a highway to Him. But with sin, that path was cut off, and creation became an "impassable jungle," giving rise to humanity's deepest religious problem: regaining union with God.

To the author of Hebrews, God is not merely the origin but the destiny of mankind. Failure to access Him after death represents total spiritual disaster.<sup>56</sup> What deeply concerns the writer is the contrast between the saints of the Old Testament, who accomplished great things with limited revelation, and the present generation, who risk apathy despite receiving greater light through Christ (2:1-4; 10:26-31).<sup>57</sup> When the Old Covenant was given, it served as a transitional measure, a rough sketch of the New Covenant (8:5; 10:1).<sup>58</sup> The focus of the Old Law was the arrangement of worship in the earthly sanctuary, consisting of two tents. The outer tent, symbolic of this world, was filled with priests performing daily rites. The inner tent—the Holy of Holies—was entered only once a year by the high priest, carrying animal blood to atone for the people (9:1-7).<sup>59</sup>

These rituals could restore ceremonial standing, but they failed to cleanse the conscience (9:9-10). Sin remained entrenched, and access to God's heavenly presence was still barred. Yet, these practices pointed ahead to the full pardon now offered through Christ. As the true High Priest, His self-sacrifice once for all cleanses the conscience and opens the way into God's presence (9:11-14).<sup>60</sup> The priesthood of old foreshadowed the emergence of a new priestly people—those who, following Christ,

---

<sup>56</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> R. C. Gleason, "The Eschatology of the Warning in Hebrews 10:26–31," *Tyndale Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (2002): 97–120.

<sup>58</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>59</sup> P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

may now confidently approach the divine presence.<sup>61</sup> In Christ, the world itself is transformed into a “new and living way,” and God’s original intention for communion with humanity becomes reality.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, Hebrews offers a decisive answer to the ancient longing for union with God. It is found in Christ: in His revelation, His sacrifice, His example, and His ongoing intercession.<sup>63</sup> Through Him, God has broken into the world, and through Him, humanity is invited to break through to the city of God (Hebrews 12:22-24). Believers must fix their eyes on Jesus—their High Priest, forerunner, and the finisher of their faith—because He is the way they are called to follow (Hebrews 12:1-2).<sup>64</sup> In baptism, the believer undergoes a radical transformation, entering into sonship and priesthood alongside Christ the Son, the Heir, and the High Priest. This new identity authorizes them to approach God and to serve as true worshippers.<sup>65</sup>

Such transformation must manifest in daily life. The Christian is called to live fully under Christ’s guidance, bearing fruit in worship, prayer, mutual support, and persevering faith (Hebrews 13:1-16).<sup>66</sup> The Church becomes a living procession of believers on pilgrimage, moving through the world toward their eternal inheritance. But the journey is dangerous. Looking back, or becoming spiritually complacent, may cost them that inheritance. According to Hebrews, salvation is not to be presumed—it must be actively pursued. Though Christians are heirs to heavenly promises, they do

---

<sup>61</sup> J. M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991)

<sup>62</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

<sup>63</sup> P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 196–216.

<sup>64</sup> V. S.-Y. Rhee, *Faith in Hebrews: Analysis within the Context of Christology, Eschatology, and Ethics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

<sup>65</sup> V. S.-Y. Rhee, *Faith in Hebrews: Analysis within the Context of Christology, Eschatology, and Ethics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

<sup>66</sup> D. A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

not yet enjoy them fully. If their love for the unseen world and their trust in their High Priest are not rekindled, they risk losing that which they were destined to inherit (Hebrews 6:4-12).

### 2.3 Literary Analysis

On the Papyrus 46 (P46), Hebrews, though, was anonymous, it was considered an epistle.<sup>67</sup> But most modern scholars consider it as a sermon or homily containing “epistolary postscript”.<sup>68</sup> The letter was written at a time when Greek culture, including writing letters, had permeated the Roman Empire.<sup>69</sup> Letters followed a “fixed scheme with a sentence to the recipients, greetings, body and end with a short farewell greeting.”<sup>70</sup>

Hebrews, though placed among the letters, lacks the essential features that typically define an epistle—namely, a salutation, identification of sender and recipients, and a thanksgiving section.<sup>71</sup> Scholars have proposed several explanations for this absence: the opening may have been lost in transit, intentionally omitted by the author, or written on an external sheet that was later detached.<sup>72</sup> Despite this, Hebrews concludes with a distinctly epistolary ending (Hebrews 13:20-25), including closing remarks, a benediction, and farewell greetings—features consistent with Greco-Roman letter conventions.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> B. R. Dyer, “The Epistolary Closing of Hebrews and Pauline Imitation,” in *Paul and Pseudepigraphy*, ed. S. E. Porter and G. P. Fewster (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 269–288.

<sup>68</sup> B. R. Dyer, “The Epistolary Closing of Hebrews and Pauline Imitation,” in *Paul and Pseudepigraphy*, ed. S. E. Porter and G. P. Fewster (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 269–288.

<sup>69</sup> S. E. Porter and S. A. Adams, eds., *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>70</sup> D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>72</sup> D. A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

Moreover, Hebrews contains other elements that support its classification as an epistle: it includes hortatory and expository content (especially in chapter 13), is addressed to a real community of believers, and blends personal and general exhortations.<sup>74</sup> The Good News Bible renders Hebrews 13:22 as, “I beg you, my brothers and sisters, to listen patiently to this message of encouragement; for this letter I have written to you is not very long,” while the NIV translates it, “I have written to you briefly.” The Greek verb used here, *επεστειλα*, literally means “I have epistled you,” and is the same term used in Acts 15:20 and 21:25 to describe the Jerusalem Council’s letter to the Gentile churches.<sup>75</sup> This linguistic and structural evidence suggests that Hebrews, while sermonic in tone, is fundamentally epistolary in form.

Apart from the last chapter, Hebrews is written in a stylistic manner quite distinct from other New Testament letters, which typically engage in direct dialogue with recipients.<sup>76</sup> The author of Hebrews, however, employs polished Koine Greek, more refined than most New Testament writings, suggesting a Jewish-Hellenistic education that likely contributed to the work’s structural precision.<sup>77</sup> This literary advantage supports the view that Hebrews was crafted not merely as a letter, but as a carefully composed homily.

Most theologians identify the genre of Hebrews as a homily, noting its resemblance to Jewish synagogue preaching traditions.<sup>78</sup> Swetnam observed that Hebrews reflects the stylistic features of Hellenistic homilies, including influences from the Cynic-Stoic diatribe, extensive use of the Old Testament, and structured paraenesis. Hebrews 1:1-2:1 exemplifies this form, following a triple pattern of exemplar, conclusion, and

---

<sup>74</sup> P. H. R. Van Houwelingen, “Riddles Around the Letter to the Hebrews,” *Fides Reformata* 16, no. 2 (2011): 151–162, accessed January 15, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> S. Voorwinde, “How Hebrews Works: Theme, Structure and Purpose,” *Vox Reformata* 73 (2008): 3–24.

<sup>76</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>77</sup> J. Swetnam, “On the Literary Genre of the ‘Epistle’ to the Hebrews,” *Novum Testamentum* 11, no. 4 (1969): 261–269.

<sup>78</sup> J. Swetnam, “On the Literary Genre of the ‘Epistle’ to the Hebrews,” *Novum Testamentum* 11, no. 4 (1969): 261–269.

exhortation.<sup>79</sup> The author’s frequent use of “speaking-type” language—such as “thus says”—and the attribution of speech directly to God further reinforce its sermonic character.<sup>80</sup>

Also, the author refers to his work as “my word of exhortation,” a phrase that appears elsewhere in the New Testament only in Acts 13:15, where Paul and Barnabas are invited to speak in the synagogue: “Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it” (NASB). This expression reflects a synagogue preaching tradition in which visiting teachers were invited to deliver a sermon following the reading of the Law and the Prophets.<sup>81</sup> In Acts, Paul responds with a message that traces Old Testament history to its fulfillment in Christ—a pattern mirrored throughout Hebrews. The author of Hebrews similarly weaves together Old Testament narratives and prophecies to demonstrate how the salvation story culminates in Jesus.

Among New Testament writings, Hebrews stands out for its richly Jewish tone and extensive use of Old Testament references—second only to Revelation.<sup>82</sup> Beale and Carson noted that “Hebrews is an excellent example of early church teaching and makes it clear to the modern readers how those in the early church interpreted the OT.” This interpretive method, rooted in Jewish tradition and fulfilled in Christ, reinforces the sermonic nature of Hebrews and its deep theological engagement with Scripture.

Also, the author refers to his work as “my word of exhortation.” This expression also occurs in the book of Acts 13:15 when Paul and Barnabas were called “Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it” (NASB). Paul gave the first recorded sermon in which he used the OT stories to show how the salvation story is fulfilled in

---

<sup>79</sup> S. Stanley, “The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 45, no. 2 (1994): 245–271.

<sup>80</sup> L. M. Wills, “The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 77, nos. 3–4 (1984): 277–299.

<sup>81</sup> A. J. Köstenberger, “Introducing Hebrews: What Is the Message?” *Biblical Foundations*, 2023.

<sup>82</sup> G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

Christ. And this is what exactly the author of Hebrews is doing again and again in his work. He uses a number of OT references in a proudly Jewish feel than any other NT book apart from Revelation (Beale & Carson, 2007). Beale & Carson commented that “Hebrews is an excellent example of early church teaching and makes it clear to the modern readers how those in the early church interpreted the OT.”

According to F. F. Bruce (1990), the book of Hebrews is a carefully structured literary work, more alike to a homily than a traditional letter. He observes that its theological argument is rooted in Psalm 110 and Old Testament readings often associated with Pentecost, emphasizing the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and warning against a return to the old covenantal order. Bruce identifies the climax of the book in Hebrews 10:19-25, where believers are exhorted to draw near to God and remain steadfast in faith. The preceding chapters build toward this exhortation, while the subsequent sections reinforce its message. Bruce divides the book into eight major sections: (I) The Finality of Christianity (1:1-2:18); (II) The Rest that Remains for the People of God (3:1-4:13); (III) Christ the High Priest (4:14-6:20); (IV) The Order of Melchizedek (7:1-28); (V) Covenant, Sanctuary, and Sacrifice (8:1-10:18); (VI) Call to Worship and Persevering Faith (10:19-12:29); (VII) Concluding Exhortation and Prayer (13:1-21); and (VIII) Postscript (13:22-25).

Donald Guthrie offers a complementary structural analysis, dividing the main body of Hebrews into three overarching theological sections: 1:1-4:13, where God reveals Himself through the Son and calls for obedience; 4:14-10:18, which presents Christ as the High Priest; and 10:19-12:29, which exhorts believers to faithful endurance until Christ’s return.<sup>83</sup> Guthrie emphasizes that these sections are not isolated but build upon one another: the Sonship of Jesus establishes the foundation for His priesthood, which in turn supports the call to perseverance—the ultimate goal of the epistle.

Therefore, this book is best understood as a sermon in epistolary form. Hebrews 13:22 affirms this dual identity, describing the work as both a “word of exhortation” and a

---

<sup>83</sup> D. Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983).

written message. Though it does not begin like a typical letter, it closes in the style of other New Testament epistles, especially those of Paul. In fact, Hebrews 13 exhibits the features of a letter, including ethical exhortations, personal remarks, and farewell greetings. The stylistic shift between the end of chapter 12 and the beginning of chapter 13 suggests that the author was composing something distinct in this final chapter. As F.F. Bruce notes, “Chapter 13 resembles the usual assortment of ethical and practical admonition and personal information with which New Testament epistles tend to close,” while Hughes (1977) rightly calls it “a postscript to the main body of the epistle.”

Thus, the main body of Hebrews comprises chapters 1-12, with chapter 13 functioning as a postscript. This structure supports the view that Hebrews consists of twelve chapters of sermon and one chapter of epistle.<sup>84</sup> When critically analyzed, chapters 1-12 reveal a well-structured sermon that mirrors the rhythm of contemporary preaching—teaching followed by application. The author opens with a prologue that declares the supremacy of Christ, a theme that anchors the entire homily.

Longenecker identified five unified expository sections within chapters 1-12, each presenting Christ’s superiority and concluding with exhortation: (1) Hebrews 1:5-2:18 - Christ is superior to angels; (2) 3:1-4:16 - Christ is superior to Moses; (3) 5:1-7:28 - Christ is superior to Aaron; (4) 8:1-10:39 - Christ is superior to the old covenant; and (5) 11:1-12:29 - Christ is superior to old covenant believers.<sup>85</sup> An exhortatory conclusion in chapter 13 was then appended before the document was sent to its intended audience. As Stanley affirms, this sermon structure is both logical and pastoral, offering theological exposition followed by practical application.<sup>86</sup>

The book of Hebrews may be divided into six major sections, with the selected passage located in section five: The Superior Priestly Ministry of Christ (8:1-10:18). This section unfolds through five distinct literary units: (1) a superior priestly ministry in a superior heavenly temple (8:1-5); (2) a superior new covenant (8:6-13); (3) a superior tabernacle

---

<sup>84</sup> S. Voorwinde, “How Hebrews Works: Theme, Structure and Purpose,” *Vox Reformata* 73 (2008): 3–24.

<sup>85</sup> R. N. Longenecker, *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005)

<sup>86</sup> S. Stanley, “The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 45, no. 2 (1994): 245–271.

(9:1-10); (4) a superior sacrifice that cleanses the conscience (9:11-28); and (5) Christ's sacrifice once for all (10:1-18). The unit titled *A Superior New Covenant* (8:6-13), forming a structurally independent discourse, serves as the primary focus of this study.

The Epistle to the Hebrews blends sermonical exhortation with epistolary form, presenting a dynamic theological message within a pastoral framework. Composed during a time of cultural tension and spiritual vulnerability, the letter urges a community of Jewish Christians not to retreat to familiar rituals but to embrace a deeper spiritual reality inaugurated by Christ. Hebrews 8:6-13 lies at the heart of this call, declaring that Jesus, the true High Priest, mediates a New Covenant rooted in inner renewal rather than external ritual. Drawing from Jeremiah 31, the passage affirms God's longstanding intent to establish a covenant marked by grace, intimacy, and transformation. In light of this, both the original audience and believers today are exhorted to hold fast to the better promises of Christ's sacrifice and to walk confidently in the new and living way He has opened.

## **2.4 Theological Themes**

Seven central theological themes emerge in the Epistle to the Hebrews, interwoven throughout the book: God in Christ, the superiority of Christ, the superior priesthood of Christ, the perfect sacrifice, the new covenant instituted through Christ, perseverance and faith in Christ.

### **God in Christ**

The concept of God is a dominant theme in the book of Hebrews, occurring approximately 68 times. The epistle expounds extensively on God's character, nature, and His progressive revelation to humanity. He is portrayed as the Living God (3:12), the Judge of all (12:23), and a consuming fire (12:29).<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> G. W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016).

Despite the awe-inspiring Majesty of God, the author emphasizes His gracious initiative in revealing Himself—first to Abraham (6:13), then to David (4:7), to the prophets (1:1), and ultimately through His Son (1:2). This culminates in the message that God is saving humanity through Jesus, His final and superior revelation.<sup>88</sup>

The author also stresses the unity between the Father and the Son. The Son is appointed “heir of all things” (1:2), seated at God’s right hand (1:3), and glorified by the Father (1:13). Though they perform distinct roles, the Father and the Son operate in perfect unity. To underscore this, the author quotes Psalm 102:25-27, attributing to the Son the divine work of creation (Heb. 1:10-12).<sup>89</sup> Thus, Hebrews affirms that Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, is fully God—equal in divine nature and glory to the Father, yet functionally distinct in His redemptive mission.

### **The Superiority of Christ**

Christology is the central theme of the book of Hebrews. The epistle opens by presenting Jesus as “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:3), indicating that the invisible God is fully revealed in the visible Son—a clear affirmation of His divinity.<sup>90</sup> Jesus is portrayed as the fulfillment of the Davidic promise, yet far greater than David himself. The name “Jesus” appears twelve times in the epistle, emphasizing His role as the Anointed One—Messiah and King.<sup>91</sup>

The author frequently refers to Jesus as the “Son” (υἱός, ), highlighting His divine origin and identity as the fulfillment of God’s promises through the prophets (Heb. 1:1-2). Hebrews also presents Christ through the framework of the *munus triplex*—the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. As Prophet, Christ is the ultimate revelation of God’s will (1:1-2); as Priest, He mediates on behalf of humanity (4:14-5:10; 7:23-8:6); and as

---

<sup>88</sup> R. H. Gause, *Hebrews 1.1–2.4: God’s Revelation of Himself* (Leiden: Brill, 2022),

<sup>89</sup> R. H. Gause, *Hebrews 1.1–2.4: God’s Revelation of Himself* (Leiden: Brill, 2022),

<sup>90</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>91</sup> P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology: Jilid 1* (Malang: Literatur SAAT, 2016).

King, He reigns in divine majesty, pointing to His full deity and eschatological reign (1:8-9).<sup>92</sup>

The Son's superiority is systematically demonstrated: He is greater than the angels (1:4-7), with the author quoting Psalm 97:7 and 104:4 to highlight their subordinate role.<sup>93</sup> He surpasses Moses, the faithful servant in God's house, by standing as the Son over that house (Heb. 3:2, 5-6; cf. Num. 12:6-7). He also exceeds Joshua, who led Israel into a temporary rest, by offering true and eternal rest—an eschatological Sabbath—for all who believe (Heb. 4:8-11).

### The Superior priesthood of Jesus

The author of Hebrews uses the term “priest” approximately 14 times and “high priest” 17 times, often interchangeably, to emphasize Jesus' unique mediatorial role.<sup>94</sup> As Matthew Henry notes, the high priest was a human being—possessing a body, spirit, and human frailty—so that he could sympathize with those he represented. This human identification was essential for priestly ministry.<sup>95</sup>

Jesus fulfilled the qualifications of a high priest as outlined in Hebrews 5, with the key distinction that He was without sin (Heb. 4:15). Although He did not meet the Levitical requirements of priesthood—being from the tribe of Judah, not Levi (Heb. 7:13-14)—He

---

<sup>92</sup> A. Rodrigues, “Thinking Systematically with the Scriptural Christology of Hebrews: Contributions to the Theology of Christ's Threefold Office,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 58, no. 1 (2020): 33–63.

<sup>93</sup> S. D. Mackie, “‘Behold! I Am with the Children God Has Given Me’: Ekphrasis and Epiphany in Hebrews 1–2,” in *Son, Sacrifice, and Great Shepherd: Studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. E. F. Mason and D. M. Moffatt, WUNT 2/510 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 43–77.

<sup>94</sup> L. Morris, *Teologi Perjanjian Baru* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2019).

<sup>95</sup> M. Henry, *Tafsiran Matthew Henry: Surat Ibrani, Yakobus, 1 & 2 Petrus, 1–3 Yohanes, Yudas, Kitab Wahyu* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2016).

was appointed “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:17), a priesthood grounded not in lineage but in divine appointment and moral perfection.<sup>96</sup>

According to Schrock, the promise in 1 Samuel 2:35 to raise up a “faithful priest” after Eli’s corrupt sons finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. While David, dressed in priestly garments, led worship and blessed the people (2 Sam. 6:14-18), he was a type pointing forward to Jesus—the true priest-king who would unite both offices in Himself.<sup>97</sup>

Jesus surpasses the Levitical priesthood in every way: He entered directly into the heavenly sanctuary, not an earthly copy (Heb. 9:11-12); He offered Himself, not animal sacrifices; and He did so once for all, securing eternal redemption and cleansing the conscience (Heb. 9:14, 10:10-14).<sup>98</sup> Therefore, the priesthood finds its final and exclusive fulfillment in Christ, who alone mediates between God and humanity (Heb. 8:1-6). Christ’s superiority—as divine Son, ultimate Prophet, eternal Priest, and reigning King—establishes the New Covenant, replacing the old system with a better, enduring relationship grounded in His once-for-all mediation and heavenly authority.

### The Perfect Sacrifice

The word “sacrifice” appears 21 times in Hebrews, with three verses directly referring to Christ as the sacrifice (Heb. 9:26; 10:12, 14). According to Bromiley, the term originally denoted burnt offerings and the ritual “killing” associated with the Passover lamb (cf. Mark 14:12; 1 Cor. 5:7). In the Hellenistic world, the act of offering was often expressed with the verb *προσφέρω*, which Hebrews uses to describe Christ’s perfect, once-for-all offering on behalf of His people (Heb. 9:14; 10:10).<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> C. B. Kvidahl and D. Lioy, “‘You Are A Priest Forever’: An Exegetical and Biblical Theology of High Priestly Christology,” *Conspectus* 29 (2020): 40–60.

<sup>97</sup> D. S. Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Priesthood,” in *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, ed. J. S. Hamilton (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

<sup>98</sup> R. B. Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2021).

<sup>99</sup> G. W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI:

Under the Old Covenant, sin—the fundamental human problem—was addressed through repeated sacrifices and ritual worship (Heb. 5:1; 10:1-4). Yet these could not cleanse the conscience or bring lasting reconciliation. In contrast, Christ’s sacrifice was both sufficient and final.<sup>100</sup> It not only removed sin but also inaugurated the New Covenant, much like Moses ratified the Old Covenant with blood after reading the commandments (Exod. 24:6-8; Heb. 9:18-22).<sup>101</sup> Through His blood, Jesus brings complete and eternal reconciliation between God and humanity. Hebrews presents Christ’s perfect sacrifice as the turning point of the redemptive history; unlike the repeated offerings of the Old Covenant, His once-for-all act cleanses the conscience, removes sin, and inaugurates the New Covenant, securing eternal reconciliation between God and humanity through His blood.

### **The New Covenant Instituted Through Christ**

The word “*covenant*” (*διαθήκη*) appears 17 times in Hebrews, signifying a binding agreement initiated by God. The author frequently contrasts the Mosaic Covenant with the New Covenant, which Christ mediates and fulfills (Heb. 7:22; 8:6-13; 10:9). This New Covenant, grounded in better promises, replaces the former system that could not effectively deal with sin (Heb. 7:18-19; 10:1-4).<sup>102</sup>

As the guarantor (*ἔγγυος*) of the New Covenant (Heb. 7:22), Christ offers believers deep assurance, since the covenant is based not on law but on His eternal priesthood and perfect sacrifice. The Old Covenant foreshadowed this greater reality, but only “in these last days” has God enacted a covenant capable of purifying the conscience and transforming the heart (Heb. 9:14-15; 10:16-17). Through Jesus’ blood, the New

---

Eerdmans Publishing, 2016).

<sup>100</sup> L. Morris, *Teologi Perjanjian Baru* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2019).

<sup>101</sup> K. P. Mańka, *Eucharistic Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews, The Biblical and Liturgical Movement* 72, no. 2 (2019): 101–112.

<sup>102</sup> H. W. Bateman IV, “The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 60, no. 4 (2017): 883–885.

Covenant brings not only forgiveness but also inward renewal and lasting communion with God. Hebrews presents the New Covenant as God's final and better agreement, established through Christ's eternal priesthood and perfect sacrifice, replacing the old system that could not fully remove sin, and now offering forgiveness, deep inner renewal, and lasting fellowship with God.

### **Perseverance in Hebrews**

Though the word perseverance appears explicitly only twice in Hebrews (10:36; 12:1), it undergirds the entire epistle as a call to endure in faith in order to obtain God's will and the promised inheritance. The author writes to encourage believers facing persecution not to revert to the old covenantal system but to remain steadfast in Christ. This perseverance is not passive endurance but active faithfulness rooted in hope.<sup>103</sup>

The Greek verb κατέχω, translated as “hold fast” or “hold on,” appears in key exhortations (Heb. 3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23), reinforcing the call to cling to the confession of faith until the end. Believers are spiritually privileged, yet they must persevere to receive the eternal reward.<sup>104</sup> In Hebrews, Christ—not the law—is the foundation for perseverance. The readers are urged to move from spiritual immaturity to Christlike maturity, from “elementary teachings” to perfection (Heb. 6:1). Perseverance, then, becomes a marker of authentic relationship with God, and those who endure are recipients of divine blessing (Heb. 6:11-12; 10:35-39). In Hebrews, perseverance is more than enduring hardship. It is faithful commitment to Christ, the foundation of the New Covenant, as believers hold fast in hope, grow toward maturity, and receive the promised inheritance through endurance marked by active, Spirit-led obedience.

---

<sup>103</sup> A. Rodrigues, “Thinking Systematically with the Scriptural Christology of Hebrews: Contributions to the Theology of Christ's Threefold Office,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 58, no. 1 (2020): 33–63.

<sup>104</sup> G. W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016).

## Faith in Hebrews

Faith in Hebrews is distinct from Paul's treatment in that it emphasizes ethical diligence, future-oriented hope, and God as the primary object of faith. While Paul often centers faith on Christ's redemptive work, Hebrews presents faith as trust in God's promises, especially the hope of resurrection (Heb. 11:19, 35).<sup>105</sup> As Easter argues, Hebrews portrays faith as theocentric—anchored in God who raises the dead—rather than Christocentric in the Pauline sense.<sup>106</sup>

The author illustrates this through the Patriarchs, whose faith was marked by a longing to draw near to God and dwell with Him (Heb. 11:13-16).<sup>107</sup> Their faith was not merely belief but a lived obedience, a forward-looking trust that God would fulfill His promises beyond death. Thus, faith and perseverance are inseparable: faith is expressed through holding fast, enduring hardship, and pressing toward maturity (Heb. 3:6; 6:1; 10:36; 12:1-2).

Hebrews describes faith using active, imperative verbs: do not ignore (2:3), consider Jesus (3:1), hold fast (3:6), move toward maturity (6:1), do not be sluggish (6:12), run toward hope (6:18), endure (10:36), and fix your eyes on Jesus (12:2).<sup>108</sup> Though Christ is not explicitly the object of faith, He is the pioneer and perfecter of it (12:2), revealing God and mediating access to Him (7:25).<sup>109</sup> Thus, faith in God necessarily includes faith in Christ as His ultimate self-revelation.

---

<sup>105</sup> R. B. Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2021).

<sup>106</sup> M. C. Easter, "Faith in the God Who Resurrects: The Theocentric Faith of Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 63, no. 1 (2017): 76–91.

<sup>107</sup> A. Malina, "Why Does the Epistle to the Hebrews Evoke the Desires of the Patriarchs?" *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2021): 463–476.

<sup>108</sup> A. Peeler, "'A Fearful Thing to Fall into the Hands of the Living God': A Study of Fear in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Review & Expositor* 115, no. 1 (2018): 40–49.

<sup>109</sup> G. W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016).

Therefore, Hebrews 8:6-13 serves as the theological center of gravity for the entire epistle, where the major themes of Christ's identity, superior priesthood, and perfect sacrifice reach their climax. It is within this passage that the New Covenant—promised through the prophets and fulfilled in Christ—is most clearly articulated. Jesus is presented not only as the exalted High Priest but also as the mediator of a better covenant, one grounded in internal transformation and divine forgiveness rather than external rituals and repeated offerings. Here, the believer's response—marked by persevering faith and trust in God's promises—finds its anchor, as the New Covenant secures access to God and empowers obedience from the heart. Through this covenantal lens, the message of Hebrews takes on its full meaning: Christ is not merely greater than the old system—He replaces it with something eternally better. In Hebrews, faith is active trust in God's promises, expressed through perseverance and ethical obedience, and finds its deepest meaning in the New Covenant, where Christ, as the High Priest and mediator, secures intimate access to God and empowers believers to live transformed lives grounded not in ritual, but in heart-renewing grace.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MESSAGE OF HEBREWS 8:6-13

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents detailed exegesis of Hebrews 8:6-13 with specific consideration of preliminary analysis, translation variations, translation analysis, textual variations and exegetical synthesis. In interpreting the message of the text, other features like grammatical structures, composition methods and figures of speech were also analysed.

#### 3.2 Preliminary analysis

6 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. (NASB)

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

8 For finding fault with them, He says, “behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

9 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord.

10 “for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 “and they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘know the Lord,’ for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them.

12 “for I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

13 When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

#### 3.3.1 Translation variation

This is a verse-by-verse translation of message of the text starting with verse 14. The study considered English Standard Version (ESV), New Revised Standard Version (RSV),

Revised Standard Version (NRSV) New International Version (NIV) and Good News Bible (GNB)

**6. νυνὶ δὲ διαφορωτέρας τέτυχεν λειτουργίας, ὅσω καὶ κρείττονός ἐστὶν διαθήκης μεσίτης, ἣτις ἐπὶ κρείττοσιν ἐπαγγελίαις νενομοθέτηται.**

*“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” (NASB).*

*“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” (ESV).*

*“But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises” (NLT).*

*“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” (NIV).*

*“But now, Jesus has been given priestly work which is superior to theirs, just as the covenant which he arranged between God and his people is a better one, because it is based on promises of better things” (GNB).*

**7 Εἰ γὰρ ἡ πρώτη ἐκείνη ἦν ἄμεμπτος, οὐκ ἂν δευτέρας ἐζητεῖτο τόπος.**

*“For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second” (NASB).*

*“For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second” (ESV).*

*“If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it” (NLT).*

*“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another” (NIV).*

*“If there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, there would have been no need for a second one” (GNB).*

**8. μεμφόμενος γὰρ αὐτοὺς λέγει· Ἴδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, λέγει Κύριος, καὶ συντελέσω ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰούδα διαθήκην καινὴν·**

*“For finding fault with them, He says, “behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;” (NASB).*

*“For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” (ESV).*

*“But when God found fault with the people, he said: “The day is coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah” (NLT).*

*“But God found fault with the people and said: “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” (NIV).*

*“But God finds fault with his people when he says: “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will draw up a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah” (GNB).*

**9 οὐ κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην ἣν ἐποίησα τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπιλαβομένου μου τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν ἐξαγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου, ὅτι αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐνέμειναν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ μου, κἀγὼ ἠμέλησα αὐτῶν, λέγει Κύριος.**

*“not like the covenant which i made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord” (NASB).*

*“not 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 showed no concern for them, declares the Lord” (ESV).*

*“This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They did not remain faithful to my covenant, so I turned my back on them, says the LORD” (NLT).*

*“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” (NIV).*

*“It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. They were not faithful to the covenant I made with them, and so I paid no attention to them” (GNB).*

**10. ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἣν διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας, λέγει Κύριος, διδοὺς νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτούς· καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς Θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν.**

*“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (NASB).*

*“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (ESV).*

*“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the LORD: I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (NLT).*

*“This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. 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” (NIV).*

*“Now, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel in the days to come, says the Lord: 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” (GNB).*

**11. καὶ οὐ μὴ διδάξωσιν ἕκαστος τὸν πολίτην αὐτοῦ καὶ ἕκαστος τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, λέγων· Γνωθὶ τὸν Κύριον· ὅτι πάντες εἰδήσουσίν με ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου αὐτῶν.**

*“And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘know the Lord,’ for all will know me, from the least to the greatest of them” (NASB).*

*“And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest” (ESV).*

*“And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the LORD.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already” (NLT).*

*“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” (NIV).*

*“None of them will have to teach their fellow-citizens or say to their fellow-citizens, ‘Know the Lord.’ For they will all know me, from the least to the greatest” (GNB).*

12. ὅτι ἴλεως ἔσομαι ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν, καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ μνησθῶ ἔτι.

*“For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (NASB).*

*“For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (ESV).*

*“And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins” (NLT).*

*“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (NIV)*

*“I will forgive their sins and will no longer remember their wrongs” (GNB).*

13. ἐν τῷ λέγειν Καινὴν πεπαλαίωκεν τὴν πρώτην· τὸ δὲ παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ.

*“When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear” (NASB).*

*“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” (ESV).*

*“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” (NLT).*

*“By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear” (NIV).*

*“By speaking of a new covenant, God has made the first one old; and anything that becomes old and worn out will soon disappear” (GNB).*

### 3.3.2 Translation Analysis

All five translations convey the central idea that Jesus, as the superior High Priest, mediates a new and better covenant; one that fulfils God’s ancient promises by internalizing His law, granting all believers direct knowledge of Him, and offering full forgiveness through a once-for-all sacrifice.

In Hebrews 8:6, most translations—such as the NASB and ESV—render the Greek phrase *διαθήκης κρείττονος* as “better covenant,” emphasizing the comparative adjective *κρείττων*, which denotes superiority or greater excellence. This word choice highlights the qualitative advancement of the covenant Christ mediates: it is founded on better promises, functions through a superior priesthood, and accomplishes what the old covenant merely prefigured. However, the NIV opts for the phrase “new covenant” in this verse, aligning it with the explicit quotation of Jeremiah 31 in verses 8 and 13, where the term *καινήν διαθήκην* (“new covenant”) is used. This interpretive decision anticipates the author’s argument and draws the reader’s attention to the prophetic fulfillment unfolding in the text.

Importantly, this variation does not create a theological discrepancy but reflects complementary emphasis: “better” underscores the covenant’s superior nature, while “new” stresses its discontinuity from and fulfillment of the old. Together, they announce the same gospel truth—Christ’s covenant is not a revised edition of the Mosaic system, but its long-awaited Completion. The two terms work in concert: “new” reveals the identity of the covenant foretold by the prophets, and “better” affirms why believers should cling to it

Also, the variation between “neighbour” (as rendered in the NIV, NLT, and ESV) and “fellow citizen” (as found in the NASB and GNB) in Hebrews 8:11 reflects differing translation viewpoints rather than a substantive theological divergence. The underlying Greek word, *πολίτης*, literally means “citizen” or “fellow citizen.” The NASB’s more literal rendering emphasizes communal belonging within a covenantal identity—echoing Israel’s collective structure under the Mosaic covenant. By contrast, translations like the NIV adopt “neighbour,” a more idiomatic and accessible expression in contemporary English, which captures the relational tone of the passage.

Yet despite this lexical distinction, the theological thrust remains the same: the verse proclaims the fundamental accessibility of divine knowledge under the new covenant. The emphasis is not on the title of the one being taught, but on the universality and immediacy of knowing God. Whether translated as “neighbours” or “fellow citizen,”

the message is unmistakable—under the new covenant inaugurated by Christ, access to God is personal, direct, and Spirit-enabled

While the translations may differ slightly in wording and tone, they unanimously affirm the central truth: the new covenant inaugurated by Christ is superior in every way, and the old is now obsolete and fading. What once served as a shadow has given way to the substance. There is no need to cling to what is passing, for in Christ the promises have been fulfilled and the way to God made complete through His once-for-all sacrifice. The call is not to preserve the past, but to step fully into the grace of what has now come—an enduring covenant built not on ritual, but on redemption.

### 3.4 Textual Variation

*8: 6 “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.”*

The phrase *vuvì ðé* (“But now...”) introduces a sharp and decisive contrast between the former priesthood, rooted in the Levitical order, and the present reality of Christ’s priesthood, which is heavenly, eternal, and effectual. The Greek *vuvì* (“now”) announces the inauguration of a new covenantal order through Christ which fulfills what the Mosaic covenant foreshadowed.<sup>110</sup> The conjunction *ðé* (“but”) emphasizes this transition by highlighting the limitations of the old covenant with its priesthood and its failure to produce permanent transformation.

Even though these are just two short words, but they carry deep meaning. They mark the shift from the old shadows to the true substance, from outward rituals to inner renewal. They proclaim that Christ’s priestly ministry decisively surpasses the Levitical priesthood. While the term *κρείττων* (“better” or “superior”) appears earlier in Hebrews 1:4 in a comparison with angels, its repetition here shows that Christ’s ministry is far better. Though the term *κρείττων* may denote “different” or “distinctive” in other

---

<sup>110</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

contexts (cf. Romans 12:6; 9:10), here it clearly points to the power and uniqueness of Christ's priesthood.<sup>111</sup>

So, when Hebrews says "But now..." it is announcing that in Jesus, the true covenant has arrived and it's fully active.

The phrase διαφορωτέρας τέτυχεν λειτουργίας ("He has obtained a more excellent ministry") makes a profound claim about Christ's exalted priestly role. The verb τέτυχεν (has obtained), a perfect active indicative form of τυγχάνω ("to obtain"), indicates a completed action with enduring results.<sup>112</sup> Christ has firmly taken up His role as High Priest, and He continues to serve as our mediator forever.

The word λειτουργίας ("ministry") refers to priestly service; something sacred and important. The adjective διαφορωτέρας ("excellent") conveys the sense of something being more excellent, surpassing in value, or superior in kind.<sup>113</sup> Christ's ministry is not only permanently active but also greater in effect.

This clause, ὅσω καὶ διαθήκης κρείττονος ἐστὶν μεσίτης ("by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant") explains why Christ's ministry is superior: because He mediates a covenant that is itself better in character and consequence. The comparative structure joins together two central axes: The priesthood of Christ vis-à-vis the Levitical priesthood and the new covenant vis-à-vis the Mosaic covenant.

While the term καινὴ διαθήκη ("new covenant") appears in Hebrews 7:22, it is in chapter 8 that the writer begins a full exposition of its content and theological significance. Notably, it is virtually impossible to speak of the new covenant in Hebrews without anchoring it in the person and priesthood of Christ (cf. 7:22; 9:15; 10:24; 12:24;

---

<sup>111</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 196–216.

<sup>112</sup> P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>113</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 295.

13:20). The term μεσίτης (mediator) appears six times in the New Testament. While Moses is described as the mediator of the old covenant (Gal. 3:19-20), Christ, divinely appointed, His superior mediatorial role is highlighted in texts like 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 9:15, and Hebrews 12:24. Even Job once longed for such a mediator (Job 9:33).<sup>114</sup>

In the Greco-Roman world, a mediator negotiated between equals but in biblical terms God initiated the covenant unilaterally motivated by grace. Christ, therefore, acts on God's behalf to implement, secure, and fulfill the covenant for humankind.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, Christ is a mediator, guarantor (Heb. 7:22) and executor of the new covenant which He seals with His own blood (Heb. 9:15; 12:24) and ensures its fulfilled on both divine and human terms.

The theme κρείττονος (“better”) keeps recurring in Hebrews. Why is the new covenant better? Because it is backed by an eternal priesthood, grounded in a better hope (7:19); the atoning work is based on a better sacrifice (9:23); it offers believers a better and lasting possession (10:34), a better country (11:16), and a better resurrection (11:35). Therefore, the new covenant is absolute, spiritual, universal, eternal, and internal which is in contrast with the old covenant which was conditional, earthly, temple-bound, outward and depending on human fidelity instead of divine faithfulness.

The closing clause ἥτις ἐπὶ κρείττοσιν ἐπαγγελίαις νενομοθέτηται (“which has been enacted on better promises”) underscores that this new covenant is divinely legislated (νενομοθέτηται, perfect passive).<sup>116</sup> The new covenant was established by God's own

---

<sup>114</sup> P. T. O'Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 295.

<sup>115</sup> P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 630.

<sup>116</sup> P. T. O'Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 296

plan, not human choice, and is anchored in the eternal inheritance Christ secured through His death, fulfilling Jeremiah's promise.

God replaced the old covenant which lacked power to bring lasting renewal with a better one, offering heart transformation and true relationship with Him. For Jewish believers, this was both a warning not to return to ritual shadows and a salvation reminding them that, in Christ, they now have a heavenly High Priest and a far greater covenant, founded on mercy and secured by His blood.

*8:7 "For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second."*

The word *gar* ("For") serves as a logical link, explaining why Christ's ministry and covenant are superior by providing the theological basis in the following verses.

The phrase εἰ ἦν ἡ πρώτη ἐκείνη ἀμέμπτos ("if that first covenant had been faultless") is a typical example of a second-class conditional sentence which assumes the opposite of what is stated.<sup>117</sup> The author acknowledges the first covenant's role but highlights that it was limited in what it could achieve. The adjective ἀμέμπτos, while often translated "faultless," doesn't mean morally flawed, but rather stresses that the Mosaic covenant was insufficient to bring complete reconciliation with God.<sup>118</sup>

Hebrews 7:11 uses a similarly structured conditional statement to show that perfection could not be achieved through the Levitical priesthood. This underscores the need for a new priesthood and covenant. The term *τελείωσις* points not just to moral purity but to full access to God and deep spiritual transformation, something the old covenant could only hint at (cf. Heb. 7:19; 9:9).

---

<sup>117</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 299

<sup>118</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 299

The juxtaposition of these two verses, *Hebrews 7:11* and *8:7*, reveals a coherent theological progression. The inadequacy of the Levitical priesthood (*7:11*) necessitates a change in priesthood (*7:12*), which in turn implies a change in covenantal structure (*8:7*). The author confirms that the first covenant was not flawed in origin but was temporary and symbolic, preparing the way for Christ's superior priesthood and covenant (cf. *Heb. 8:6; 9:15*). Its limitations emphasize the need for fulfillment in Christ, who alone brings the covenant's true purpose to completion (*Heb. 7:22*).<sup>119</sup>

The phrase "no occasion sought" (*οὐκ ἂν ἐζητεῖτο τόπος*) shows that God deliberately initiated the better covenant. It was not as a reaction to failure, but as part of His planned redemption.<sup>120</sup> The old covenant was not a mistake; it served a temporary purpose, paving the way for Christ's fulfillment.

The Mosaic covenant was never meant to be final but it was provisional, pointing forward to the new covenant promised in *Jeremiah 31:31-34*. *Hebrews (10:1)* or *Galatians (3:24)* present the first covenant as a shadow or tutor respectively, preparing the way for Christ. Its sacrificial system was not evil, but it was incomplete, especially due to the weakness and ineffectiveness of the Levitical priesthood (*Heb. 7:11, 7:18*). The failure was not in God's law itself, but in its inability through human experience and structural limitations to bring full transformation. Recognizing this, God enacted a better covenant, not as a divine alternative plan but as the intended fulfillment: one grounded in superior promises and focused on inward renewal through Christ.

The author of *Hebrews* offers both comfort and challenge to Jewish Christians torn between old traditions and the gospel's call. He confirms that the first covenant, while ordained by God, was always temporary, pointing toward something greater. Quoting

---

<sup>119</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 299

<sup>120</sup> J. W. Kleinig, *Hebrews*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

Jeremiah, he shows that the new covenant is God’s intended fulfillment: not outward or ceremonial, but written on hearts and grounded in Christ’s one perfect sacrifice. The warning is clear—don’t return to a system that cannot transform. Instead, embrace the deeper relationship that brings true inner renewal.

*8:8 “For finding fault with them, He says, ‘Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will bring about a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.’”*

This verse begins with *gar* (“for”), offering a theological reason for why the first covenant fell short. The fault was not with the law itself, but with its inability to bring lifelong change in the people. It could not produce the obedience needed for true covenant relationship.<sup>121</sup>

The participle *μεμψόμενος* (“finding fault”) meaning “reproaching” or “blaming,”<sup>122</sup> points not to the covenant itself, but to the people’s failure to uphold it, reaffirming Jeremiah’s lament over Israel’s spiritual unfaithfulness. Using vivid imagery like a broken marriage, Jeremiah mourns their disobedience and resistance to God’s petitions, expressing divine sorrow rather than distant condemnation. His grief, found in passages like Jeremiah 2-3 and Lamentations, calls for repentance and reflects God’s relational pain.<sup>123</sup> Hebrews restates this lament by quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Heb. 8:8-12), portraying the old covenant’s failure as purposeful groundwork for the superior covenant in Christ. For Jewish believers facing pressure to return to the Mosaic system, Jeremiah’s lament serves as both warning and assurance—urging them not to repeat past unfaithfulness and reminding them of God’s promise of renewal.

---

<sup>121</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

<sup>122</sup> T. D. Lea, *Hebrews & James*, ed. M. Anders, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999).

<sup>123</sup> W. F. G. Thomas, *Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961).

The plural αὐτοὺς (them) refers to the Israelites—particularly the wilderness generation—who broke the covenant they had “cut” with God.<sup>124</sup> Though the author of Hebrews acknowledges the structural insufficiency of the covenant, he also highlights human responsibility. It was not that the people were unable to obey, but rather they refused to obey.<sup>125</sup> Their rebellion revealed the covenant's ineffectiveness to bring about heart-level transformation (cf. Hebrews 3:8-10).

The phrase λέγει (“He says”), in the present tense, introduces the quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34 as Scripture that still speaks or the living voice of God in Scripture.<sup>126</sup> The absence of the prophet’s name, coupled with repeated references to “says the Lord,” highlights that the new covenant originates directly from God’s initiative, not human authority.

The phrase “Behold, the days are coming...” signals a future God's redemptive plan,<sup>127</sup> which Hebrews sees as already begun through Christ’s priesthood (cf. Matt. 26:28), though its full impact is still unfolding, reflecting the New Testament’s “already/not yet” eschatological tension.

The Greek term καινήν (“new”) in Hebrews and Luke does not simply denote something recently made (νέος), but something qualitatively superior and distinct in nature.<sup>128</sup> This subtle distinction is essential for grasping the nature of the covenant Christ inaugurates at the Last Supper, as declared in Luke 22:20—“this cup is the new covenant in my blood.” Here, καινή aligns with the Septuagint rendering of Jeremiah 31:31-34,

---

<sup>124</sup> B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 597.

<sup>125</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1990). *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Revised ed.). Eerdmans.

<sup>126</sup> P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 299

<sup>127</sup> J. W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>128</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

highlighting the covenant's complete uniqueness: not a renewed version of the Mosaic covenant, but a fundamentally new creation.

Paul repeats this concept in 2 Corinthians 5:17, describing believers as a *καινή κτίσις* (“new creation”), stressing that divine transformation is at the heart of God’s redemptive work. Just as the old covenant gives way to the new, so the old self yields to a Spirit-empowered life marked by reconciliation and righteousness. The external rituals and mediated access of the old order are replaced by internalized law, once-for-all atonement, and direct communion with God.<sup>129</sup>

Luke’s deliberate use of *καινή* (absent in Matthew and Mark) emphasizes this theological shift, serving as a Christological seal upon Jeremiah’s promise. Jesus declares that His impending death initiates and secures the new covenant, fulfilling prophetic anticipation through sacrificial reality.

The phrase *ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου* (“in my blood”) reconfigures the covenantal imagery of Exodus 24:8, where Moses endorses the covenant with sacrificial blood. In the Lukan account, this ritual is reframed around Christ Himself, not just as mediator, but as the once-for-all offering that grounds the new covenant.

Yet this “blood” should not be reduced to physical shedding alone. As seen in John 19:33-35 and 1 John 5:6-8, Jesus had already given up His spirit before His blood spilled, indicating that the power of His sacrifice lies in its spiritual significance: a self-offering unto death. Biblically, “blood” operates as a symbol of substitutionary atonement, divine propitiation, and covenant approval.

The animal sacrifices of the Mosaic covenant served as preparatory shadows. Though repeated and limited, they pointed forward to the depth of redemption accomplished in Christ. Hebrews 8:3 confirms this when it states that every priest must offer something—and Christ’s offering is Himself. Thus, He fulfils and transcends the Levitical

---

<sup>129</sup> Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 228

system not only as high priest but as the Lamb of God, whose self-giving secures eternal redemption and inaugurates the new covenant with lasting effect.<sup>130</sup>

The phrase “I will establish” affirms that God's covenants begin with His initiative, not human action.<sup>131</sup> While many Old Testament passages speak of heart renewal (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 11:19), Jeremiah 31:31 uniquely foretells a “new covenant” that goes beyond restoration—it redefines the divine-human relationship.

God’s promise to “Israel and Judah” reflects both the historical division<sup>132</sup> and the hope of restoration, while signalling that the new covenant, though first given to a Jewish audience, is ultimately extended to all in Christ (cf. Romans 3:29-30), uniting separated peoples into one redeemed covenant family.

The author of Hebrews clarifies that the old covenant’s flaw was not in its design but in its inability to change hearts—underlining human failure, not divine error. Drawing from Jeremiah’s lament, the text shifts from judgment to hope, affirming that God initiated a superior covenant through Christ that brings true inner renewal. This new covenant fulfils His redemptive plan, inviting believers into a deeper relationship founded on grace, and signals the comprehensive restoration, reminding Jewish Christians that God's faithfulness remains steadfast and His voice still speaks.

*8:9 “Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord.”*

This verse deepens the contrast introduced in verse 8 by stating plainly that the new covenant will be definitely different from the one given at Sinai. The phrase οὐ κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην (“Not like the covenant...”) stresses that the new covenant is not simply

---

<sup>130</sup> A. Robinson, *Jesus’ Death: Ratification of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20)*, Downs Easter Convention (2023).

<sup>131</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1990). *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Revised ed.). Eerdmans.

<sup>132</sup> R. J. Utley, *The Superiority of the New Covenant: Hebrews*, vol. 10 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1999).

a modified continuation of the old, but a fundamentally transformed relationship between God and His people.<sup>133</sup>

The reference to τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν (“their fathers”) points the generation that stood at Sinai to receive the law and entered into a covenant with God (cf. Exodus 24:1-8). The phrase ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπιλαβομένου μου τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν ἐξαγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου (“on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt”) paints a vivid image of divine tenderness—God as a parent gently leading a child.<sup>134</sup> For Jewish Christians familiar with these Scriptures, such language would inspire comfort in God’s loving initiative and conviction to embrace the new covenant—no longer external, but written on their hearts, calling for faithful trust.

God’s deliverance from Egypt reveals a covenant founded on mercy and intimate grace, not obligation (cf. Deut. 1:31). For Jewish Christians, this imagery arouses both comfort in God’s loving initiative and a call to faithfully embrace the heart-written new covenant. However, God’s grace was met with persistent rebellion by “their fathers”. The text continues, “*for they did not continue in My covenant,*” as it reveals the core issue: not a flaw in the law itself, but in the people’s failure to remain faithful. While Israel had pledged obedience (cf. Exod. 24:7; Heb. 9:18-20), they quickly turned to disobedience especially evident in the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea (Num. 14), which led to their wandering and exclusion from the promised land (Num. 14:2).

This breach was not isolated to the wilderness generation. Successive generations in both Israel and Judah repeatedly broke the covenant (Ps. 95:7-11). Prophets such as Jeremiah continually called the people back saying “*Hear the words of this covenant*

---

<sup>133</sup> P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 196–216, 300

<sup>134</sup> J. A. L. Lee, *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 129–130, 136.

*and do them*” (Jer. 11:6)—with blessings promised for obedience and curses pronounced for rebellion (cf. Deut. 28). Yet Israel’s spiritual stubbornness endured.

The disheartening phrase *κἀγὼ ἠμέλησα αὐτῶν* (“I did not care for them”)—also translated as “I disregarded them” or “I turned away from them”—conveys the grievous consequence of a covenant betrayed.<sup>135</sup> The verb *ἀμελέω* signals a deliberate decision to withhold care in response to persistent unfaithfulness.<sup>136</sup> In this context, the failure lies with the people who repeatedly abandoned God’s covenant which He graciously initiated. God’s response, then, is rooted in a solemn acknowledgment of a broken relationship. Despite God’s tender guidance, Israel’s sustained disobedience resulted in just consequences, a caution which resonates with earlier warnings in Hebrews: “*How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?*” (Heb. 2:3).

Just as the generation in the wilderness missed out on God’s promised rest because of unbelief (Heb. 3:7-4:11; Num. 14:2), the writer of Hebrews now urges his audience to stay faithful and not repeat those mistakes. Throughout the epistle, this theme of perseverance is constant: Christ’s priesthood “remains” (Heb. 7:3, 24); the inheritance He gives “remains” (Heb. 10:34; 12:27; 13:14); and the covenant He brings is based on better promises (Heb. 8:6).

This verse marks a turning point—from a warning about Israel’s disobedience to the promise of inner transformation through the new covenant (vv. 10-12). The first covenant was divinely made but lacked the power to produce lasting faithfulness. In contrast, the new covenant, inaugurated in Christ, fulfils God’s redemptive purpose: it is internal, Spirit-empowered, and able to transform rebellious hearts from within.

---

<sup>135</sup> P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

638

<sup>136</sup> R. J. Utley, *The Superiority of the New Covenant: Hebrews*, vol. 10 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1999), 83-4.

Therefore, believers are called to hold fast to Christ and live faithfully within the new covenant—a covenant that offers true rest, lasting hope, and all the resources needed for enduring faithfulness. Unlike the old, which revealed sin but lacked power to transform the heart, the new covenant brings deep inner renewal and Spirit-empowered change from within.

8:10 *“This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. 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.”*

The central term *διαθήκη* (“covenant”) in Hebrews 8 refers not merely to a contract or testament, but to God's solemn, binding promise to establish a new kind of relationship with His people. The demonstrative *αὕτη* (“this”) emphasizes the distinctiveness and superiority of this new covenant, while the phrase *ἣν διαθήσομαι* (“which I will establish”)—derived from the future middle verb *διατίθημι*—reveals God's personal initiative and deliberate commitment in forming it *τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ* (“with the house of Israel”).<sup>137</sup> Although the phrase roots the covenant within Israel's history, the context of Hebrews reimagines “Israel” as the community of faith in Christ: those—whether Jew or Gentile—who respond to the divine promise through belief.<sup>138</sup> The quotation from Jeremiah (Hebrews 8:8) is therefore applied not ethnically but spiritually, and the covenant community is described as God's household (3:6), heirs to a Sabbath rest (4:9), and participants in the heavenly Jerusalem where Christ mediates a better covenant (12:22-24).

This covenantal shift is framed by the eschatological phrase *μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας* (“after those days”) from Jeremiah 31:33, marking the pivotal transition from an

---

<sup>137</sup> In the Divided Kingdom, Israel was dispersed and destroyed, leaving only Judah to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians (2 Kings 17:6). Therefore, when God refers to the people—into whose minds he will put the laws and onto whose hearts he will write them—as the house of Israel, He is referring to the entire nation of Israel.

<sup>138</sup> A. G. Shead, “The New Covenant,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission*, ed. P. Bolt and M. Thompson (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 38.

external, law-based relationship to an internal, Spirit-driven transformation.<sup>139</sup> Rather than indicating a mere chronological delay, it denotes a new redemptive era in which God writes His law on the minds and hearts of His people—effectively shifting obedience from ritual compliance to relational intimacy (Hebrews 8:10). This is articulated in the divine declaration, λέγει Κύριος (“says the Lord”), where the present tense λέγει stresses the ongoing relevance and living authority of God’s voice.<sup>140</sup> The prophet does not merely report a word from the past but affirms a continual divine address that speaks afresh into the reality of Christ’s mediating work.

The substance of the New Covenant is declared by God Himself through two parallel clauses: δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτούς (“I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts”). The first clause emphasizes the cognitive dimension of transformation—διάνοια representing intellect and reasoning—while the second points to the emotional and decisional core—καρδία as the seat of desire and will.<sup>141</sup> The use of δώσω (“I will give”) and ἐπιγράψω (“I will engrave”) reveals divine initiative and permanence, portraying a holistic renewal where God’s will becomes both known and embraced by His people.<sup>142</sup> This transformation culminates in a covenantal formula echoing Exodus: καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς Θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν (“and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”), signifying restored identity and mutual belonging—a relational bond, not just a legal arrangement.

Israel was commanded to internalize God’s law (Deut. 6:6-9), yet repeatedly failed due to hardened hearts caused by deep-seated sin, as seen in Exodus 24:7 and Jeremiah

---

<sup>139</sup> T. G. Long, *Hebrews*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, eds. J. L. Mays, P. D. Miller Jr., and P. J. Achtemeier (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1999).

<sup>140</sup> A. G. Shead, “The New Covenant,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission*, ed. P. Bolt and M. Thompson (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 38.

<sup>141</sup> P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 301

<sup>142</sup> B. Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 81.

17:1. While a few obeyed, most did not. In contrast, the New Covenant offers universal inner transformation, fulfilling OT prophecies (Ezekiel 11: 19-20 and 36:26-27), and extending this renewal to all in Christ instead of just a faithful few. The author of Hebrews presents this as the remedy for spiritual apathy, assuring believers of divine resources for faithfulness through Christ's sanctifying work (Heb. 2:17; 13:12).

The New Covenant is marked by the internal inscription of God's law, yet retains the enduring covenant formula— "I will be their God, and they will be my people"—which appears throughout Scripture (Ex. 6:7; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3).<sup>143</sup> At each point in salvation history, this phrase gains deeper meaning, unveiling more of God's redemptive intent. In Hebrews, it signifies the culmination of God's plan: a Spirit-driven transformation that produces heart-rooted obedience, grounded in relationship rather than ritual.

*8:11 "And they will not teach, each one his fellow citizen, and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them."*

The construction *οὐ μὴ διδάξωσιν* ("and they will not teach") employs a strong negation using *οὐ μὴ* with the aorist subjunctive, emphatically stating that such teaching will no longer be necessary.<sup>144</sup> This does not disprove the value of teaching, but it signifies that external instruction will no longer be the defining source of covenant uniqueness because knowledge of God will be internalized, Spirit-given, and shared across the whole covenant community.<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "God as the Speaking God: 'Theology' in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 302

<sup>144</sup> A. G. Shead, "The New Covenant," in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission*, ed. P. Bolt and M. Thompson (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>145</sup> Teachers and the gift of teaching are significant gifts of the ascended Christ and his Spirit in the early churches (1 Cor. 12:28; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:9, etc.).

The use of the parallel phrases *ἕκαστος τὸν πολίτην... καὶ ἕκαστος τὸν ἀδελφὸν* (“each one his fellow citizen, ... and each one his brother”) emphasizes the communal fabric of Israelite life under the Old Covenant.<sup>146</sup> In the Old Covenant, knowledge of God was passed down communally—through priests, prophets, families, and religious systems. But under the New Covenant, such external instruction is no longer necessary for covenant identity, because knowing the Lord becomes personal, universal, and Spirit-empowered: “For they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest.”<sup>147</sup>

The phrase *λέγων· Γνῶθι τὸν Κύριον* (“saying, ‘Know the Lord’”) includes the verb *γνῶθι*, the aorist imperative of *γινώσκω*, which reflects far more than intellectual understanding—it points to a deep, relational, and experiential knowledge of God, born out of covenant intimacy and empowered by the Spirit.<sup>148</sup> The use of the aorist imperative conveys both urgency and completeness: “come to know fully!” Under the Old Covenant, such knowledge had to be formally taught and repeatedly urged. But Hebrews reveals that in the New Covenant, this knowing becomes Spirit-enabled, personally internalized, and universally shared—no longer reserved for priests, prophets, or scribes, but accessible to all who are in Christ.<sup>149</sup>

The phrase *πάντες εἰδήσουσίν με* (“they will all know Me”) highlights that in the New Covenant, everyone, regardless of age, status, or spiritual experience, can have a direct relationship with God. The verb *εἰδήσουσιν* (from *οἶδα*) suggests complete and intuitive knowing, not just intellectual understanding.<sup>150</sup> The inclusive wording *ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου* (“from the least to the greatest”) makes it clear: this deep, personal, Spirit-

---

<sup>146</sup> J. A. L. Lee, *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 129–130, 136.

<sup>147</sup> P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 302

<sup>148</sup> P. H. Hacking, *Opening Up Hebrews* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006).

<sup>149</sup> P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 303

<sup>150</sup> C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

given knowledge is no longer reserved for religious leaders or the spiritually gifted. It is the shared experience of all who belong to the covenant community.

Hebrews 8:11 presents a powerful contrast between the limitations of the Old Covenant and the promise of the New. In Israel's history, early generations experienced God's presence, but later generations fell into ignorance and disobedience (Judg. 2:10; Hos. 4:1, 6). Though the law was taught and memorized (Deut. 6:6-9), sin remained rooted (Jer. 17:1), proving that external instruction alone could not produce lasting faithfulness.

In response, Jeremiah prophesied a completely new dynamic—affirmed in Hebrews—where God's law would be inscribed on hearts and His knowledge shared directly by all (cf. Heb. 8:11; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27). This promise dissolves class barriers and removes the need for intermediaries, offering a Spirit-enabled relationship marked by inner transformation, obedience, and trust in God's saving work.

Importantly, this is not a rejection of spiritual leadership or teaching roles—Hebrews itself teaches with pastoral depth. Rather, it affirms that every believer has direct, confident access to God through Christ's high priestly ministry (Heb. 4:16; 7:25; 10:19-22). This aligns with the New Testament witness that all believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) and are taught by the Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27).

Thus, Hebrews 8:11 envisions a reconfigured covenant community—not structured around hierarchical access to sacred knowledge, but united through shared, personal, and relational knowledge of the Lord. It affirms spiritual equality, intimacy, and accessibility for all, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophetic promise and anchoring a central truth of the New Covenant.

8:12 *“For I will be merciful toward their wrongdoings, and their sins I will no longer remember.”*

The conjunction ὅτι (“for”) functions theologically, linking this mercy-filled declaration to the prior verse's promise of universal, unmediated knowledge of God.

The reason every believer will know the Lord personally and directly is rooted in the divine act of mercy—because God decisively addresses sin through forgiveness. The promises of internalized law and relational knowledge (v.10-11) stand on this foundation: sin is dealt with—fully and finally—through the sacrificial offering of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:14, 26, 28; 10:10, 14).

The phrase ἰλεως ἔσομαι (“I will be merciful” or more literally “I will be propitious”) expresses God’s promise to forgive and restore.<sup>151</sup> The adjective ἰλεως refers to a gracious, favourably disposed character—especially in the divine-human relationship.<sup>152</sup> It echoes the language of propitiation, drawing from the same root as ἰλασμός (atonement) and ἰλαστήριον (mercy seat).<sup>153</sup> In Hebrews 2:17, Jesus is described as the one who makes propitiation for the people’s sins, satisfying divine justice and opening the way for mercy. Here in 8:12, ἔσομαι (“I will be”) in the future tense is not simply predictive but a divine pledge. God’s mercy is not temporary or uncertain but He has committed Himself to show grace even in our deepest failures. This is the core of the New Covenant: mercy that isn’t achieved through effort, but offered freely and completely by God.<sup>154</sup>

This mercy is directed with precision: ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν (“toward their wrongdoings”). The noun ἀδικίαις (plural of ἀδικία) encompasses personal sin, injustice, moral failure, and rebellion against divine righteousness.<sup>155</sup> It refers to both inner moral decay and visible transgression, covering everything from personal deceit to widespread,

---

David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 1338

<sup>152</sup> A. G. Shead, “The New Covenant,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission*, ed. P. Bolt and M. Thompson (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>153</sup> P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 303

P. T. O’Brien, “God as the Speaking God: ‘Theology’ in the Letter to the Hebrews,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 303

<sup>155</sup> T. D. Lea, *Hebrews & James*, ed. M. Anders, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999).

organized injustice. The dative case (*ταῖς*) shows that God’s mercy is not vague but it is aimed directly at sin. God doesn’t ignore sin instead He faces it directly and overcomes it with His mercy. This kind of mercy is part of His covenant: it is personal, powerful, and brings real change.

The phrase *καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν* (“and their sins”) adds another layer. The noun *ἁμαρτιῶν* (from *ἁμαρτία*) in the genitive plural signals the full spectrum of moral deviation—deliberate rebellion and unintentional failure alike.<sup>156</sup> The possessive pronoun *αὐτῶν* (“their”) personalizes the transgressions: these are not distant sins, but the personal failures of God’s beloved covenant people, the very ones He claims and chooses to redeem with His mercy.<sup>157</sup> And yet, after this naming comes no condemnation, only divine resolve: “*I will remember their sins no more.*”

The phrase *οὐ μὴ μνησθῶ ἔτι* (“I will certainly not remember anymore”) uses a strong double negative (*οὐ μὴ*) with the aorist passive subjunctive of *μνησκόμαι*. This shows a strong and deliberate decision; it is not that God forgets by chance, but that He chooses not to remember the sins of His people anymore.<sup>158</sup> God chooses not to recall, not to accuse, not to revisit the sins of His people. The word *ἔτι* (“anymore”) emphasizes the finality of God’s forgiveness—there will be no future judgment or punishment. The sins are not simply forgiven but they are completely erased from God’s record.

In the Old Covenant, forgiveness was genuine but incomplete. God showed mercy (Ex. 34:6-7; Mic. 7:18-19; Ps. 51), yet serious sins still led to death, and yearly sacrifices

---

<sup>156</sup> J. W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>157</sup> J. W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>158</sup> R. J. Utley, *The Superiority of the New Covenant: Hebrews*, vol. 10 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1999).

reminded the people of their guilt (Heb. 10:3), leaving their consciences troubled. Although they trusted God’s mercy, lasting freedom remained out of reach.

The New Covenant changes this entirely. Through Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice (Heb. 7:27), God offers complete forgiveness. He chooses not to remember sin by deliberate grace, bringing full cleansing and restored relationship.

Hebrews 8:12 marks the climax of this covenant shift. God confronts sin with justice through Christ’s atonement and answers with unshakable mercy. This mercy is not vague or distant; it is covenantal and life-changing, leading to deeper intimacy with God, Spirit-led obedience, and confident access to His presence. It forms the very foundation of the believer’s assurance and reflects the heart of the New Covenant.

*8:13 “In saying ‘new,’ He has made the first obsolete; and what is becoming obsolete and growing old is near to vanishing.”*

Just as verses 7-8 highlight the weakness and temporary nature of the old covenant, verse 13 ends with a serious but important statement. The author of Hebrews is not simply pointing out flaws, but offering a strong theological judgment: in light of the New Covenant, the old one is now outdated and ready to disappear.

The phrase ἐν τῷ λέγειν Καινήν (“In saying ‘new’”) points to a complete redefinition of the covenant but not simply a refreshed version of the old. The author is declaring that this New Covenant is a completely new creation. Thus, the use of *καινή διαθήκη* in Hebrews 8:13 is theological blow to the old covenant. The simple naming of the covenant as “new” renders the first covenant *παλαιά*—outdated, surpassed, and ready to disappear.<sup>159</sup> The phrase *πεπαλαίωκεν τὴν πρώτην* (“He has made the first obsolete”) uses the perfect active of *παλαιόω*, indicating a completed action with continuing implications.<sup>160</sup> The old covenant has already been displaced; its obsolescence is not

---

P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993),

<sup>160</sup> J. W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker

future but present reality. Its legal authority and spiritual function have ceased, displaced by a covenant established through Christ's redemptive blood.

The participles *παλαιούμενον* ("becoming obsolete") and *γηράσκον* ("growing old") reflect the progressive deterioration of the old covenant.<sup>161</sup> Their present tense suggests an ongoing decline, not a sudden annulment.<sup>162</sup> Like a worn-out garment or a fading body (cf. Gen. 18:13), the Mosaic system is losing its strength. It has served its purpose, as a temporary and preparatory arrangement, but was never enough to bring lasting change (Heb. 7:18). Now, having outlived its role, it gives way to a better covenant built on deeper transformation and enduring grace.

This is made even more vivid with the phrase *έγγυς άφανισμοϋ* ("near to vanishing"). The noun *άφανισμός* denotes obliteration or deliberate removal, and can at times suggest judgment or destruction.<sup>163</sup> The Mosaic covenant was given by God and had a holy purpose (Rom. 7:12), but it was always temporary (Gal. 3:24). It was not flawed, it simply prepared the way for something greater. Now that Christ has come, the covenant has reached its end. The Law was like a shadow, and Christ is the substance it pointed to.

Hebrews 10:1 describes the law as a shadow of the good things to come but not the actual realities. A shadow may suggest shape, but it lacks detail and substance. The old covenant outlined God's justice and holiness, but it could not cleanse the conscience or provide lasting access to God.

---

Academic, 2008), 176

<sup>161</sup> J. W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 176

<sup>162</sup> J. W. Kleinig, *Hebrews*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

<sup>163</sup> J. W. Kleinig, *Hebrews*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

The author of Hebrews does not treat the old covenant as a failure, but as a temporary sketch which was waiting for the arrival of the true fulfillment. When Christ came as the mediator of a better covenant, He did not cancel the law's purpose; He completed it. The shadow gave way to reality, the tent was replaced by the true sanctuary, and the temporary stepped aside for the eternal.

So, the disappearance of the old covenant is not a loss. It is a meaningful transition. The language of fading and obsolescence is more than description; it is theological, historical, and eschatological. Believers no longer live under ritual-based access or constant reminders of guilt (Heb. 10:3). They are part of a covenant where sin is remembered no more, the law is written on hearts, and direct access is granted through a High Priest who remains forever.

And because God is sovereign, it was fully within His right to replace a covenant He once gave (Heb. 7:18). Jeremiah 31 foretells this change as not just an update, but a whole new kind of covenant. When God spoke of something "new," He made the first outdated. Like aging skin, the Sinaitic covenant served its purpose but gave way to the life-giving power of the new.

Hebrews 8:13, then, is not just reporting the end of a covenant, it is announcing that the promised fulfillment has arrived. The covenant once written with ink now lives in the hearts. The old has faded, and the new has firmly taken root. What was once only outlined in shadow now shines clearly through Christ's better promise.

Therefore, this passage carries a transformative message to a community of Jewish Christians grappling with spiritual exhaustion, cultural pressure, and the attraction of familiar religious rituals. It invites them to move beyond the temples and tabernacles of the Mosaic covenant toward the internal renewal offered through Christ. The text presents the New Covenant as a divine initiative which goes beyond the traditional limitations and redefines covenant identity around relational intimacy, Spirit-empowered obedience, and unchangeable mercy. For an audience immersed in tradition yet longing for lasting transformation, the text offers both hope and

redirection, grounding their faith not in mediated rituals but in personal communion with God through the High Priest who lives forever at His right hand.

This message speaks directly to believers tempted to go back into the comfort of the old system. But it urges them to persevere, reminding them that they are part of a covenant community in which God's laws are inscribed on their hearts, divine knowledge is shared by all, and sins are remembered no more. The old has faded; the new has come—not as a revision, but as a redemptive fulfillment. In this New Covenant, they are invited to walk in the confidence of forgiveness, to know God personally, and to embody the transformation that was always God's ultimate purpose for His people.

### **3. 5 Key Exegetical Issues**

#### **3.5.1 The Promise of a New Covenant is Fulfilled in the Christ**

The promise of a “new covenant,” once declared by Jeremiah as future hope, is now a living reality for all who are in Christ. No longer written on stone or limited to a privileged few, God’s law is inscribed on the hearts of believers, and intimate knowledge of Him is the shared gift of all—from the least to the greatest. This covenant is not just an improvement upon the old but a complete transformation: empowered by mercy, secured by Christ’s eternal priesthood, and made alive by the Spirit. Hebrews does not merely repeat Jeremiah’s prophecy; it proclaims its fulfillment, showing that the long-anticipated future has become the believer’s present—and that this covenant, unlike the old, is unshakeable and everlasting.

#### **3.5.2 The Role of Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant**

The role of Christ as Mediator stands at the very center of Hebrews’ message, offering profound assurance to believers longing for nearness with God. Unlike the old covenant, which relied on rituals and human intermediaries, Christ bridges heaven and earth by offering Himself as High Priest, perfect sacrifice, and living guarantor of a better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15). His mediatorship is ongoing and

personal—He lives to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25), providing believers with direct access to God’s presence. For those weighed down by guilt or religious complexity, the message is liberating: we do not approach God through a system, but through the Savior—Jesus Christ, who is more than sufficient and always present.

### **3.5.3 A Call to embrace a “better” covenant**

The language of “better” and “more excellent” in Hebrews serves not merely as theological comparison but as a pastoral exhortation to Jewish Christians tempted to return to the old covenant. The author presents Christ’s eternal priesthood and the new covenant as categorically superior—offering internal transformation, direct access to God, and lasting forgiveness, unlike the former system. Verse 13 underscores the urgency: the old is not just aging but divinely declared obsolete. Rather than rejecting Jewish heritage, the author urges believers not to cling to what is fading but to embrace the fulfillment found in Christ. “Better” becomes a call to remain steadfast in the covenant that truly makes them God’s people.

### **3.5.4 The Divine Commitment is Fulfilled in Christ’s New Covenant**

The recurring covenant formula, “I will be their God, and they will be my people,” serves as a theological anchor that reaches its fullest expression in Hebrews 8:10, where it affirms the fulfillment—not the abandonment—of Old Testament promises in Christ. This shift signifies more than continuity; it marks a complete transformation from external, ritual-based obedience to internal, Spirit-empowered renewal. No longer mediated through priesthood or national identity, the new covenant is internal, personal, and universally accessible, engaging both mind and will. This redefines humanity’s relationship with God, as divine law is now inscribed on the heart enabling true transformation. What once dwelled behind veils now resides within, offering Jewish Christians the

assurance that the covenantal God of their ancestors now communes with them directly in Christ.

### **3.5.5 Transformation is Through the Power of the Holy Spirit**

Hebrews 8:10 signals a profound spiritual transformation in which God's law is no longer externally imposed but internally inscribed—engaging both the mind and heart to produce genuine obedience. Though the Holy Spirit is not named directly in this passage, the broader New Testament context affirms His role in empowering this inward renewal. Rather than relying on ritual or rule, the new covenant centers on relationship, assuring believers that salvation involves not only forgiveness but deep, Spirit-enabled transformation. In a world craving for authenticity and change, this covenant offers the promise of a life reshaped from within.

### **3.5.6 Personal Knowledge of God is for All Believers**

Hebrews 8:11 proclaims a transformative promise: that under the new covenant, every believer—regardless of status, education, or background—can know God personally and directly. This stands in stark contrast to the old covenant, where access to God was mediated through priests, prophets, and ritual systems. Now, through Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, intimacy with God is no longer reserved for a select few but is the shared inheritance of all who believe. This totally reshapes our understanding of spiritual leadership—not as gatekeepers to divine access, but as fellow pilgrims who nurture and equip others in a relationship they already possess. The priesthood of all believers is not a slogan but a lived reality, where grace—not hierarchy—defines proximity to God. In this covenant community, every Christian is empowered, known, and called, and the invitation to know the Lord is extended equally “from the least to the greatest.”

### **3.5.7 God’s Mercy Remembers Sin No More**

Hebrews 8:12 proclaims a staggering promise of divine mercy: “I will remember their sins no more.” This is not forgetfulness born of frailty, but a deliberate, redemptive act rooted in the finished work of Christ. For believers burdened by guilt, shame, or the weight of past failures, this is not abstract religion—it is salvation made personal. God’s mercy does not trivialize sin; it declares that sin has been fully dealt with at the cross. In a culture obsessed with judgment, performance, and self-condemnation, the gospel offers a radically different message: that in Christ, the believer’s past is not only forgiven but erased from the divine record. God does not revisit it, weaponize it, or hold it over us. Justice has been satisfied, and grace now defines the believer’s standing. Under the new covenant, identity is no longer shaped by what we have done wrong, but by what God has declared right—forever.

### **3.5.8 Living in the Reality of the New Covenant**

Hebrews 8:13 declares a covenant that is not simply newer in time but wholly new in kind—a complete redefinition of how humanity relates to God. Unlike the superficial upgrades we see in everyday life, this “new” covenant is not a renovation of the old system but a radical transformation: Christ draws us near by grace and makes His dwelling within us by His Spirit. It is categorically superior, not only in function but in intimacy. Yet as with the early believers tempted to return to the visible stability of temple rituals, modern Christians may also fall back into performance-based faith, seeking to earn what God already gives freely. But the old is growing obsolete, ready to vanish, because God is not patching up the past but He is ushering in the fulfillment of Christ’s finished work. This new covenant is not a transitional phase, but the eternal future breaking into our present. It is not built on external duty, but on internal transformation—and it assures every believer, regardless of past failures or social standing, that they can now walk in the power, nearness, and joy of what is gloriously and permanently new.

### 3.6 Exegetical Synthesis

In Hebrews 8:6-13, the author of Hebrews reached the peak of his argument where he clearly declares that the old covenant, mediated through the Levitical priesthood, was never intended to be final. It was sacred and ordained by God but it was provisional. The daily sacrifices, the rising incense, the blood poured out, and the law recited in the temple courts were not final in themselves. They were shadows, not substance. They were signs pointing forward to a greater reality.

When the author said “But now...”, he was announcing a turning point in history (vv. 6). The covenant had changed. The priesthood had changed. The heavenly order had broken into time. Christ had come—not from Levi, but from the order of Melchizedek. Not to minister in copies and shadows, but in the true tabernacle, the one “*that the Lord set up, not man*” (vv. 2).

His priesthood was not inherited but secured through obedience, suffering, resurrection, and ascension. Unlike the priests of old who offered blood not their own, Christ offered Himself once for all. His sacrifice is not repetitive but final. His mediation is not external but transformative. He has enacted a better covenant which is a law written by the Spirit on hearts softened by mercy.

The author of Hebrews, quoting Jeremiah, makes this explicitly clear that this is not a divine course correction, but the fulfillment of a long-anticipated promise (vv.7-8). The old covenant was broken, not because the law was flawed, but because the people were (vv. 9). Thus, God promised something new—something inward, enduring, and relational. This is not merely a change in legal structure but a transformation of the human heart (vv. 10). The Spirit now teaches from within. The veil had been torn. Access to God is no longer mediated through rituals but through the living Christ.

This shows how God's closeness is no longer limited to a few but it is now shared with all believers. Everyone, from the least to the greatest, can know God personally (vv.11). No longer is knowledge of God the privilege of the priestly class; it is the inheritance of all who are in Christ. And at the heart of this covenant is mercy where God would forgive and not remember sins any more (vv. 12). This is not divine forgetfulness but divine satisfaction. The blood had been shed. The guilt was gone. No more offerings. No more annual reminders. Only the final word of grace.

Thus, the author concludes: *"In speaking of a new covenant, He makes the first one obsolete..."* (vv. 13). To return to the old covenant is not merely to regress but it is to rebuild what God has fulfilled. The old is fading. The new has come. This is not a second system but it is the unveiling of the first's true intent.

What the prophets longed to see has now been revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, risen and reigning. This covenant transforms. This promise has taken on flesh. This High Priest lives forever. Therefore, it is important that the believers hold fast to what has been revealed. They are urged not slip back in what was passing away. For Christ is not only better but He is final. And in Him, they are made new.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the significance of this research to the contemporary church explaining the Doctrinal and Practical significance.

#### 4.2 Doctrinal significance

Hebrews 8 stands as a pivotal theological defining moment, highlighting God's sovereign initiative in establishing a New Covenant, and revealing Christ's redemptive role as both eternal High Priest and divine Mediator. At its core, the passage extends a summons to spiritual renewal—inviting the Church to abandon reliance on external rituals, and embrace a dynamic, grace-centered relationship rooted in the inward work of the Spirit. The passage presents a striking contrast between the insufficiencies of the old covenant and the surpassing glory of the new, which is founded upon *better promises*. The passage challenges the contemporary Church to respond to God's covenantal proposal, moving beyond ceremonial formality into Spirit-led transformation that bears the marks of Christ's mercy, presence, and reconciling mission.

##### 4.2.1 Christ as the superior mediator

The concept of Christ as the superior Mediator of the New Covenant, as captured in *Hebrews 8:6*, lies at the theological heart of the Church's identity today. It proclaims that in Jesus—fully divine and fully human—God has decisively bridged the gap caused by sin, fulfilling the ancient longing for restored communion first pronounced in Genesis and echoed in Isaiah's cry, "Here am I; send me" (*Isaiah 6:8*). Unlike former mediators bound by ritual, limitation, and lineage, Christ's priesthood is eternal (*Hebrews 7:24*), His sacrifice once for all (*Hebrews 10:10*), and His intercession unceasing (*Romans 8:34*). In Him, mediation becomes not simply practical but fundamental: He is the Word made flesh (*John 1:14*), the living channel of divine self-giving.

This is theologically urgent for the Church today because it reorients worship, access, and mission around grace rather than performance. Christ's mediatorship reveals that intimacy with God no longer rotates on sacred places, religious lineage, or ritual accuracy. Instead, the Church stands as a community formed by a "better covenant...enacted on better promises"—grounded in Christ's finished work, not humanity's striving. This confronts contemporary tendencies toward spiritual superiority, liturgical formalism, or inherited Christianity, calling the Church back to the simplicity and sufficiency of Christ's eternal priesthood.

Moreover, in contexts shaped by ancestral mediation and communal ritual—such as many African traditions—Christ's role aligns deeply and disruptively. He exalts the cultural nature of seeking intercession, yet He purifies it by re-centering all mediation on Himself. This challenges syncretistic tendencies and confirms that true reconciliation with God does not arise from human intermediaries, but from a divine-human Mediator whose blood purifies the conscience (*Hebrews 9:14*) and whose death secures an eternal inheritance (*Hebrews 9:15-17*).

For the Church today, this theology is not intellectual but it is its lifeblood. It declares why the gospel liberates: because Christ mediates perfectly, permanently, and universally. It reveals why worship is no longer limited, but transformed: because no veil remains. And it supports why mission is not simply proclamation, but an invitation into communion that is accessible, assured, and secured in grace. To proclaim Christ as Mediator is to proclaim that the work is done, the way is open, and the call persists: "Draw near."

#### **4.2.2 Internal Transformation as the Heart of the New Covenant**

The New Covenant's emphasis on internal transformation confronts one of the deepest theological challenges facing today's Church: the temptation to substitute ritual obedience for personal communion. In an era where religion can be reduced to performance, tradition, or institutional loyalty, the New Covenant calls believers to remember that holiness begins in heart not in habit. This shift from external

commitment to internal renewal matters greatly because it restores the ultimate object of covenant life which is to awaken love, justice, and mercy from within instead of controlling behaviour.

For modern believers, the relevance lies in identity. The Spirit no longer hovers above temples and tabernacles but He indwells ordinary lives. This truth dismantles the divide between “spiritual” and “secular,” reminding the Church that God’s presence blesses affections, work, and relationships. In a broken world searching for truth, the Spirit offers what systems cannot: transformation that is intimate, personal, and enduring. Believers are living temples (Rom 8:9-16), bearing the writing of grace in every sphere of life.

This calls the Church to reimagine holiness as a Spirit-empowered union with the love of Christ. True consecration is vital because external observance alone cannot cultivate the inward righteousness that reflects God’s true desire. The Spirit’s reformatory work confirms that Christian morals are not external commands imposed upon the will, but divine instincts awakened within it (Phil 2:13). In this way, the incarnation becomes a model whereby God enters human weakness to elevate it into a communion but not to condemn it.

Ultimately, the Church’s mission stands or falls on this truth. A gospel stripped of transformation cannot heal, convict, or reconcile. But the New Covenant proclaims that transformation is realized not wished. Believers become living expressions of God’s redemptive love because the Spirit reshapes what the law could only diagnose. In today’s Church, where people are hungry for meaning deeper than ritual and truth greater than trend, the New Covenant answers not with behavior modification but with heart renovation.

#### **4.2.3 From Creation to Covenant: Universal Access to God**

The biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation reveals God’s intention to dwell with humanity in a continued communion. “*In the beginning...*” (Gen 1:1), creation was an

intentional act, a sanctuary declared “*very good*” (*Gen 1:31*) and created for relationship. The *imago Dei* (*Gen 1:26-27*) defines our human dignity and capacity for intimacy with the Creator. This inherent accessibility is confirmed in the heavens’ proclamation (*Ps 19:1-2*) and the law written on every heart (*Rom 2:14-15*), showing that divine presence has always been inborn, even when invisible.

This theological truth is vital today because it confronts spiritual isolation and religious formalism. Where modern faith communities struggle with questions of God’s nearness in an age of secularism and suffering, the biblical testimony declares that God is not silent. Even after the fall, the “*Where are you?*” (*Gen 3:9*) connects through history, not as condemnation, but as an invitation. Christ’s “*Come to Me*” (*Matt 11:28*) answers this cry. For churches and believers today, this affirms that God initiates relationship not through ritual performance, but through redemptive communion. Jeremiah’s prophecy (*Jer. 31:31-34*) and its fulfillment (*Hebrews 8:10-13*) declare that covenant access is now direct, not delegated.

In this era of spiritual exhaustion and moral destruction, the relevance of Christ’s mediatory work is important. Through His atoning death, He tears the veil (*Matt 27:51*) and assumes the office of *eternal High Priest* (*Heb 9:15*). For today’s Church, this means that access to God is not a privilege of the few but it is the inheritance of all who believe (*John 1:12; Rom 5:2*). The presence of God has moved from tabernacle to temple, from temple to heart (*Rom 8:9-16; John 14:23*). This reorganization of blessed space urges the Church to re-examine its identity as a community of encounter but not as guardian of access.

The Holy Spirit’s ministry is what transforms this truth into a real experience. He convicts (*John 16:8*), restores (*Titus 3:5*), purifies (*2 Thess. 2:13*), and empowers believers to become *vessels of divine presence* (*2 Cor 3:17-18*). For believers going through daily life including work pressure, personal wounds, cultural letdown, this principle elevates the ordinary. God does not dwell in thought; He consecrates family, work, and community as settings for grace. His *common grace*—seen in rain (*Matt 5:45*), joy (*Acts 14:17*), and provision (*Rom 2:4*)—becomes holy when recognized as invitation.

Ultimately, the New Covenant reveals how and why we commune with God - because divine love desires presence. The phrase *“I will be their God, and they shall be My people”* (Heb 8:10) is relational not ceremonial. In today’s broken world, this truth carries spiritual weight. Churches exist not only to preserve tradition, but also to embody participation. Believers are not simply recipients of doctrine but they are living temples (1 Cor 6:19), animated by the Spirit and called into communion that imitates Eden and anticipates the New Jerusalem. The phrase *“I am with you always...”* (Matt 28:20) is not a metaphor but it is the heartbeat of the Church’s mission and the reason why faith still matters today.

#### **4.2.4 Mercy and Forgiveness**

From Sinai to Pentecost, Scripture reveals that mercy is not a passive feeling but the active flow of divine quest. Forgiveness was God’s deliberate initiative, flowing from covenantal love, not human worthiness (Psalm 79:9; Nehemiah 9:17). At Sinai, the law exposed the need for mercy; at Pentecost, the Spirit made mercy possible. The Church must reclaim the biblical vision of forgiveness as divine power. It is the sacred force that heals division, mends wounded relationships, and weaves broken lives into people of restored communion. In a culture soaked in revenge, this mercy recovers the theological foundation of restoration; that is grace but not vengeance.

Under the New Covenant, mercy is no longer confined to ritual. It is alive in relationship. Jesus bypassed sacred boundaries to declare, *“Your sins are forgiven”* (Mark 2:10). He taught that *“Forgive, and you will be forgiven”* (Luke 6:37) as a non-negotiable Heavenly principle. His parables, especially the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35), make it clear that forgiveness is God’s way of giving out mercy. The Church today must return to this focal point of relationship, becoming a community that abandons offense and multiplies grace (Colossians 3:13). Forgiveness must be normal and define relationships.

Pentecost initiated the Church and showed its mission as a vessel of mercy. Peter, once overwhelmed with self-blame, stood in power and proclaimed truth (Acts 2:14-41).

Thousands were converted and reconciled. The promises of *Jeremiah 31:33* and *Ezekiel 36:26-27* were fulfilled as mercy moved from ritual into life. The Spirit, now dwelling in believers (*John 14:23*), writes mercy on hearts (*Hebrews 10:16*), and believers become living temples of reconciliation (*2 Corinthians 3:17-18*). The Church must rise beyond seeing grace as simple scriptural idea and live it as a physical calling. Grace must be seen in our steps, heard in our speech, and felt in our service.

In a world wounded by injustice, betrayal, and spiritual exhaustion, forgiveness speaks prophetically. It is why the cross matters; not just as sacrifice but as God's courageous refusal of injustice and His joyful confirmation of mercy's triumph (*Luke 23:34; Hebrews 9:14*). It is why the resurrection is life renewed through forgiveness, and hope restored through grace. The torn veil (*Matthew 27:51*) signals that God is not distant. "I am with you always" (*Matthew 28:20*) is not poetic but it is the promise that mercy now resides near. In Jesus, forgiveness is animating—it lives, moves among us, and dwells within hearts.

In African contexts, where identity is collective and healing is deeply social, this idea speaks with truthfulness. Forgiveness is practical and important. It restores tribes, stories, societies, and spiritual custom. The Church must become the living witness of this mercy, practicing it in worship, leadership, community, and reconciliation. When forgiveness flows freely, God's original intention is fulfilled, and the Spirit writes mercy into sacred scars of history. For the Church today, forgiveness is the core reason of its calling.

#### **4.2.5 The Obsolescence of the Old Covenant**

The theological witness of the passage remains deeply relevant to the Church today because it locates covenant failure not in divine design but in human disobedience thereby clarifying that God's promises are steadfast, even when His people disobey. In an age where moral decline and spiritual coldness tempt communities to question the reliability of Scripture or the relevance of covenantal faithfulness, this passage reminds us that failure rests not in God's Word, but in our response to it. The shift from external

rituals to internal transformation reorients contemporary faith from performance-driven religiosity to Spirit-empowered faithfulness. It calls today's Church to embrace not a new religion, but a renewed relationship.

Moreover, the term “new” in *καινή διαθήκη* is not merely chronological—it is eschatological. It signifies that the promises of grace have reached their ultimate object in Christ. This continuity affirms that Christian faith is not a rejection of Israel's story but its fulfillment: the same God, the same calling, and the same covenantal heartbeat—“I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” For today's believers, this offers theological stability amid cultural instability, reminding the Church that its identity is secured in divine faithfulness, not shifting doctrinal trends or institutional success.

Christ's superior mediation is not just better in words but it is transformative. Unlike the Levitical system tied to repetition and physical limits, the once-for-all work of Jesus grants the Church continual access to God without intermediaries, without barriers, and without fear (*Heb. 9:14; Rom. 8:34*). In a world captivated by performance-based faith, pseudo-spirituality, and intermediaries, the Church must reclaim this truth: Christ alone bridges the divine-human divide, and His intercession defines our access, assurance, and identity.

The intensified role of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant gives further theological gravity. Today's believers often struggle with broken obedience and hollow spirituality. Yet the Spirit does not simply comfort but also, He convicts, empowers, and transforms. By shifting the focus of holiness from ritual to indwelling, He consecrates ordinary life, sanctifies conscience, and equips the Church to bear witness to Christ in public and personal spheres. Thus, Christian morals internal realities shaped by divine communion.

Ultimately, the obsolescence of the Old Covenant speaks not of rejection, but of culmination. Today's Church must interpret this not as theological disposal but as sacred completion. The shadows have given way to substance. Promise has met fulfillment. And through Christ, believers now stand in the light of a covenant that is

eternal, personal, and unshakably secured. This is why the Church proclaims not simply that grace is available, but that God's redemptive plan is accomplished. The New Covenant does not ask us to begin again; it invites us to live in what Christ has already made new.

### 4.3 Practical significance

Hebrews 8:6-13 presents the New Covenant as a divine reordering of relationship where Christ, as superior mediator, inaugurates a covenant founded on *better promises*: internal renewal, personal communion, and enduring forgiveness. This covenant is not ceremonial but participatory, not inherited but transformative. It calls believers into a living posture of grace-dependent intimacy with God.

In Uganda, Christianity has long been woven into the national fabric, with over 84% of the population identifying as Christian. Yet beneath this religious majority lies a tension between cultural Christianity—marked by inherited rituals and institutional allegiance—and covenantal Christianity, which demands relational transformation. This tension is visible across multiple domains:

**Liturgical transformation:** In many Ugandan churches, liturgy is deeply rooted in colonial missionary traditions. Anglican and Catholic services often follow rigid formats, where Scripture is read, sacraments administered, and prayers recited. While these practices are historically rich, they can become performative when disconnected from personal encounter. Services are attended out of habit, and sacraments are received without spiritual expectancy.

The New Covenant reimagines this liturgical space as a hospitable encounter. Liturgical rhythms like confession, Scripture, song, and sacrament must be curated as movements into communion. Confession should serve as a doorway into grace but not as ritualized burden of sin. Scripture reading becomes a dynamic dialogue with the Spirit, kindling revelation. Prayer should become responsive, a covenantal exchange with the Father instead of being formulaic. The Eucharist should be a meal of covenant affirmation, not

a memorialized tradition. Silence is embraced as reverent anticipation, not passive interlude. In such a liturgical environment, worship ceases to be performative and becomes responsive—a living encounter with divine presence. This shift invites believers to experience God personally, not just ceremonially.

**Reimagining Faith Formation in the Ugandan Churches:** Cultural Christianity in Uganda often equates church membership with spiritual maturity. Many Ugandans are baptized as infants, confirmed in adolescence, and attend church regularly—yet remain spiritually disengaged. Many Ugandan youth identify as Christian yet lack spiritual depth. Faith is often reduced to social identity or school requirement. This inherited identity fosters moral strictness without intimacy and obedience without joy. The New Covenant leadership should reframe this identity as a fruit of transformation. Churches should teach children not only to memorize biblical truths but also embody covenantal values like love, forgiveness, and relational holiness. Churches should also create spaces for encounter, where Scripture is not merely taught but experienced, and where young believers are mentored into covenantal maturity. Discipleship should not be inherited but cultivated. Students should learn to respond to God’s love with surrendered lives, embodying covenantal formation from a young age.

**Redeeming Faith from the Prosperity Gospel Trap:** The rise of prosperity preaching in the urban centers of Uganda has led many Christians to equate faith with material blessing. Churches promise breakthroughs, miracles, and wealth as signs of divine favour. This theology, while popular, often bypasses repentance, dependence, and spiritual formation. The New Covenant confronts this distortion by emphasizing grace over gain. Church Leaders should teach that transformation is the true evidence of covenantal life, not material success. It is important that they model lives of humility, transparency, dependence on Christ, and joyful obedience, dismantling performance-driven religion and restoring the importance of grace.

**Leadership Rooted in Presence and Communion:** Church leadership in Uganda has often reflected political structures; hierarchical, distant, authoritative, and managerial. Bishops and Reverends/Pastors are revered, but rarely accessible or

relational. This fosters spiritual detachment and reinforces cultural religiosity. The New Covenant calls leaders to walk with the flock not above them. Leaders become shepherds of transformation, not managers or custodians of tradition.

As Paul charged the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:20-27), preaching must be both public and personal, theological and pastoral. Leaders should cultivate holy worship times where confession, Scripture, sacrament engage the congregation in genuine communion. Their transparency invites trust, and their presence fosters intimacy. In this model, leadership becomes incarnational, reflecting the torn veil and unrestricted access to God.

**Proclaiming Christ Amid Confusion through Biblical Preaching:** In rural districts of Uganda, Christianity often coexists with indigenous beliefs. Rituals like ancestral appeasement, traditional healing, and ritual festivals are practiced alongside church attendance. This syncretism dilutes biblical truth and fosters spiritual confusion. The New Covenant inscribes truth upon the heart. The Church in Uganda should emphasize biblical literacy and Spirit-led interpretation. Scripture is not studied for information but opened for transformation.

Biblical preaching, in this context, must reclaim its prophetic edge. It is not a pulpit performance but the Spirit's instrument to confront nominalism and call hearts into covenantal reality. Preaching must exalt Christ, not merely mention Him, but proclaim Him as the hope, healer, and redeemer of broken lives (Luke 24:27). It must expose sin with gospel clarity, awaken repentance through grace, and invite renewal through the Spirit's transforming work.

The church should foster a covenantal community where grace is alive, shaped by presence, and sustained by a love that writes itself upon every heart. This reorientation anchors believers in covenantal truth and displaces inherited superstition.

**Walking Together in Grace through Contextual Discipleship:** This must go beyond programs and rituals. Grounded in the identity given by the New Covenant, believers are called to dwell in continual relationship with Christ. They should not simply show up in religious places, but to remain, grow, and live in Him. Mature Christians should become incarnational mentors, as living epistles of grace (2 Corinthians 3:3), who

disciple through closeness, truth, and Spirit-led formation. In this way, the Church becomes a community of covenantal companions walking together in transformation. To cultivate spiritually vibrant and contextually faithful discipleship, Ugandan pastors and theological educators must also interpret Scripture through the lens of African realities. Communal identity, relational interdependence, and native stories should become entry points for gospel encounter. Core themes like covenant, mercy, reconciliation, offer theological ground for addressing tribal divisions, ancestral constructs, and societal fragmentation.

Therefore, In the contemporary world, the New Covenant offers a transformative call for the Church to move beyond inherited rituals and cultural Christianity into authentic, grace-filled relationship with God. Through covenantal leadership and Spirit-led renewal, the Church becomes a sanctuary of divine encounter—where worship is intimate, Scripture is alive, and forgiveness leads to transformation. By embracing mercy, presence, and spiritual depth, the Church reclaims its prophetic and missional identity, becoming a covenantal community that reflects God's reconciling love in a fractured world.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The Epistle to the Hebrews offers a timely and transformative message, originally written as a sermon in letter form to Jewish Christians handling with spiritual exhaustion, persecution, and pressure to return to the well-known traditions. The author encouraged them to stay faithful by showing them how Christ is greater than anything in their past. The author uses Jewish history and clear language to explain that Christ brings a new covenant; one founded not on ritual but on grace. He calls weary believers into a renewed, living relationship with God.

This New Covenant redefines how we relate to God. It is no longer through ritual and ceremonial systems, but through the Spirit's work in the heart. It is rooted in mercy and sustained by personal communion. Every believer is invited into direct access to God, not as distant worshipers but as beloved covenant partners. The message is both a warning not to turn back and a promise that Christ's work gives lasting peace and hope.

For the modern Church—especially across Africa—this message remains deeply relevant. It affirms that Christ alone, not institutional tradition or religious performance, mediates our relationship with God. The Spirit transforms believers from within, empowering holiness as an overflow of grace. Worship moves beyond churches, special leaders, and scripted liturgy into everyday encounters with God. Forgiveness becomes a lived reality, shaping both individuals lives and community relationships.

This has critical consequences in societies where cultural Christianity is widespread. In many Ugandan contexts, faith is often inherited—expressed through routine church attendance, ritual observance, or social identity—rather than born out of personal transformation. The New Covenant directly challenges this superficial faith. It invites believers to move from cultural affiliation to covenantal intimacy, from routine to relationship, and from tradition to transformation.

Where Christianity risks becoming a label or inherited custom, the passage calls the Church to cultivate Spirit-led discipleship grounded in grace, truth, and encounter. It urges believers not to strive to reach God through inherited norms, but to walk with Him daily through Spirit-empowered intimacy. This covenant is not preserved in rituals of the past, but made present in the risen, reigning Christ.

In Uganda, Hebrews 8:6-13 serves as a pastoral roadmap for renewal. It challenges liturgical formalism, prosperity gospel distortions, inaccessible leadership models, and syncretic practices, offering in their place a vision of worship that is responsive, leadership that is Christ-embodied, and discipleship that is relational. By interpreting covenantal themes within African realities—communal identity, reconciliation, mercy—the Church can awaken trustworthy faith that heals divisions and restores communities.

Ultimately, the New Covenant calls the Church in Uganda and beyond to reclaim its prophetic voice and missional identity through Spirit-empowered grace but not through ritualistic performance. It invites believers into a covenantal journey marked by forgiveness, transformation, and love that reshapes hearts and communities. In a fractured world, true renewal comes not only through sacred words, but through the personal, enduring, and transformative living presence of Christ.

## Bibliography

- Anders, M., ed. *Hebrews & James*. Vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.
- Arinaitwe, K. A. "The Dilemma of Syncretism in the Church of Uganda: Christian Faith Development from 1877 to 2019." *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education* 7, no. 3 (2023): 45-50.
- Attridge, Harold W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.
- Bateman IV, H. W. "The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 60, no. 4 (2017): 883-885.
- Beale, G. K., and Carson, D. A., eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Bompani, B. "Christianity and Public Culture in Africa." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64, no. 1 (2013): 206-207.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046912001959>
- Bromiley, G. W., ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Revised ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Easter, M. C. "Faith in the God Who Resurrects: The Theocentric Faith of Hebrews." *New Testament Studies* 63, no. 1 (2017): 76-91.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688516000291>
- Enns, P. *The Moody Handbook of Theology: Jilid 1*. Malang: Literatur SAAT, 2016.

- Englund, H. *Christianity and Public Culture in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Fee, G. D. *New Testament Exegesis*. 3rd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Gause, R. H. *Hebrews 1.1-2.4: God's Revelation of Himself*. Leiden: Brill, 2022.  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004465787>
- Guthrie, D. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Hacking, P. H. *Opening Up Hebrews*. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006.
- Henry, M. *Commentary: Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude, Revelation*. Surabaya: Momentum, 2016.
- Kasujja, J. P., and Hassan, H. "Religious Affiliations and Political Leadership in Uganda: The Case of Iganga District." *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 11, no. 6 (2023): 24-36.
- Kleinig, J. W. *Hebrews*. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017.
- Kostenberger, A. J. "Introducing Hebrews: What Is the Message?" *Biblical Foundations*, 2023. <https://biblicalfoundations.org/introducing-hebrews-what-is-the-message>
- Kvidahl, C. B., and Liroy, D. "'You Are A Priest Forever': An Exegetical and Biblical Theology of High Priestly Christology." *Conspectus* 29 (2020): 40-60.
- Lea, T. D. *Hebrews & James*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.
- Long, T. G. *Hebrews*. Interpretation Commentary. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1999.

- Longenecker, R. N. *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Mackie, S. D. “‘Behold! I Am with the Children God Has Given Me’: Ekphrasis and Epiphany in Hebrews 1-2.” In *Son, Sacrifice, and Great Shepherd*, edited by E. F. Mason and D. M. Moffatt. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020.
- Mańka, K. P. “Eucharistic Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews.” *The Biblical and Liturgical Movement* 72, no. 2 (2019): 101-112.  
<https://doi.org/10.21906/rbl.2346>
- Malina, A. “Why Does the Epistle to the Hebrews Evoke the Desires of the Patriarchs?” *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2021): 463-476.  
<https://doi.org/10.21697/ct.2020.90.5.19>
- Mayambala, A. “Religion’s Influence in Ugandan Politics: Power, Impact, and Controversy.” *Nile Post*, 2024. <https://nilepost.co.ug/politics/213098>
- Metzger, B. M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed. Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994.
- Mbiti, J. S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. 2nd ed. London: Heinemann, 1990.
- Mokhoathi, J. “From Contextual Theology to African Christianity: The Paradox of Cultural Identity and Spiritual Conviction.” *Scriptura* 120, no. 1 (2017): 1-15.
- Morris, L. *Teologi Perjanjian Baru*. Malang: Gandum Mas, 2019.
- Mulepi, H. I. *The Rising Trend of Religious Syncretism in Uganda*. Mbale: New Eden Ministries International Press, 2020.
- Musana, I. “Religiosity, Indigenous Contributions and Martyrdom Misconstructions

- in the Growth Process of Christianity in Uganda.” *African Multidisciplinary Journal of Research* 8, no. 1 (2023): 44-64.
- Peeler, A. “‘A Fearful Thing to Fall into the Hands of the Living God’: A Study of Fear in the Epistle to the Hebrews.” *Review & Expositor* 115, no. 1 (2018): 40-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034637317752933>
- Petersen, David L. *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Robinson, A. *Jesus’ Death: Ratification of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20)*. Downs Easter Convention, 2023.  
<https://www.ddcc.net.au/linkedfiles/2023/Luke%2022.20>
- Rodrigues, A. “Thinking Systematically with the Scriptural Christology of Hebrews.” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 58, no. 1 (2020): 33-63.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/auss/vol58/iss1/4>
- Royal, L. P. *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians among Roman Catholics*. Lausanne Occasional Paper 23 (1980). <https://lausanne.org/occasional-paper/lop-23>
- Sanneh, L. *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Schrock, D. S. “A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Priesthood.” In *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, edited by J. S. Hamilton. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Shead, A. G. “The New Covenant.” In *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on*

*Paul's Mission*, edited by P. Bolt and M. Thompson, 38. Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Sundkler, B., and Steed, C. *A History of the Church in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.




Swetnam, J. "On the Literary Genre of the 'Epistle' to the Hebrews." *Novum Testamentum* 11, no. 4 (1969): 261-269.

Thomas, W. F. G. *Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961.

Thompson, J. W. *Hebrews*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker

**Bakkabulindi Patrick**

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEW COVENANT IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN: AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF HEBREWS**

-  Quick Submit
-  Quick Submit
-  Uganda Christian University

**Document Details**

Submission ID  
trn:oid::1:3323830408

90 Pages

Submission Date  
Aug 29, 2025, 10:18 AM GMT+3

23,550 Words

Download Date  
Aug 29, 2025, 10:23 AM GMT+3

130,229 Characters

File Name  
exegetical\_dissertation\_new\_covenant.docx

File Size  
289.3 KB

## 19% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

### Filtered from the Report

- Bibliography
- Quoted Text

### Match Groups

- 409 Not Cited or Quoted 18%**  
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
- 25 Missing Quotations 1%**  
Matches that are still very similar to source material
- 0 Missing Citation 0%**  
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
- 0 Cited and Quoted 0%**  
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

### Top Sources

- 14% Internet sources
- 15% Publications
- 9% Submitted works (Student Papers)

### Integrity Flags

#### 0 Integrity Flags for Review

No suspicious text manipulations found.

Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.