

# The First and Final Covenants

November 5 – Hebrews 8:3-13

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 308 – 57 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After having already addressed several Old Testament icons and how Christ has proven superior to them all, the writer of *Hebrews* turned to the covenant itself. **The new covenant (or testament) in Christ is superior to the old covenant (or testament) of the Law.**

However, before the writer spoke to that topic, he first established a principle that is necessary for all Bible students to understand. Most (if not all) of the things related to the old covenant (or testament) were foreshadowing aspects of the new covenant (or testament). **The old covenant was not meant to be permanent; rather it was a pattern of the new covenant to come.** The old was a copy or shadow (v.4, 5), while the new was the true substance.

In other words, the Old Testament figures, activities, and structures were symbolic types pointing to the person and work of Christ in the New Testament (called typology). For example, the Levitical priests foreshadowed Jesus' work of salvation and mediation. Also, the earthly tabernacle and temple were patterned after the "true tabernacle in the heavens" (v.1, 2).

**Therefore, the fulfillment that occurred in the New Testament is greater or superior to the foreshadowing that occurred in the Old Testament.**

Now we are ready to understand the writer's claim that Christ "has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is a mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second" (v.6; also 7:22). He continued, "With the new covenant, He (Christ) has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear" (8:13). **Simply put, the first or old covenant was replaced by the new and final covenant in Christ.**

What was wrong with the old covenant? Why was it replaced with the new one? Was God correcting a mistake that He made? God made no mistakes. The fault was not with Him, but with His people (v.8-12; Jer. 31:31-34).

Remember, a covenant is an agreement or promise forged between two parties. Sinful people were unable to keep their end of the agreement (*Heb. 8:9*). That's why the writer pointed out that the New Testament (or covenant) was enacted on better promises (v.6). God sent His Son to fulfill what we could not (the Law). We now can have a right relationship with the Father because of the Son.

While we read about and respect the Old Testament (or covenant), we no longer adhere to it. **The first covenant has been replaced with the final one.** The things of the Old Testament are obsolete and are ready to disappear (v.13). Shortly after the writing of *Hebrews*, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple, the sacrificial system, all of it (70 AD). Perhaps, the Lord provided a visual for what was happening spiritually. The old way of doing things is gone.

## Daily Reflection

The writer of *Hebrews* has made a very strong case for the superiority of Christ over the Old Testament types. What do you think was his point? What response would be appropriate after hearing of the superiority of Christ and His New Testament promises?

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Praise God that we live in this New Testament era — a better hope on better promises.

# The Better Tabernacle

November 6 – Hebrews 9:1-15

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 309 – 56 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

In the first eight chapters of *Hebrews*, the writer has proven the superiority of Christ over several Old Testament icons (i.e., prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, the high priests, and more). Next, he addressed the tabernacle, that earthly sanctuary in which God dwelled with His people.

The tabernacle was a permanent fixture in Israel, starting with the exodus from Egypt. God gave Moses details for its construction (*Ex. 25-40*). The tabernacle represented to Israel the visible presence of God and, through the sacrificial system, provided a temporary way for their sins to be forgiven. Eventually, Solomon transformed the tabernacle into the Temple.

The tabernacle included three locations. First, there was a white linen fence that enclosed an outer courtyard. The courtyard had one entrance and included three main items — the altar of sacrifice, the water laver (bowl), and a large rectangle tent. The tent had two sections. Just inside the outer veil and the only entrance to the tent was the second location, called the Holy Place (*v.1, 2*). The Holy Place included three pieces of furniture — the golden lampstand, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense (*v.2*).

Behind the inner, or second, veil was the second section of the tent and the third location, called the Holy of Holies, which housed the ark of the covenant (*v.3-5*). The ark was a box with a lid, called the mercy seat (*v.5*). Inside the ark were three items — a jar of manna, Aaron's staff, and two tablets with the Ten Commandments (*v.4*). Above the mercy seat were two angels (cherubim), whose wings covered the ark.

Notice that the writer included the altar of incense in the Holy of Holies (*v.4*). While it technically stood just outside the inner veil (*Ex. 30:6; 40:26*), its function was so closely related to the ark in the Holy of Holies that the author connected the two items in his description.

The first section of the tent — the Holy Place — was a place for priests to worship God. They were in and out of that room all day every day (*Heb. 9:6*). But the second section — the Holy of Holies — where God dwelled, was off limits. Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, could the high priest enter that room, taking an animal's blood with him to the ark of the covenant, to atone for the people's sins (*v.7*).

## Daily Reflection

What's the writer's point? **The tabernacle was a part of the first or old covenant. Its sacrificial system was never meant to be permanent. Instead, the entire tabernacle structure and all the detailed regulations were a picture of the work of Christ in the New Testament (gospel) (*v.9, 10*).** Since none of these things were permanent, then they were not effective to remove sins. It was only by God's grace that He accepted the blood of animals on their behalf until a permanent solution could be presented.

**What was the permanent solution to the sin problem? Christ.** Just as high priests entered the earthly sanctuary to atone for the sins of the people, so did Christ enter "the more perfect tabernacle" (heaven), not made with hands, not of this creation (*v.11*). Furthermore, Christ did not take the blood of goats and calves, but rather He offered His own blood sacrifice to atone for our sins (*v.12*). The blood of animals could never suffice to cover our guilt and shame. But the blood of a sinless sacrifice in Jesus Christ atoned for sin once for all (*v.13, 14*). "For this reason, Jesus is the mediator of a new (and better) covenant" (*v.15*).

Now that we have Christ, we no longer need that earthly tabernacle. Christ was (and is) God in the flesh, who dwelled (or tabernacled) among us (*Jn. 1:14*). **Because of His sacrifice, He had made a way for us to stand before God, cleansed from our sin.** Now, we are His earthly tabernacle, for God dwells in His followers by His Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. 3:16*).

# The Blood of the Covenant

November 7 – Hebrews 9:16-28

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 310 – 55 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After proving Christ's superiority over the Old Testament tabernacle, the writer of *Hebrews* moved to address the blood of the covenant. A covenant is a contract, an agreement, or a promise. In our passage today, the writer related a covenant to a will (v.16, 17).

The English word *covenant* comes from the Hebrew word *berith*, meaning "to cut." The Greek word for covenant is *diatheke*, meaning a testament. Two parties who entered a covenant would either cut themselves or cut animals (sacrifice) to demonstrate the severity of the oaths they were taking (*Gen. 15*). In essence, they were saying, "If we break the covenant, let this be done to us," referring to death.

The point was this — Old Testament covenants, promises, oaths, or wills required blood and/or death. Even today, for a person's will to take effect, that person must be dead (*Heb. 9:16, 17*). When the Lord made the first or old covenant with the people of Israel, there was blood involved (*Ex. 24:4-8*). Moses sprinkled everything, including the people, with the blood of animals (*Heb. 9:18-21*). In essence, the Lord was saying, "If you break this covenant, let it be done to you," referring to death. The principle is clear — something or someone must die for sin (*Rom. 6:23*).

However, when the people broke the covenant repeatedly, God accepted the blood of sacrificial animals on their behalf (*Lev. 16:16*), all of which was a foreshadowing of what Christ would do for them later. If these earthly copies, types, or symbols were sprinkled with blood, then the heavenly versions must also be sprinkled with blood (*Heb. 9:23*). But the blood must be better than animal sacrifices. These things would require the sinless blood of Christ.

As our Great High Priest, Jesus sacrificed Himself, shedding His own blood on our behalf (v.24-26). He did not have to make that

sacrifice repeatedly, as the earthly priests did. Rather He made His sacrifice once, which was sufficient to atone for all sin.

When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year, to atone for Israel's sins, the people eagerly waited outside the tabernacle in hopes that the blood was sufficient, and that God would forgive their sins. Likewise, Jesus, who shed His own blood on our behalf, will return one day from heaven (the true tabernacle). When He appears a second time, we will rejoice with Him, knowing the covenant has been fulfilled, that through Him the Father has forgiven our sins. Therefore, we eagerly await His return! When we see Him, we will be forever free from sin's presence (v.27, 28).

## Daily Reflection

In 1876, Robert Lowry published a song that became an instant classic. It was entitled, "Nothing But the Blood." I would encourage you to find and listen to it today. Here are a few lines of the song.

What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace —  
Nothing by the blood of Jesus.  
This is all my righteousness —  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Naught of good that I have done.  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh! Precious is the flow  
That makes me white as snow.  
No other fount I know,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Praise God today for the blood of the covenant.

# One Sacrifice

November 8 – Hebrews 10:1-18

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 311 – 54 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After having proven Christ's superiority over so many other Old Testament elements, the writer of *Hebrews* addressed the sacrificial system. In the tabernacle, priests offered a morning and evening sacrifice, and then once a year on the Day of Atonement, for the sins of the people. But all of that was "a shadow of the good things to come," meaning they would all be fulfilled in the life, ministry, and death of Christ (v.1).

Those daily sacrifices were obviously ineffective "to make perfect those who draw near" (v.1). "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered," the writer asked (v.2). By God's grace, He allowed temporary forgiveness of sin by the blood of animals, but that blood by no means erased the overwhelming guilt and offense of the people in the eyes of God. In fact, those daily sacrifices were "a reminder to Him and to the people that their sin remained (v.3). "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (v.4).

**So then, what was the solution to the sin problem? The Father's solution was to send the Son, who would do the will of the Father and present Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin (v.5-10; Ps. 40:6-8).** Interestingly, the writer of *Hebrews* translated *Psalms 40:6* as "a body You have prepared for Me" (*Heb. 10:5*), when the psalmist actually wrote, "My ears you have opened." So which writer was correct? Both.

The word *opened* here means to dig or pierce the ear. In the Law of Moses, slaves were brought to the tabernacle to have their ears pierced or opened by an awl, as a sign of one who is committed to obey the will of his master (*Ex. 21:6*). Both the psalmist and the writer of *Hebrews* connected this piercing to Christ. As the perfect servant, Jesus the Son committed Himself to the Father's will and presented His body as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. He became obedient to the Father, even to the point of death (*Phil. 2:7, 8*).

**What was the point? The point is that Jesus' perfect sacrifice replaced the many sacrifices,** the New Testament replaced the Old Testament. "He took away the first in order to establish the second" (*Heb. 10:9*). "We are now sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (v.10).

Because Christ's sacrifice was perfect, we have no more need for sacrifices. Therefore, the priests' responsibilities were completed in Christ. Although they could never sit down (for their duties never ended), Christ, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God... For by one offering, He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (v.11, 12, 14, 18). **This one sacrifice for all sin and His subsequent act of sitting down help us better understand Jesus' words, "It is finished," at the time of His death (Jn. 19:30).**

## Daily Reflection

Notice in *Hebrews 10:3* that the daily offerings in the tabernacle reminded both God and the people of sin. Then notice that after Christ's one perfect sacrifice, the Holy Spirit testifies to us, "Their sins and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more" (15, 17). **Because of what Christ did, those who believe in Him by faith are justified in the eyes of God, washed clean, just as if they had never sinned. Is that not good news?**

If God no longer sees you as a sinner, and He has remembered your sins no more, how should that affect how you view yourself and Him?

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# Since We, Let Us

November 9 – Hebrews 10:19-25

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Day 312 – 53 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Now that the writer of *Hebrews* has connected Christ to the High Priest and his duties in the tabernacle, he stopped to summarize his comparisons and to make application (note the word *therefore*, v.19). What follows are two “since statements” and three “let us” applications.

In the first “since statement” — “Since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh...” (v.19, 20) — the writer insinuated that followers of Christ are essentially priests who have access to God (the holy place). **Our access was not earned by our own merits but by the merits of Christ through His flesh and blood** (referring to the cross). Like the inner veil of the temple, His flesh was torn (*Lk. 23:45*), and like the sacrificial lamb, His blood was spilled.

With the second “since statement” — “Since we have a great priest over the house of God” (v.21) — the writer reminded us that Christ is superior to the other priests of the past. He is our “new and living way” (v.20), as He is alive and interceding for us before God continually. Our “priesthood” is dependent on His priesthood. **Our access to the God of the house (heaven) is due to the Great High Priest who is over the house of God.**

But what was the point of these “since statements”? Next, the writer made applications in three “let us” statements. First, “Let us draw near...” (v.22). Since Christ has made a way for us to have access to God, **we no longer must stand outside the tabernacle or Temple, as the Israelites did, and appeal to God through a priest. We now can approach Him ourselves**, having full assurance of faith that we are clean because of the blood and the water (referring to the water laver, *Ex. 30:18*). Our hearts have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and the washing of the Holy Spirit (*Ti. 3:5*).

Second, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (*Heb. 10:23*). That which the Old Testament priests foreshadowed, Christ has fulfilled. How can we not be more confident in our faith? **Our God is more than worthy of our trust. Therefore, let us not doubt what He has done for us. He is the “confession of our hope.”**

Third, “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds...” (v.24). Because we are so overwhelmed and grateful for what Christ has done for us, **we should jump at the chance to share this good news with others, and we should be more emboldened to encourage other believers who are struggling.**

## Daily Reflection

The word *stimulate* in Verse 24 means to stir up, to spur on, or to prod. **These actions cannot be achieved when alone.** They can only occur when around other people. Thus, the writer challenged his readers not “to forsake their assembling together” (v.25). **Encouraging others requires us to be with others.**

In other words, **the writer is discouraging the lone ranger mentality**, when we are deceived into believing that we don’t need to be around other believers. But that is a lie that leads to spiritual captivity or even worse, apostasy.

Are you living in community with other believers? Are you making yourself available for others to encourage you? Are you placing yourself in situations where you can encourage others? **You need community.**

Finally, the writer encourages us not to waste time but to pursue these things even more passionately because “the day is drawing near” (v.25). “The day” refers to the return of Christ, which will be followed by the judgment. Take advantage of the wonderful privileges that the Lord has earned for you, and appeal and encourage others while you still have time.



# Those Who Shrink Back

November 10 – Hebrews 10:26-39

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 313 – 52 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After having expounded on the excellencies of Christ compared to the imperfect Old Testament types, the writer of *Hebrews* offered both a warning and an encouragement. The warning was against apostasy. The encouragement was to endure to the end. Let's look briefly at each.

First, the writer included a stern warning against apostasy (v.26-31). An apostate is one who forsakes a profession or commitment which he previously held (i.e., to the church, to a religion, or to God Himself). On the surface, it may seem that the writer was insinuating that Christians can lose or surrender their salvation and walk away from their faith. But people who do that were never truly Christians in the first place. They were "Christian in name only." Would someone who has the Holy Spirit indwelling him deny the Lord and Savior? No.

This apostasy refers to people who claim to be Christ-followers externally but who have never fully trusted Him by faith internally. Like Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' own disciples, they are pretenders who seemingly walk with the Savior, but when pressure is applied, their true colors are revealed. They deny Him and walk away.

The writer's warning is alarming. Since Christ is the only way to be right with God, he who walks away from Him has no other options. "There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (v.26). Only severe judgment awaits the apostate, a judgment that will end with a guilty plea and a sentencing to the fires of hell (v.27, 28).

Those who walk away from Christ "trample under their feet the Son of God and regard His blood as unclean" (v.29). How can God treat such a person with mercy? The writer pleaded with his readers, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (v.30, 31). Apostates are deceived by the enemy. They think they are doing the right thing but soon discover they are on the path of destruction.

## Daily Reflection

After issuing this dire warning, the writer provided some encouragement by recalling former days when the Jews endured hardship and suffering (v.32-34). He challenged his readers to endure again, to remember the reward waiting for them at the finish line (v.35, 36). For Jesus will return, just as He said, and all will be made right (v.37). **So then, "let us not shrink back, but let us live by faith" (v.38).**

I love the way the author closes this chapter. He wrote, **"But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but we are of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul" (v.39). In simpler terms, there is no quit in a genuine believer. There is no retreat. While there may be a pause to re-muster our courage, there is no surrender.** As Paul wrote, "We press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (*Phil. 3:14*).

Have you ever witnessed friends or family members "fall away" from their faith? Explain. How did you determine a true or false faith?

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"Only the Lord knows those who are truly His" (*2 Tim. 2:19*). What can you do when dealing with a possible apostate? How do you protect your walk with the Lord in that situation?

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# People of Faith

November 11 – Hebrews 11:1-12:3

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 314 – 51 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

The writer of *Hebrews* encouraged his readers, at the end of the last chapter, not “to shrink back to destruction, but to be of those who by faith” endure to the end (10:39). His mention of faith is a nice transition to Chapter 11, the famous forty verses about faith. **In fact, this chapter is often called “The Hall of Faith,” men and women who demonstrated tremendous faith during difficult challenges.**

Before diving into the roll call of Old Testament heroes, let’s define faith as the author does. “Faith,” he wrote, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). In other words, for one to believe something or someone that he or she has never seen requires faith, a conviction that the something or someone is true and trustworthy. Paul called this wonder “walking by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

Without such faith, the writer continued, “It is impossible to please God,” or walk with Him, for those who do not believe that God exists, or that what He says is true, are basically calling Him a liar or claiming that He doesn’t exist (Heb. 11:6). However, by demonstrating such faith, the people in the Old Testament found approval in God’s sight and were declared righteous (v.2, 4, 7, 39).

In what were these Old Testament saints putting their faith? They, of course, were putting their faith in God and His promises, to send a Messiah to save them from their sins. While we look back at what Jesus did for us, the people of the Old Testament were looking forward to what He would do when He arrived. Thus, both groups were (and are) saved by faith in Christ, who is the Messiah. Of course, we know that such faith is a gift of God, not a result of works (Eph. 2:8, 9). This type of faith is unworldly, unhuman, and unnatural. It must be supplied by our supernatural God.

Next, the writer bombarded his readers with case after case to prove his point (Heb. 11:3-38). Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Israel, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets all demonstrated this saving faith in God and His promises. Also, they did not let their circumstances discourage them. **“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises... but having welcomed them...” (v.13).**

The writer even included us in his list. We were not alive at creation (v.3). **We did not see God make everything from nothing, but we believe it by faith.** We trust God is who He says He is, and we believe He did what He says He did.

## Daily Reflection

Re-read *Hebrews 12:1-3*. What was the point of listing all those Old Testament heroes? What did you read that encouraged you?

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What did you read that challenged you?

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Those who lived before Christ looked to His coming. We look forward to His return. **Let us “fix our eyes on Him, the author and perfecter of our faith, and keep running this race with endurance” (v.2). If we keep our eyes on Him, “we won’t grow weary and lose heart” (v.3).**