

## PART 3: THE BETTER COVENANT (Hebrews 8:1--11:40)

### CHAPTER 10

#### The Epistle to the Hebrews

#### THE HEAVENLY TENT (Hebrews 8:1-13)

by G. H. Lang

#### Chapter 8:1-13

1. Now in the things which we are saying the chief point *is this*: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;
2. a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.
3. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this *high priest* also have somewhat to offer.
4. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law;
5. who serve *that which is* a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned *of God* when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was shewed thee in the mount.
6. But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises.
7. For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.
8. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;
9. not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and I will be to them (a) God, and they shall be to me a people:
11. and they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them.
12. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more.
13. In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away.

**RECAPITULATION.** Clearly such a high priest as has been described is eminently desirable, but is he available? He is: "We have such a high priest"; this is the chief point urged. He embodies all the required qualifications as to position, dignity, service, and offerings.

i. As to position: He sat down. The force of this will be shown in chapter 9:11-14.

ii. As to dignity: (i) He took His seat *at the right hand*; the place of highest honour; (2) of *the throne*: the center of supreme authority; (3) of *the Majesty*: the center of Divine glory; (4) in *the heavens*: the primal, dominating region of the creation; for the heavens were created before the earth (Gen. 1:1; Job 38:6, 7), and "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:17, 25, 26, 32, 35).

Thus is our High Priest in the position which affords Him decisive influence upon all matters in which He acts, an influence not to be defeated by the utmost that the Accuser of the brethren can do or urge (Rev. 12:10, 11; Job chs. 1 and 2; Zech. 3:1, 2). Already when on earth He had thus acted in support of His followers (Luke 22:31, 32), and now at the throne He prevails on behalf of the lowly of heart (1 John 2:1, 2).

iii. This service to God and man, for the reconciling and maintaining of relations between them, He discharges in "the *true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, not man."

(1) It is here that He renders this public and priestly service, and does so at His own expense; all of which ideas are expressed in the word translated "minister" (*leitourgos*). Nor shall any heart but His own ever know the cost it was to Him to provide the gifts and sacrifices which are due to God from men, nought of which they could offer but all of which He supplied on their behalf. And now, as priest, while waiting the time to take up His kingly service, He expends His time, abilities, love, and power for the good of them that entrust to Him their affairs.

The subject of His gifts and sacrifice the Writer will open at length in chs. 9 and 10.

(2) The heavenly regions are vast beyond human conception. It is not in any and every part of them that our High Priest officiates, but in a particular sphere described here as "the true tabernacle [or tent, *skene*] which the Lord pitched, not man." Of this tabernacle several details are given which, being seldom noticed, shall be here considered.

(a) A tabernacle (or tent) is a *dwelling*, even as we read of Abraham (ii: 9) that "he took up his abode in tents" (*en skenais katoikesas*). There is, then, in the heavens a "tent" wherein God dwells. As to His infinity and universality God is everywhere, but as

the Center of creation and Object of its worship He has a place where beings limited in nature and form can approach Him: “in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10). The scenery of the *Revelation* exhibits this, as 15:5, where seven angels come out from the inner shrine, “the sanctuary (*naos*) of the tabernacle [tent] of the testimony in heaven”—here literal beings come out of a literal place. Empty the latter of reality and the reality of angels must be denied and the *Revelation* is emptied of meaning.- Referring to *Note C* to chapter 2, it is clear that *this* dwelling place of God cannot be “outside of time and space” for angels cannot be so, and they enter and leave this tabernacle.

This heavenly tent corresponds to the Tent in Israel by being a center of the glory of God. In that the Shekinah was a display of His glory. When the Lord of that glory “tabernacled” on earth (John 1:14) men with enlightened eyes saw in Him the moral glory of God, and once, on the holy mount, His outward glory. In this heavenly tent His personal glory is seen, even as Rev. 15:8: “the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God.”

(b) But this dwelling is *temporary*, a second element belonging to a tent. In 2 Cor. 5:1 the contrast is emphatic between a tent which can be taken down and a building which is eternal. The tent in heaven is not eternal; it had a beginning, it was “pitched.” Before finite beings were created it was not necessary; the Divine Persons enjoyed divine intercourse without need of such a sphere. It exists for the benefit of creatures of time and space, as part of the heavenly portion of the creation.

(c) This tent is *movable*. It was thus with its earthly copy, as God said to David: “I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel, unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent and from one tabernacle to another” (1 Chron. 17:4-6). Here is the same contrast between the permanent house and the movable tent.

The tent in heaven (Rev. 15:5) has been noticed above as the source of wrath just before the period of the millennial glory. In Rev. 7:15 it is perhaps intimated that the persecuted of that period will, after their removal to the heavens, be sheltered by this tabernacle of God: “He that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them.” And at the close of the Millennium, which is the beginning of the everlasting kingdom, it will be announced that “the tabernacle of God is with men,” that is, on earth (Rev. 21:3).

It is in this dwelling-place of the Most High that the Great Priest now exercises His ministry of mercy, from the throne where causes are *determined*.

(d) The tent is set up by *the Lord*. The Israelite could reach only a tent made, indeed, at the direction of God, but made by man, and so having no range beyond man’s sphere, this earth, leaving uncertain his standing before heaven and for eternity.

Such religious persons to-day who persist in seeking God along that line of things earthly, visible, material, share the uncertainty and insecurity of that earthly system, for they do not benefit by the priestly ministry of Christ seeing that this is carried on in heaven. Yea, their situation is less secure than that of the devout Israelite of old, for those had at least the benefit of a God-appointed priesthood to help them God-ward, but these to-day have only a self-appointed priesthood having neither Divine warrant nor any validity.

But such as approach God through the heavenly Priest are introduced to that divine dwelling of God which is of His own direct construction for the very purpose that His creatures may meet with Him there. A tent made by man, man could destroy, and Israel be deprived of such advantages as attached to it; but the tent pitched by the Lord none can destroy or close.

(e) This is the *true* tent-dwelling of God. "True" (*alethinos*) means the real as contrasted with anything that seems to correspond to it; that which fulfils every purpose. Comp. John 6:55: "My flesh is true (*alethes*) food and my blood is true (*alethes*) drink."

In this tent God does really and personally dwell, In only a very limited degree was this known in the Tabernacle of old. Therefore access to this dwelling, through the true High Priest, affords a real relation of reverent intimacy with God Most High not to be found elsewhere. That perfection which the earthly arrangements under the law could never produce is reached here.

## 2. *The Copy of the Heavenly.*

Of this heavenly original the tabernacle built by Moses was but a *copy* and *shadow* (ver. 5).

i. Even so it was of real value; but who will linger over the copy who can study the original? Who need regret to pass from the twilight of the shadow to possess the bright substance? He who will be so foolish can never enjoy the original, the ideal, the substantial.

ii. But as yet none has come to the original in personal experience. It is our hope to do so; but hope that is seen is not hope. Meanwhile, from the copy much can be learned of the original; the shadow shows the shape and size of the substance; much as to the heavenly tent can be learned from its earthly copy.

iii. This by itself were reason enough why God solemnly warned Moses that he was to complete (*epitelein*) the copy precisely according to the pattern that had been shown to him in the mount. The pattern was to be followed not merely as to general

design but completely, that is, as to the smallest detail. For by these details the Holy Spirit was signifying important truth and teaching lessons in parabolic form (9:8-10).

A modernist I know said that we could quite well dispense with the book of Leviticus. And I heard a celebrated Nonconformist preacher, who passed as evangelical, say sarcastically that certain brethren “hung a great weight of doctrine on a tabernacle pin.” Such slights of the copy remain blind as to the original; their knowledge of the heavenly places is infantile. Yet we are exhorted by the Spirit to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, yea, to “set our mind on the things that are above, *not* on the things that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:1, 2). And he who loves Christ will wish to know as much as possible about the place where Christ is and what He is doing there, in gaining which knowledge the study of the copy helps.

A further reflection. God is now building a spiritual dwelling for Himself, His church (Matt. 16:18; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5; Eph. 2:19-20). Very many who busy themselves helping, as they suppose, in this work say that God has given us no pattern for *this* house, but that each may, yea must, build as he thinks best. For that earthly sanctuary precise details were given, with a solemn injunction that they were to be followed; for this present house no pattern is given, say these builders. Is it any wonder that, with such an opinion prevailing, Christendom, claiming to be the house of God, presents the appearance of a building of many and incongruous styles and a mass of confused and discordant details?

iv. Moses did not see that actual “tent that the Lord pitched.” Probably man, not yet possessed of the powers of the body of resurrection, could not see it or comprehend it if seen. It was a “pattern” (*typos*) of it that was shown to Moses and of that pattern he made an earthly copy. Yet as the copy corresponded to the pattern and the pattern to the original, we, studying the first, can learn about the last. It has been rightly said that the types are as rigid as mathematics.

To this study our Epistle is a call and encouragement, and without it the Epistle cannot be understood, In these four chapters (7—10) there are mentioned perhaps forty details of the earthly tent and its services. Some major matters will be noticed in their places. But even as the pattern was not shown to Moses on the low level of the desert but on the summit of the mount, so must the heart be detached from the earth and ascend to God if it would comprehend the heavenly. They who “mind earthly things” will not be shown the heavenly things. For the ultimate design of the copy is to attract to the original.

All Israelites dwelt around the Tabernacle. They knew its form, took part in its services, perhaps admired its pure linen, colored coverings, artistic veils, and golden pillars; but only those whose spirits longed after the God of the mount, the God of

heaven, and who by faith and love sought in heart His holy place on high, knew the spiritual value of that earthly copy of the heavenly. It is thus to-day. The essential principle and vital secret of the true Christian life is to know Christ *where He now is*, at the right hand of God.

### 3. *The Old Covenant.*

It has been already stated that “Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant” (7:22). This is now expanded.

i. A covenant is a contract in which each party binds himself to the other on certain conditions.

The properly first covenant was an *implied* covenant, that between the Creator and the creature, Adam; God undertaking certain responsibilities toward the being He had seen fit to make, and the creature being under natural responsibility to trust and obey his Creator. The first *expressed* covenant was that made by God with Noah (Gen. 9:8-17), of which the rainbow is the sign. So long as there shall be rainbows this covenant will stand. The next covenant was that with Abraham reviewed in chapter 6:13-20. That covenant too stands: it was not annulled by the law promulgated at Sinai 430 years later. This is argued in Gal. 3:15-22.

It is the covenant made between God and Israel at Sinai that is here called “first” and “old” as is clear from 9:18, 19. It would perhaps be more exact here to translate *prote* by “former” which is the meaning in Matt. 27:64; John 1:15, 30, and is its more usual meaning in Hellenistic Greek.

The Jewish mind based all on Moses, Sinai, the law. Few were spiritually minded to discern that the covenant there made was faulty and temporary, and that the true hope of the godly was based on God’s promises to Abraham. Far too many do not understand this to-day, and persist in the vain endeavor to be at peace with God by works and ceremonies of the law of Sinai. Being ignorant of God’s righteousness they seek to establish their own, not seeing that, their works being morally imperfect, they can never by them become righteous before God (Rom. 10:3; 3:20).

ii. But the position is yet more radical. It is a just principle of law that should one party to a covenant willfully and persistently disregard his obligations the other party is at liberty to regard it as void and to denounce it. This is how matters stand as regards the covenant of Sinai. After it had lasted some seven hundred years God denounced it, saying through Jeremiah, “Israel did not continue in My covenant and I disregarded them” (ver. 9; Jer. 31:32). The rebellion of Israel brought about the temporary annulment of the covenant, which has been the situation ever since and will remain so

till they are changed in heart toward God and the promised new covenant can be made with them. This can be studied at length in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.

One item of the covenant was that habitual obedience to the statutes imposed under the covenant would assure permanent possession of Canaan, with material prosperity; whereas persistent disobedience would involve, first, severe chastisement in the land, and at length, removal from it and dispersion in other lands. Already by the time of Jeremiah the northern kingdom had suffered this as penalty, and in the days of that prophet Judah also was scattered.

It is true that after seventy years a portion of the godly, of all tribes, humbled themselves and embraced the opportunity of returning to Judea, but they were a mere minority; the majority continued in banishment and have remained scattered until now. And the descendants of that minority proved as unspiritual as their ancestors (Matt. 23:29-39; Acts 7:51-53); they filled up the cup of iniquity by the murder of the Son of God; so that after a comparatively brief occupation of the land (some six centuries; Cyrus to Hadrian), these also were scattered and to this day the Sinaitic covenant remains in abeyance.

It follows that it must needs be futile for any son of Adam, Jew or Gentile, to endeavor to secure under it the favour of God, and especially the Gentile seeing that such have never been parties to it. Some other and better covenant must needs be the basis of fellowship between God and man. Even in the days when our Epistle was written the former covenant had long since been, by implication, declared "old," and was actually becoming old, indeed aged, like a decrepit old man (*gerasko*), and was nigh unto vanishing away. (ver. 13.)

Incidentally, this (apart from other weighty reasons) forbids absolutely the pretentious theory of Anglo-Israelism. Even if it could be established historically that the Anglo-Saxons and the Americans are the descendants of Judah and the ten tribes (which, however, is unfounded), yet even so they could not, in banishment from Palestine, and therefore being under the curse of Jehovah, be enjoying the vast temporal blessings guaranteed to Israel in that land only, and there only upon condition of obedience to the covenant of Sinai; for that covenant is not in force.

#### 4. *The New Covenant.*

i. Even while that former covenant lasted no one ever stood in the favour of God on the ground of it, for from its start that law had denounced its curse upon every person that *continued* not to keep *all* its demands (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10). Obedience had to be continuous and complete, on which terms no one had qualified for favour or could do so.

From this fact alone the spiritual Jew could have seen that his expectation of the grace of God must rest upon the earlier covenant with Abraham. Now this covenant had not been made with Israel as a nation, for they did not become a nation until their corporate deliverance from Egyptian slavery. It was only then that God promised to regard them as a kingdom and a nation, set apart corporately as His special people. This last privilege was conditional upon national obedience which they unitedly promised to render (Ex. 19:3-8). From this situation resulted their national apostasy from God and national rejection by God.

But the covenant with Abraham was with himself personally and with his descendants individually. Therefore each of his seed who walked in the steps of that faith of his father Abraham was blessed with the faithful Abraham (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3: 9).

By consequence, each Gentile also who thus trusted God, likewise was reckoned by God to be a child of Abraham and within the sphere of the covenant with him. And because Abraham had thus trusted God, and the covenant promises had been granted, *before* he had been circumcised, circumcision could be a sign of the covenant, but was not a condition precedent thereto (Rom. 4:9-17; Gal. 3:6-9).

From these considerations it follows that every individual who exercises a personal faith in God becomes a "son of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7) and a sharer in that righteousness which was reckoned unto Abraham upon his having believed God. And because a true faith of the heart was the only condition required of Abraham, it results that this is the only condition required to make one a spiritual son of Abraham. Thus the covenant afterward made at Sinai is set aside as to the basic blessing of acceptance with God.

ii. But further, the essential feature of God's promise and of Abraham's faith concerned a particular person, indicated thus: "In thy *seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). "He [God] saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

Abraham looked forward to Christ, with his expectation fastened on Him for the fulfillment of the promised and covenant blessings: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day," said the Lord Jesus, "and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).

At the appointed and aforetold time the Seed was born, the Christ appeared; and then and thenceforth the faith required unto righteousness must of necessity be placed in Him as having come, even as in advance it was placed in Him as to come. And forasmuch as the covenanted blessing was to extend through Him to all nations of the earth, the Gentile as much as the Jew can claim the blessing and secure it by faith in Christ.

For thus sharing in the blessing promised to Abraham it is not needful to become a Jew in the national sense. Centuries before the *nation* came into existence at Sinai, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel had entered the *family* circle of Abraham; and, if they had also his personal faith in God, they secured a share in his portion from God.

That Israel's national life, and membership in it, secured certain rich privileges, is, indeed, true, and remains true, and will prove true in ages to come (Rom. 3:1, 2; 9:4, 5). But this does not enter into the question of obtaining a righteous standing with God; for *this* Christ is the end, the annulment of the law (Rom. 10:4), and so for inheriting the primal, preSinaitic covenant with Abraham.

iii. It is out of this situation there develops that new spiritual society, the church of God, formed from both Jews and Gentiles, but in which there can be neither Jew nor Gentile, nor other merely earthly distinction, and the members of which society, because they belong to Christ, the Seed of Abraham, are themselves "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:28, 29).

To such belong all the fabulous riches, heavenly and earthly, included in the new covenant of which Jesus is the surety; for "*all things*" are theirs, since they are Christ's and Christ is God's (1 Cor. 3:21-23). Eternity itself will be too short to exhibit that this covenant is indeed better than the old, enacted upon better promises (ver. 6).

#### 5. *The Differences between the Old Covenant and the New.*

1. At Sinai there was set up a standard and rule of life. It was a perfect standard, sufficient to regulate perfectly the heart and conduct of man in every relationship. But it was external to man and could not enable him to be or to do what it demanded. Being thus "weak through the flesh" it failed of its end. This is so with all legislation. Parliament may only upon condition of obedience to the covenant of Sinai; for that covenant is not in force.

#### 4. *The New Covenant.*

i. Even while that former covenant lasted no one ever stood in the favour of God on the ground of it, for from its start that law had denounced its curse upon every person that *continued* not to keep *all* its demands (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10) Obedience had to be continuous and complete, on which terms no one had qualified for favour or could do so.

From this fact alone the spiritual Jew could have seen that his expectation of the grace of God must rest upon the earlier covenant with Abraham. Now this covenant had not been made with Israel as a nation, for they did not become a nation until their corporate deliverance from Egyptian slavery. It was only then that God promised to

regard them as a kingdom and a nation, set apart corporately as His special people. This last privilege was conditional upon national obedience which they unitedly promised to render (Ex. 19:3-8). From this situation resulted their national apostasy from God and national rejection by God.

But the covenant with Abraham was with himself personally and with his descendants individually. Therefore each of his seed who walked in the steps of that faith of his father Abraham was blessed with the faithful Abraham (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:9).

By consequence, each Gentile also who thus trusted God, likewise was reckoned by God to be a child of Abraham and within the sphere of the covenant with him. And because Abraham had thus trusted God, and the covenant promises had been granted, *before* he had been circumcised, circumcision could be a sign of the covenant, but was not a condition precedent thereto (Rom. 4:9-17; Gal. 3:6-9).

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ii. But further, the essential feature of God's promise and of Abraham's faith concerned a particular person, indicated thus: "In thy *seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). "He [God] saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). Abraham looked forward to Christ, with his expectation fastened on Him for the fulfillment of the promised and covenant blessings: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day," said the Lord Jesus, "and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).

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For thus sharing in the blessing promised to Abraham it is not needful to become a Jew in the national sense. Centuries before the *nation* came into existence at Sinai, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel had entered the *family* circle of Abraham; and, if they had also his personal faith in God, they secured a share in his portion from God.

That Israel's national life, and membership in it, secured certain rich privileges, is, indeed, true, and remains true, and will prove true in ages to come (Rom. 3:1, 2; (:4, 5). But this does not enter into the question of obtaining a righteous standing with God; for *this* Christ is the end, the annulment of the law (Rom. 10:4), and so for inheriting the primal, preSinaitic covenant with Abraham.

iii. It is out of this situation there develops that new spiritual society, the church of God, formed both Jews and Gentiles, but in which there can be neither Gentile, nor other merely earthly distinction, and which society, because they belong to Christ.

#### 5. *The Differences*

i. Before a man trusts another his inner man is locked against that other, but faith, trust, is an act which opens the heart, the inner life, to the person trusted, in this case to God. At once God is free to work *within* the one who trusts Him. This the law could not do, except so far as to frighten and to harden the sinner, which did but oppress and provoke him, and left him both weak and rebellious.

ii. But it is the vital feature of the new covenant that God, by His Spirit, puts this law in the inward parts and writes it upon the heart. The heart open to God receives an inward perception of what God requires, an instinctive sense of what pleases God, and a spiritual acquaintance with God Himself. Such a believer not merely knows about God, as did men who heard this law, but becomes acquainted with God Himself revealed in Christ. "And this is the life eternal, that they should get to know Thee, the alone true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).

To know God thus is to love Him; the renewed and instructed heart cannot but love Him Who is Love; and love becomes the energy which both impels and enables a joyful obedience to His law.

"My gracious Lord I own Thy right  
To every service I can pay,  
And count it my supreme delight  
To hear Thy dictates and obey."

Thus faith worketh by love and love fulfils the law. Not by a fraction is the Divine standard lowered, no demand of the moral law is relaxed. On the contrary, the heart perceives now its deeper meaning, its more spiritual sense and claim. It perceives that hatred is murder, lust is adultery, coveting is stealing. But love is glad and able to discharge this higher claim; it longs only to be perfect as God is perfect.

It is to be observed that, by faith and love, spiritual believers in the older days reached by faith this normal and blessed state long before Sinai. Ehiphaz described to

Job the path by which he might make acquaintance with God and find the Almighty his true treasure and heart's delight (Job 22:21-30). And a later much afflicted saint could exclaim, "Oh, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). And another had reached such ripeness of character that he was "greatly beloved" in heaven (Dan. 10:11).

To this large extent did the Spirit work practical righteousness of heart and life in believers in days of old: how much richer therefore may be and should be the conformity to God of those who share in the new covenant now, subsequent to the fulfillment at Pentecost of the promise that the new heart should be reinforced by a new spirit, for God would put His own Spirit within the believer and so cause him to walk in His statutes, keep His judgments, and do them. (Ezek. 36:26, 27.)

#### 6. *The Canceling of Iniquity.*

But what becomes of the penalties incurred by the transgression of the old covenant? It is a fixed law of God's universe that "every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward" (2:2). The penalty being death, how shall the transgressor benefit by a new covenant? How can he be a party thereto?

At chapter 9:15 it will be stated that "a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant." By His own death the Mediator of the new covenant wiped out, cancelled the liability to death of the transgressor of the old covenant. On this ground God can rightly say to such as agree to the terms of the new covenant He proposes that He will be merciful to their iniquities and will remember their sins no more (ver. 12).

i. The word "merciful" (*hileos*) is notable. It means much more than being merciful, even being *propitiated*. The distinction is important. The tax collector stood before the gate of God's house (Luke 18:9-14) and therefore before the brazen altar of sacrifice. On that altar burned the innocent creature that had died as his substitute. Understanding sufficiently the principle involved in that victim having died in his stead, he prayed, "God, be propitiated (*hilastheti*) to me the sinner." By this he meant: "I, not the lamb, am the sinner; for the sake of my substitute that has paid my penalty be propitious to me."

Therefore, to be propitious is to show mercy *on the ground of penalty met* by substitution. One may be merciful and not shoot a dog that bites him, or not exact a debt from the poor. David was merciful to Amnon and Absalom; he did not exact the legal penalty for the incest of the one or the murder by the other. This was mercy at the expense of justice and the results were most disastrous. But God is propitious on the ground, fully adequate in law, that the penalty of the sinner has been met, his liability discharged.

In the tabernacle the golden cover of the ark, sprinkled with blood, was the propitiatory, the spot where the high priest annually made propitiation for the people (2:17). In the heavenly sanctuary Christ personally is this propitiatory: "He is the propitiation (*autos hilasmos estin*) concerning our sins" (1 John 2:2; 4:10). As the blood stains on the golden altar showed that atonement for sin had been made at the altar without, so the wound-marks on the glorified person of our Redeemer are proof in heaven of His atoning death on earth.

ii. The perpetual repetition of the sacrifices in Israel brought perpetually to the fore that sin was ever prevalent: "in those sacrifices there is remembrance made of sins year by year" (10:3). But the adequate sacrifice of the Son of God enables God to dismiss the question of sin for ever.

The millenniums through God has been bound to keep before Him the iniquity of Israel, if only because, as a people, they persist in their wrong attitude to Him. Even today, after all their bitter sorrows, the majority of Israel are enemies of God and His Son. But when their hearts shall have been at last humbled, and they have been renewed in spirit, when the new covenant shall have been established with them, then shall be fulfilled, to the joy of God and the comfort of their own hearts, this gracious promise, "their sins will I remember no more" (ver. 12; and see Isa. 44:22 and other passages).

iii. The *order* of the promised blessing is significant.

In the evangelical preaching of the gospel in our times the common method has been to offer first the forgiveness of sins upon faith in the atoning work of Christ. The address may or may not go on to add somewhat as to the new life and its possibilities, but quite often the preacher is content to present only the offer of pardon.

This is not the method of teaching by either Jeremiah or our Writer who here quotes him, as taught by the Spirit of truth. The prophet dwelt much upon the wickedness of man in violating his due relations with God and the severity and righteousness of God's inevitable judgments. He stressed the disability of man under the old covenant of law and works, and the glorious proposal of a new covenant on the basis of grace and faith. It was on the supposition that a man repented of his sins, and embraced the proposed new arrangement, with its new nature and practice, that he was then assured of the forgiveness of his sins.

The Lord followed the same order in presenting His message. On a cultured Rabbi He pressed first the necessity of a new birth leading to a new life in a new kingdom, and only later spoke of His own death as the basis of that new life (John 3). To a woman of poor character He first offered the new life of inward satisfaction, and then made her face her sins (John 4). The same method is seen in Peter's address at Pentecost and Stephen's before the Sanhedrin (Acts 2 and 7). It was thus the first

preachers taught Gentiles also. In the house of Cornelius Peter enlarged upon the facts of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and only then mentioned the forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:34-43). Paul followed the same plan in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), and when speaking to the cultured heathen at Athens he does not seem to have brought in the matter of pardon at all (Acts 17).

The Divine order in presenting the Divine message will be more sure of the Divine blessing and endorsement.

7. *Israel and Judah.* The lengthy quotation from Jeremiah raises another question and one of vast importance, namely, the status under the new covenant of Israel and Judah as such.

i. Jeremiah 30 and 31, quoted in Heb. 8, form one prophecy. It begins (30:3) with an assurance from Jehovah that days will come "that I will turn again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith Jehovah: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."

It is surely clear that to Jeremiah and his contemporaries this promise could mean only what it plainly says: that the two sections of his people, the one already removed from the land and the other just about to be, would return to the land and possess it. To those first readers Israel meant Israel, Judah meant Judah, and the land given to their fathers meant Palestine. No other meaning was conceivable. If the terms did not mean this, but something wholly different, then the prophecy would have thoroughly misled its first readers.

ii. If it be suggested that perhaps this restoration took place when that small company (comparatively) returned in the days of Cyrus, one has only to note the details of the promised restoration, and of the times to precede it, to see that this suggestion cannot hold.

(1) That remnant did not then *possess* the land. The Persians were its owners, and Israel were there on sufferance.

(2) The time of Jacob's trouble before the restoration is to be unexampled, "that day is great, so that none is like it (30:7; See Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21). No such days immediately preceded the return under Zerubbabel.

(3) When this return takes place "Jacob shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid" (30:10). The history of that former return, as given in Ezra and Nehemiah, shows a very different picture, one of fear, distress, opposition, uncertainty. And this developed into the horrors of the Maccabean days.

(4) The period in view was to see, under the judgments of God, “a *full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee*” (30:11). This has never yet taken place.

(5) The multiplied details here given of that happy era can have only a literal meaning or no meaning at all. The names Israel, Judah, Jacob, Ephraim, Zion, Samaria, Rachel, Ramah, Egypt, Hananel, Gareb, Goah, Kidron, the valley of dead bodies and ashes, the horse gate toward the east—all these must mean the persons and places that bore these names or they become without sense and must be virtually expunged from the prophecy. As treatment of the words of God this would border on profanity.

(6) The restoration here promised when effected is to be permanent. The fulfillment is connected with “the latter days” (30:24) and the “latter end” (31:17), terms regularly meaning the days to precede the coming again of Jehovah to this earth to establish His kingdom here. It is guaranteed that, as certainly as the ordinances of sun, moon, and stars shall not depart, so certainly shall Israel not “cease from being a *nation before me for ever*” (31:36, 37), and that Zion, having been then built, “shall not be plucked up. nor thrown down, any more *for ever*” (31:38-40).

Therefore the prophecy still awaits fulfillment and foretells that Israel and Judah as such will together enter into the new covenant with God.

iii. This is the undeviating testimony of the Old Testament. At the beginning of Israel’s national existence the song of Moses (Deut. 32) and the blessing of Moses (Deut. 34) taught that God “will make expiation for his land, for his people” (Deut. 32:43)—the land and the people in conjunction. This is the consensus of all prophecies, and it shines out vividly in chapter 37 of Jeremiah’s contemporary, Ezekiel. Two sticks represent Judah and Israel in their then separation. These two sticks were to become one in the prophet’s hand to signify that God “will make them one nation,” and this, as stated above by Moses, “in the land, upon the mountains of and (as declared also by Jeremiah in chapter 30 above, ver. 9) “one king shall be king to them all, and they shall no more be two nations,” and “David shall be their king.” Through Ezekiel also God emphasized that this restoration will be permanent, saying twice, “my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for *evermore*” (Ezek. 37:25-28).

The great prophet of the exile was shown this as to the coming kingdom of God: “it shall never be destroyed . . . it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44). The post-exilic prophet, Zechariah, speaking to that small portion of the people that had returned to their land, spoke much of another, fuller, final restoration of Judah, Jerusalem, and Ephraim, with Jehovah dwelling in their midst at Zion. And Malachi closes the Old Testament by pointing onward to the same great day, when all Israel shall have the benefit of a further ministry by Elijah. Christ Himself declared this to be future to His time, saying “Elijah indeed cometh and restoreth all things” (Matt. 17:11).

The whole Old Testament speaks with one undivided voice, and insistently, to this effect, even that Israel and Judah will dwell permanently in their own land, and no other than a literal meaning can be given to the statements upon this point. For example, what other than a plain literal sense can be gathered from our chapter in Jeremiah (31:5): "Again shalt thou plant vineyards upon the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit thereof"? "*Again* shalt thou plant"; as the former planting was unquestionably literal, so must be the latter, or the word "again" is out of place.

iv. That the prophecy should be taken thus is strongly confirmed by its terms being cited unchanged in the New Testament. If Israel is not in days to come to remain a distinct nation, bearing that name, why does our Writer include and repeat the national name? (vers. 8, 10). He could well have paraphrased the paragraph to avoid this. He could have said: "Behold the days come when I will make a new covenant; not according to the covenant which I made when I led Israel out of Egypt, etc. For this is the covenant which I will make, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into men's mind, etc."

v. That Israel is to remain a distinct national entity in the kingdom of God is parallel to the feature that other nations also are to remain such.

In that portion of his book which deals specially with Gentile nations Jeremiah announces the restoration in the latter days of Moab (48:47), Ammon (49:6), and Elam (49:39). This is in contrast to the fact that the restoration at that time of Philistia, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, or Babylon is not announced. The difference implies the literal meaning of both sets of predictions.

Isaiah 19 declares that Egypt shall be smitten but healed (ver. 22); that there shall be through traffic between Egypt and Assyria (ver. 23); and that "in that day shall Israel be a third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that Jehovah of Hosts hath blessed them, saying Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isa. 19:24, 25). If Israel is to be eliminated from this prophecy, as not having a national future, then who is to be the third with Egypt and Assyria? In the case supposed (rather, asserted by some) Egypt and Assyria also ought to be eliminated, which renders the prophecy wholly meaningless.

Later, Isaiah declared unequivocally that the nations shall come to the light of Israel and kings to the brightness of Israel's rising, and that the nation and kingdom that will not in that day serve Israel shall perish, yea, be utterly wasted (Isa. 60. And see Zech. 14:16-19).

vi. So certainly is this the future as foretold by God that in the eternal state these national entities, including Israel, will continue. The notion that all distinctions are

to be annulled and all believers to be merged into the heavenly company, the church now being gathered, makes void the whole testimony of the Old Testament and also the final testimony of the New Testament. For, in Rev. 21, when the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descends out of heaven from God, and the tabernacle of God is with men, it is stated distinctly (vers. 2, 3) that “they shall be His peoples,” in the plural. And on the gates of that city “are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel,” as plainly as the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are on the foundations of its wall (vers. 12, 14). The apostles must be reduced to nonentities if Israel is to be eliminated. In this final vision of the final conditions, both the bride, the apostles, the nations, and Israel are all present, each distinct from the others in the eternal kingdom. Much more might be urged, but this must suffice to justify the view that our passage means that the actual Israel and Judah are to share in the blessings of the new covenant of which Jesus is the mediator. A radical defect in those who argue the reverse view is, that they cannot face the first, the plain, the uniform meaning of the vast array of passages concerned from both the Old and New Testaments.

vii. That nations share in the covenanted blessings is not at variance with the feature (mentioned under 4.i. above) that it is *individuals* who enter into this covenant relation with God. It is as individuals that the covenant is entered to-day; but this does not hinder the formation of these individual believers into the spiritual body, the church. Similarly every individual Israelite, or man of another race, will for himself repent, believe, and receive the new nature and spirit; but this will not hinder the existence of national bodies formed of such regenerate individuals.

It was necessarily upon each skeleton separately in Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones that the breath moved and the spirit of life acted; but when they stood up they were an *army*, an organized body (Ezek. 37).

At Pentecost the tongue like as of fire “sat upon *each one of them*” separately. “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,” and so “in one Spirit were all baptized into *one body*” (Acts 2:3, 4; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Thus also at the end of this age: the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28), Jew and Gentile alike, incorporating each into his sphere in the kingdom of God, whether in Israel or some other nation.

Thus the present distinction (1 Cor. 10:32) between Jew, Gentile and the church of God is to be permanent. Shortly before that outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh the church of God will have been completed, and by resurrection and rapture will have been removed from earth to the presence of God in heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4; etc), to return with the Lord when He descends to the earth (Col. 3:4). This alone forbids that persons of Israel and of the nations who believe in Christ and receive the Spirit after that removal are to be merged in that heavenly company. They will remain

distinct therefrom. But the members of each company of the saved will alike enter by faith into the blessings of Abraham, the father of us all, and share in the blessings of the new covenant, each in his sphere and measure.

8. *Jesus the Surety and Mediator.* Now since this whole Divine program could never be served, nor its privileges be gained under the law, how powerful is the argument and appeal of the Writer that believers should advance from that old covenant and embrace and hold fast the new covenant.

For the covenant is “new” in contrast to that of Sinai, which had grown “old” (8:13), not as respects its relationship to the Abrahamic covenant, for of this it is a re-affirmation.<sup>1</sup> It is even now in force, as Jesus said: “This cup is the new covenant in My Blood” (Luke 22:20), and as it is said here (8:6), “which *hath been* enacted.” Believers, both Jew and Gentile, as sons of Abraham receive its benefits now: Judah and Israel will enter into it hereafter.

Of this covenant, Jesus, not Aaron or any other person, is the *Surety*, the Guarantor from God’s side that all these vast benefits are available to faith (comp. 2 Cor. 1:20). He is also their *Mediator*, the only One through Whom they can be obtained. To Him therefore the sinner must resort continually, reposing confidence in Him alone, and in Him for ever, in all relations with God.

“Stand in Him, in Him alone,  
GLORIOUSLY COMPLETE.”

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<sup>1</sup> This subject is examined more fully in my *Israel’s National Future*.

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