The Identity, Timing and Participants of the New Covenant in Hebrews 8:7–13

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Abstract

Dispensationalists of all theological inclinations have always debated the question of the nature, timing and participants of the NC. Specifically, the issue of the church's relationship with the NC has been widely discussed. As expected, there are several views, ranging from the argument that the church has got no direct relationship with the NC to the argument that the church fully participates in the NC. Naturally, much attention has been given to the book of Hebrews where the NC features significantly and is, frankly, at the heart of the book.

This paper advances the discussion by revisiting one of the most central NT passages on the NC: Hebrews 8:7–13. Seeking to identify the nature, timing and participants of the διαθήκην καινήν here, it argues that although the author or Hebrews quotes Jer 31:31–34 in its entirety (LXX), there are several indicators that point to it being solely applicable eschatologically to the nation of Israel and not the church either now or in the future. The main reason for this argument is that, although the LXX uses the NC language in conjunction with other OT covenants such as the Abrahamic and the Davidic, which have some bearing for the church today, the author of Hebrews uses it only in conjunction with the Sinaitic covenant ("πρώτη—first"), a covenant which he states God found fault with. This assertion is demonstrated through the following attempted resolution of the text-critical issue present in the text. Thus, this distinction between the promissory nature of the Abrahamic covenant with promises some of which are applicable to the church today, and the covenantal (contractual) nature of the Sinaitic covenant, which is now contrasted with the new ("δευτέρας—second") covenant, points to a future fulfilment only in the nation of Israel. This is demonstrated through the determination of the correct wording of the textual issue in Hebrews 8:8a and a summary of the promises of the NC in Hebrews 8:8–13.

Introduction: The Context and the Issues

The larger context of Hebrews 8:7–13 starts in Hebrews 8:1. Indeed, chapter 8 is a continuation of the contrasts that the author has been making between the Levitical high priests and Christ. However, the focus here is on Jesus Christ. The author begins by declaring that he is now summing up what he has been saying so far. The phrase Κεφάλαιον

δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις has been translated in several ways such as this: "Now the main point of what we are saying *is this*" (NET) or "Now the main point in what has been said is this" (NASB) among other translations. F. F. Bruce's translation captures that essence of the Greek text here, translating it this way: "This is the sum of our argument thus far."[1] The term Κεφάλαιον (nom. sg. neut. of κεφάλαιον, -ου, τό, "point") can mean the "chief point," a "summary" of the argument or the "crowning affirmation" (an admixture of both the main point and summary). The first meaning is found in several translations such as the NASB, NET, and NIV (and has the lexical support of BDAG), and is supported by many commentators. For example, Dana Harris arrives at the same conclusion after considering the previous chapters, writing: "Hebrews 8:1 draws on previous points about Christ's priesthood and sacrifice (although not an exhaustive summary) and lays the foundation for discussion of covenant and sanctuary .... Thus κεφάλαιον as 'main point' is preferred.... Δέ is thus resumptive."[2] Others see it as crowning affirmation. An example here is Bruce, who states that the term can be rendered this way: "What all this amounts to, what it leads up to, is this: it is a high priest of this superior order and quality that we have."[3] Both views have merit and are not entirely opposed to each other, however.

After the introduction, which summarizes the argument and introduces the heavenly sanctuary (vv. 1–2), the author now relates Christ's priesthood to that of the Aaronic priests. This is aimed at introducing the reader to contrast between the old covenant under which the Aaronic priesthood served and the new covenant under which Christ serves. As the writer explains, since a high priest is appointed to present "gifts and sacrifices for sin" (5:1), Christ, as the high priest, must also have something to offer. However, the author uses two indicators to heighten the contrast between the offerings of the Aaronic priests and that of Christ. First, using the indefinite pronoun "something" (τι) to offer, the author builds suspense in contrasting Christ's sacrifice and those of the Aaronic priests. As Harris explains, "The indef. pron. refers to that which Christ offers ('something' [most EVV]), which has been explicitly stated in 7:27 and will be again in 9:14. The indef. pron. builds suspense for the subsequent revelation that what Christ offers is himself (9:14). The focus here is on the heavenly sanctuary and the covenant."[4] Second, the author's use of the tenses also heightens this contrast. To indicate the continued repeated sacrifices offered by the

[1] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 180.
[2] Dana M. Harris, *Hebrews*, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Eggnt)* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2019), Accessed August 27, 2025. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2175855.
[3] Bruce, 180 n 1.
[4] Harris.

Aaronic priests, he uses the present προσφέρειν—"indicating the rep.—hence incomplete—nature of their work),"[5] and the aorist προσενέγκῃ with Christ, "indicating the complete nature of his work."[6] As Cockerill states, the author "anticipates its once-for-all character (9:25–10:14) by using a singular noun ('something') and an aorist verb ('that he might offer') in contrast to the present tense of repeated action appropriate for other high priests."[7] The contrast is continued in verses 4–6 but with the focus now shifting to the place where the sacrifices are offered.

In verses 4–6, the author focuses on the differences between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary. The gist of the comparison is that there would be no room for Christ to serve in the earthly sanctuary (whether the Mosaic tent [tabernacle] or the temple itself) because "the [earthly] high priesthood was confined to one family; and far from belonging to that family, Jesus did not even belong to the tribe from which it came."[8] Most significantly, the author declares that the earthly tabernacle was nothing more than a "copy" (ὑποδείγματι) and a "shadow" (σκιᾷ) of the heavenly reality (v. 5). Although the terms "copy" and "shadow" could be understood as a hendiadys, it is perhaps best to understand them as elliptical pointers to Christ. As Harris explains, "Σκηνή (or τὰ ἅγια) is elliptically understood from v. 2 and is modified by ἐπουρανίων (gen. pl. neut. of ἐπουράνιος, -ον, 'heavenly' ... as a descriptive gen. Its omission puts the emph. on the heavenly nature of the sanctuary."[9] As the section closes, the reader begins to be introduced to the idea that the superior ministry, which Christ conducts in the superior (heavenly) sanctuary, is based on a superior covenant—of which Christ is the Mediator. In verse 6, the author intensifies the contrast between the superior ministry of Christ and that of the Aaronic priests by using the

[5] Harris.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *New International Commentary on the New Testament (Nicnt)* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012).
[8] Bruce, 183.
[9] Harris. There is much more that can be said concerning this comparison/contrast between the earthly and heavenly tabernacle as well as how the author views what Moses saw/was told in Exodus 25:40. Harris' summary is insightful. He writes: "There is much debate whether Exod 25:40 (cf. Num 8:4) indicates that Moses saw a model or a blueprint of the heavenly tabernacle, or the heavenly sanctuary itself. This explains the range of EVV for both ὑπόδειγμα and τύπος. The citation follows the LXX closely. The likely addition of πάντα by the author to the citation (perhaps due to its inclusion in Exod 25:9 or 25:39) may suggest that everything in the earthly copy derives from the heavenly model ... or that the author intended to use every detail of the earthly sanctuary to demonstrate Christ's superiority .... The second alteration from the LXX is from the pf. ptc. δεδειγμένον to the aor. ptc. δειχθέντα, likely to indicate that the author views the command given to Moses as a whole. In Exodus, the fact that the earthly tabernacle was to be a copy of the heavenly one would have been understood positively; in Hebrews, however, this reveals the inferiority and impermanence of the earthly sanctuary."

phrase Νυν δέ, which is "intensified form νυνὶ δέ."[10] In so doing, the author "introduces a declaration set in opposition to the contrary-to-fact condition . . . in v. 4."[11] And, while the name Moses is not mentioned in this verse, it is clearly assumed that the contrast is between him as the mediator of the earthly covenant and Jesus Christ as the mediator of the heavenly. As Cockerill explains, "The association of the terms 'mediator' and 'covenant' invites comparison with Moses (cf. 9:16–22). Because Moses established the Old Covenant, he was its 'mediator' (Philo, *Moses* 2.166; cf. Heb 9:16–22)."[12] In contrast, "this heavenly High Priest is far superior to Moses. Not only has he established the New Covenant, but he also continues to make its benefits available. Thus he is not merely its 'Mediator' but also the 'Guarantor' [ἔγγυος] of its perpetual effectiveness (7:22)."[13] To illustrate the better promises, the author, then, offers an extended citation of Jer 31:31–34 (LXX 38:31–34) without much commentary. This leads us to the main issues.

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Although the author has logically progressed in determining that the better ministry of Christ requires a better covenant, in this section, he wades into one of the most difficult issues: the determination of these covenants as well as the participants and the timing of each. Arthur Pink captures these problems, commenting:

> In approaching the subject of the two covenants, the old and the new, it should be pointed out that it is not an easy matter to determine whether the 'old covenant' designates the Mosaic economy or the covenant of works which God made with Adam (Hos. 6:7 margin); nor to decide whether the 'new covenant' refers to the Gospel dispensation introduced by Christ, or to the covenant of grace which was inaugurated by the first promise made to Adam (Gen. 3:15) and confirmed to Abraham (Gen. 17).[14]

Frankly, the determination of these two covenants in this context is the essence of the issue here. The author, having described the new covenant as "better" (v.6), transitions to a contrast between the first (πρώτη) covenant and the second (δευτέρας). According to Ellingworth, both the γάρ and ἐκείνη indicate a new section. "Εκείνη," he writes, "also refers back, in this case beyond the reference to the second covenant in v. 6, to the cultic activities

[10] Harris.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Cockerill.
[13] Ibid. For a discussion of how Christ relates to the NC as it awaits its future inauguration, see Cory M. Marsh, "A Dynamic Relationship: Christ, the Covenants, and Israel " *The Master's Seminary Journal* 30, no. 2 (2019): 269–74.
[14] Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 437.

of the first, described in vv. 1–5."[15] The issue, again, is the determination of the "first" and the "second" covenants.

To help the reader identify these covenants, the author, after emphasizing that the second covenant is better than the first, prepares the reader for his justification of this assertion. In the progression of his thought, "πρῶτος is used temporally, of the covenant in 8:13; 9:1, 15, 18; of the old tabernacle as a whole, 9:8; of its outer part, 9:2; 6, with δεύτερος, 9:3, 7; πρῶτος* and δεύτερος as 'former' and 'latter,' 10:9; ἐκ δευτέρου,* 9:28."[16] The author, then, using a condition contrary to fact (i.e., second class condition: "Εἰ γὰρ ἡ πρώτη ἐκείνη ἦν ἄμεμπτος"), declares that, had the first covenant been found "faultless," ("Ἄμεμπτος is the nom. sg. fem. of ἄμεμπτος, -ον, 'faultless' (most EVV), 'blameless' (BDAG 52d)"[17]), then there would be no need for a second one. Indeed, the construction is in such a way that the condition is triple negative. As Ellingworth explains, as in 4:8 and 8:4, "εἰ... ἦν indicates a condition contrary to fact ... so that with ἄμεμπτος and οὐκ ἂν... ἐζητεῖτο, the sentence in effect contains a triple negative, which may be simplified as 'if the first covenant were perfect.'"[18] The obvious implication is that it was *not perfect*! So, what was wrong with it?

It seems that the answer to this question begins to take shape in v. 8a, a segment already anticipated by the term "blameless." Introducing the long quotation from Jeremiah 31:31–34, the author states: μεμφόμενος γὰρ αὐτοὺς λέγει. This phrase is translated differently in various translations.[19] The difficulty, as some (very few, unfortunately) commentators note, is with a somewhat major text-critical issue. As the NET note explains, the problem is that while some manuscripts have the accusative pronoun αὐτοὺς ("them"), others have the dative pronoun αὐτοίς ("it").[20] Manuscript evidence seems to be evenly divided between the two readings. The first is supported by א* A D* I K P Ψ 33 81 it vg cop^{sa} $_{cop\ fay}$ *al* while the second is found in 𝔓^{46} א^{c} B D^{c} 614 1739 *Bzy Lect al.*[21] Although Bruce Metzger argues that there is "very little difference in sense," he admits that "the latter may be construed with

[15] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 411.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Harris.
[18] Ellingworth, 411.
[19] Here is a sampling: "But showing its fault, God says to them" (NET), "For finding fault with them, he says" (NASB, 1995), "But finding fault with His people, He says" (HCSB), "But God found fault with the people and said" (NIV), "For finding fault, God says to them" (Mounce Reverse Interlinear NT), etc.
[20] Michael H. Burer, W. Hall Harris, and Daniel B. Wallace, eds., *New English Translation (Novum Testamentum Graece): New Testament English Text and Notes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), 573 n 10.
[21] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002), 597.

either μεμφόμενος or λέγει."[22] It is no surprise that the translation committee went with αὐτοὺς. But is this matter this simple and without any meaningful implications?

In contrast to most commentators who either minimize or ignore this textual issue, this paper insists that its solution goes a long way into identifying the nature, timing and participants of the NC here. Rather, the question is: did God find fault with His people or with the old covenant, according to this text? As already pointed out, many assume that the correct wording is the accusative pronoun αὐτοὺς ("them"), meaning that the author is saying that God found fault with His people (the Israelites). For example, even though Ellingworth interacts with the textual issue adequately, his conclusion that αὐτοὺς is to be preferred because "the tendency to take αὐτοίς with λέγει would have been an influence towards the dative"[23] seems more assumed than demonstrated. No wonder, his main defense for the idea that the author of Hebrews is talking about God finding fault with His people here is an appeal to 2 Maccabees. "The use of μεμφόμενος before a quotation from Jeremiah," he writes, "recalls 2 Mecc. 2:7 where Jeremiah himself finds fault with members of God's people."[24] This does not seem convincing, in my view. In any case, most of the commentators who see "them" as the correct wording here almost always end up concluding that the NT church replaces the OT Israel since "God found fault with them." While, obviously, like all other people, the Israelites had their own problems with obedience to God, this does not *ipso facto* translate into the church replacing them as suggested by this wording.

Consequently, contrary to this majority view, I agree with the NET Bible that the dative direct object (αὐτοίς) is more likely to be original. After stating the textual issue, the editors summarize the evidence, with the concluding implications, this way:

> The reading behind the text above (αὐτοίς)...is perhaps a harder reading theologically, and is more ambiguous in meaning. If αὐτοίς goes with μεμφόμενος (here translated "showing its fault"), the clause could be translated "in finding fault with them" or "in showing [its] fault to them." If αὐτοίς goes with the following λέγει, the clause is best translated "in finding/showing [its] faults, he says to them." The accusative pronoun suffers no such ambiguity, for it must be the object of μεμφόμενος rather than λέγει.

[22] Metzger, 597.
[23] Ellingworth, 415.
[24] Ibid.

> Although a decision is difficult, the dative form of the pronoun best explains the rise of the other reading and is thus more likely to be original.[25]

Indeed, not only is the dative harder and most likely to be the original, but it puts the contrast where it belongs: between the first and second covenant (not between the first and second "people"). In so doing it lends more support to the idea that the NC here is only applicable to Israel just as the first covenant with which it is being contrasted, was.[26]

As we transition to the promises of the NC itself, a comment or so needs to be made concerning what God found fault with the first covenant. While not many commentators discuss this issue (indeed, some, like Delitszch, outrightly declare that "God does not blame His own institution"[27]), Pink's summary, focusing on the external nature of the provisions of the covenant, is helpful as it is consistent with the thrust of the author throughout the book. He writes:

> It [the Old Covenant] was wholly external, accompanied by no internal efficacy. It set before Israel an objective standard but supplied no power to measure up to it. It treated with men in the flesh, and therefore the law was impotent through the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:3). It provided a sacrifice for sin, but the value thereof was only ceremonial and transient, failing to actually put away sin. It was unable to secure actual redemption.[28]

Thus, while, elsewhere, Israel is chastised for disobedience, here, the focus is on the Sinaitic covenant itself. Hence, there was a necessity for the NC. This brings us to its nature, timing and participants.

As already noted, this is the only place where the NC of Jeremiah 31:31–34 is quoted fully in the NT. Although the full exposition of the NC is delayed until 10:15–18, a few of its aspects are clear here.[29] First, from the viewpoint of the author, the promises of the NC are

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[25] Burer, Harris, and Wallace, NET Text–Critical Notes, 874–75. For more defense of the αὐτοίς reading, see Johannes L. P. Wolmarans, "The Text and Translation of Hebrews 8:8," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 75 (1984).

[26] As Harris states, "Although the LXX uses διαθήκη in conj. with several OT covenants (e.g., Abrahamic and Davidic), Hebrews uses διαθήκη only in conj. with the Sinaitic, or 'first,' covenant and the 'new' covenant of Jeremiah 31. This reveals a distinction that the author draws between the 'promissory' nature of the Abrahamic (e.g., ἐπαγγελία in conjunction with Abraham, esp. in Hebrews 6) and Davidic covenants (inferred from the author's use of Psalm 2 and 2 Sam 7:14 in Hebrews 1)" (Harris).

[27] Franz Delitszch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury, vol. 2, 2 vols. (London: T. & T. Clark, 1871), 33.

[28] Pink, 443.

[29] As many commentators agree, the author generally follows the LXX wording. As Harris explains, "Heb 8:8–12 quotes Jer 31:31–34 (LXX Jer 38:31–34) and agrees generally with the LXX, although συντελέσω substitutes

still in the future. The phrase ἰδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, λέγει κύριος is eschatological. As Ellingworth explains, "As elsewhere in Hebrews (notably, in →10:37f), there is some heightening of the eschatological element. The days which for Jeremiah 'will come' at some unspecified time for the author of Hebrews an event which is 'near' (v.13)."[30] Second, and most significant, the promises of the NC here are "ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰούδα—with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (v. 8). There is clearly no ambiguity here. As Ellingworth helpfully clarifies, the author of Hebrews "shares Jeremiah's concern for a renewal of the whole of Israel (cf. Rom. 11:26f.=Is. 59:20f.) under the new covenant. The wider perspective of a covenant with the nations (Rev. 21:3, if λαοὶ is read with NA26; cf. Metzger 765f.) *falls outside* of the author's horizon."[31] In other words, the author of Hebrews specifically states that the NC is about the house of Israel and Judah, period.

Finally, the view that the NC in Hebrews 8:7–13 is for Israel and will be fulfilled in the future is buttressed by the nature of the promises listed. Several authors list these differently.[32] After declaring that this new covenant will "not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt" (NET), the Lord, then makes a few promises.[33] The first promise is that God will put his

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for διατίθεμαι. There is debate concerning whether this reflects a different version of the LXX, a stylistic variation on the part of the author, or a deliberate choice, perhaps alluding to the 'perfection' achieved by Christ, the mediator of the new covenant (i.e., συντελέω...) (Harris).

[30] Ellingworth, 414. For more information on the eschatological nature of Hebrews 8, see Grant Macaskill, "Hebrews 8–10 and Apocalyptic Theology in the New Testament," in *Son, Sacrifice, and Great Shepherd: Studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. David M. Moffitt and Eric F. Mason (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); Kenneth A Vandergriff, "Διαθήκη Καινή: New Covenant as Jewish Apocalypticism in Hebrews 8," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2017).

[31] Ellingworth, 414, emphasis added.

[32] See, for example, Victor R. Gordon, "Studies in the Covenantal Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews in Light of Its Setting" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), 115–16. Of all of these lists, the one by Craig R. Koester seems concise enough. These can be summarized this way: God will at that time, write his laws on the hearts of his people, he will be their God and they shall be his people, all the people will know God fully to the extent that teaching will be unnecessary and, finally, God will remember their sins no more (Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *The Anchor Bible* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 391–92. For a history of the interpretation of the promises of the NC, see Joshua Moon, "*Restitutio Ad Integrum*: An 'Augustinian' Reading of Jeremiah 31:31-34 in Dialogue with the Christian Tradition" (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 2007). See also Susan Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews:*, *Journal of the Society for New Testament: Supplement Series* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990).

[33] Again, this is the only place in the NT where the NC of Jeremiah is quoted in its entirety. While many assume that it is quoted in bits and pieces here and there, evidence to support that is scanty. Ellingworth summarizes: "The extent of the NT use in Je. 31:31–34 outside Hebrews is uncertain. UBS lists as possible allusions to v. 31 Mt. 26:28; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; to v. 33 2 Cor. 3:3; to vv. 33f. Rom. 11:27; 1 Thes. 4:9; and to v. 34 Acts 10:43. Dodd includes the passage 'with some reserve' in his list of sources for testimonies. Derrett argues that Mt. 23:8–10 is a midrash on Is. 51:13 and Je. 31:31f" (Ellingworth, 415). In

laws within the people and write his laws in their hearts (8:10c). The verb Ἐπιγράψω is the 1st sg. fut. act. indic. of ἐπιγράφω, and means "to write in." As Harris explains, "the promise here goes beyond memorization of God's laws or even an interiorization of them. Instead it points to one of the focal points of Hebrews 9 and 10—the cleansing of the very conscience of the worshipper."[34] Obviously, this has not happened yet. It is in the future. Second, God promises to be their God and they his people (8:10d). With the use of the two datives of advantage (αὐτοῖς and μοι), the author summarizes the anticipated intimate relationship between God and his people in the future NC relationship.[35]

Third, Jeremiah also promises that knowledge of God will be to such extent that there will be no need for teachers (8:11). This promise contains the strongest suggestion that NC will be fulfilled in the future. As Harris contends, the subjunctive (Διδάξωσιν=3rd pl. aor. act. subjunc. of διδάσκω, "teach"), "with the strong negation οὐ μή [no, not] 'is the most definite form of negation regarding the future.'"[36] The term πολίτην, which means "fellow citizen," is more well-attested than πλησίος ("neighbor[s]," or "neighbour").[37] Not only is the term "fellow citizen" well-attested, but, it may also point to the relatedness of the Israelites, the beneficiaries of the NC described in this text. Although fellow citizens did not always have to be of the same ethnicity, as Koester states, "'fellow citizens' can belong to the same ethnic group (2 Macc 9:19; 14:8; 15:30) so that it is similar to 'brother' in the extended sense."[38] Most significantly is the fact that all of this is in the future. "Since those addressed by Hebrews needed teaching (Heb 5:11–14), this aspect of the new covenant remains unrealized."[39] This is the same with all the other promises. This knowledge of God, for Isreal, will be all-encompassing (i.e., from the least to the greatest).

The final characteristic of the NC is introduced with the causal clause, ὅτι ("For"). It lends further support to v.11. In other words, because the Lord will be merciful (Ἵλεως), he will remember their sins no more, making the reality of all the other promises possible.

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other words, outside the book of Hebrews, there are no express references to the Jeremiah NC! This should lead scholars to deal with this text with a lot of care and be cautious when making assertions about its meaning.

[34] Harris. See also Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989), 227.

[35] For a comparison with other key OT passages, see Koester, 387.

[36] Harris.

[37] The reading πολίτης is found in the standard LXX as well as other mss. such as $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ א A B D K L most minuscules it^{d} syp^{ph} among others while the variant reading πλησίος appears in LXX^{A} (Codex Alexandrinus, 5th century) P 81 104 365 629 630 among others.

[38] Koester, 387.

[39] Ibid.

Delitzsch is correct in pointing out that "this promise is the foundation and, as it were, the cornerstone of all others [because] the ὅτι with which it commences is not co-ordinate with the ὅτι in the preceding clause, but the *proof* of it."[40] The term Ἵλεως (nom. sg. masc. of ἵλεως, -ων, "merciful"), means "being favorably disposed, with [the] implication of overcoming obstacles that are unfavorable to a relationship, *gracious, merciful*."[41] Significantly, in the LXX and the NT, the adjective is only used of God. Thus, because God is merciful, He will remember their sins no more. "Remembering [their sins] "means, writes Harris, "'not holding past sins against people' ... because they have been completely forgiven. This promise anticipates the sacrifice that cleanses the conscience and thus fulfills this promise."[42] Thus, even though the sacrifice has already been provided, for Israel as a nation, the full realization of this is still in the future. Verse 13 concludes by declaring that, because God speaks of a new covenant, he makes the old one obsolete The term Πεπαλαίωκεν "is the 3rd sg. pf. act. indic. of παλαιόω, 'make obsolete' (ESV, NET, NIV, NLT), 'declare obsolete.'"[43] Thus, although there were many in Judaism who considered the old covenant everlasting, God declares it obsolete.[44]

Conclusion

This paper argues that the NC of Jeremiah 31:31–34, as presented in Heb 8:7–13, applies exclusively to the nation of Israel, and will be fulfilled in the future during the millennium. This conclusion is based on two main reasons: first, the determination, based on the establishment of the proper wording of the textual issue in v. 10 (αὐτοίς), that God found fault with the old covenant (and not with the people) as well as the understanding that, because of their nature and recipients, none of the promises of the NC, as described in the text, have been fulfilled in the church (or in any other body).

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[40] Delitszch, 42, emphasis added. William Henry Oxtoby sums it up this way: "In the divine forgiveness of human sin is found the reason for this new condition. Inwardness and universal knowledge of God will be possible, because the sin that disturbs the relationship of the soul with God will be pardoned. The iniquity that testifies against man 1 will no longer be a witness" (William Henry Oxtoby, *The Nw Covenant: Jeremiah 31.31–34: Inaugural Address Delivered by the Rev. William Henry Oxtoby, D.D., as Gray Professor of Hebrew Exegesis and Old Testament Literature* (San Anselmo, CA: San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1914), 21.

[41] BDAG, 474 s.v., λεως, ων.

[42] Harris.

[43] Ibid.

[44] As Koester explains, "The idea that the Sinai covenant was temporary ran counter to Jewish sources that considered it to be everlasting (Sir 17:12; cf. 4 *Ezra* 9:36–37; 2 *Bar.* 77:15; Philo, *Moses* 2:14–15; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2:272), as were God's other covenants (Gen 17:7; 1 Chron 16:15–18; Ps 105:10; Sir 44:18; 45:17, 15: 2 Esdr 3:15). Like the 'first' or 'former' things (Isa 43:18; Rev 21:4), however, which pass away when the new comes, the 'first' covenant gives way with the advent of the new covenant" (Koester, 388).

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