

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS 8

The apostle observing that the priesthood of Christ is the sum of what he had treated of in the preceding chapter, proceeds to show the superior excellency of it in other instances, particularly in the place where Christ now officiates, which is in heaven; he being set down at the right hand of God there, and so was a minister of the sanctuary, and true tabernacle pitched by God, and not man; whereas the priests of Aaron's line only ministered on earth, and in the typical sanctuary and tabernacle, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:1,2) and after he had observed that Christ must have something to offer, meaning his body, to answer to the gifts and sacrifices priests were ordained to offer, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:3) he proves the necessity of his ministering in heaven, because if he was on earth he would not be a priest, a complete one, and would have been useless and needless, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:4) and besides, it was proper that he should go up to heaven, and minister there, as the antitype of the priests, who, to the example and shadow of heavenly things, served in the tabernacle which was made by Moses, by the order of God, and according to the pattern showed him in the Mount, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:5) and that the ministry of Christ in the true sanctuary is much more excellent than the ministry of the priests in the shadowy one, is evident from his being the Mediator of a better covenant, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:6) and that the covenant he is the Mediator of is the better covenant, appears froth the better promises of which it consists, and from the faultiness of the former covenant, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:6,7) and that that was faulty, and succeeded by another, he proves from a passage in (~~SR08~~ Jeremiah 31:31-34) in which mention is made of a new covenant, and as distinct from that made with the Jewish fathers, and violated by them; and several of the promises of this new and second covenant are rehearsed, and which manifestly appear to be better than what were in the former, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:8-12) from all which the apostle concludes, that a new covenant being made, the old one must be antiquated; and that whereas it was decaying and waxing old, it was just ready to vanish away, (~~SR08~~ Hebrews 8:13).

Ver. 1. *Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum*, etc..] The scope and drift, the compendium and substance; or the principal of what has been said in or from (^{<5904>}Psalm 110:4) and has been discoursed of in the three preceding chapters, is the priesthood of Christ:

we have such an high priest; as is described in the foregoing discourse, and in the following words: Christ is a priest, an high priest, and the saints' high priest; they are not without one under the Gospel dispensation; and Christ is he, and always continues, in whose sacrifice and intercession they have a share:

who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; he is “set”, whereas the Levitical priests stood; which shows that he has done his work, and that with acceptance; and is in a state of ease and rest; and is possessed of honour, glory, majesty, and authority, and which continue: the place where he is set is, “on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty”; the same with the right hand of God; for by the throne of the Majesty is meant God the Father, in his royal glory and dignity; so Tiphereth, one of the ten numbers in the Jews' Cabalistic tree, whose name is Jehovah, is called *dwbkh ask*, “the throne of glory”^{f125}; so angels are called thrones, (^{<5016>}Colossians 1:16) but God is a throne of majesty superior to them; and at his right hand sits Christ the great high priest; which is expressive of his high honour, glory, and power, and even of his equality with God: the phrase, “in the heavens”, may refer both to God the throne of majesty, who is there, and to Christ the high priest, who is passed into them, and received by them, and sits there.

Ver. 2. *A minister of the sanctuary*, etc..] The heavenly one, so called, in allusion to the holy of holies, the type of it; and because it is truly an holy place; and which Christ sanctifies and prepares for his people by his presence and intercession: or “of the Holy Ones”, or “saints”; who are sanctified or set apart by God, the Father, to whom Christ is made sanctification, and who are made holy by the Spirit of God; to these Christ is a minister; he was so in his prophetic office, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and in his priestly office, to all the chosen ones, when on earth, offering himself a sacrifice for them, and now he is a minister to them in heaven, interceding for them; and in his kingly office, governing, protecting, and defending them: or “of holy things”; to his people, such as the gifts of his Spirit, grace, and all supplies of it, and at last glory; and for

them, presenting their sacrifices of prayer and praise to God, which become acceptable to him through his powerful mediation:

and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; by which is meant, not heaven, the same with the sanctuary, for this would be an unnecessary tautology, and an explanation of a word by another more obscure; nor is there any reason why it should be added, “which the Lord pitched, and not man”; since everyone must believe that heaven is made by God alone; but rather the church of Christ, which is sometimes called a tabernacle, and is a true one, of which the tabernacle of Moses was a type, and is of God's building, and where Christ ministers, being the high priest over the house of God; though it is best to interpret it of the human nature of Christ, in which he tabernacled among men, and which was typified by the tabernacle of Moses, and therefore is called the “true” one, in distinction from that; for as there God dwelt, and his glory was seen, and he granted his presence to his people, and the sacrifices were brought and offered up there, and to this the people looked when at a distance, and this appeared very coarse without, but within full of holy things; so in Christ's human nature the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily; here the glory of God is seen, even in the face of Jesus; and through him God vouchsafes communion with his people; and by him the sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered up; and to him do the saints look for the acceptance of them; and though in the days of his flesh he looked very mean and despicable, yet was full of grace and truth, and of all the gifts of the Spirit: and the human nature of Christ was not of man; it was not propagated by human generation, but was produced through the power of the Holy Ghost; and in this tabernacle Christ ministered when on earth, and now ministers in heaven.

Ver. 3. *For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices,* etc..] (See Gill on “³⁸⁰¹Hebrews 5:1”)

wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer; or this person; for the word “man” is not in the text, and seems not so proper a word to be supplied, since it was his human nature that it was necessary he should have to offer; he was a person, and existed as a divine person antecedent to his assumption of human nature: as God, he had nothing to offer, or that was capable of being offered; something to offer as a sacrifice was necessary to him as a priest, but not any thing was proper to him; Levitical sacrifices would not do, these could not take away sin; besides,

the great high priest was not of the tribe of Levi, nor of the order of Aaron, and therefore could not offer these. An angelic nature would have been improper, that is not capable of dying; and the offering up of such an one would have been of no service to men, for whom priests are ordained; but an human nature is meant, and which it was necessary Christ should have, and offer, for it is for men that he became an high priest; it was human nature that had offended God, and satisfaction must be made in that nature; and this was capable of suffering and dying; yet not human nature under any consideration was necessary for him to have and offer; not merely as in a state of innocence, without any infirmity, nor as sinful, yet as perfect as to parts and qualities; and a nature, and not a person, was necessary to be had, and to be taken into close and inseparable union to his divine person; and of this there was a necessity, not absolute, or a necessity of coercion and force: Christ was not forced unto it; but on the foot of his suretyship engagements, and because of making satisfaction for the sin of man, it was necessary; otherwise Christ voluntarily engaged to be a priest, and willingly became man, and freely offered himself, soul and body, in the room and stead of his people.

Ver. 4. *For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest,* etc..] The Socinians from hence attempt to prove that Christ was not a priest, and did not offer sacrifice on earth; whereas his coming into the world, and his appearance in human nature, was in the character of a priest, and to qualify himself for one; his death was his sacrifice, which was on earth; and he never offered but one sacrifice; and it was after he had offered himself that he went to heaven; so the sacrifices under the law were first offered, before their blood was carried within: but the meaning is, either if “that” was on earth, namely, what it was necessary he should have to offer; if his human nature had been earthly, had been of men, had come by ordinary generation, he had not been properly, only typically a priest, at most; and had been no better than the typical ones; yea, he would have been needless, nay, might not have offered, not being of Levi’s tribe, and could not have existed as a priest with the sons of Aaron; but he had his human nature in another way, through the power of the Holy Ghost from above, and therefore is said to come from above, from heaven, and to be the Lord from heaven: or the sense is, if he was on earth, and had not died, he had not been a priest; and if he had died and remained under the power of death, he had been a priest of no account and use; and had he rose again and remained on earth, without going to heaven, with his blood and

sacrifice, he had not been a perfect priest; if Christ had remained on earth, the Levitical priesthood had remained, and so he would have been no priest, since two priesthoods could not have subsisted together. The Levitical priesthood was in force while Christ was on earth; Christ's priesthood was not perfected on earth; the Levitical priesthood remaining while he was on earth, proves he was not then a perfect priest, or had not completed his priesthood; had he been so, that would not have subsisted; it was necessary therefore that Christ should enter into the holy place, to put an end to the Levitical priesthood: moreover, if he had remained on earth, he had been needless;

seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law; there were priests when Christ was upon earth; their work was to offer gifts the people brought, and sacrifices for sin, and that according to the law of Moses, which till the death of Christ was in full force.

Ver. 5. *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things*, etc..] Things respecting the person, office, and grace of Christ; the priests themselves were types of him; the places they ministered in were an exemplar of the heavenly places, as the word may be rendered, where Christ is; and the things they ministered were shadows of the good things which are by Christ; and the shadows were mere representations; dark, obscure, glimmering ones, and were fleeting and transitory:

as Moses was admonished of God; by an oracle; he was a peculiar favourite of God, and was the mediator between God and the people of Israel, and what he received was oracle wise; what he delivered to the people was what he received from God; and what was thus delivered ought to be received as from God: and this admonition or oracle was given him

when he was about to make the tabernacle; the Levitical one, with everything appertaining to the worship of God in it: this is ascribed to Moses, though it was made by others, because it was by his direction, and under his care and oversight; and he had this admonition at the beginning of it; and at the finishing of it he looked upon it, and saw that it was all done as the Lord had commanded; (¹⁰²⁵⁴Exodus 25:40 39:43),

for see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the Mount; Moses was taken up into a mountain with God, even Mount Sinai; and while he was there, a pattern was given him of the tabernacle and all its utensils; this was not a device of his own, but was

shown him by God; and this pattern reached to every particular thing; and great care and circumspection were used that the most minute thing answered to it. The Jews think this pattern was given him by the ministry of angels; Gabriel, they say ^{f126}, girt himself with a girdle, and showed to Moses the work of the candlestick; and they further say, that an ark of fire, and a table of fire; and a candlestick of fire, descended from heaven, and Moses saw them, and made according to them: from whence it may be observed that the tabernacle, and tabernacle worship, were of divine institution; the ceremonious rites of the Jews were not, as some have affirmed, borrowed from the Egyptians; nor were they given as diversions to that people, nor only to preserve them from idolatry, and keep them separate from others, but were designed to lead them to Christ, whom they were typical of; wherefore the abuse, and not the use of them, were condemned under the former dispensation; though they were to continue no longer than till Christ came, and suffered and died; and now they are abolished: moreover, it may be gathered from hence, that whatever is done in a way of religious worship, should be according to a divine rule; a church of Christ ought to be formed according to the primitive pattern, and should consist, not of all that are born in a nation, province, or parish; nor should all that are born of believing parents be admitted into it; no unholy, unbelieving, and unconverted persons, only such as are true believers in Christ, and who are baptized according as the word of God directs; the officers of a church should be only of two sorts, bishops, elders, pastors or overseers, and deacons; the ordinances are baptism, which should only be administered to believers, and by immersion, and the Lord's supper, of which none should partake, but those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and this should be performed as Christ performed it, and as the Apostle Paul received it from him; the discipline of Christ's house should be regarded, and all the laws of it carefully and punctually in execution; and a conversation becoming the Gospel should be attended to.

Ver. 6. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry*, etc..] Christ has a ministry, he is the minister of the sanctuary, (<sup>^{3RD>}Hebrews 8:2) he has “obtained” this ministry of his Father; he was called unto it and engaged in it by him; and he has “now” obtained it; for though he was called to it from eternity, it was in time he came an high priest of good things, to come; and his ministry is

a more excellent one than that of the priests, who offered gifts according to the law and served to the example and shadow of heavenly things; as

abundantly appears from the preceding chapter, and from this, as well, as from what follows:

by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant; the covenant of grace, as administered under the Gospel dispensation; which is not only better than the covenant of works, that being conditional, this absolute; that stood on the foot of works, this on the foot of grace, and is established in Christ; that being broken and made void, this continues; and not only better than the covenant of the Levitical priesthood, which was but a typical one, and is now ceased, but also than the covenant of grace, as administered under the legal dispensation; being better than that, as to the manner of its manifestation, which is more full and clear; and as to the extent of its administration, reaching to Gentiles as well as Jews; and as to the ratification of it by the blood of Christ, called from thence the blood of the everlasting covenant; and as to the promises of it, here said to be better:

which was established upon better promises; which are not now delivered out as before, under the figure of earthly and temporal things; nor under a condition to be performed nor confined to a particular people and nation; and which are attended with a greater measure of the Spirit, to open and apply them; and are all secured in Christ Jesus, and confirmed by his blood: and now of this covenant Christ is the “Mediator”; a mediator is of more persons than one, and of these at variance; and he is a middle person between both; and his business is to bring both parties together, and make peace between them: the two parties in this case are God and man, set at a distance from each other by the sin of man, whereby man is become enmity to God; Christ is the Mediator between God and man, a middle person between both, being both God and man, the daysman, who lays his hands on both; who brings men to God that were afar off, and makes peace for them by the blood of his cross, and satisfies the justice of God, which he has done by the sacrifice of himself; and now appears in the presence of God for them, and intercedes for them, and applies the blessings of the covenant to them by his Spirit, and keeps and preserves them safe to his everlasting kingdom; and for this office he is every way fit, and in this he excels the Levitical priests, and has a ministry superior to theirs, since he is such a Mediator, and a Mediator of such a covenant,

Ver. 7. *For if that first covenant had been faultless*, etc..] Not the covenant of works; that was made in paradise, this on Mount Sinai; that

was made with Adam and his posterity, this with the Jews only; that had no mediator, this had one, Moses; that was not dedicated with blood, this was; that had no forgiveness of sin in it, this had; under that saints are not, but they were under this; to be under that was no privilege, but to be under this it was, as to the Israelites, who on this account were preferable to all other nations: nor is the pure covenant of grace as administered under the Gospel, meant; for though that was first made, yet is the second in administration; that includes the elect of God among the Gentiles, this only the Jews; that is made only with them, and is made known to them whom God calls by his grace in time, this was made with good and bad; that was of pure grace, this required works in order to life and the enjoyment of its blessings; that is an everlasting covenant, this is done away; and the one is manifestly distinguished from the other in this chapter: but the covenant here designed is the covenant of grace, as administered under the legal dispensation, and which was a typical one; the people with whom it was made were typical of the true Israel of God; the blessings promised in it were shadows of good things to come; the works it required were typical of Christ's obedience to the law, in the room and stead of his people, by which he fulfilled it; the sacrifices on which it was established were types of the sacrifice and death of Christ; the mediator of it. Moses, was a type of Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant; and it was confirmed by the blood of beasts, which was typical of the blood of Christ: this covenant was not "faultless", but was faulty or blameworthy; not that there was anything sinful and criminal in it, but it was deficient; there was a weakness in it; its sacrifices could not make men perfect, nor take away sin; there wanted a larger supply of the grace of the Spirit to write the law of God upon the heart, and to enable men to keep it; there was not in it so full a revelation of the mind and will of God, and of his love and grace, as has since been made; nor did it exhibit a free and full pardon for all sins, unclogged of every condition; the persons that were under it were faulty; hence it follows, that God found fault with them, they could not answer the requirements and end of it: had it been faultless,

then should no place have been sought for the second; the covenant of grace unveiled in the Gospel dispensation, called the better testament, the better covenant, and the new covenant; in order to, introduce which, the first was removed, that this might succeed it; just as because there was no perfection by the Levitical priesthood, it became necessary that another priest should arise, of another order.

Ver. 8. *For finding fault with them*, etc..] Both with the covenant, which had its faults, and with the people who continued not in it, and were therefore disregarded by the Lord, (^{<383>}Hebrews 8:9)

he saith, behold, the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; the words are cited from (^{<383>}Jeremiah 31:31,32) in which God promises a “new covenant”; so called, not because newly made; for with respect to its original constitution, it was made from eternity; Christ the Mediator of it, and with whom it was made, was set up from everlasting; and promises and blessings of grace were put into his hands before the world began: nor is it newly revealed, for it was made known to Adam, and in some measure to all the Old Testament saints, though it is more clearly revealed than it was; but it is so called in distinction from the former administration of it, which is waxen old, and vanished away; and with respect to the order of succession, it taking place upon the former being removed; and on account of the time of its more clear revelation and establishment being in the last days; and because of its mode of administration, which is different from the former, in a new way, and by the use of new ordinances; and because it is always new, its vigour and efficacy are perpetual; it will never be antiquated, or give place to another; and it provides for, and promises new things, a new heart, a new spirit, etc.. to which may be added, that it is a famous, excellent covenant, there is none like it; just as an excellent song is called a new song. The persons with whom this covenant is promised to be made, are the houses of Israel and Judah; which being literally taken, had its fulfilment in the first times of the Gospel, through the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, by whom this covenant was made known to God's elect among the twelve tribes; but being mystically understood, includes both Jews and Gentiles, the whole Israel of God; Israel not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; such as were Jews inwardly; God's elect of every nation: the word **συντελεσω**, rendered, “I will make”, signifies, I will consummate, or finish, or end, or fulfil it; which shows the perfection of this covenant, and the imperfection of the former; and that what was typified in the first is fulfilled in this; and that it is now established and ratified by Christ; and is so finished, as to the manifestation and administration of it, that there will be no alteration made in it, nor any addition to it: the time of doing all this is called “the days to come”; the last days, the days of the Messiah, which were future in Jeremiah's time: and a “behold” is prefixed to the whole, as a note of attention, this being an affair

of great moment and importance; and as a note of demonstration, or as pointing to something that was desired and expected; and as a note of admiration, it containing things wonderful and marvellous.

Ver. 9. *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers*, etc..] The ancestors of the Jews at Mount Sinai:

in the day when I took them, by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; which is mentioned, not only to observe the time when the former covenant was made with the Israelites, which was just upon their deliverance out of Egypt; but also to show their weakness and inability to have delivered themselves, and the tenderness of God towards them; they were like children, they could not help themselves when God took them by the hand, and brought them forth with an outstretched arm; and likewise to expose their ingratitude, and vindicate his conduct towards them:

because they continued not in my covenant; though they promised, at the reading of it, that all that the Lord had said, they would hear and do; but their hearts were not right with God, and they were not steadfast in his covenant, and therefore their carcasses fell in the wilderness:

and I regarded them not, saith the Lord; the words in (^{2B13}Jeremiah 31:32) are very differently rendered in our translation, “although I was an husband unto them”: and so it becomes an aggravation of their sin of ingratitude, in not continuing in his covenant: in the margin it is rendered interrogatively, “should I have continued an husband unto them?” that is, after they had so treated him, no; as if he should say, I will not behave towards them as such; I will reject them, and disregard them. The Chaldee paraphrase is just the reverse of the apostle's translation, “and I was well pleased with them”: some render them, “I ruled over them”, as a lord over his servants, in a very severe manner. Others, observing the great difference there is between the Hebrew text, and the apostle's version, have supposed a different Hebrew copy from the present, used by the Septuagint, or the apostle, in which, instead of **yti [b**, it was read either **yti j b**, or **yti [g**; but there is no need of such a supposition, since Dr. Pocock ^{f127} has shown, that **l [b**, in the Arabic language, signifies to loath and abhor, and so to disregard; and Kimchi ^{f128} relates it as a rule laid down by his father, that wherever this word is used in construction with **b**, it is to be taken in an ill part, and signifies the same as **yti j b**, “I have loathed”; in which sense that word is used in (^{3B18}Zechariah 11:8) and so here, I have loathed them,

I abhorred them, I rejected them, I took no care of them, disregarded them, left their house desolate, and suffered wrath to come upon them to the uttermost.

Ver. 10. *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel,* etc..] That is, this is the sum and substance of the covenant, which God promised to make with, or to make manifest and known to his chosen people, the true Israelites, under the Gospel dispensation; or the following are the several articles of that covenant, he proposed to consummate or finish, as before:

after those days, saith the Lord; after the times of the Old Testament, when the Messiah shall be come, and the Gospel day shall take place. So the Jews^{f129} apply these days, when they represent the Israelites saying to Moses, O that he (God) would reveal (himself or will) to us a second time! O that he would kiss us with the kisses of his mouth, and that the doctrine of the law was fixed in our hearts; when he (Moses) said to them, this is not to be done now, but *abl dyt [I]*, in the time to come, (i.e. in the times of the Messiah,) as it is said, (²⁴¹³Jeremiah 31:33).

I will put my law, etc.. and so^{f130} they are elsewhere applied to the same times. And the first article in it is,

I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; by the laws of God are meant not the precepts of the ceremonial law, which were now abrogated, but either the moral law, and its commands; which is a transcript of the divine nature, was inscribed on Adam's heart in innocence, and some remains of it are even in the Gentiles, but greatly obliterated through the sin of man; and there is in men naturally a contrary disposition to it; in regeneration it is reinscribed by the Spirit of God; and great respect is had to it by regenerate persons, in which lies one part of their conformity to Christ: or else, since the word "law" signifies sometimes no other than a doctrine, an instruction, the doctrines of grace, of repentance towards God, of faith in Christ, and love to him, and every other doctrine may be intended; and the tables where, according to the tenor of this covenant, these are put and written, are two tables, as before, the "mind" and "heart"; but not two tables of stone, on which the law of Moses was written, partly that it might not be lost, through defect of memory, and partly to denote the firmness and stability of it, as also to point at the hardness of man's heart; but the fleshly tables of the heart; not that part of our flesh that is

called the heart; but the souls of men, such hearts as are regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit of God, and such minds as are renewed by him: and the “putting” of them into the mind, designs the knowledge of them, which God gives; as of the moral law, of its spirituality and perfection, showing that there is no life and righteousness by it, that it is fulfilled by Christ, and is a rule of conversation to the saints; and of all other laws, ordinances, and doctrines of Christ: and the “writing” them in, or on the heart, intends a filling the soul with love and affection to them, so that it regards them singly and heartily; and a powerful inclination of the heart to be subject to them, through the efficacious grace of God; and which is done not with the ink of nature's power, but with the Spirit of the living God, (~~4RB~~2 Corinthians 3:3).

And I will be to them a God; not in such sense as he is the God of all mankind, or as he was the God of Israel in a distinguishing manner, but as he is the God of Christ, and of all the elect in him; and he is their God, not merely as the God of nature and providence, but as the God of all grace; he is so in a covenant way, and as in Christ, and by virtue of electing grace, and which is made manifest in the effectual calling; and as such, he has set his heart on them, and set them apart for himself; he saves them by his Son, adopts and regenerates them, justifies and sanctifies them, provides for them, protects and preserves them; and happy are they that are interested in this blessing of the covenant, which is preferable to everything else; they have everything, and can want no good thing; they need fear no enemy; all things work together for their good; and God continues to be their God in life and in death; so that they may depend on his love, be secure of his power, expect every needful supply of grace, and to be carried through every duty and trial, and to share in the first resurrection, and to enjoy eternal happiness:

and they shall be to me a people; not in such sense as all mankind are, or the Jews were in a more peculiar respect, but as all God's elect are, whether Jews or Gentiles; and who are such whom God has loved with a special love, has chose in Christ, and given to him, and with whom he has made a covenant in him; whom Christ saves from their sins by his blood, and calls them by his grace and Spirit, and who give up themselves to him; these are a distinct and peculiar people, a people near unto the Lord, and who are all righteous in Christ, and are made willing in the day of his power on their souls.

Ver. 11. *And they shall not teach every man his neighbour*, etc..] The Alexandrian copy reads, “citizen”; that is, fellow citizen; and so the Syriac and Arabic versions: “and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord”: this is not to be understood, so as to set aside the external and public ministry of the word, which is a standing ordinance of God under the Gospel dispensation; or even the, private instructions of saints one to another, in Christian conversation, whereby they may build up one another in their most holy faith; but the sense is, that men should not only teach, but the Spirit of God should teach with them, and by them; and it stands opposed to particular and pretended revelations, and especially to magisterial dictates; and denotes the abundance of knowledge that should be in Gospel times, which should not be restrained to particular persons, and sets of men, but should be shared by all believers, more or less:

for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest; from babes to fathers in Christ; not with a natural, but with a spiritual knowledge; not with general knowledge of him, that he is, but with a special knowledge of him, that he is theirs; not with a legal, but with an evangelical knowledge; not with the knowledge of him in, and through the creatures, but in Christ; and that not speculative, but experimental; such as is attended with faith in him, fear of him, love to him, and a cheerful obedience to his will: the knowledge of the Lord, under the New Testament dispensation, is greater than under the former dispensation; the subject matter of it is more distinct; God is more known in the persons of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in the perfections of his nature, in his titles and characters, and in his Son; the manner of it is more clear, open, and perspicuous; the persons to whom it is communicated are more numerous; it is not restrained to Jews, but is given to the Gentiles; and all this owing to a greater effusion of the Spirit; (see ¹⁷⁷1 John 2:27).

Ver. 12. *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, etc..] That is, sin; for all unrighteousness is sin, being contrary to the justice of God, and his righteous law: and the phrase is expressive of God’s forgiveness of it, which is a very considerable article of the covenant of grace; mercy is the spring and original of pardon; it is what God delights in, and therefore he pardons freely; it is large and abundant, and hence he pardons fully; and this lays a foundation for hope in sensible sinners: and the way and means, in and by which God pardons, is the propitiatory sacrifice of his Son; and the word here rendered “merciful”, signifies “propitious”; God pardons none but those to whom he is pacified, or rendered propitious by Christ;

there is no mercy, nor pardon, but through him; he pardons on the foot of reconciliation and satisfaction for sin by Christ; so that forgiveness of sin is an act of justice, as well as of mercy; or it is an act of mercy streaming through the blood and sacrifice of Christ.

And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more; by which are meant all kind of sin, original and actual; sins before and after conversion; every sin but that against the Holy Ghost, and that God's covenant people are never guilty of; these God remembers no more; he casts them behind his back, and into the depths of the sea, so that when they are sought for, they shall not be found; God will never charge them with them, or punish them for them: this is another phrase to express the forgiveness of sins, and distinguishes the new covenant from the old one, or the former dispensation; in which, though there were many typical sacrifices, and a typical removal of sin, yet there was a remembrance of it every year.

Ver. 13. *In that he saith a new covenant*, etc..] In the above prophecy, (~~808~~ Hebrews 8:8)

he hath made the first old; this naturally follows from hence; if the second is new, the first must be old; which is called so, not on account of its date and duration; for the covenant of grace itself is older than this mode of administration of it, and the manifestation of that to the patriarchs was before this covenant, and so was the covenant of works before it; but on the account of its faultiness and deficiency, its weakness, and unprofitableness, and especially its being antiquated, and made to give way to another.

Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away; the apostle argues from the first covenant, being old, to its being near to dissolution, or a disappearance; and the dissolution or disappearance of this covenant was gradual; it began when the Chaldeans seized the land of Canaan; and the ark, an eminent type of Christ, being wanting in the second temple, gave a hint of its waxing old; and both the civil and ecclesiastical government of the Jews were in great confusion under the second temple, at least towards the close of it; and even before the times of Christ, John the Baptist came, and proclaimed the near approach of the Messiah, and his kingdom: this covenant was of right abolished at the time of Christ's death; upon his ascension the Spirit was given, and the Gospel published among all nations, by which it more and more disappeared; and in fact it quite vanished away, when the city and temple of Jerusalem were

destroyed, which was in a little time after the writing of this epistle; so that the apostle, with great propriety, says, it is “ready to vanish away”.