



Decoding Hebrews 10

He Takes Away the First to Establish the Second

Few passages in the New Testament have been more misunderstood than Hebrews 10:9, where the author writes, *“He takes away the first that He may establish the second.”* For many believers, this single statement has been used as a sweeping declaration that God abolished His law and replaced it with an entirely new system. But when Hebrews is read through its original Hebrew and first-century context rather than later Greco-Roman interpretations, a very different—and much clearer—picture emerges.

At Passion for Truth Ministries, we strive to rediscover the Scriptures as the early Jewish believers understood them. Hebrews is one of the most important books for this mission because it bridges the sacrificial system of the Torah with the priesthood and ministry of Messiah. And when we look at Hebrews 10 closely, we find that the author is not attacking God’s commandments at all but revealing a powerful shift in the way they are administered.

The Traditional Misreading of Hebrews 10



For generations, many Christians have been taught that “the first” refers to the entire Old Testament law—seen as something burdensome, obsolete, or even harmful. According to this interpretation, God removed the law in order to replace it with grace, replacing one system with something supposedly opposite in nature.

Yet this understanding assumes something the biblical text never actually claims. Hebrews does not argue that God’s instructions were the problem or that the law was somehow defective.

Instead, the author focuses on something far more specific: the inadequacy of the sacrificial system and the priesthood that administered it.

This shift in focus is essential to understanding the chapter.

The Shadow and the Substance

Hebrews 10 begins by describing the law as containing “a shadow of the good things to come.” A shadow is not bad; it is simply incomplete. It gives us the outline, the shape, the direction of something greater that is approaching.

The problem highlighted in the passage is not the shadow itself but the sacrificial rituals that accompanied it. The author points out that the sacrifices offered year after year could never make the worshiper perfect. They served as continual reminders of sin, not permanent solutions. Animal blood could temporarily cover sin, but it could never remove it.

This is the core issue Hebrews is addressing—the inability of the Levitical system to achieve what only the Messiah could accomplish.

Covenant and Law: Two Concepts Often Confused

One of the biggest stumbling blocks in understanding Hebrews is the assumption that “covenant” and “law” are interchangeable ideas. They are not. A covenant refers to the administration or framework in which the relationship between God and His people operates. The law contains the instructions that guide that relationship.

A helpful analogy is a marriage. A person may enter into a new marriage covenant, but the basic expectations, responsibilities, and moral laws of marriage do not disappear simply because the spouse changes. The covenant can change, but the principles remain consistent.

In Hebrews, the “first” that is taken away is the *old administration*—the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system attached to it. The “second” that is established is a *new administration* under the priesthood of Melchizedek, with Jesus as the eternal High Priest. This is not a replacement of God’s law but a change in how the covenant is mediated.

What Was Actually Removed?

When the author says that God “takes away the first,” he is referring specifically to the former priestly order and sacrificial administration. The Levitical priesthood, despite its important role, could not cleanse the conscience or perfect the worshiper in a lasting way. Its sacrifices pointed forward to the work of Messiah but could not accomplish what His blood ultimately would.

Christ’s sacrifice brought an end to the need for continual animal offerings. His once-for-all atonement satisfied the righteous requirement declared in the Torah—something the blood of bulls and goats could never achieve. In doing so, He qualified as the perfect High Priest and inaugurated the New Covenant.

This is what was “taken away”: **the old administration**, not God’s eternal instructions.

Establishing the New Covenant Through a New High Priest

The New Covenant is new because the mediator is new. Jesus, functioning through the order of Melchizedek, establishes a better priesthood—one that is eternal, sinless, and capable of truly transforming the heart. His priesthood does not exist in opposition to the Torah but in perfect fulfillment of its requirements.

In this new administration:

- Atonement is no longer achieved through repetitive sacrifices.
- Access to God is no longer mediated by earthly priests with human limitations.
- The cleansing of sin goes beyond the surface and reaches the inner conscience.

The structure has changed, but the standard of righteousness has not.



Why This Matters for Modern Believers

For nearly two millennia, the enemy has used theological confusion to distance God's people from His commandments. If believers can be convinced that God's instructions no longer matter, they will voluntarily disconnect themselves from the blessings attached to obedience. This is the same strategy behind the Balaam narrative: remove the people from obedience, and the blessings cease automatically.

Understanding Hebrews correctly restores the richness of God's consistent character. It reminds us that His commandments were never the problem. The problem was our inability to live them out without a perfect High Priest. Through Christ, the requirement for atonement has been fulfilled and the power to obey has been restored.

The True Message of Hebrews 10

Far from abolishing the law, Hebrews 10 reveals how Jesus brings its purposes to their fullness. The chapter shows us a God who is consistent, righteous, and faithful. It reveals a Messiah who finishes what the sacrificial system could only foreshadow. And it demonstrates a covenant built not on earthly rituals but on the eternal priesthood of the Son of God.

The old administration has been taken away.

The new administration has been established.

God's instructions remain, and through His Spirit we are empowered to walk in them.

This is the beauty of Hebrews 10. This is the heart of the New Covenant. And this is the truth that brings freedom—not from God's law, but from our separation from Him.

Watch the full teaching here:
<https://youtu.be/-48xQxUiJwM>



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