

Hebrews Chapter 8

Theme: *Jesus, the Superior High Priest of a Better Covenant*

Introduction

Hebrews 8 serves as a pivotal chapter, transitioning from the discussion of Jesus' superior priesthood to the introduction of a new and better covenant. The author emphasizes that Jesus ministers in the true heavenly tabernacle and mediates a covenant that fulfills and surpasses the old one.

Jesus, Our Heavenly High Priest (Hebrews 8:1–6)

Scripture:

1 Now the main point of what is being said is this: We have this kind of high priest who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
2 a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that was set up by the Lord and not man.
3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; therefore, it was necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.
4 Now if he were on earth, he wouldn't be a priest, since there are those offering the gifts prescribed by the law.
5 These serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was warned when he was about to complete the tabernacle. For God said, *Be careful that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain.*
6 But Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been established on better promises.

Key Greek Terms:

- **λειτουργός (leitourgos)** – *Minister or servant* (v. 2): Denotes someone who performs a public service or religious duty.
- **σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς (skēnēs tēs alēthinēs)** – *True tabernacle* (v. 2): Refers to the genuine, heavenly sanctuary as opposed to the earthly copy.
- **ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ (hypodeigmati kai skiā)** – *Copy and shadow* (v. 5): Indicates that the earthly tabernacle is a representation or foreshadowing of the heavenly reality.
- **μεσίτης (mesitēs)** – *Mediator* (v. 6): One who intervenes between two parties to reconcile them.

Theological Insights:

- Jesus' position at the right hand of God signifies His authority and the completion of His sacrificial work.
- The earthly tabernacle and priesthood were mere shadows of the true, heavenly realities.
- Jesus serves in the true sanctuary, offering a superior ministry and mediating a better covenant based on better promises.

Historical and Cultural Context:

- The Jewish audience was familiar with the Levitical priesthood and the tabernacle as central to worship.
- The author emphasizes that Jesus' priesthood is not based on earthly lineage but on divine appointment and heavenly service.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be a minister in the "true tabernacle"?
 2. How does understanding the earthly tabernacle as a "copy and shadow" affect our view of Old Testament worship?
 3. In what ways is Jesus' ministry superior to that of the Levitical priests?
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The New Covenant Promised (Hebrews 8:7–13)

Scripture:

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second one.

8 But finding fault with his people, he says:

*See, the days are coming, says the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant*

with the house of Israel

and with the house of Judah—

9 *not like the covenant*

that I made with their ancestors

on the day I took them by the hand

to lead them out of the land of Egypt.

I showed no concern for them, says the Lord,

because they did not continue in my covenant.

10 *For this is the covenant*

that I will make with the house of Israel

after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds

and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,

and they will be my people.

11 *And each person will not teach his fellow citizen,*

and each his brother or sister, saying, "Know the Lord,"

because they will all know me,

from the least to the greatest of them.

12 *For I will forgive their wrongdoing,*

and I will never again remember their sins.

13 By saying a new covenant, he has declared that the first is obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old is about to pass away.

Key Greek Terms:

- **καινή διαθήκη (kainē diathēkē)** – *New covenant* (v. 8): "Kainē" denotes something qualitatively new, not merely recent.
- **διαθήκη (diathēkē)** – *Covenant* or *testament*: A binding agreement or contract.

- **ἐπιγραψω (epigraphō)** – *I will write upon* (v. 10): Implies inscribing or engraving, indicating permanence.
- **ἰλεως ἔσομαι (hileōs esomai)** – *I will be merciful* (v. 12): Expresses God's gracious disposition towards forgiveness.

Theological Insights:

- The first covenant was insufficient due to the people's inability to uphold it.
- The new covenant, prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31–34, involves internal transformation—God's laws written on hearts and minds.
- This covenant offers a personal relationship with God and complete forgiveness of sins.

Historical and Cultural Context:

- The quotation from Jeremiah would resonate with Jewish readers, highlighting the fulfillment of prophecy.
- The shift from external adherence to internal transformation marked a significant change in the understanding of God's relationship with His people.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the new covenant differ from the old in terms of its requirements and promises?
2. What does it mean for God's laws to be written on our hearts and minds?
3. How does the promise of complete forgiveness impact our daily lives and relationship with God?

Summary & Application

Key Takeaways:

- Jesus serves as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, offering a superior ministry.
- The new covenant, established through Jesus, fulfills God's promise of internal transformation and complete forgiveness.
- Believers are invited into a personal, intimate relationship with God, characterized by His laws written on their hearts.

Application Questions:

1. In what ways can we embrace the internal transformation promised in the new covenant?
2. How can we live out the reality of having God's laws written on our hearts in our daily interactions?
3. What steps can we take to deepen our personal relationship with God, as invited by the new covenant?