

Not Your Grandpa's Covenant

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[0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 8, verses 1 through 12. Now the point in what we are saying is this.

! We have such a high priest, Thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying, See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain. Because as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old, as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

[1 : 24] Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall not teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

I assume you are all familiar with General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Military leader, United States President.

In World War II, he achieved probably one of the coolest job titles of all time, supreme allied commander in Europe. So I want to imagine a story about Eisenhower.

[2 : 40] It's totally made up, okay? There's no historical veracity to it. Let's imagine a story about Eisenhower. During World War II, let's say he's home in the States for some reason, and he's walking along the street, and he comes along this house with the front yard, and in the front yard, there's an eight-year-old boy named Johnny and a bunch of his friends.

And Johnny and his friends are playing army. They have cap guns. They have radio flyer wagons that sometimes they're pretending are tanks, and sometimes they're pretending are airplanes.

Some of them are wearing pots on their heads that they stole from their mom's kitchen as helmets. And so Eisenhower walks by, and he says, what are you guys doing?

And Johnny says, we're playing army. We're fighting a war, and I'm the general. And Eisenhower chuckles, and he says, I'm a general too.

And Johnny says, you got any cap guns? No. You got a wagon or something to be a tank?

[3 : 57] Eisenhower says, no. Where's your helmet? I don't have it with me. Johnny says, you don't seem like a general to me.

Now, if you were watching that unfold, how many of you would say, Johnny's got a point? I guess Eisenhower isn't a general at all. Of course not.

Because you would know, the problem is not that Eisenhower isn't really a general. It's not that he isn't qualified, or doesn't have all the necessary rank and status. The problem, in terms of Johnny's comprehension, is that Eisenhower is so much more of a real general than Johnny even realizes about this guy who's just walked past his front yard.

Eisenhower is the real thing to which Johnny and his friends and his cap guns are all pointing towards. Things that they're copies of. Let's ask this question.

Let's say it's two weeks before Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, two weeks before D-Day. Who do you think should be in command of that operation?

[5 : 10] General Johnny? Or Supreme Commander Eisenhower? When the stakes are high, you need the real thing.

When the stakes are high, you need the real thing, not a copy. And when it comes to our sin, the stakes are high. When the problem is as serious as the evil in our own hearts and lives, we need a real answer.

And so our text this morning, Hebrews chapter 8, is going to be of little interest to people who don't feel the weight of their own sin. For those who don't understand just how messed up they are and how totally unacceptable they are before God, Hebrews 8 is going to be kind of boring and irrelevant.

But, if you wince when you take an honest look at yourself, and if you have deep regret for the ways that you have hurt others and you continue to hurt others, and if you cringe at the thoughts that go through your mind every day, and if you've done things that you'd give anything if you could just undo them, and if on top of all that you've realized that all of those ugly things are not just flukes and accidents, but are expressions of something that's really wrong and bad about you, if that's you, then Hebrews 8 is for you.

Because the message of Hebrews 8 is take your real sin to a real high priest who gives better promises.

[6 : 56] Take your real sin to a real high priest who gives better promises. And so we're going to ask the questions, what does it mean that Jesus is a real high priest? And we're going to ask the question, what are those better promises?

But before we do, let's review what we've already learned about Jesus as a high priest in Hebrews. Remember that a priest is someone who goes between us and God, who represents us before God, who mediates between us and God.

And as we see someone who offers a sacrifice for us to God. So as we think about priests going between us and God, we've seen that Jesus in chapter 4 is a sympathetic high priest.

He understands our weakness because he's experienced it, but without sin. In chapters 5 through 7, we've seen a variety of things about Jesus as our high priest.

We saw that he's a legitimate high priest. He's not a priest in the line of Levi, but he is a legitimate high priest because he was a different priestly order that is also designated by God, the order of Melchizedek.

[8 : 05] And the author of Hebrews showed us this was part of God's plan based on the Old Testament Scriptures. We've seen that Jesus is a perfect and a sinless high priest.

He doesn't need to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, but instead he can offer himself as a perfect sacrifice for ours. And we've seen that he's an eternal high priest.

He has an indestructible life and he always lives to intercede for us. And then now, as we come to chapter 8, we see that Jesus is the real high priest.

The realest, the most real, the high priest of whom every other priest who came before is just a copy and a shadow. So how is Jesus the real high priest?

What's real about him? We see it in verses 1-5. Let's look at verses 1-2 first. Now the point of what we are saying is this. We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

[9 : 20] So Jesus is the real high priest because where he is. He's at the right hand of the throne of God, not on earth, in heaven.

And there's also the contrast between the kind of tabernacle that he's in. It says that he's a minister in the holy places in the true tent.

When you hear the word tent, you should think tabernacle. He's in the true tabernacle. So if that's the true tabernacle, maybe you think to yourself, what does that say about the old tabernacle?

A tabernacle that the Lord set up, not man. No other priest can claim these things.

If a priest's role is to represent us before God, to intercede before God on our behalf to offer sacrifices for us to God, then the location of that priest is going to make a difference.

[10 : 25] If you have one priest who is on earth in an earthly tabernacle, in an earthly tent, created by man, then you have another priest that's in heaven right next to God, speaking directly into God's ears, in God's presence, in the real holy place.

Which one's going to be a better priest for you? This is a tabernacle. It says that the Lord set up not man. Remember in Exodus when they built the tabernacle, God gifted a man named Bezalel with the gifts and the abilities to help craft, along with his fellow craftsmen, all of the structures and utensils for the tabernacle.

So that's a pretty nice setup. A man directly gifted by God to build these things, and he's given the plans from Moses who got them directly from God.

God. And now the author of Hebrews is saying, that's not the true tabernacle. There's a different one that's better in heaven.

Many of you guys have probably participated in a science fair at some point in your education.

Right? A bunch of students get together, they each work on these projects for a while, they present them, maybe they win an award for the best science project.

[11:51] Imagine a tabernacle fair, and Bezalel shows up, he's got his tabernacle, he knows he's been gifted by God, he knows he's got the plans exactly as God gave them to Moses, and he thinks he's got this tabernacle fair locked in.

He goes up to register, he says, I'm here to display my tabernacle, secretary says, okay, you're going to be at table number three, right next to table number four, where the Lord God is presenting.

Bezalel says, what? He says, yeah, the Lord is presenting at the tabernacle fair, he's brought his heavenly tabernacle with a true holy place. And Bezalel says, and I have to be at the table right next to him?

that's what the author of Hebrews is saying. Jesus is our high priest in a tabernacle that's in heaven, created by the Lord, not man.

He's the real high priest. Now look at verses three through four. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.

[13:21] Jesus did not fit into the earthly Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament. Remember what happened with Eisenhower? Now imagine Jesus walking up to the Levitical priests at their tabernacle and he says, I'm a priest.

And I'd say, well, do you have our special priestly garments? Jesus says, no. Do you have a bull or a goat or a dove to offer as a priest?

Jesus says, no, I don't have that. Well, are you even a priest at all? Not here on earth. Not of this kind of priesthood.

Not of this tabernacle. verse 5. These priests who are on earth, they serve a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things. When Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, see that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.

These earthly priests in their earthly tent carrying out their priestly duties and their sacrifices, they are copies and shadows of the ultimate realities of the heavenly things.

[14:37] they are shadows of the things that actually happen in the presence of God. And God showed Moses a very clear pattern of how he wanted this tabernacle and all its utensils created and it was important that Moses got them right because they point to something that's much more real and much more important than themselves.

They were never meant to be ultimate. So Jesus is the real high priest. He's the realist. And when Hebrews talks about this and when I say he's the true or the real high priest it doesn't mean that everything that came before was fake.

Because the comparison here is not real versus fake. God established that old priesthood. It served a purpose. The difference that the author of Hebrews is showing us here is the difference between the real thing and the representation of that thing.

The difference between what is eternal and what is only ever meant to be temporary. the difference between the foreshadowing of something and its ultimate fulfillment. Of course in the simplest sense as the author of Hebrews says it's the difference between a real thing and a shadow.

So is a shadow fake? No there's nothing fake or counterfeit or deceptive about a shadow. it's just not the real thing.

[16:05] That's all. When you see a friend after a long time apart you don't try to hug their shadow. And if you're walking along outside and you hear a plane overhead and a shadow passes over you you don't look at the ground and start running and chasing the shadow and studying the shadow.

When a shadow passes overhead you look up. And that's what the purpose of all those detailed, complicated, Old Testament instructions were for the tabernacle and the sacrificial system. It was to create a shadow that would cause us to look up so that at the right time when Jesus came we would look up and we would see him and recognize him for who he is. As the real high priest in heaven sitting at the right hand of the throne of majesty. So when you have real sin that condemns you before God where do you want your high priest to be? In some tent on earth or at the right hand of God interceding for you? When you have real sin and you need a high priest to go between you and God what do you want? [17:18] Do you want a shadow or do you want the real thing? Now you might be saying to yourself okay I get it Jesus is the real high priest.

He's better than what came before. He's the real thing. They were copies and shadows but I have not been trying to go back to that Old Testament system. I haven't been asking some Old Testament priest to represent me or sacrifice for me.

I'm good with that. Why is it important for us to see here in Hebrews that Jesus is the real high priest? Two reasons that I'll give at least.

One is we need to know that Jesus as our high priest has the full approval of God the Father. We need to know that Jesus as our high priest is part of God's plan for all of time because there's only one true God, right?

There's only one God who created the world. There's only one God who flooded the earth. There's only one God who made covenants with his people.

[18:32] There's only one God who made promises to Abraham. There's only one God who brought his people out of Egypt with great power. There's only one God who brought them through the Red Sea.

There's only one God who has literally spoken and given his words in detail to his people. There's only one God who's done any of that. And so if Jesus just comes to us in a historical vacuum, totally disconnected from all that, there's no reason for us to expect that he's actually connecting us, representing us to the one true God.

We need to have confidence that Jesus is part of God's plan for all of time. He's a continuation and fulfillment of what God has been doing all along.

But not only is he better than the Old Testament priests, we need to know that Jesus is a better and real high priest compared to any alternatives that we may try to find for ourselves.

So we may not be asking an Old Testament Levite to represent us before God, but what kind of priest do we have? What do we think will stand before God for us? Who do we hope will mediate between us and God and offer sacrifices for us so that God will forgive us and overlook our sin?

[19:56] Well, here's a few possibilities. We might be trusting in the high priest of our own good intentions. What's going to represent me before God? It's my own good intentions.

God sees my heart. He knows it's in the right place. He knows that I try to do good as much as I can. He knows that I try not to do bad stuff as much as I can.

A lot of times, even when I do do bad things, it's not because I really want to or I intend to do. It's just, you know, circumstances and all kinds of stuff kind of worked against me. And so God knows. He understands.

So when I stand before God with my sin, I'm going to count on my good intentions to represent me before God so that my sins may be forgiven.

That's one option. Maybe we have a high priest of cultural excuses. Well, it's just the world we live in right now. Everyone is doing it.

[20:56] Everyone is saying it's okay. You know, maybe there were some things that maybe were wrong or at least seemed wrong in the past, but now kind of in the situation we live in, it is what it is.

And so as I stand before God with my sin, he's going to take into account the culture that I live in. God's going to see that.

Or maybe the high priest of religious intensity. I'm going to go to church as much as I can. I'm going to be involved as much as I can. I'm going to serve every Sunday.

I'm going to do everything midweek that I can. I'm going to read my Bible every day. I'm going to pray with great feeling and emotion. I'm going to give and serve as much as I can.

And my religious intensity will represent me before God. He will see that I am sincerely, trying to honor him, that I sincerely believe in him.

[22 : 01] And that will cause him to overlook my sin. Or maybe it's the high priest of intense guilt and self-punishment.

I'm going to make sure that I feel so bad about my sin. No one is going to feel worse about my sin than me. Maybe not even God. I'm just going to sit in my guilt and I'm going to punish myself. I'm going to punish myself mentally or emotionally or socially or physically. But I'm going to punish myself so that God doesn't have to. When I stand before God with my sin, he's going to see how much I've already taken it out of myself.

And therefore, he will overlook my sin. That's my high priest. Or maybe you say, my high priest is just that I'm not as bad as other people. What stands between me and a holy God?

It's all the other bad people who are worse than me. So when God looks at me, yes, he's going to see some sin. But he's going to see a lot more sin in other places and in other people. And so he's going to grade on a curve and I'm going to end up okay.

[23 : 09] Okay. What stands before God for you? None of these are real high priests.

And in fact, they're actually worse than the Levitical high priests of the Old Testament because at least those priests were copies and shadows pointing towards something true and something better. But these high priests that we come up with are totally false.

They do not minister in heavenly places. They don't sit at the right hand of the throne. They can't offer any sacrifice for you. And they leave you condemned in your sin. So the author of Hebrews is telling us verses 1 through 5, Jesus is the real high priest.

So take your real sin to a real high priest. A high priest who gives better promises. What are the better promises?

Verses 6 through 12. Let's start in verses 6 and 7. As it is, Christ has obtained a ministry, i.e.

[24 : 15] a priesthood, that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better since it is enacted on better promises.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. Jesus has a better priestly ministry not only because he serves true heavenly realities in the very presence of God but also because his covenant is better and his covenant is better because it's legislated, it's enacted on better promises.

And Hebrews tells us there was a problem with the old covenant. It had a fault. What was wrong with the old covenant? The old covenant came from God himself.

Did God give his people something faulty? Something broken? And now he's saying I gotta do a redo, try again? There's a fault in the covenant? What's up with that?

Did God mess up in his first covenant? Let's look at verse 7 again in the first part of verse 8. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

[25 : 28] For he finds fault with them when he says. You would expect him to say, if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

For he finds fault with it, with the covenant. But that's not exactly what it says. It says he finds fault with them, not it. See, the real fault in the old covenant is not the covenant itself per se.

It's with God's covenant people. Look at verses 8 and 9. He finds fault with them when he says, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

For they did not continue in my covenant, so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. The people did not continue in the covenant. They broke the agreement.

They violated it in every way and they received the promised judgments of the covenant. That's some of the promises of the old covenant, by the way.

[26 : 40] If you do this judgment, that's some of the promises of the old covenant. But this new covenant, which Jesus is the high priest, has better promises that address this fault.

Verses 10 through 12. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people and they shall not teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest.

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. What are the better promises of the new covenant of which Jesus is the high priest?

There are at least three that are listed here. God's law internalized in our hearts, a personal relationship with God for every member of God's people, and total forgiveness of our sins. What was the law written on in the old covenant? Tablets of stone. External. Hearts were not changed. In the new covenant, God writes his law on hearts.

[27 : 58] He changes something within us. Something that was hard and cold and dead previously is now changed by God and the law is not something external to us to which we constantly try to live but it's something that's internal, that's empowered by God himself.

And we aren't just a group of God's people where some people kind of receive special dispensations of the Holy Spirit at special times to accomplish special tasks and some of us you know are specially chosen by God or have a special relationship with him.

All of us know God from the least to the greatest. Everyone has a personal relationship with God. They know him personally. And of course a total forgiveness of our sins.

I'll be merciful towards their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. If we were the fault in the old covenant and our sin and our violations and our covenant breaking, the new covenant has to have something to account for that.

Something to account for our sin and God says I will be merciful and I will remember those sins no more. forgiveness and total forgetfulness.

[29 : 36] So what's new about the new covenant? Here it is. This is by the way the longest quotation of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Three promises available to us because Jesus is our real high priest and because he mediates a new covenant for us.

The old covenant, the little biblical priest could not offer these promises to God's people. And neither can any of the false high priests that we may hope in today.

The high priest of our good intentions can't give us any of these promises. The high priest of cultural excuses cannot give us any of these promises. The high priest of our own religious intensity cannot give us any of these promises.

The high priest of intense guilt and self-punishment does not offer any of these promises. The high priest of being a little bit better than most other people offers no promises.

So take your real sin to a real high priest who gives better promises. We have such a high priest.

The main point of what we're saying is we have such a high priest. That's why the good news is called the good news.

[30 : 51] We have such a high priest. So where are you this morning? Are you aware of your sin?

It's Mother's Day. Moms, were you a bad mom this week? I don't just mean in a joking way. Did you let your kids down?

Did you treat them in a way that you shouldn't have? Dads, were you a lousy dad this week? Did you choose selfishness? Did you choose anger? kids, were you disobedient?

For all of us, did we give in to greed? Did we give in to envy? Did we hurt others with our words? Did we live in shame of our high priest Jesus?

Take your real sin to a real high priest who offers better promises? Only Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Always ready to intercede for you.

[32 : 15] Only Jesus offers a sacrifice that is acceptable in heaven in the very presence of God. Only Jesus offers hope of real obedience in our hearts and lives. Only Jesus gives you direct access to know God directly.

Only Jesus can take your real sin and declare it totally forgiven and totally forgotten and show mercy to you. We have such a high priest.

That's good news. And we're going to learn a lot more about the specifics of what this is in the coming weeks as we look at the next few chapters. But the main point of what we're saying is we have such a high priest.

A real one. So let's take our sin to Him. Let's pray. Father, thank you.

We are not capable or worthy in and of ourselves to stand before you. this week, this morning, this morning, last night, all of us fell short.

[33 : 29] All of us sinned. And so we know that we need a high priest. We need Jesus. just as much today as any other day.

And we thank you that He is there for us. Thank you that He always will be there for us. Help us to believe it. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.