

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 15TH–16TH, 2025 // HEBREWS

A SUPERIOR MINISTRY (HEBREWS 8:1–6) TO SUMMARIZE... (VS. 1–2)

Several chapters have been spent discussing the work of Jesus as our High Priest.

- The main point is that Christ accomplished the work of atoning for the sins of His people by offering Himself as a sacrifice on the cross.
- He “sat down”—He completed the task.
- Jesus had a real and spiritual ministry in the presence of God (“the true tabernacle”).

A BETTER SACRIFICE (V. 3)

Priests were appointed to continually offer gifts and sacrifices on behalf of God's people.

- Jesus, our High Priest, offered a superior, once and for all sacrifice—His own body on the cross.
- This was not a sacrifice that needed to be offered more than once—it was completely sufficient and better than any of the other previous sacrifices.

A BETTER TEMPLE (VS. 4–5)

Because He was not born from the tribe of Levi, Jesus would not have been qualified to serve as a priest according to the Mosaic law.

- But still, Jesus was superior to the priesthood and the work in the temple in every way.
- Why? Because the priesthood and sacrificial system of the tabernacle/temple were simply a copy/shadow of heavenly realities.

SHADOWS OF THE SUBSTANCE

The Greek philosopher Plato told a parable about people who were chained in a dark cave their whole lives facing a wall.

- They see shadows of objects projected on the wall from a fire behind them and think those shadows are real because that is all they have ever seen.
- Then one day, one of them escapes!
- That person gets free and sees the actual objects casting the shadows and realizes there is a reality outside the cave that they never knew existed!
- When he goes back inside the cave to tell the others, they do not believe him because they are so used to the shadows.
- What is the point of Plato's parable?
- People can be trapped in ignorance because that is all they have ever known.
- It is important to seek knowledge and truth beyond what we initially see and understand.
- We can live in spiritual darkness, unaware of God's truth, but God wants to free us and lead us into reality and transformation.
- How was the priesthood and temple a “shadow”?

THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE AND ITS PRACTICES WERE A SHADOW OF THE TRUE, HEAVENLY REALITY.

The OT system of sacrifices and the earthly temple were not the ultimate reality but pointed forward to the true, perfect, heavenly sanctuary where Jesus is the High Priest. God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle with great detail because each item and practice had great spiritual symbolism.

A SUPERIOR MINISTRY (V. 6A)

All the practices within the tabernacle were copies and shadows of the real work of atonement that Jesus the Messiah would one day complete.

- Jesus' work was superior because Christ fulfilled everything the tabernacle promised in heaven (God's true tabernacle) and in God's throne room (God's true sanctuary).

A BETTER COVENANT (V. 6B)

A mediator has the job of keeping two parties linked together in fellowship and communication.

- Jesus is the mediator of a “better covenant.” No longer do we have fellowship and communion with God through annual sacrifices.
- Now God has given us a better promise to forgive our sins and give eternal life through faith in Jesus and His ultimate sacrifice.

N.T. WRIGHT AND TABLE-TOP FOOTBALL.

“...if you'd ever seen an actual football match you would never mistake the table-top variety for the real thing.”

- Just like the freed prisoner in Plato's cave comes to see the real truth, Jesus has revealed to us the fullness of God's truth and plan, bringing us out of the “shadows” of the Old Covenant into the light of the New Covenant.

A NEW COVENANT (HEBREWS 8:7–13)

SOMETHING LACKING (V. 7)

God made a covenant with Israel through Moses when God gave the Law and required animal sacrifices and obedience to maintain a relationship with God.

- The “fault” of the Old Covenant was not that it was bad or wrong but that it was incomplete. It could not fully save people from sin.
- Just knowing the rules does not mean anything.
- The problem was not with the Law itself but with people's inability to keep it.
- The Law shows God's standard of righteousness, but it also exposes human weakness because no one can keep it perfectly (Rom. 3:20).
- The sacrifices provided temporary forgiveness, but they could not remove sin permanently.
- So, God promised a New Covenant.

THE NEW COVENANT PROPHESIED (VS. 8–12)

Through the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31–34), God made a promise of a “new covenant.”

- When the word “new” (*kainos*) is used in this instance, it means new in every sense of the word: completely different than the covenant God made with Israel through Moses.
- This New Covenant would be with the house of Israel and Judah (God's people, Gal. 3:29).

1. The Promise of Inner Power from God

- “I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts.” This is the promise of transformation from within, not external behavioral modification to some rules.
- The Old Covenant can show you the path of right and wrong, but the New Covenant, through Jesus, can supply you with power.

2. The Promise of Personal Intimacy with God”

- I will be their God, and they will be my people...”
- It is one thing to know about God and to be familiar with the traditions of organized religion, it is quite another thing to know God in a personal and intimate way.
- God promised fellowship with Him would be direct and immediate (v. 11).

3. The Promise of Complete Forgiveness from God

- “I will forgive...I will never again remember their sins.”
- The sacrificial system simply covered over and pushed back sins a year at a time.
- Through Jesus, we are offered a true, complete, total cleansing of our sin.
- God has offered to never again remember our sin.

THE OLD COVENANT MADE OBSOLETE (V. 13)

Something becomes “obsolete” when it is no longer useful or widely used because something better has replaced it (like dial-up internet, pagers, fax machines, or MapQuest printouts).

- There once was a time and place for these things, but when something better came along, there was no reason to keep using these things!
- Something better has come!
- God has established a New Covenant in Jesus. If we place our trust and faith in Him, we receive...
 1. Complete forgiveness from God
 2. Personal intimacy with God
 3. Inner power from God
- The Old Covenant of animal sacrifices and strict obedience to the Mosaic law is now obsolete.

“...IS ABOUT TO PASS AWAY” (V. 13B)

Just a few years after Hebrews was written, the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem.

- This brought an abrupt and permanent end to the sacrificial system.
- This led to a complete upheaval in the practice of the Jewish faith. A deep theological crisis occurred when the building that was seen as God's dwelling place was completely leveled.
- Since sacrifices could only be made in the temple, its destruction meant Jews could no longer follow the law of Moses in its fullness.
- Jesus had predicted the temple's destruction (Matt. 24:1–2), indicating that the Old Covenant was being replaced by the New Covenant in Christ.
- Something greater has come in Jesus!

HAUNTED BY JESUS

“I think it is safe to say that while the South is hardly Christ-centered, it is most certainly Christ-haunted.”—Flannery O'Connor, *Mysteries and Manners*

- While the South is not fully centered on Christ, it is still “haunted” by Him, meaning even those who do not believe in Him fully can not escape Christianity's influence (we are still caught in its shadow).

SHADOWS OVER SUBSTANCE

- It is possible to hold to a form of godliness (religion/churchy-ness/southern morality) but to have absolutely no power from God at work in your life (2 Tim. 3:5).
- It is possible to fall in love with the wrong things when it comes to what we are doing right now.
- Are we truly trusting in Christ (or just in religion and the structures of religion)?
- What if having a relationship with God was more than...
 - Going through the “one-and-done” ritual?
 - Attending church once a week (or once a year or whenever we feel like it)?
 - Holding to a loose set of cultural morals (that are more defined by tradition, politics, or family expectations than Scripture)?

THE SUBSTANCE TO WHICH SHADOWS POINT

- In Christ, we are offered something greater!
 1. Complete forgiveness from God
 2. Personal intimacy with God
 3. Inner power from God
- Religion has no power to give you any of these things, but Christ does. Are you trusting fully in Him as the mediator of the New Covenant?