

Hebrews 8 (NRSV)

Jesus Mediates a New and Better Covenant

Now the main point in 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 the heavens, ²a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up.

³ For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴ 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. ⁵ They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent, was warned, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”

⁶ But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one. ⁸ God finds fault with them when he says: “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish 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 when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I had no concern for them,” says the Lord.

¹⁰ “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” says the Lord:

“I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹ And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

¹³ In speaking of “a new covenant,” he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

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10 Questions for Small Group Discussion

1. Last week we saw the author’s focus sharpen on Jesus as our ‘great high priest.’ Can you remember why this emphasis is so crucial?
2. You’ve got to appreciate this pastor. He makes big claims about who Jesus is that can be hard to grasp at first. Helpfully, we are told what the main point is (v.1-2). Therefore, what makes Jesus such a special and unique high priest (see 7:26-28)?
3. How does this list support the criteria for high priest presented earlier, viz.: be a suitable representative, offer sacrifices and bring gifts, be chosen by God (see 5:1-4)? Why does he keep harping on this?
4. Hebrews shows that Jesus mediates a better covenant than the old one established through Moses. What does this passage suggest the old covenant could not do for them (v.6-9)?
5. How does God promise to rectify this “shortcoming” through the new covenant (v. 10-11)?
6. How does Jesus’ ministry accomplish God’s promise of showing mercy and being able to set aside our sins forever (see also 9:26b-28)?
7. Why does he drive home the point that the old covenant is now obsolete (v.13)?
8. What lesson is there for us today in our pluralistic religious culture?
9. What do we learn about God’s mercy from *this* passage?
10. How has this passage increased your appreciation for Jesus and what he accomplished for us?

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