

The Mediator of a Better Covenant

Hebrews 8:1-6

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 9, 2022

Well, good morning, everyone. I want to say thank you to those who responded to the survey that I sent out this last week. I put together a questionnaire for our church just had two questions: one was, please tell me the first time you met Jesus, and then the second question was, tell me what He's done in your life since you first met Him. and had a good response to that. Unfortunately, I had plans to put it in the sermon this morning and I couldn't figure out where to fit it. So, I will put it in next week's. If you're interested in filling that out there, an email went out to the church, please, you've got another week to do it, we'd love to hear your answers to that.

This morning, please open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews. As you're doing that, I was thinking of a different way to introduce our passage for today. And I thought it would be a good idea to do it like this. Since we're talking about the history of Israel, and the history of the covenants, and the temple and the sacrifices and the priesthood so much, I thought it might be helpful to begin with a question to get your mind thinking about this subject and that is this: if you were a Jew, living at this time in the first century, and you sinned against the Lord, what would you do? How would you handle that? I Ask you that because as I've said many times in the series, you're not Jewish this morning. No one in this room is Hebrew, to my knowledge anyway. So, when you sin, you have a totally different paradigm for how to handle that. You bring it to Christ, and you understand it is forgiven at the cross. But these people didn't think like that, not initially, anyway. They did, once they were saved, but in the beginning, they did things differently. So, how did they respond when they failed the Lord? Well, here's a few things they did: the first thing they did was to determine what kind of sin it was, whether it was intentional or unintentional, because all sins were not treated the same way in Israel, they were not dealt with the same mode of procedure. If you just want to write this passage down in your notes, Numbers 15 says that if a person sins unintentionally, in any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, he can bring a sacrifice, and it will be forgiven. But if a person sins intentionally or defiantly, he cannot. In other words, if you sin unintentionally, in the Old Covenant, either through ignorance or weakness or something like that there was a sacrifice for that. There was a way to handle it by bringing an offering and making atonement. But if you sinned another way, through cold-hearted rebellion, there was not. In the case of those sins, you had to just throw yourself on the mercy of God. If you remember, in Psalm 51, David commits adultery with Bathsheba. He's confessing and he says, "I cannot bring an offering for this," well, that's what he meant. Because the sacrificial system was not set up for you to sin casually and keep sinning casually. It was not set up for you to break the law callously and keep breaking it. It was much more involved in that.

So, the first step you would have to take when you did something wrong was to examine your heart and figure out what exactly did I do, because if it was unintentional, the next step was to go to Jerusalem.

Once you examine your heart and discover that your action was not defiant, your next course of action was to go to the temple, because you couldn't pay for your sins where you were, you had to do it there. So, you would pack up your bags, strap up the camel, hit the road and go out on a journey, which may not sound like a big deal to you. But remember, this was the days before planes, trains, and automobiles. So, it was a very big deal because you had to join a caravan. Since it wasn't safe at the time on the roads, and they were often attacked by robbers, pilgrims didn't go to Jerusalem by themselves. They traveled in a long train of people called a caravan, which would start out kind of disorderly because they were often thrown together; but they became more united as they went. You would travel at night during the summer season because you were going through the desert, and you would travel a day during the winter months at the rate of 20 miles per day, if you can imagine that -that was the pace. Today you can go 20 miles in 20 minutes. Back then it was very different, and it was all uphill. Since Jerusalem was not on a flat area, it rests on a hill 2300 feet above sea level. It means if you were coming from the South or the East in the Dead Sea region, it was an incline of over 3000 feet because the Dead Sea is the lowest point on Earth. It was backbreaking work just to get to the city. I think we can appreciate that in a town like ours because we live in a mountainous region. So, if you can imagine walking up Mount Tom every time you went to church or something more than that, that's what it would be like.

And then once you arrived in the city, the next step was to navigate the town of Jerusalem itself, because it was surrounded by walls that were 60 feet high and several feet thick. And they were divided up into sections that you had to pass through in order to be harassed by the guards and approached by the tax collectors and questioned by the Roman officials that work there. Then once you pass the walls, you would enter the narrow streets that could be suffocating at times, because they were all crammed by people, they were all crammed within the walls. Jerusalem, if you've ever been there, it's the most unusual city in the world because everything is built on the walls or inside the walls. There's no open space. Some have speculated that at this time, the population was around 100,000 People who live mostly outside the walls, because they couldn't all fit in there. But they would go there to conduct business and that's where the crowding came from. Depending on when you showed up there, it could be quiet, if you came on a Sabbath day, it would be dead because everybody would be resting. But if you came on a feast day, like Passover, the city would swell up to twice the normal size. Whatever the case is, you went through the Capitol, your goal was to get to the temple, on the Eastern side in a place called Mount Moriah. Wasn't really a mountain, it was more like a big plateau that set several stories above the landscape. So, you had to keep climbing once you got there, the trip of a sense was not over yet. And in fact, when you first came there, you didn't go into the temple itself, or go up the stairs, you had to pass through several man-made caves at the bottom, where you would go and wash yourself off before making sacrifice. You would remove your clothes, go down one set of stairs in order to immerse yourself in the water, and then come up the other side and put on another set of clothes to symbolize the fact that you're clean now and you're ready to go meet the Lord. Then once you did that, you can see the ruins of this today, you would go next door in order to look at the animals that were being kept for sacrifice because right beside those baptistries, the Jews had several large pens where rams and sheep and

goats were held while they were waiting for slaughter up top. You can see the stone outlines of those things today. Because they wouldn't keep the animals at the top, they would put them down there, which you would look at out of curiosity.

That brings it to the final stage of the third stage of the journey and that's the Temple Mount itself. You haven't even gotten to the temple yet, by the way. You've done all this already, and you haven't gotten to the place of sacrifice. But once you've made the trip to Jerusalem, climbed the hill to the city, cleaned yourself off, you're ready to go. Because at this point in the story, you will ascend the four-story flight of stairs from the ground to the temple complex above, which was 36 acres in size. It is a very large portion of the town. If you've seen pictures of the Dome of the Rock today, that's where it's located. The Dome of the Rock is not a big building, it is two or three-stories tall, but it's on this massive plateau. In fact, to be more specific, the temple itself was actually in the center of a large series of courts that surrounded it like a fortress. Just like it was with the walls of Jerusalem, it was built within several sections that brought you closer and closer to God as you went.

So, the first thing you went through was the court of Gentiles, which was a massive open-air area that wrapped itself around the grounds because it was provided a place for Gentiles to worship God that was far away from the temple. And in that court, you had things like Solomon's portico, and you had the Antonia Fortress where the Roman garrison was kept, and you had the shops where you could buy a sacrifice. I just told you, they kept the animals at the bottom, but they would take them to the top to sell them. And up there on the court of Gentiles, you could purchase your ram or sheep or goat to present before the Lord. You could bring your own sacrifice if you wanted to, but the priests had to approve it first and they rarely ever did that. Things were very corrupt at the time, so, if you brought your animal to the priests, they would say, "oh, no, it has a blemish, I can't use this, so, sell it to me and I and go get another one." Once you did that, you would come to the court of women where Jewish women could go into worship, that is where they would praise the Lord. And then there you would have the temple treasury, a court of women was about 200 feet long. They had 13 large basins there that were shaped like trumpets, they were large at the top and smaller at the bottom and that's what you would put your money in, at the court of women. They also had several chambers there that would hold the firewood for the altar and oils for the lamps. Then the next court you came to with your sacrifice was a court of Israel where the men could go and I couldn't get the dimensions on this one but this is where the male citizens would worship and praise the Lord, and listen to the Torah being taught. And that was about it, because the main purpose of the court of men was to hand your sacrifice off to the Priests, because the next court further in was the court of Priests and you couldn't go there. That is where the Temple and the Holy of Holies, and the Altar was where the sons of Aaron made sacrifice was in the court of Priests. It was a massive area right in the middle of the complex that several thousand people could fit in at once, but it was off limits to you. If you were a male Jew, you could not walk in that section. So, you would take your animal right up to the corner or the barrier, hand it over to Priest and you would watch as he led the animal to the altar, cut its throat, collected the blood in a bowl, went back to the altar, sprinkle the blood, then skin, the body, cut the body up, spread the pieces on top in order to let the fire

consume it and then finally, your sin was forgiven. You imagine that? Finally, after going through all those steps, your sacrifice was made. So, the next thing you do now, is you go home.

You have to get back on the camel, join the caravan, and take the long journey back to your family. Now let me ask you another question: the reason I told you all that, because I'm trying to get your mind around this passage, but let me ask you another question: How would you like to do that every time you sinned? You imagine that? After hearing about all that, how many of you would like to go through all those steps every time you failed the Lord in order to get forgiveness? I don't see any hands up. It sounds very, very difficult. And with that in mind, I want to read our passage for you for today. It's found in Hebrews chapter eight. Our focus is on the first part of this chapter. And that's what we're going to read if you would read Hebrews eight, verse one. It says this, it says,

Now the main point in what has been said *is this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so, it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

Now, just to summarize what you just read here, we could focus our attention on verse six, which says that Jesus has "obtained a more excellent ministry." What does that mean? Well, that means Jesus has given you something that's better than all that stuff I just described to you, Amen. Christ has given you a way of salvation that's greater than anything Israel ever knew. Because now when you sin, you don't have to journey to Jerusalem anymore. You don't have to travel at the Temple Mount. You don't have to immerse yourself in water. You don't have to go buy a sacrifice. You don't have to walk through court after court after court and hand you're offering to the priests, you can just trust in Christ, and that's it. You can go to the cross, and that's all. Can we all say Amen to that? I mean, doesn't that get you excited? And the reason is because Christ is this, He is the mediator of a better covenant for you. Israel had a covenant, and it was a good covenant. You have a covenant that's better. The word mediator, it's the word *mesitēs* in Greek. It refers to someone who stands between two parties and brings them together. The term actually comes from a root word that means center, because it describes a person who steps into the center of a conflict and reunites two warring factions and that's what your Savior has done. He stepped into the center of your conflict with God, your sin with God and He's brought reconciliation. Because with Him, unlike it was under the Old Covenant, Jesus has given you one death, one sacrifice one offering, and that's taking care of everything.

The priests who served in Israel were mediators as well. And they stepped into the conflict but not like this. This verse even says that He has given you a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. And that means it's enacted on better assurances, because when you sin, you have a perfect assurance that it will be forgiven because of Christ. It is not because of you, is because of Him. You don't have this promise because you're better, or because the church is better than Israel, or because Christians are better than Jews, or because people in the 21st century are better than people in the first century, that has nothing to do with it. It is simply because of Christ. He is the one who died. He is the one who was killed. He is the one who laid Himself on the altar. So, He is the one who receives all the glory for all of this. And that is what we are talking about this morning, because this morning, I want to talk about the ministry Christ is doing now. We are going to talk about that by looking at five things Jesus does now, in order to give us a better covenant. So, if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today: this passage is talking about His work as our high priest, and the ministry He is doing for us today. And so, in Hebrews eight in these first couple of verses here, we are going to talk about five things Jesus does now, to give us a better covenant. I'm going to walk you through these one at a time and I think it would be a blessing to our hearts this morning.

The first one is that he is seated at the right hand of God. You can see all this in your passage as we go through it. The first thing Jesus does to give us a better covenant is that He is seated at the right hand of God, which means that, Jesus does not serve us from anywhere as our High Priest right now, He does it from heaven. He has died on the cross, He has provided forgiveness, He has given us salvation that way. But there are things He is doing for us now and the first one is He's in heaven. If you look in verse one, it says this, it says,

Now the main point in what has been said is this. We have such a high priest, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

Now, as you read that, one thing that jumps out at you is this phrase – “now the main point” that means that this is the main point of the book, this is what it's all about. And that is that Jesus is our high priest now. You may wonder why it says that here, because it seems to come out of nowhere, but it doesn't because he's continuing a train of thought that he started way back at the end of chapter six. If you look back in chapter six, verse 19, the author introduces this subject this way, when he says

this hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope, both sure and steadfast, and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

In other words, when you read chapter eight, the subject of Christ's priesthood, and the New Covenant may seem to come out of nowhere, but it doesn't because the author's making a connection between Melchizedek and Christ, in order to show you that Jesus comes from the order or the priestly line of Melchizedek. Back then, in order to become a priest, you couldn't just step into office, you had to come

from a specific group or priestly order that was based on your race. That was how the Old Covenant was set up. And this passage says Jesus did that, but not in the typical way. Because He doesn't come from the order of Levi like the Jewish priests did. He comes from the line of Melchizedek, which is better by far. And just to summarize why it's better, if you look in chapter seven, and some of the things he says here, chapter seven, verse two, the author explains that Melchizedek, or Christ's priesthood is better because he was the King of Righteousness and the king of peace, which means Jesus was a priest and a king, He serves in both offices. And then in verse three, it says that it's better because he had neither beginning of days nor end of life, which means He is eternal. In Christ, you have a Savior who lives forever. Then in verse 11, it says, it is better because He is perfect, there is nothing lacking in Him. In verse 16, it is better because He is indestructible, in verse 22, it is better because He gives you a guarantee, verse 25 says it is better because Christ saves us forever. And after saying all this, the author summarizes it this way in chapter eight, verse one: "now, the main point and one has been said is this we have such a High Priests." In other words, you don't have a normal man serving in this office like Israel did. You don't have a fallen person, a tangible person doing all these things. Verse one says you have someone who has taken His seat at the right hand of God; that is who your High Priest is right now.

Now this is one of many passages in the book that can only be understood if you have a Jewish mindset because when you put yourself in the mind of the Jews, you realize the priests had no seats in the temple back then. There was nowhere for them to sit down and take a break, because the job was never over. Once they stepped into the court of priests, it was just work, work, work for them. It was just go, go, go because they had prayers to offer, sacrifices to make, animals to kill, animals to dispose of all these types of things. But on the other hand, this verse says, we have a High Priest who has taken His seat, see the connection. To demonstrate that Christ's work is over, His task is done, your salvation is completely finished once and for all at the cross. So, He doesn't have to run around and go, go, go like they did. And to add to this, if you were a Jew, and you read this verse, you would also remember that the throne of God was off limits to the priest as well. There was one place in the temple they couldn't go to. We may talk about this more next time, but I showed you the Temple Mount and how it was laid out with the four courts that brought you closer and closer to God as you went through them. And so, you came to the court of priests, which house the temple building itself. And in that structure, there was one room that priests could go into, but there was another one that had the veil and the Holy of Holies, and the Ark of the Covenant, and that was off limits. The high priests could go in there one day, a year on the Day of Atonement, and that was it. But on the other hand, this verse says that place is not restricted from Jesus, He has full access to the presence of God, because He lives there. He is taking His seat at the right hand of God. You know, angels bow in the presence of God, Christ sits there. In His right hand, that was considered to be a place of great respect back then. When a king wanted to honor someone, he would place them at his right hand, to symbolize this person is above everyone else in the kingdom. That's what God did with Christ. He's above everything else in heaven. It also says He sat down by the throne of the Majesty and if you notice that word, "Majesty" is capitalized in your Bibles, because it is a reference for God, to highlight the fact that it's not just anyone's throne Jesus is sitting beside, it is God's throne, God's chair, God's seat, to show that the two of them are the same. There is

equality there, between the Father and the Son. And it says, He does this in the heavens, and that word is plural, that's not a typo. Because the Jews thought there were three levels to heaven back then they believe that there was the first heaven, which referred to the atmosphere or the sky. And then there was the second heaven, which referred to outer space or the galaxy. And then they believe there was the third heaven where God sat and where God resided and that's where Christ is now; He is in the highest place imaginable. In fact, this idea of the three levels of Heaven shows you how remarkable this is, because if you can't go to the first heavens on your own or the sky, and you can't get up to the second heavens or outer space on your own, then how in the world are you going to get to the presence of God? It's impossible, it's too high for you. But the point here is that it's not too high for your Savior, because He's already there. And so, to be saved, what you have to do is you trust in Him and He will bring you to Heaven with Him. But all this is said in the first verse to show you how special Christ is as your High Priest. He does his work now, from the throne of God.

You know, I don't know about you. But I was really amazed as I studied all this, because I'm tempted to think that when Jesus got to heaven, He forgot about me. And I tend to believe that when he went up there, I slipped his mind because He had more important things to think about, this passage says that he doesn't. Even when He's up in heaven, you're still on his mind. Even when He sits by the throne of God, He still wants to help you. Because yes, He has ascended into heaven, and yes, He is sitting with God and yes, He left the earth, but He did not leave you, and that's what this passage is telling you. He did not forget about us. We are still close to His heart and if that doesn't humble you, I don't know what else will, and if that doesn't drive you to worship, nothing's going to do it. You have a Savior in the greatest place imaginable. We often get so concerned about the things that are going on this earth, and there should be some concern, things are getting crazy. But that does not matter in light of this does it? Not eternally. I am not worried who my king is on earth. I just want to know I have a King of heaven, that's the most important thing.

That brings us to another thing Jesus does to bring us a better covenant, and that is that He ministers in the sanctuary, or the true tabernacle. The first one is that He is seated at the right hand of God. But a second thing Jesus does in order to bring us a better covenant is that He ministers in the sanctuary, or the true tabernacle, and we're just following along the passage here. But this means that even though He is seated in heaven, He is not idle. And even though the work of salvation is done, He is still serving and helping us there like a priest would, because He is taking the work on the cross and applying it to our lives now. He is taking the fruit of our salvation and bringing it to bear in us. And if you would read on in verse one, it says this, it says,

Now, the main point in what has been said is this, we have such a high priest, who is taking a seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Now, as you move on in the passage here, you can tell it gets more mysterious as you go. Because the author is talking about Christ's ministry in heaven and anytime you do that, you're diving into an inexhaustible subject. This is something you'll never get to the bottom of. I think most of us think of heaven as a place where we do nothing all day but sit around on a cloud and strum a harp. That's not true. And that's not what Christ is doing there. Maybe you guys don't come from that tradition. But where I came from the idea of Heaven was a place where nothing really goes on. That is not what heaven is like. It says in this verse that He is a minister there. And that's the Greek word, *leitourgos* it refers to a servant or helper or someone who works to assist you. Interestingly enough, the word is used in Exodus 30:20 to refer to the Old Covenant priests. Because when the Lord was instituting the priesthood in Israel, He made it clear that they were to approach the altar in order to minister. In other words, they weren't supposed to be lazy, they weren't supposed to do it selfishly for themselves, it was all done for others in this verse says it's the same way with Christ. Because on the one hand, He is seated at the right hand of God, on the other hand, He ministers there. And the passage here in verse two, it doesn't go into a lot of details as to what He is doing, but it does tell you where it occurs, it says He does it in the sanctuary. That is another word for heaven, all this stuff is pictures of heaven. Because it's a term that Jews use interchangeably for the Holy of Holies, or the place where the Ark of the Covenant was kept in that room behind the veil in the temple. And the significance to it is that the other priests in Israel did not serve God in that place, because it was outside of their jurisdiction that they served at a distance from the Holy of Holies, in the sanctuary, but with Jesus is different. He serves in the sanctuary. It also says he does it in the true tabernacle. That's a term for heaven as well refers to the building that Jews used to worship in before they built the temple, and the importance of that word is that this is the first place where the presence of God was kept in Israel. It is the first place where the Holy of Holies was, so it always had a special significance to the Jews. And even so, this says, the place where Jesus serves is greater than that. Because He serves in the true tabernacle, which was pitched by God and not by man. That doesn't mean that the previous tabernacle was fake, because it wasn't. And it doesn't mean that it was wrong because it was not wrong. It was just temporary. The Tabernacle the priests served in lasted for a few centuries and that was it, while the place Jesus serves in lasts forever.

If you're wondering what the Lord is doing in heaven, specifically, what we're talking about here, I looked it up last week, and from what I could learn, there are currently eight things Jesus does in heaven right now. I read this list to you last time, I sent it out in the grace for your day for this week. But I want to mention it again, just to have it fresh in your memory. But right now, in heaven, the Bible says Jesus is seated at the Father's right hand, He's ministering in the sanctuary there, He's making intercession for us, He's serving as our mediator, He's serving as our advocate, He's overseeing the church like we read in the book of Revelation, He's sending out the Gospel like we see in the book of Acts, and He's preparing a home for you in the book of John. That is encouraging, isn't it? It is a blessing for you to think about all that because it means He is doing it now; all this work is happening this instant. And can we just stop here for a moment and say, aren't you glad He is? And we would pause, aren't you grateful Christ is doing these things? Because if you are wondering, what has Jesus done for me lately? Let me ask you a question. Are you still a Christian? It's because of Christ. That's it. That's the only reason

you're still saved. Are you still walking with God? It is because of Him. It is not because you're good enough or smart enough or holy enough, it's not because you've earned your way there, nothing about that. It is His grace and nothing more.

Are you keeping away from gross sin this morning? That's because of Christ. Are you avoiding temptation? That's because of Christ. Are you seeing spiritual fruit? Are you winning spiritual victories? Are you triumphing in spiritual battles against the evil one? That's all because of His ministry. It is Christ with the Holy Spirit working in your life. He is making intercession for you, serving as your advocate, serving as your mediator, and building up the church. It is not because you are holding on to him, it's because He is holding on to you. It is not because you are reaching up to Him as much as it is He reaching down to you. Christ is the focus of everything. He saved you in the beginning, He saves you in the middle, He saves you in the end. In fact, if you look back up in verse one, it says that we have such a High Priest who is taking a seat at the right hand of God, a minister in the sanctuary, and the verse is in the continual tense in Greek to show you that you have such a High Priest, and you continue to have Him. We have such a minister right now in heaven, we continue day in, day out, year in, year out, every waking moment, because this is what saves us; it is Christ and nothing else. I'll never forget the time I was at a conference when John MacArthur told us that the one thing that would surprise him the most in heaven, is the fact that he will be there. It won't be the streets of gold, and it won't be the crystal sea, and it won't be the pearly gates, as much as the fact that he gets to see it, and it will be because of his Savior. It is the same way for you, same way for me.

Which brings it to another thing that Jesus does in order to bring us a better covenant and that is that He is appointed to make an offering for us. A third thing that Jesus does, in order to bring us a better covenant is that He's appointed to make an offering for us, which doesn't refer to the offering of blood because that was already made, but the offering of something else. And before we move on, I want to point out as you continue to go through this, the author keeps making a comparison between Christ and the priests of the Old Covenant. And as he does so some of these images may not sound familiar to you because you are a gentile, which is why I'm doing my best to explain this to you. But if you look in verse three, he says,

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So, it is necessary that this High Priest also have something to offer.

Now, the key phrase here is that phrase gifts and sacrifices. Because at first glance, it sounds like those two things are the same, but they're not. In the Jewish world, the terms refer to two different types of offerings that you would bring. The first one would be gifts or non-bloody sacrifices, and then it would be offerings or bloody ones. The way the sacrificial system was set up in Israel, is that there are several categories the sacrifices fell into, for example, you had the grain offerings, which involve the offering of a plant or fruit of the ground that's summarized in the word gift here. That is something that the people would bring to a priest when they sin, they would pass through the quarter gentiles pass, through the

courts of women, pass through the courts of man on their way to the courts of priests in hand them some heads of grain at the threshold. And the priests would take that grain, and he would put it on the altar and let it burn. That was one way forgiveness was offered or found. And they would also present four other ones called: the burnt offering, sin offering, guilt offering and peace offering, which all involve the slaughter of an animal. And that is summarized in the word offerings here. Because in the burn offering, you would give an animal to the priests in order to let him burn it all the way up. He would let the fire completely consume it. And then the sin offering, guilt offering, and peace offering, you would give it to him so he could burn it up partially and the priests would keep the rest as a means of payment. It is because of this that some scholars have called the priests "professional butchers," because they spent all their days killing animals and wading through their blood, the blood just flowed constantly from the altar in Jerusalem. And the idea here is that Jesus was appointed for the same reason except that he does not bring God an animal or a grain sacrifice anymore, He brings Him something else. Now, when it says here in verse three, that it is necessary that this High Priest have something to offer, there are some different views on that, but the way it's worded here sounds like it's not a reference to the cross, because the context is all about his ministry in heaven in the things He's doing for us now. So, it seems like it's referring to something else. And this is not a physical offering that's described here as much as a spiritual one.

As one commentator says all the offerings of the Old Testament had a deeper meaning behind them. Therefore, the gift offerings were given to represent personal dedication, commitment, and thanksgiving to the Lord. And the blood offerings were given to represent forgiveness. So that's what Christ brings to the father now on our behalf, when we sin, He reminds us that we're forgiven and when we repent, He helps us to dedicate ourselves to the Lord. And again, this passage doesn't give you lots of information about this, but this is something that has been talked about before in the book of Hebrews. If you look up in chapter seven, verse 25, the author says this, and this is an example of the kind of offering Jesus makes in heaven now. In chapter seven, verse 25, it says,

Therefore, He is able also to save forever, those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

And when it says Jesus makes intercession, that means He pleads before the Father, because that's what an intercessor does. He comes to the Lord on our behalf, and He makes supplication for our needs. Because you can't go to God on your own, you're way too sinful for that. So, this is what Christ does; He goes for us and pleads our case there. In fact, this verse says, He always lives to do that, which means He doesn't do it once, but he does it continually. He doesn't just go to the Father on our behalf today, but he does it tomorrow and the next day in the next day too. Because the offerings continue to flow. You will never come to a time when you when you don't need Him; so, there's never a time when He's not doing this for you. I think we have a tendency to forget this because we all like to be self-sufficient and we have a propensity to ignore the offerings Jesus brings to God on an ongoing basis, because we like to think we can handle things on our own. But the reality is that you can't. That's just

pride talking. You can't handle anything on your own, you can't handle your job on your own, you can't handle your family on your own, you can't handle your marriage on your own, you definitely can't handle sin on your own. You need someone to help you. You need someone to intercede. And by the way, that's true whether you're a new Christian or an old Christian, that's the case whether you've been walking with the Lord for one year, two years, three years, 100 years. That's what He's there for, which is what the end of the verse refers to when it says, it's necessary that this High Priest have something to offer. That means it's necessary for Him to offer this because that's what a priest does, but it also means it's necessary for Jesus to offer this because of you. You need his help continually. So that's what He gives freely for us from heaven.

And I'd like to say more about that, but I want to move on to this next point. Because this brings us to another thing Jesus does, in order to bring us a better covenant, and that is that He provides more than a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. If you look in the passage here, a fourth thing Jesus does to bring us a better covenant is to provide more than a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, which means, He provides something that lasts longer than a fleeting moment, like the previous sacrifices did. And to be honest, when you come to verse four, it seems like He's changing the subject and talking about something else, but He's not because the verse starts off by saying, now if Jesus were on the earth, he would not be a priest at all. Now, what's that talking about? Well, he's telling you another reason why Jesus' work in heaven is so important and that's because if He were living on the earth at this time in the first century, He wouldn't be doing all these wonderful things for you because He was not a Levite. Jesus did not come from the proper tribe in Israel to be a priest; that's why when you read the Gospels, you don't see Christ serving in that office. But that doesn't matter, because now the author reminds you that his priesthood is not about that anyway. It is a priesthood of heaven and not of the earth. Verse five tells you why that's so important, because the priests who serve on this earth are just a shadow and a copy of the heavenly things. That phrase, "copy and shadow," it's interesting, can be taken several different ways: It can mean that the priests who serve on earth are a reflection of the heavenly things. They are like a mirror so that when you look at them, you get a thought of what's happening in eternity. And it can also mean that the priests who serve on the earth are a poor reflection as well, because they remind you of eternity, but just a little bit, because their work is human, it is full of deficiencies. It can mean that the priests who serve on the earth are also just temporary. They are only there for a while. At this time, most scholars believe because it says this, that the sacrifices were still going on in Israel and these Jews would have thought that to be a very essential thing is huge, very big deal. And the author is saying it's really not in the grand scope of things. Because the sacrifices will one day end. This is what verse five goes on to say, when it says these things

serve as a copy and Shadow of the heavenly things. Just as Moses was warned by God, when he was about to erect the tabernacle. For See, he says that you make all things according to the pattern, which was shown you on the mountain.

That's a reference to the time when Moses was commanded to build the tabernacle in the book of Exodus and the Lord gave him a pattern as to what it looks like. And we don't know what the pattern was, but it doesn't matter because the idea is whatever it was, just like it would be silly for Moses to see the finished tabernacle and want to go back to the pattern, it would be a silly thing for you to see Christ and want to go back to the Old Covenant, because it's just a shadow. You know what this means? This means the priesthood was a shadow. Circumcision was a shadow. Food laws were a shadow. The altar was a shadow. The tabernacle was a shadow, the temple was a shadow, sacrifices were a shadow, the offerings were a shadow, because it was all given as a pattern of the Savior that was to come. They were important, and they serve their function, but once the Son is here, you don't need the shadows anymore, do you? And once the full Light has come, you don't need the copies. I don't know if you've study this before but depending on what version of the Bible you have, when you open it up, some of you have study Bibles, that show you how Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant feasts. Because when he arrived, the Lord became our Passover Lamb for the Passover feast, and our Atonement sacrifice for the Day of Atonement, and the One who tabernacled among us for the Feast of Tabernacles. So, you don't need all that stuff anymore, it is not necessary, He's completed it. You can also find charts that talk about how He fulfilled the objects in the temple. Because as our intercessor, He took the place of the altar of incense, which came into the presence of God through the sweet aroma. And as the bread of life, He took the place of the showbread, and as a Light of the world, He took the place of the lampstand, so you don't have to keep going back to those traditions either. It is just a foretaste.

I have said this before in the series on Hebrews, but there's a reason why the New Testament is not caught up in all the physical stuff anymore. And there's a reason why it doesn't put such an emphasis on the external parts of our religion and that's what all these things are now, they are shadows. Big showy displays in church are shadows, big flashy programs on the stage with light shows and fog machines are shadows. Let us get real offensive: candles are shadows, fog machines, statues are shadows, robes are shadows, incense are shadows, priests who go up and down and do the mass is shadows. Because they are hiding the real thing, and that's Christ. We like to read a book like Hebrews and kind of pick on the Jews a little bit, but we do all this stuff today, don't we? I just told you what it looked like if you visited Jerusalem in the first century, but my wife and I actually went there 15 years ago and we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was built on the spot where Christ was supposedly crucified. And they had a place in the floor where they thought He was taken down from the cross. I don't know if they really knew that for sure, but that's where they thought it happened. And I remember watching people go up to that stone slab and bow down to it, and pray to it, and take the handkerchief out of their pocket and rub it on there and weep. And I remember thinking, why? What is that doing? Christ isn't there, He is not in your handkerchief. So, in order to get to Him, you got to put all that way of thinking aside and look to heaven. To be honest, some people just have this backwards. They think the more physical things you do in church, the better they believe. The more candles you have, the more robes you have, the more incense you have, if God will like it, it's not true. Worship in the New Testament was very different from that. It put all its attention on Christ. When you go through Israel, you see a lot of ruins of old churches. And one thing they tell you is there were almost no churches built in the first century,

because they were under persecution, they couldn't afford it, they just met in houses, they had nothing physical going on. And the Lord still bless the work.

And it brings us to one more thing Jesus does, in order to bring us into a better covenant. Just to review these other ones, the first one is that He is seated at the right hand of God. Secondly, He ministers in the sanctuary or true tabernacle. Third, He is appointed to make an offering for us. Fourth, He provides more than a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. But let me give you one more of those and that is that He has become our mediator. We talked about this at the beginning of the sermon, but this is how it ends. A fifth thing Christ does in order to bring us into a better covenant is that He became our mediator, which means that He became the one who stood in the gap between us and God. Now here, the author is going to bring things around full circle and take you back to where he started this. Because he says this in verse six, he says, "but now" and that's helpful because if you look back up in verse one, he said, Now the main point in what has been said is this. And he says here in verse six, "but now" one preacher said that anytime you see a word like that repeated in Scripture, you should see the author clapping his hands and raising them up and saying, "all right, everybody, listen up. I'm about to tell you something important." And this is what he says "but now Jesus has obtained more excellent ministry." Way back in verse two, it says Jesus was a minister. Now, it says He has obtained a more excellent ministry, because He is the mediator of a New Covenant, better Covenant. And the word mediator, it's that word, *mesitēs* as I mentioned a moment ago, it refers to a middleman or someone who steps into the center of a conflict to bring about peace. It is mentioned here because this is what a priest was set up to do in Israel. Numbers 18, verse five says to Aaron, that you and your sons will be priest because you will be responsible for my altar so that my wrath will not fall on Israel again. In other words, it was the priest's job to keep God's wrath from falling on the Jews. He was to be a mediator to step in, to bring peace when they sinned. Leviticus four verse 20, says that when someone sinned it was the priest's job to make atonement for it, and that means when someone broke a commandment, this is what happened: God went over here, they went over there, and the priests was to bring them back together. The Jews knew when you sinned, you couldn't just say you're sorry and expect God to forgive it. A price had to be paid, blood had to be spilled, something had to die, and it was their job to handle it. And the author says here, this is what Christ has done for us. He is your great High Priest now.

And I want to say a little more about this word mediator because it has a rich history in the Bible. It is a word that was used way back in the book of Job. When Job was suffering and hurting and dealing with the problem of pain, Job nine, verse 32, says this: Job was talking in one of his long monologues and he says:

For God is not a man, that I may answer Him that we may go to court together, for there is no mediator between us.

You see what Job saying there. Job is saying, I have a problem with God. I don't know why this is happening. And I have no body to stand in the gap. I'm all alone. Most scholars believe the Job was

written before the sacrificial system was instituted in Israel. So, he said that before the priesthood was put into place, and he tells you why that was such a problem for him and that is because he's just alone in this. Here the author of Hebrews says, you don't have that problem, unlike Job. It is not just you and the Lord and no one else, you have a mediator in the person of Christ. Not only that, but He is the mediator of a better covenant. Which means he gives you a better relationship with God than anything Israel had because you don't have to go back to the temple now to be forgiven, you just go to Christ. And it says here that for this covenant is enacted on better promises, which means it's an acted on better assurances, because when you sin, you can believe without a question, He will pardon it. And in fact, I could sum this whole verse up, I think, with the word "now" that I just mentioned to you a moment ago. That word is very interesting in the setting of what we're talking about here, because the Jewish people had no sense of the word "now" when they sinned. Under the Old Covenant, you couldn't get a mediator right now. When you failed, you had to go through all those long steps. You had to go back to Jerusalem, you had to climb the 3000 foot incline, you had to go through the walls of the city, go to the Temple Mount, buy a sacrifice, go through the court of gentiles, go through the court of women, go through the court of Israel, in order to present the animal to a priest and stand back and watch as he led it to the altar, cut its throat, collected the blood in the bowl, went back to the altar, sprinkled the blood skin the body, cut it up into pieces, put it on the altar to burn it, which was exhausting. It was draining, it took forever. But you did it because you had no other choice. That was how forgiveness was made. Now the passage is reminding you at the end, not anymore. Because now He has obtained a more excellent ministry for you, right now.

And let me tell you what this means practically. Practically, we'll make some applications to this. This means if you need Jesus to help you now, Jesus can help you now. You don't have to wait. You don't have to go pack up the cow and join a caravan. If you need Him to step in and serve you with this excellent ministry from heaven, He can do it right away. I think we often forget this because we like to say what can I do for Jesus, right? And when we're saved, the first thing we want to know is how can I serve Him? And that's right, that's a good attitude. But on the other hand, you need to remember Jesus is there to serve you to. He is sitting right now at the Father's side in order to intercede and plead and go to Him for you. So, you need to learn how to kill that prideful spirit of self-sufficiency that we're talking about and let Him do it. I can't tell you how many times I've talked to someone in our church who has told me that they feel like they have no one to help them. That is not true. If you are in Christ, you have Jesus. He is there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, morning, noon and night. And I can't tell you how many times I've heard someone say they feel like they're alone in the Christian life, you're not alone. He lives to intercede for you. The only way to see that is to be humble. You remember what Peter said, when Jesus took the towel and he tried to wash his feet. Remember that story? Peter said, "no, Lord, you will never wash my feet, You will never serve me. I am self-sufficient." Remember what Jesus said. He said, "if I do not wash you, you will have no part in me." You know what that means? That means if you don't let Jesus serve you, He will reject you. This is part of the deal. We have to be humble in this. If you look at this passage, and you want another application, here is another one: if you want something better than the types and shadows right now, you can have

something better than the types and shadows. If you want a religion that's not just based on the external things anymore, and based on the physical things, and based on the show, you don't have to wait for that either because Christ can give it to you now. Jesus wants to give you more than just candles and robes and statues when you come to church. Christ wants to give you more than just songs and concerts and fog machines. He came to change you at the soul level. I know the thought of that is a blessing to some of you because you have told me that you have been to one church after another that felt so fake because it was also physical, Christ wasn't there. They talked about the news, but they didn't talk about Christ. They talked about sports, but they didn't talk about Christ. They talked about what was all going on in the world today, but they left the cross out of the picture, and you understand how wrong that is, because who cares about all that if you don't have Jesus, Amen?

But the solution now is not for you to go out and criticize those churches. The solution now is to make sure you're not making the same mistake. Do not leave Christ out of the throne room of your heart. Do not get so caught up in all that other stuff that you don't put Him in the first place. This is how you take the shadows away. You don't light a candle first; you don't take out a handkerchief and rub a stone. You fix your eyes on Jesus. We could talk about some other applications here. I mean, this means if you want a high priest, who can offer you more than just a physical sacrifice, He can do that too. Because He is the son of God, He is seated at the right hand of God, He is assisting us there in the true tabernacle, which means He is serving you with heaven's resources, and heaven's power and heaven's grace. So, there's nothing He can't do. We can talk about more, but we'll, we'll ended here. Next week, we're going to look at the rest of Hebrews eight. And talk about this some more because we're not done talking about the New Covenant yet. Starting in verse eight, the author is going to give you a long quotation from the Old Testament, from Jeremiah 31 that we'll get into more details about this subject. This is actually the longest quotation from the Old Testament in the book of Hebrews. There's more than 100 words mentioned in here to show you the importance of that, so, please come back next time and we will look at that together. But for now, let's go to our High Priest and close in a word of prayer and thank Him for this ministry to us, and ask Him for His grace to apply these things.

Heavenly Father, we are overwhelmed with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we think of our weakness, and we think of our frailty, and just the frailty of our minds, and understanding all this, it blows us away that you would want to stay in heaven and serve us in this way. And Lord, I pray that a passage like this one, even though it is rich, and deep, and mysterious in many ways, would be such an encouragement to our hearts. I know that there are many here this morning who do feel lonely as they go through the Christian life, when they feel like they're missing a sense of power to change and grow, yet all the power we need is right there in your Son. It is sitting there in heaven. Lord, would you give us the grace to see that? Would you open our eyes to the resources we have in Jesus? And Father, for those who were here this morning, who had been caught up in physical things, they come from churches or places where the emphasis is all pointed in the wrong direction, Lord would you help us to come out of that as well. There is still a spirit sometimes of the Old Covenant way of doing things in our hearts. We are so focused in the tangible and things we can touch, smell, taste, and that sort of thing. But we

need more than that. Our souls need to change, our hearts need to grow, our minds need to be strengthened. We need to repent of sin. Would you grow us in that father, and Lord and all these things, we thank You for Your Word. We thank you that it is a bottomless subject. We could sit up here and talk about this all day long. Never get to the end of it. So, Lord thank you for giving us this revelation. We pray as we continue to go through the book of Hebrews, that these things would not just be doctrinal for us, they would be things that change our lives and grow us ever closer to the Savior, and we pray this in Jesus' name for His glory. Amen.