

**Prayer:**

C.S. Lewis:

“If God forgives us we must forgive ourselves otherwise it’s like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him.”

“When you are arguing against God you are arguing against the very power that makes you able to argue at all.”

John Piper writes:

*The point of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, has not just come to fit into the earthly system of priestly ministry as the best and final human priest, but he has come to fulfill and put an end to that system, and to orient all our attention on himself, ministering for us first on Calvary as our final Sacrifice and then in heaven as our final Priest.*

*The Old Testament tabernacle and priests and sacrifices were shadows. Now the reality has come, and the shadows pass away.*

*Here’s an Advent illustration for kids — and those of us who used to be kids and remember what it was like. Suppose you and your mom get separated in the grocery store, and you start to get scared and panic and don’t know which way to go, and you run to the end of an aisle, and just before you start to cry, you see a shadow on the floor at the end of the aisle that looks just like your mom. It makes you really hopeful. But which is better? The hopefulness of seeing the shadow, or having your mom step around the corner and it’s really her?*

*That’s the way it is when Jesus comes to be our High Priest. That’s what Christmas is.*

*Christmas is the replacement of shadows with the real thing: Mom stepping around the corner of the aisle, and all the relief and joy that gives to a little child.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Devotional excerpted from “*Our High Priest Is the Son of God Perfect Forever*”  
[https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/replacing-the-shadows?utm\\_campaign=Daily%20Email&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_c](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/replacing-the-shadows?utm_campaign=Daily%20Email&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_c)

Heb 8: 1-6: Jesus a Better Ministry

Heb 8:7-13: The New Covenant, written on their hearts

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**Part 1: Heb 8:1-6: *Jesus, a Better Ministry***

- Verse 1 starts with a continuative conjunction. The author is continuing the discussion. He is very straightforward: the main point is this
  - He has been writing about Jesus as the forever High Priest
- Now, he begins to modify who this High Priest is
- He is seated on the right hand of the throne of majesty
  - This gives royal language which is not uncommon in Hebrews
  - There is a throne
- this throne is in Heaven
- There is a physical throne and our High Priest, Jesus, is on it in His physical body. Remember, He has been resurrected.
- Psalm 110:1

Verse 2:

- Jesus is a minister in the sanctuary, or holy place
  - This is contrasting the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament set up by man and the Holy of Holies in the New Testament set up by God

**ESV Study Bible notes:**

**Heb. 8:1–2** *The author reminds readers of the main **point** of the letter: Christians have a **high priest** who has brought full forgiveness of sins, and this is evident by his being **seated** at God's **right hand**. See [1:3](#), [13](#); [10:12](#); [12:2](#). **Majesty**. An indirect Semitic term for God himself (see [1:3](#)). The Greek translated **holy places** will refer later to the “Holy Place” ([9:2](#)) and the “Most Holy Place” (lit., “Holy of Holies,” [9:3](#)) in the earthly tabernacle constructed at the time of Moses ([Ex. 26:33–34](#)) as well as in the Jerusalem temple. But here the author is speaking of something even better, the actual heavenly “holy places,” that is, the area before the very throne of God himself. This is where Christ is now a **minister**. The **true tent** (Gk. skēnē) refers to heaven, God's very presence; the earthly tabernacle functions as a picture of entering into God's*

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*presence in heaven. Human beings made the earthly tabernacle; the heavenly tabernacle ([Heb. 8:5; 9:11, 23–24](#)) was **set up** by **the Lord** himself—probably a reference to God the Father (see [8:8–11; also 7:14; 12:5–6](#)), though possibly to Jesus ([1:10; 2:3; 7:14; 13:20](#)).*

**[Heb. 8:1–13](#)** *Jesus, High Priest of a Better Covenant. Jesus is shown to be the eternal high priest, ministering from heaven in the true tabernacle and enacting the better promises of the new covenant.*

Verse 3:

- This begins a new sentence and more about the High Priest
- Every High Priest must offer a sacrifice
- The text says that this High Priest also must offer a gift and a sacrifice

**The ESV study notes:**

**[Heb. 8:3](#)** High priests offered **gifts** of thanksgiving and **sacrifices** for sin; Jesus as high priest must **offer** a sacrifice, which he does in the true heavenly tabernacle ([v. 2; see 9:11–14, 23–28; 10:12–14](#)).

Verse 4:

- Verse 4 is almost like a parentheses
- Verse 4 starts with “if.” This is a conditional conjunction. The verse is giving a condition.
- This is contrasting him being in Heaven versus being on earth.
- On earth there are already priests
- The priests on earth are according to the law
- They are offering gifts

**ESV Study notes:**

**[Heb. 8:4](#)** Jesus could not serve in the earthly tabernacle, since the law requires Levitical/Aaronic lineage ([7:11–19](#)).

Verse 5:

- The priests on earth serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things
  - What does this mean? I think it means that it is not genuine
- The author gives a quote from Ex 25:40
- Moses was told to make it according to the “pattern.”

- Col 2:17 is similar

#### ESV Study Notes:

[Heb. 8:5](#) The earthly tabernacle (**tent**), in which the Levitical priesthood served, was only a lesser **copy** of the heavenly **pattern** shown to Moses ([Ex. 25:40](#)).

Verse 6:

- Starts with the conjunction translated “but.”
  - This is showing contrast
- Jesus’ ministry is superior
- Jesus’ ministry is founded on better promises
- Jesus has received or obtained this ministry
  - This carries the connotation that He had planned action for this ministry
- 1 Tim 2:5 Jesus is the mediator
- Luke 22:20 is about the New Covenant

#### The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:

The writer produces here an extended citation from Jeremiah 31:31–34 to demonstrate his case that the Bible itself predicted a change in the law. This text was also stressed by the Qumran sectarians who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls; they saw themselves as the people of this “new covenant.” But they interpreted Moses’ law more strictly, whereas this writer would have been

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law \***Law**. “Torah” (the Hebrew word behind the Greek word translated “law”) means literally “instruction” and “teaching,” not just regulations. It was also used as a title for the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, the books of Moses) and sometimes for the whole Old Testament. This commentary uses the translation “law” because it is familiar to readers of most translations, even though the English term’s semantic range is much narrower than the Jewish concept.

Qumran **Qumran**. The place where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found (Khirbet Qumran); hence “Qumran community” is used to describe the people who lived there and wrote the Scrolls.

Dead Sea Scrolls \***Dead Sea Scrolls**. Writings from a strict Jewish sect (usually agreed to be Essenes) that lived in the Judean desert, near modern Khirbet Qumran. The writings include the War Scroll, the Community Rule, the Damascus Document, the Thanksgiving Hymns, the Genesis Apocryphon, the Temple Scroll and commentaries on and expansions of various biblical books.

considered a more liberal Jew on this point than Philo was (13:9), valuing the principles as eternal but the forms as cultural and temporary.

**8:6–7.** The author picks up a hint he dropped in 7:12: the old priesthood was tied with the old law and its covenant, and both were shown to be imperfect if they were superseded.<sup>2</sup>

**ESV Study notes:**

**Heb. 8:6** The words **than the old** are not in the Greek but are supplied from the context for clarity (see [vv. 7–13](#)). Evidence for Jesus' superior ministry is found in the new **covenant** ([vv. 8, 13](#)), of which he is the mediator (see [9:15](#); [12:24](#); [cf. 2:2](#)) and which is legally ordained (**enacted**) on **better promises**. On “promises,” see [4:1 and 6:12–20](#). The better promises of the new covenant are cited in [8:8–12](#).

Hebrews 8:7-13: *The New Covenant, written on their hearts*

- This is saying a repeated theme in Hebrews: there was something wrong with the first covenant and this is why there is a need for a new covenant
- Verse 8 introduces an OT quotation
- Verses 9-12 is from Jeremiah 31:31-34
- This is a good contrast with the old covenant and I don't think it has completely been fulfilled
- Verse 13: the new covenant has come and the old one is obsolete and aging

**The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:**

**8:8–9.** The phrase generally rendered “new” covenant in Jeremiah 31:31 could also be translated “renewed” covenant. The first covenant was meant to be written on people’s hearts (Deut 30:11–14), and the righteous actually had it there (Ps 37:31; 40:8; 119:11; Is 51:7); but according to Jeremiah, most of Israel did *not* have it in their hearts (cf., e.g., Deut 5:29). The difference between the former and the new covenant would be precisely that whereas the Israelites broke the first covenant (Jer 31:32), the new law would be written within them, and they would know God (Jer 31:33–34).

**8:10–12.** Jeremiah echoes the language of the first covenant: “I will be their God, and they will be my people” (e.g., Lev 26:12). “Knowing” God was also covenant language, but on a personal level it referred to the sort of intimate relationship with God that the prophets had.

**8:13.** The writer undoubtedly says “about to disappear” because the temple service had not been directly discontinued by Jesus’ exaltation, but it was at that time on the verge of disappearing. If,

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Philo \***Philo**. A first-century Jewish philosopher committed to both Judaism and Greek thought; he lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and held a position of great influence and prestige in the Jewish community there.

<sup>2</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Heb 8:2-6). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

as is likely, this letter was written in the late 60s A.D. (see introduction), many in the Diaspora recognized that the Romans might soon crush Jerusalem and the temple. Apart from a few groups not very dependent on the Jerusalem temple (such as the Essenes), most Palestinian Jews were forced to make major readjustments in cultic practice after the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.<sup>3</sup>

**ESV Study Bible notes:**

**Heb. 8:7** if that first covenant had been faultless. The Mosaic covenant was not wrong; rather, it was weak and ineffective (7:18–19) since it could not bring people to perfection. God's purposes in the old covenant (among others) were to inform his people of the moral law, to convict them of sin (10:3), and (prominently featured in the book of Hebrews) to establish the pattern of sacrifice, priesthood, and promise of salvation that is fulfilled in Christ. Yet the inability of sinful humanity to achieve perfection under the old covenant required the promise of a **second** covenant, proving the ineffectiveness (i.e., the shortcomings) of the first.

**Heb. 8:8–12** he finds fault with them. God blames sinful humanity for the failure of the first covenant. [Jeremiah 31:31–34](#), quoted here, supports several arguments in Hebrews: (1) this “second” covenant ([Heb. 8:7](#)) comes after the Mosaic covenant (**the days are coming, v. 8**); (2) it is established by the Lord ([vv. 8, 13](#)); (3) it is a **new covenant** ([vv. 8, 13](#)); (4) it is unlike the former covenant of the exodus ([vv. 9, 13](#)); (5) the former covenant failed because of the fault of Israel (**for they did not continue in my covenant, v. 9**; see [v. 8](#)); (6) this new covenant involves a transformation of the inner life of its recipients by writing God's laws into their **minds** and **hearts** so that all **know** him ([vv. 10–11](#); see [10:14–17](#); cf. [9:9](#)); and (7) it brings true, final forgiveness of sins ([8:12](#); see [9:15](#); [10:12–18](#)).

**Heb. 8:13** The **new covenant** makes **the first one** old (Gk. *palaiōō*, here translated **obsolete**)—so old that it is becoming like a person of extreme age (Gk. *gēraskō*, here translated **growing old**) and thus is near to disappearing (**ready to vanish away**).

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Diaspora \***Diaspora**. The Jewish dispersion outside Palestine. The technical term “Diaspora Judaism” is thus used interchangeably with “non-Palestinian Judaism” in this commentary.

Essenes \***Essenes**. A strict group of pietists, some of whom withdrew into the wilderness as monastics. The Dead Sea Scrolls are probably from one group of Essenes.

<sup>3</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Heb 8:8-13). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.