

School of the Word
Hebrews
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HEBREWS 8:1-6

Sequence

- Hebrews 8:1-6
- Reading and reactions
- The place in the letter
- Assumptions
- Commentary
- Conversation

Reading and reactions

Heb 8:1 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, one who *sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven*, **2** a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.

3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer. **4** Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

5 The place where they serve is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle.

For he says, “*See that you make everything according to the design shown to you on the mountain.*” **6** But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry, since the covenant that he mediates is also better and is enacted on better promises.

Place in the letter

- **III: B** 8:1-9:28 — Jesus the perfect high priest
 - 8:1-6: The Son is mediator of a new covenant
 - 8:7-13: The promise of a new covenant
 - 9:1-10: The worship of the old covenant
 - 9:11-28: Christ’s worship in heaven

Assumptions

- How will Jesus be the perfect high priest?
- Every priest offers something
- The earthly sanctuary was a shadow / sketch
- Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary
- Thus, the writer gathers in what went before, leading to what is coming next
- Plato’s cave and his “forms”

Hebrew 8:1-2

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- These verses summarise the discussion since chapter 5.
- Main point: *kephalaion*.
- Qualities: 7:26-27.
- Psalm 110:1 is used again: Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1 and 10:12.
- The Lord said to my lord, “Sit on my right until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” (Ps 109:1)
- “My” becomes “of the throne of the Majesty of heaven”

- Minister: *leitourgos* — actually a secular word, meaning a public work.
- True: i.e. genuine or real
- Tent: lit. “of the holy things” (used elsewhere to mean the sanctuary).
- (a) The sanctuary, that is, the true tabernacle. Cf. Heb 9:8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11.
- (b) The holy of holies, distinguished from the sanctuary as a whole.
- Set up: lit. pitched.
- I.e. “not made by human hands.”

Previous affirmations

Heb 4:14 Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

Heb 6:19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain, **20** where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became *a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*.

Heb 7:3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, he has neither beginning of

days nor end of life but is like the son of God, and he remains a priest for all time.

Heb 7:24 but he holds his priesthood permanently since he lives forever. **25** So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Heb 7:27 He has no need to do every day what those priests do, to offer sacrifices first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people, since he did this in offering himself once for all.

Tent of Meeting / Temple

Lev 16:16 So he is to make atonement for the holy place from the impurities of the Israelites and from their transgressions with regard to all their sins, and thus he is to do for the *Meeting Tent* which resides with them in the midst of their impurities.

Lev 16:20 “When he has finished purifying the holy place, the *Meeting Tent*, and the altar, he is to present the live goat.

Lev 16:33 and he is to purify the Most Holy Place, he is to purify the *Meeting Tent* and the altar, and he is to make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

Hebrews 8:3-4

Heb 8:3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer. **4** Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

- A general definition of “priest.”
- For every high priest is taken from among the people and appointed to represent them before God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. (Heb 5:1)
- True for all and therefore true for Jesus as well.
- Jesus is *not* an earthly priest according to the Law — Levites were already in place and Jesus was not a Levite.
- Heb 7:13-19.
- *Therefore*, his priesthood is *not* on earth.

Hebrew 8:5-6

Heb 8:5 The place where they serve is a sketch (*hupodeigma*) and shadow (*skia*) of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For he says, “*See that you make everything according to the design (typos) shown to you on the mountain.*” **6** But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry, since the covenant that he mediates is also better and is enacted on better promises.

- Exod 25:40 See to it that you make them according to the pattern (*typos*) that has been shown to you on the mountain. (LXX)
- Exod 25:8 (9) And you shall make for me according to all that I show you on the mountain—the pattern (*paradeigma*) of the tent and the pattern (*paradeigma*) of all its furnishings. So you shall make. (LXX)
- The Greek terms permit another understanding: that the earthly temple was only a pale shadow of the true one in heaven.
- Plato: *typos*, meaning the perfect forms in heaven. Earthly versions are mere copies.
- The imitation depends on the ideal type, so there is a real connection.
- Nevertheless, it is always derivative and secondary.
- Additionally, *hupodeigma* means an example *to the followed*, in this case, to be followed by the perfect sanctuary.
- The writer has no trouble using the metaphysics of Plato to read the biblical text afresh.
- At the same time, the author values to a high degree the true humanity of Jesus.
- Ministry: *leitourgia*.
- Superior: different, unlike.
- Mediator: *mesites*, a technical term.
- The noun *mesites* appears in the NT only 6 times (Gal 3:19, 20; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), whereas the vb. derived from the noun is a NT hapax legomenon in Heb 6:17.
- Secular meaning: impartial person who mediates between two parties; also witness / guarantor.
- Jewish use: a mediator between God and humans.
- Philo: So Moses, being amazed, and being also constrained by this command, believes those incredible events, and springs down to be a *mediator* and reconciler; (Moses 2:166)]
- The notice of a new and better covenant prepares for a long citation from Jeremiah regarding the new covenant.

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Conversation

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