

The New and Better Covenant

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, April 14, 2024
PASSAGES	Hebrews 8; Hebrews 9; Jeremiah 31
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

When Hebrews says the first covenant is at fault, it does not mean God got something wrong. The fault is found squarely with the people — and always would have been, with any people. The new covenant is the one where God takes both sides of the agreement himself.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The author of Hebrews states his own thesis in the first sentence of chapter 8: we have exactly the high priest we need. Everything after that is why.
- ◆ Even Moses' tent was not the original. It was built to a pattern of something heavenly and ancient, which means the temple Jesus spoke of is older than the one he stood in.
- ◆ "He finds fault with them." The fault in the first covenant is on the human side of it, not the divine side. Nothing God did in the old covenant is being condemned.
- ◆ Two opposite errors make the same mistake: reading the Old Testament as a set of tasks we might do better, and reading it as though God were evolving. Both read scripture without the lens of Christ.
- ◆ If any nation could have kept a covenant, it was the one that had every advantage. Israel's failure is not a verdict on Israel; it is a mirror.
- ◆ "Obsolete" is not a demotion of anything God said. It is what fulfillment looks like from the far side.
- ◆ Jesus is not only the one who secures your standing. He is your standing, your access, and your prayer life.

► 1:09:33

Matt came to Hebrews 8 with what he called a rare treat: the author states his own main point up front, so no discernment is required to find it. The rest of the morning was spent on what that point costs, and what it buys.

1. The main point, stated up front

► 1:10:09

"Now the 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 heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man."

HEBREWS 8:1-2 ↗

Seated at the right hand implies access at the highest level of authority. The true tent means that access is ancient, perfect and holy. And he is there with our interests — advocating for people he loves. Matt’s phrase for it was “our man on the inside,” and then he pushed the picture further: “Imagine how you’d feel if the judge over your case and your defense attorney were in scandalous cahoots. Collusion in your favor.”

2. Even the tent was a copy

► 1:13:15

The earthly priests serve a copy and shadow, built to the pattern Moses was shown on the mountain. Matt traced the layers backward. Those who returned from exile wept for the older temple. Before Solomon’s temple there was the tent in the wilderness, which suited a nomadic people. And even that tent — the first one by most people’s reckoning — was modeled on something heavenly and eternal. So the temple Jesus meant when he said tear this temple down and I will raise it in three days is not the newest thing in the story. “This isn’t just like a software update.” It belongs to the one who said “before Abraham was, I am.”

3. Where the fault actually lies

► 1:15:21

“But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.”

HEBREWS 8:6-7 ↗

Hebrews keeps warning its readers not to walk away and keeps insisting the gospel is rock solid because the person it rests on is rock solid. Matt read that repetition as evidence about the audience: they were tempted to do exactly that — to treat the new covenant as something they could safely leave in order to go back. Which makes the next line load-bearing. “For he finds fault with them.” Not with the covenant’s author. The quotation that follows is Jeremiah 31, spoken during the reform of King Josiah (2 Kings 23).

4. Two errors, one mistake

► 1:17:43

Matt slowed down here on purpose, because he sees the household of God tempted in two opposite directions. Some Christians, he said, live-action role play as though they were Old Testament Israel with new material added — as if Jesus came to lengthen the list, and we might succeed where others stumbled because we have more insight, or better spiritual technology. It is the instinct behind concern-trolling a nativity scene for containing a baby Jesus. Others go the other way and treat the covenants as evidence that God is learning: he tried some rules, it did not work, so he tried the Jesus thing. “Though I phrase it in a way that sounds insane, that exact idea does get broadcast within the body.”

Both are the same error wearing different clothes — reading the words of scripture without the lens of Jesus Christ. He came not to abolish the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them. The first camp, in particular, has a hard time doing what Jesus commended — bringing out of the treasure what is new and what is old — because it cannot tell which is which. “Fulfillment is the substance of this message from Hebrews. Fulfillment.”

5. If anyone could have kept it

► 1:22:36

None of this is a verdict on Israel. “It is my firm conviction that the Macedonians would have failed as well. The Egyptians would have failed. The Germans would have failed.” Hand a covenant to any people on earth, say do this and you will find blessing, and what you get back is failure on the human side. And if anyone was ever going to manage it, it was this nation: born out of a miracle to an elderly couple who could not have children, carried out of slavery, fed with manna, given water in the wilderness, given an encounter with God in smoke and fire and trumpets that “Hollywood couldn’t have done better,” then handed judges and prophets and more miracles besides. Every advantage, and still all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. What that leaves, Matt said, is a longing: could there ever be a covenant where God simply takes both sides of it?

6. The covenant where God takes both sides

► 1:23:52

“I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people... For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

HEBREWS 8:10-12 ↗

God's desire here is relational, as it has been all through the Old Testament, and the promised transformation runs from the inside out in a way only he could pull off. Matt paused on "they shall not teach each one his neighbor" long enough to say the obvious: that is not a rule against lessons. It is a description of people who all know him.

7. Obsolete — and why the word is not a problem

► 1:25:44

Then comes the intense word: what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. There is an objection to raise first, and Matt raised it himself — Aaron's priesthood was called everlasting (Numbers 25:13, Exodus 29:9, Exodus 40:15). He gave three possible answers and took the third.

God can revoke a "forever," and has: a prophet told Eli that the promise about his house standing before the Lord was withdrawn (1 Samuel 2:30). That is not what is happening here. The Hebrew word is also not the English word — it can mean for the duration, the way Samuel would live in the temple forever without being immortal. Not that either. The reason something called forever can be called obsolete is fulfillment: every promise, every longing, every whisper of what God was doing, found complete and final in Jesus Christ.

8. Inside the tent, and out of it

► 1:28:00

Chapter 9 walks the furniture — lampstand, bread of the Presence, the golden altar of incense, the ark with the manna and Aaron's staff and the tablets, the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat (Hebrews 9:1–5). Into the second section the high priest goes only once a year, and never without blood. And those gifts and sacrifices could not perfect the conscience of the worshipper — they dealt with food, drink and washings, until the time of reformation.

► 1:30:05

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption."

HEBREWS 9:11–12 ↗

Once, not repeatedly, and it lasts. And where the old arrangement reached the flesh, this blood purifies the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. “This is not cope,” Matt said. “This isn’t a consolation letter for those who long for the old. This is supposed to be excellent, joyful news.”

9. Read the Old Testament for the longing

► 1:30:51

Here Matt offered the alternative to putting yourself at the center of the story. Read it and let a longing accumulate. Kings walk faithfully for a while and falter; sometimes they die and their sons act a fool immediately. David supplies a great deal of proverbial wisdom, and Solomon, who was wiser still, did not walk in it.

► 1:32:17

Then Rehoboam, asked for relief by people worn out from building, takes advice from his young friends and comes back with a heavier yoke than his father’s. You start wishing for a king who would rule justly and stay that way. Then Jehoiada the priest, who hid the infant prince from Athaliah, led a reform and tutored the boy — and once the priest died, the king he had raised killed his mentor’s own son, a prophet (2 Chronicles 24:17–22). “Apparently you can’t disciple someone from the outside in, against their will.” So the longing sharpens into something specific: a priest who can reach the places that are secret and hard to get to, and who will not leave you by dying. Then Abraham bargaining down from fifty to ten (Genesis 18:23–32), and Moses asking God to blot him out rather than destroy the people (Exodus 32:32) — and you want an intercessor whose ministry never lapses.

10. Which is why the word “obsolete” is good news

► 1:36:39

All of it is satisfied in one person. The negotiator God sends to the table represents God perfectly, because Jesus is the God of the Old Testament in flesh. He is also, at that same table, genuinely one of us — someone who knows what it is to be tempted, weak, hungry, poor, dirty and tired, and yet without sin. Father and Son on the same page, Matt said, doggedly pursuing his bride.

► 1:37:20

“Jesus Christ is our covenant with God.” No fine print to check for a loophole. He is our right standing with the Father, our perfect righteousness, our identity as children of God. He is, Matt added, your forty-day fast.

► 1:38:07

And for anyone who has ever wondered how close they might feel to God if only they prayed better and longer and harder — Jesus is your prayer life too. He already has all the access there is. “He’s in the triple platinum level already, and he’s there to bring you in like a Trojan horse” — the unwashed, stinky masses carried deep into the holy places. And no, the Father is not going to discover you were snuck in. You were invited. That, Matt prayed at the end, is what would give rest to the heavy laden, if the Spirit helped us grasp it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Hebrews 8:1–2](#)
- [Hebrews 8:5](#)
- [John 2:19](#)
- [John 8:58](#)
- [Hebrews 8:6–7](#)
- [Hebrews 8:8–9](#)
- [Jeremiah 31:31–34](#)
- [2 Kings 23](#)
- [Matthew 5:17](#)
- [Matthew 13:52](#)
- [Romans 3:23](#)
- [Hebrews 8:10–12](#)
- [Hebrews 8:13](#)
- [Numbers 25:13](#)
- [Exodus 29:9](#)
- [Exodus 40:15](#)
- [1 Samuel 2:30](#)
- [Hebrews 9:1–5](#)
- [Hebrews 9:6–7](#)
- [Hebrews 9:9–10](#)
- [Hebrews 9:11–12](#)
- [Hebrews 9:14](#)
- [1 Kings 12:8–14](#)
- [2 Chronicles 24:17–22](#)
- [Genesis 18:23–32](#)
- [Exodus 32:32](#)
- [Hebrews 4:15](#)
- [Matthew 11:28](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Of the two errors Matt described — living as though we were Israel with a longer list, or treating God as though he were learning as he went — which one are you more prone to, and how does it show up?
2. Hebrews says the fault was found with the people, not with the covenant's author. What changes in how you read the Old Testament if nothing God did there is being condemned?
3. Matt said the story leaves you longing for a king who stays, a priest who reaches inside, and an intercessor who never stops. Which of those three do you feel the lack of most right now?
4. Jeremiah promises laws written on the heart. Where do you most want that inside-out work, as opposed to another attempt at trying harder from the outside?
5. If Jesus is already your right standing, your access and your prayer life, what does that change about how you approach God this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZkgmOMW9BE&t=0s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.