

SHADOW VS. REALITY



Hebrews 7:26-8:5

Those last words in **Hebrews 8:5** "*See that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain*" - are a quote from **Exodus 25:40**. God is speaking to Moses, and the point that this writer draws out is that the furnishings and the actions of the Old Testament tabernacle were not made up "ad hoc" on the spot. God was considering heavenly, eternal realities and then creating something that would be like a *shadow and a copy* (v.5a) of that. So the whole Old Testament regime (tabernacle, vestments, sacrifices, holy days) when you really look at them, you see more. You see God and his ways, something being said about God, mainly the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now when Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into the world, he came NOT to become the best and last shadow, as a priest. He came to put an end the shadows, because He IS the Reality.

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

This probably happened to every one of us when we were children. As a kid, 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 happy and you feel hope.

But which is better, kids? The happiness of seeing the shadow, like mommy, or having mommy step around the corner and it's really her!? (Mommy's better.)

That's the way it is when Jesus comes to be our High Priest. Christianity is Jesus coming around the corner, and the shadows are gone!

Christianity is the coming of Jesus Christ, and is the replacement of shadows with the real thing.

The priesthood is gone, temple is gone, vestments are gone. Animal sacrifices are gone, yearly feasting, circumcision are gone. Why? Because Christianity is the replacing of the shadows and copies with the real thing – Jesus Christ.

The Main Point

Hebrews 8:1–2 (NIV) —*1 The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.*

1. The main point of it all—is that the one priest who goes between us and God, and makes us right with God, and prays for us to God - is *not* an ordinary, weak, sinful, dying, priest like in the Old Testament days. He is the Son of God—strong, sinless, with an indestructible life.

2. Not only that, he is not ministering in an earthly tabernacle with all its limitations of place and size. No, **v.2** says that Christ is ministering for us in a "*true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.*" This is the "real thing" in heaven. This is from what the earthly tabernacle was copied.

3. AND according to **verse 1**, another great thing about the reality which is greater than the shadow, is that our High Priest is *seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven*. No Old Testament priest could ever say that. Jesus deals directly with God the Father. He has a place of honor beside God. This is not shadow reality like curtains and bowls and tables and candles and robes and tassels and sheep and goats and pigeons. This is final, ultimate reality: God and his Son interacting in love and holiness for our eternal salvation.

Heb. 7:26-28 - Five Superiorities of the Priesthood of Jesus

Now add to this the last verses of chapter 7. The writer wants us to marvel at the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus over the Old Testament priesthood that he came to replace.

Notice five superiorities.

1. First, Jesus is sinless. **Hebrews 7:26** (NIV) ⁻²⁶ *Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

No other priest could ever say that! They were all sinful, like you and me. But not Jesus. He was tempted but never yielded to the point of sin.

2. Second, because he was sinless, he didn't have to offer sacrifices for himself, but instead could offer HIMSELF as a sacrifice. Hebrews 7:27 (NIV)²⁷ *Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*

What a radical difference from the previous priests. They had sins of their own that had to be dealt with first, and then never in a million years would it have entered their heads that they could actually *be* the sacrifice for the sins of others. But Jesus changed all that: He needed no sacrifice for himself, but became a sacrifice in himself.

3. Which leads to the third superiority: his sacrifice of himself was "once for all." You see that at the end of **verse 27**, "*He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*" This is a great word (*ephapax*)—"once for all." The effect it has is to make Jesus the center of history of redemption and grace.

- Every work of God's grace in history before the sacrifice of Christ looked *forward* to the death of Christ for its foundation.
- And every work of God's grace since the sacrifice of Christ *looks back* to the death of Christ for its foundation.

So the cross is the center of the history of grace and redemption. Grace was planned from all eternity, but not without Jesus Christ at the center and his death as the foundation. Paul says in **2 Timothy 1: 9** that God's "*grace . . . was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.*"

4. The fourth superiority. Instead of a law which appointed the other priests, Jesus Christ was appointed with an oath. Hebrews 7:28 (NIV)²⁸ *For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever."*

The oath he's referring to is the oath in **Psalm 110:4**, "*The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*" The oath comes after the law and, in fact, points already in the Old Testament to the end of the Law as a ritual system.

The oath is spoken to the Messiah (Psalm 110:1). So the final High Priest is the Messiah, the Son of

God, in the order of Melchizedek, not Levi or Aaron, and is installed by an oath, not by the Law, which is passing away.

5. The fifth superiority of Christ over all other priests is that his ministry is FOREVER. At the end of verse 28: The oath "*who has been made perfect forever.*" Jesus never dies. He never has to be replaced. He has an indestructible life. He will outlive all his foes. He will be there for us long after everyone we depend on is dead.

When we so often encounter the uncertainty of this life, it's so good to realize that this priest, Jesus—the one who prays for us, as we saw last week, and the one who is sympathetic with us, as we saw in Hebrews 4:15—has been perfected forever. Not for a decade or a century or a millennium. But forever. To that we look when we think about how uncertain our lives are.

SUMMARY

The great and overarching point of this text at the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8 is that we have a great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who came into the world as the Son of God, lived a sinless life, offered himself as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of his people, rose to everlasting life at the right hand of the majesty of God, **INSTALLED AS OUR PERFECT HIGH PRIEST**, and there loves us and prays for us and bids us draw near to God through him.

AND this high priest did not come to be the last and greatest "shadow" -to fit into the old system of priestly sacrifices. He came to fulfill and therefore end the shadows (as he steps around the aisle). No more tabernacle, priests, vestments, dietary laws – all the shadows are fulfilled and gone!

John 2:19

Remember at end of His life he stepped out of the temple (Herod's temple – 46 yrs to build)? He looked up and said, "*Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in 3 days.*" (Jn.2:19) What did he rebuild? Not another temple, not a cathedral, or a new priesthood, not new worship rules. **HE BUILT CHIRST!** Risen, reigning ascended. And receiving worship as the *locus* and the *focus* of all true spiritual worship. That's the replacement of shadows with reality.

Worship and the New Reality

Now let me close by drawing out some implications of this for our life of worship (Personal,

Corporate and Global).

- The sacrificial system is gone
- the tabernacle and the temple - gone.
- Priesthood - gone.
- dietary laws- gone.
- priestly vestments - gone.
- days of atonement and reconciliation - gone.

In essence, the entire worship life of the Old Testament has been decimated! In its place comes something radically different.

PERSONAL WORSHIP

It is all refocused on Jesus himself and has become a radically *spiritual* thing, as opposed to an *external* thing.

The external still exists, as a skeleton, but in the New Testament, **the spiritual unseen reality of Christ is so pervasive that not one building, but EVERY building is a place of worship.** And not one place or act is an act of worship, but every act is an act of worship (or not).

Romans 12:1 *"Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship"*. That's all the time and everywhere (suits or pajamas, work or play). **1 Corinthians 10:31** *"Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* —all the time, everywhere.

What you do at work or school, what you do not just on Sunday morning but Friday and Saturday night – is an act of worship OR blasphemy!

CORPORATE WORSHIP

It is stunning how different the New Testament is to such things. Read the New Testament to try to find out how to worship? In vain.

In the New Testament, all the focus is on the reality of the glory of Christ, not the shadow and copy of religious objects and forms.

There is NO authorization in the New Testament for thins such as:

- worship buildings, or
- worship dress, or
- worship times, or
- worship music, or
- invitations
- choirs or praise bands

NOTHING is authorized (or forbidden).

Because now only one thing matters – ARE WE CONNECTING WITH THE LIVING CHRIST? – in reality, not in externalities. Are we connecting with the living Christ? And if we're not, it doesn't matter what we do/don't do on the outside – it's not worship!

It is both **frightening** and **freeing** at the same time.

We have FREEDOM. We can build a building if we want. We can set a time and dress pick music and elements and objects to worship – but in the end the question is – do they help us orient radically toward the supremacy of God in Christ?

But it is also FRIGHTENING, because it means that every cherished worship tradition we have is without Biblical Mandate.

Question? Will we chose places, actions and forms that kindle a passion for the supremacy and glory of god?

GLOBAL WORSHIP

And will we pray and think and adapt so it is transferable to the peoples that we (you and I) are called to reach?

There's a **REASON** for this stripped down and radical spirituality of worship in the New Testament. And the reason is this. Christianity is a Missionary Religion and the New Testament is a Missionary Document. The message of this book is meant to be carried to every people on earth and incarnated in every culture in the world.

That's why New Testament worship is stripped of form. It goes free into every culture so that Christ can be worshipped by every people group in the world, even though they may do it in radically different ways.

- The Old Testament was mainly a “come-and-see” religion. So they “built” for it.
- The New Testament is mainly a “go-and-tell” religion.

And to make that possible, the Son of God has not abolished worship, but made it the kind of radically spiritual engagement with God in Christ that can and must happen in every culture on the earth.

CONCLUSION

Have you moved from the shadows to the REALITY? Jesus Christ.