

引言 INTRODUCTION

Toy is an essential tool in the growth of a child. Sometimes parents let children play something so that they can focus on their business. But good toys can help children prepare for the real world. Boys learn how to drive and crash vehicles when they play toy cars. Girls build an imaginary home with dolls and stuff animals. Kids use money to buy and sell properties in Monopoly. They pretend to be a chef with a kitchen set. As kids grow up, they will gradually stop playing childhood toys. They buy things with real money, drive their parents' cars or cook real food. When they have something better, they will not go back to the old ways. The author of Hebrews presents the same argument in chapter 8. God has prepared a better covenant in Jesus. Therefore, the readers should not go back to the old way. They did not have to observe the Law and sacrifice animals. Covenant is the foundation for the relationship between God and His people. A covenant functions like a contract we sign today. Each side can enjoy benefits when the terms are obeyed. There will be a penalty if either party violates the agreements. In the Bible, God made covenants with His people. For example, God presented a covenant with Israel through Moses. Then God gave His people the Law to elaborate the terms in that covenant. The Law tells them how to maintain a proper relationship with God. There are regulations on worship, food, hygiene, etc. When Jesus came, He completely transformed the way people approach God. Through Jesus, every believer can build a personal relationship with God. Jesus is the fulfillment of a better and superior covenant.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 更美之約的中保 Mediator of a Better Covenant

Jesus fulfilled a better covenant and He is the Mediator of it. Let us read from **verse 1 to 6**. The word mediator (ESV translates it as mediates) appears in verse 6. In today's term, we call the person an arbitrator. His job is to resolve a dispute between two parties to bring back harmony. That was the role of priests. They offered animals to temporarily quench God's wrath and atone for people's sins. But Jesus is superior to the priests. The author tells us in several ways Jesus' work was more effective than the priests. First, Jesus was **a better high priest**. Verse 1 says that Jesus is now sitting at the right side of the Father. Jesus can sit down because He had completed the salvation work. Unlike earthly priests, Jesus does not only get near to God, He is forever in God's presence. Through Jesus, we can access the Father from anywhere at any time. Jesus had made the connection for us. He assures us that God will hear us when we pray in His name. Jesus' name is like a signature on a check that authorizes a payment. A bank will process a check if the signature matches the record. Likewise, God answers our prayer when He recognizes our eternal relationship with Jesus. Second, Jesus offered **a better sacrifice**. The notion is implied in verses 3 and 4. An earthly priest presented animals on the altar. Therefore, it is expected that Jesus had to offer something. In 7:27, the author says Jesus offered Himself as the ultimate sin sacrifice. Jesus' cleansing power is so effective that He only had to die once on the cross. People in any era who confess their sins and accept Jesus by faith will have their sins – past, present and future – all wiped out. Next time we sin, we do not need to find a priest to offer an animal for us.

Instead, we can call onto to Jesus in-person, admit our sin and claim His forgiving grace once again. Third, Jesus serves in **a better sanctuary**. Earthly priests ministered in the tabernacle. It was a tent made of cloth and animal skin before the temple was built. In verse 5, the author says this earthly worship place was but a **copy, shadow and pattern** of the heavenly sanctuary. “Copy” means a representation. We use a photocopier to duplicate a document. The copy looks like the original but it is only a reproduction of it. A shadow is cast when light shines on an object. We make shadows of a wolf, bird, butterfly, etc. using our hands around a campfire. When there is a shadow, there must be a real item. From the Greek word for “pattern” we get the English word “type.” When engineers build a car, bridge or a building they will start with drawings on paper or on a computer. From that, they will create models. Automobile manufacturers even put together prototypes called concept cars. They have outrageous designs and super-cool features. They show what the final products may look like. Earthly priest served in a model sanctuary, while Jesus ministers in the true sanctuary. Fourth, Jesus performs **a better ministry**. The author specifies Jesus’ ministry in 7:25 – **Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them**. Jesus is able to cover any sin that we confess to Him. In addition, Jesus prays continually for us as He is right next to the Father. Jesus asks the Father to give us grace, wisdom and confidence whenever we need help. Jesus makes requests on our behalf even when we do not know how to express our burdens in words. Jesus appeals for us when we go astray and are too stubborn to turn back. Jesus is our ever-present and effective advocate in any life situation. How dumb are we if we think that we can manage our circumstances by ourselves? It is like a car without an engine. We cannot go anywhere no matter how hard we step on the accelerator. Christianity in essence is to surrender our self-dependence and to fully trust God. He can make use of various resources to fulfill His plans for us. We can rest in His peace even in a stormy sea. There are actually two more ways that show Jesus is superior. He offered us **a better covenant** grounded in **better promises**. We will cover those two aspects in a moment. Jesus is the superior Mediator of a better covenant. He paved the way for us to go to the Father. Today, we worship God in Jesus’ name. This is not a moral lecture or a religious performance. By faith, we know that God is here when we call onto God. How different will it be if we truly know that God is in our midst? We will feel embarrassed to arrive late, check on our phone or chat with our neighbors. I am human too and so I can understand that sometimes there can be unexpected events that need your immediate attention. God’s presence also gives me awesome fear every time I prepare my messages. God evaluates my sermons even before you hear it! I often pray: “Lord, I will have nothing to say if you don’t teach me Your Word first. May this message be something You want me to speak and something our congregation needs to hear.” I will continue to stumble with my pronunciation. I will sweat all over when I forget some details in my script. Thank you for showing me kindness and patience. Those imperfections keep me humble, or else I will trust my own ability instead of God’s unlimited grace. Our attitude should also change when we visualize that God is here to receive our worship. We will sing with more joy and enthusiasm. We will pray more earnestly. Our weekly gathering in this room is actually a rehearsal for the worship in the heavenly sanctuary. God will give us a new body when we see Him. We will not worry about getting bored, falling asleep or singing off-tune. We will worship God face to face with a multitude of believers and angels. How exciting and glorious that will be!

2. 更美之約的先驅 Initiator of a Better Covenant

Jesus is not only the Mediator of a better covenant. He is also the Initiator of it. Let me read from **verse 7 to 9**. The author raises a reasonable question in verse 7: why did God install a new covenant if there was nothing wrong with the old ones? God only gives us good gifts. Therefore, it is not His fault but ours when problems occur. The author summarizes the problem in verse 9: the Israelites did not continue in God's covenant. They breached the contract by rebelling against God. They did not believe that God would deliver them from their difficulties. They were fearful when they saw enemies. They only focused on meeting immediate needs and lost sight on God's future plan. As a result, they were disciplined instead of blessed by God. We are no better than them. We resort to our little human wisdom to deal with our problems. Instead, we must hold onto God's promises. We can pray to Him: "Lord, I can't but I know you can. Help me put my trust in You and wait for Your guidance." Since the Israelites failed, God initiated a new and better covenant. We will proceed to read **verse 10 to 13**. The author is quoting from Jeremiah 31:31-34. At that time Judah was defeated by Babylon. People understood that God was judging them for worshipping idols and seeking help from foreign nations when enemies came. As a result, the temple was destroyed, and people and properties were taken away. But God gave His people hope even in such a tragic outcome. One day God would bring them back and restore relationship with His people through a new covenant. It will supersede all the previous covenants. But it is not a plan B. God knew all along that Israel would betray Him, just like He knew Adam and Eve would sin. Salvation through Jesus Christ was in God's schedule. Our lives are in the care of this sovereign God. Nothing will catch Him by surprise. We can have peace despite uncertainties in our lives and calamities in the world. This better covenant does not only benefit the Israelites. It will bless all God's children. Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus 600 years later. In Matthew 26:27-28, Jesus said to His disciples while passing them a cup at the Last Supper: **27 ... "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."** This new covenant was established through the cross. Jesus died for our sins so that we can be reconciled with the Father. Since then, Christians observe the communion to remember His death. Why is this covenant better than all the previous ones? The author of Hebrews tells us three better promises in it. Pay attention to the "I will" statements in this passage. Verse 10 says: **"I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts."** The two lines are parallel sentences to convey the same idea. God's Law is no longer commands etched on clay tablets or written on animal skins. It will be ingrained onto people's brains. Does God give people better mental capacity so that they will not forget His Word? No, God blesses us with a better gift! He sends the Holy Spirit to live in believers. He helps us understand the Bible. He reminds us of God's truth. He alerts us when we face temptations. He convicts us when we sin. The Holy Spirit empowers us so that we have the will and strength to do what pleases God. Whenever we are weak, He is strong. The Holy Spirit will come to our rescue. In addition, the verse continues: **"I will be their God, and they shall be my people."** God told Moses the same thing when He gave the Law. What had been changed? All along, God intended to build a close relationship with His people. However, the Israelites felt that God was distant. They were afraid when God manifested Himself with smoke, fire, earthquake and sound of trumpet on Mount Sinai. They told Moses that they would rather hear from him instead of getting near God. Since then, they obeyed God's Law to avoid His punishment. In the new covenant, God puts the focus back to where it should be. Think of it like house rules. It is no fun that parents have to keep nagging children or even threatening them with penalty before they will comply to our requirements. True obedience is seen in three steps. First, kids understand that those rules are for their good. Second, they remember what their parents

said. Third, they do accordingly even without asking. Likewise, God does not want us to focus only on the rules, but the relationship behind the rules. God's commands are not to restrict our freedom. Quite the contrary. They draw a boundary to protect us so that we can enjoy God's freedom as His children. Now we come to the third "I will" statement. Look at verse 12: **"For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."** In our expression, we say God will forgive and forget our sins. For those who put their trust in Jesus, all of their sins have been settled at the cross. Those records have been erased from God's database. But Satan is the biggest party-crasher. He likes to convict us with our previous sins. He mocks at us: "Look at you! You fell to the same sins again. Will God still forgive you?" Someone said it right: when Satan reminds us of our past, we should remind him of his future! When Jesus returns, Satan will be condemned forever. God's forgiveness is a remedy for our weakness, but it should not be used as a license for sin. We will dare not to sin if we truly realize the great price Jesus paid to save us. He willingly sacrificed everything for us. Since God loves us so much, He wants us to love Him back. The question for you is: do you maintain a relationship with God by rules or by love? Often we have a long list of "have-to." We have to read the Bible, have to attend church meetings, have to offer money, have to do good work, etc. or else God may punish us. Jesus freely gives us salvation grace. We can never earn God's approval. The only motivation for any spiritual endeavor should be love for God. If we truly love Him, we will put Him first in our life. We will stop asking what are the minimum requirements we have to meet. We should forever feel that we do not love God enough.

結論 Conclusion

Jesus is the fulfillment of a better and superior covenant. Jesus invites us to build an eternal relationship with Him. Jesus is also the only bridge that connects us to the Father. Why look for any useless alternative when we have such a wonderful Savior? When I was a kid, I saw people selling "shark-fin soup" on the streets. For only a dollar a bowl, people may expect to find fish bone instead of shark's fin in it. In grocery stores, you can buy imitation crab legs. You can tell by its name that it is not made of real crab meat. The labels on fruit drinks will tell you what percentage of the contents is actual fruit juice. Then there is fake leather that feels and smells like genuine leather. Some people knowingly buy counterfeit products because they are more affordable. But no one will opt for a substitute if someone give them the real thing. Jesus gives us free salvation grace. It is free because it is priceless. No one else but Jesus can pay for the cost. Thank to the Lord for such a wonderful gift!

引言 INTRODUCTION

玩具是小孩成長的必需工具。有時父母讓小孩玩一些東西，這樣父母就可以專心做自己的事情。但是好的玩具可以幫助孩子們為現實生活做好準備。男孩子在玩模型車時學習如何開車和撞車。女孩們用洋娃娃和玩具動物建造一個想像的家庭。孩子們用玩具鈔票在大富翁中買賣房地產。他們也會用廚房的玩具充當廚師。隨著兒童長大，他們逐漸會停止玩小時候的玩具。他們改用真錢買東西，開父母的車或煮真正的食物。當他們有更好的東西時，他們不會回到舊的方式。希伯來書的作者在第8章提出了同樣的論點。神在耶穌裡預備了一個更美的約。因此，讀者們不應該回到舊的方式。他們不需要再遵守律法或獻動物為祭。約是神與祂的子民之間關係的基礎。聖經中盟約的功用就像我們今天簽署的合同一樣。若雙方都遵守條款，他們便可以享受利益。如果任何一方違反協議，就會受到處罰。在聖經中，神與祂的子民立約。例如，神透過摩西與以色列立約。然後，神頒布律法來詳細說明盟約中的條款。律法告訴他們如何與神保持良好的關係。對敬拜、飲食、衛生等事情都有規定。耶穌來了之後，祂徹底改變了人接近神的方式。藉著耶穌，相信祂的人可以與神建立個人關係。耶穌為我們實現了一個更美、更超越的約。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 更美之約的中保 Mediator of a Better Covenant

耶穌實現了一個更美的約，並且祂是那個約的中保。讓我們來看第1-6節。第6節中出現了中保這個字。在今天的用詞中，我們可以稱他為仲裁人。他的角色是解決兩方之間的爭端，挽回關係。這就是祭司的責任。他們獻上動物來暫時平息神的憤怒，並替人贖罪。但是耶穌比祭司更超越。作者提到耶穌的工作在幾方面比祭司更有效。首先，耶穌是一位**更美的大祭司**。第1節說耶穌現在坐在父神的右邊。耶穌可以坐下來，因為祂已經完成了救贖工作。與地上的祭司相比，耶穌不僅親近神，而且祂永遠與神同在。透過耶穌，我們可以隨時隨地接近天父。耶穌為我們建立了聯繫。祂保證當我們奉祂的名禱告時，神會垂聽我們。耶穌的名字就像支票上的簽名。如果簽名與記錄相符，銀行便會兌現支票。同樣，當神承認我們與耶穌的永恆關係時，祂便會回應我們的禱告。另外，耶穌提供了**更美的祭物**。第3節和第4節暗示了這一點。地上的祭司在祭壇上獻動物。因此，耶穌也必須照樣獻上一些東西。在7:27，作者說耶穌將自己獻為終極的贖罪祭。耶穌的潔淨能力如此有效，因此祂只需要在十字架上死一次。任何時代的人，只要認罪並憑信心接受耶穌，他們過去、現在和將來的罪都會被一筆勾銷。下次我們犯罪時，我們不需要找祭師為

我們獻祭。我們可以親自呼求耶穌，承認我們的罪，並再次支取祂饒恕的恩典。第三，耶穌在一個**更美的聖所**中服事。地上的祭司在會幕裡服事。會幕是在建造聖殿之前，一個用布和動物的皮製成的帳篷。在第 5 節中，作者說這個地上的敬拜場所不過是天上聖所的**形狀、影像和樣式**。「形狀」是一種代表。我們使用複印機複製文件。副本看起來像原稿，但它只是一個複製品。「影像」的意思是影子。當光照在一件物體上時，就會投射出陰影。我們用雙手圍著營火弄出狼、鳥、蝴蝶等動物的影子。有影子，就必定有實物。從希臘文的「樣式」，我們得到英文「類型」這個字。當工程師建造汽車、橋樑或建築物時，他們會先在紙上或電腦上畫一個圖樣。然後，他們做一個模型。汽車製造商甚至會做一些概念汽車。它們的外表奇特，裡面也有超酷的功能。它們展示出最終產品的外觀。地上的祭司只是在一個聖殿的模型中服事，而耶穌是在真正的聖殿中服事。第四，耶穌提供了**更美的奉**。作者在 7:25 詳細說明了耶穌的事奉：**凡靠著他進到神面前的人，他都能拯救到底；因為他是長遠活著，替他們祈求**。耶穌能夠遮蓋我們任何的罪。此外，耶穌不住地為我們禱告，因為祂就在天父的旁邊。當我們需要幫助時，耶穌祈求天父賜給我們恩典、智慧和信心。就算我們不知道如何用言辭表達我們的重擔，耶穌也會為我們提出要求。當我們偏行己路並且不願意回頭時，耶穌會為我們懇求。在任何情況下，耶穌都是我們隨時隨地的辯護人。如果我們以為自己可以掌控環境，那是多麼的愚蠢？這就像一輛沒有引擎的汽車。不管我們怎麼踩油門，哪兒都去不了。基督信仰本質上是放棄獨立自主，完全相信神。祂可以使用各種資源來完成祂對我們的計劃。就算在波濤洶湧的大海中，我們也可以在神那裡得安息。實際上還有另外兩種方式表明耶穌更超越。耶穌賜給我們一個**更美的盟約**，建立在**更美的應許**之上。我們稍後會解釋這兩方面。耶穌是更美之約超越的中保。祂為我們鋪路，使我們來到天父面前。今天，我們是奉耶穌的名敬拜神。這個聚會不是道德課的講座或宗教表演。當我們憑著信心奉神的名聚會時，祂就在這裡。如果我們真的知道神就在我們中間，那會有多不同？我們會不好意思遲到、看手機或與鄰座的人聊天。當然我也是人，我明白有時候你可能需要處理突發事件。神的同在也使我在準備信息時感到畏懼。在你們聽講道之前神就已經評估了我的信息！我常常禱告：「主啊，如果祢不先教導我，那麼我便沒有東西可說了。願這篇信息是祢要我講的，也是會眾需要聽的。」我經常還是會發音不準確。當我忘記講章的一些細節時，我會全身冒汗。謝謝你們對我的恩慈和耐心。其實這些不完美的地方讓我謙卑下來，否則我會倚靠自己的能力，而不是倚靠神無限的恩典。當我們意識到神在這裡接受我們的敬拜時，我們的態度也應該改變。我們的唱詩便會更喜樂和更投入。我們的禱告會更加懇切。我們每週在這個大堂的聚會其實是為在天上聖所的敬拜作排練。當我們見到主時，祂會賜給我們一個新的身體。我們不會擔心聚會枯燥、自己打瞌睡或唱詩走調。我們將與眾多的信徒和天使面對面敬拜神。那將是何等的興奮和榮耀！

2. 更美之約的先驅 Initiator of a Better Covenant

耶穌不僅是更美之約的中保，祂也是更美之約的先驅。讓我來讀第 7-9 節。作者在第 7 節提出了一個合理的疑問：如果舊約沒有問題，為什麼神要立新約？神只會給我們好的禮物。因此，當問題出現時，不是祂的錯，而是我們的錯。作者在第 9 節總結了問題所在：以色列人沒有繼續遵守神的約。他們違背盟約，並背叛神。他們不相信神會拯救他們脫離困境。當他們看到敵人時，他們便害怕。他們只專注於滿足眼前的需要，而忽略了神整體的計劃。結果，他們得到神的管教而不是祝福。我們並不比他們好。我們靠自己的小聰明來解決問題。我們應該是抓住神的應許。我們可以向神禱告說：「主啊，我不能，但我知道祢能。幫助我相信祢，等待祢的指引。」由於以色列人失敗了，神提供了一個新的並更美的約。我們將繼續閱讀第 10-13 節。作者引用耶利米書 31:31-34。那時猶大被巴比倫所滅。人們明白是神審判他們敬拜偶像和尋求外邦人的幫助對抗敵人。結果聖殿被毀，人和財物被奪走。但就算在如此悲慘的結局中，神也給予子民盼望。有一天，神會立新約，將他們帶回來並恢復與他們的關係。新約將取代之前的所有盟約。但這不是後備計劃。神一直都知道以色列會背叛祂，就像祂知道亞當和夏娃會犯罪一樣。耶穌基督的救恩是在神的計劃中。我們的生命是在這位擁有主權的神照顧之下。沒有什麼事情會讓祂措手不及。儘管我們的生命充滿不確定性，世界上有災難，但我們心中仍然有平安。這個更美的約不僅祝福以色列人，它也祝福所有神的兒女。耶利米的預言在 600 年後應驗在耶穌身上。在馬太福音 26:27-28 中，耶穌在最後的晚餐中把杯遞給門徒，對他們說：27 「…你們都喝這個；28 因為這是我立約的血，為多人流出來，使罪得赦。」這個新約是藉著十字架建立的。耶穌為我們的罪而死，使我們與天父和好。從此，基督徒遵守聖餐來紀念耶穌的死。為什麼這個約比以前所有的約都更好？希伯來書的作者告訴我們三個更美的應許。注意這段經文中「我要」這個形容。第 10 節說：「我要將我的律法放在他們裡面，寫在他們心上」。這兩句話是平行的句子，傳達相同的意思。神的律法不再是刻在泥板上或寫在動物皮上的命令，它將深深烙印在人的腦中。神是否給人更好的記憶力，使他們不會忘記祂的話語？不是，神賜給我們更好的禮物！祂差遣聖靈住在信徒裡面。聖靈幫助我們理解聖經。祂提醒我們神的真理。當我們面對試探時，祂會警惕我們。當我們犯罪時，祂會責備我們。聖靈賜給我們力量，使我們有意志和能力去做神喜悅的事。每當我們軟弱時，祂使我們剛強。聖靈會來幫助我們。此外，這節經文繼續說：「我要作他們的神；他們要作我的子民」。神頒布律法時也向摩西說同樣的話。有什麼不一樣嗎？一直以來，神都想與祂的子民建立密切的關係。然而，以色列人覺得神是遙遠的。當神在西奈山以煙雲、火焰、地震和號角聲顯現時，他們便感到害怕。他們告訴摩西，他們寧願聽到他的聲音，而不願靠近神。從那時起，他們因為害怕懲罰而遵守律法。在新約中，神把焦點放回正確的地方。我們可以把它想像成為家規。如果父母必須不停地嘮叨，甚至用懲罰來威脅，孩子才肯聽話，那麼就失去意義了。真正的順服有三個步驟。首先，孩子們明白那些規則是為了他們好。其次，他們記得父母的話。第三，不用要求，他們自動自覺去做。同樣，神不希望我們只看到規則，而是注意規則背後的關係。神的命令不是要限制我們的自由。恰恰相反。

它們定出界限來保護我們，使我們可以享受作神兒女的自由。現在我們來到第三個「我要」的聲明。請看第 12 節：「我要寬恕他們的不義，不再記念他們的罪愆。」我們的形容是，神赦免並忘記我們的罪。對於那些信靠耶穌的人來說，他們所有的罪都在十字架上解決了。彷彿那些記錄已從神的檔案中被刪除了。但撒旦最愛唱反調。他喜歡用我們以前的罪來毀謗我們。他嘲笑我們：「看看你！你又犯了同樣的罪。神還會原諒你嗎？」有人說得對：當撒旦提醒我們的過去之時，我們應該提醒他他的將來！當耶穌再來時，撒旦將永遠被定罪。神的饒恕彌補我們的軟弱，但它不應該被用作犯罪的通行證。如果我們真正意識到耶穌為拯救我們所付出的巨大代價，我們就不敢犯罪。祂甘願為我們犧牲一切。既然神如此愛我們，祂希望我們以愛來作回應。問題是：你跟神的關係是透過規條還是透過愛來維持的？我們腦中常常有一連串的「必須」。我們必須讀聖經，必須參加教會聚會，必須奉獻金錢，必須做好事等等，否則神可能會懲罰我們。耶穌白白地賜給我們救恩。我們永遠無法贏得神的認可。任何屬靈操練的唯一動機應該是對神的愛。如果我們真的愛祂，我們就會把祂放在我們生命的首位。我們將不再詢問我們必須達到的最低要求是什麼。我們應該永遠覺得我們愛神不夠。

結論 Conclusion

耶穌為我們實現了一個更美、更超越的約。耶穌邀請我們與祂建立永恆的關係。耶穌也是連接我們與天父的唯一橋樑。當我們有如此奇妙的救主時，為什麼還要尋找任何無用的替代品？我小時候看到有人在街上賣「魚翅湯」。只需一美元一碗，你大概只能在裡頭找到魚骨頭而不是魚翅。你可以在超市買到假蟹肉。你聽名字就知道它不是用螃蟹製成的。果汁飲料上的標籤會告訴你它的成份有多少是真正的果汁。還有摸起來和聞起來像真皮的人造皮。另外有些人故意買冒牌貨，因為它們比名牌貨便宜多。但是，如果有人送給他們真的東西，可能沒有人會選擇替代品。耶穌賜給我們白白的救恩。它是免費的，因為它是無價的。除了耶穌，沒有任何人可以付出所需的代價。感謝主賜給我們如此上好的禮物！