

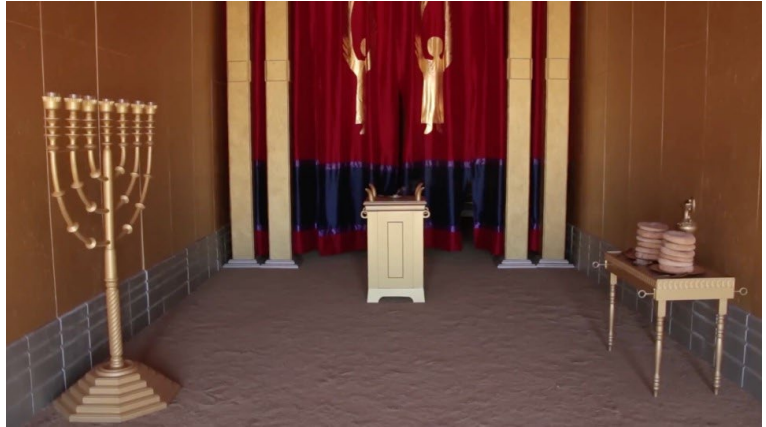
Bible Study March 29, 2023

HEBREWS 9 (AMPLIFIED VERSION)

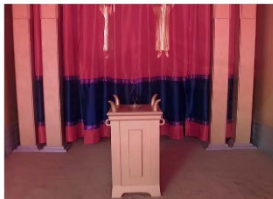
The Old and the New

¹ Now even the first covenant had regulations for divine worship and for the earthly sanctuary.

Outer Court



² A tabernacle (sacred tent) was put up, the outer one or first section, in which were the lampstand and the table with [its loaves of] the sacred showbread; this is called the Holy Place.



Holy of Holies

³ Behind the second veil there was another tabernacle [the inner one or second section] known as the Holy of Holies, ⁴ having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered entirely with gold. This contained a golden jar which held the manna, and the rod of Aaron that sprouted, and the [two stone] tablets of the covenant [inscribed with the Ten Commandments]; ⁵ and above the ark

were the [golden] cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but we cannot now go into detail about these things.

Cherubim are mighty angels. One of the functions of the cherubim in the days of the Old Testament was to serve as guardians. These angels guarded the entrances to both the tree of life (Genesis 3:24) and the Most Holy Place (Exodus 26:31-33). With their wings “stretched out over the Ark’s cover,” these two gold statues were believed to support God’s invisible presence (Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4, 18). Here they are called “the cherubim of divine glory,” referring to God’s glory, which hovered over the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 40:34-36; Leviticus 16:2).

⁶ Now when these things have been prepared in this way, the priests continually enter the outer [or first section of the] tabernacle [that is, the Holy Place] performing [their ritual acts of] the divine worship, ⁷ but into the second [inner tabernacle, the Holy of Holies], only the high priest enters [and then only] once a year, and never without [bringing a sacrifice of] blood, which he offers [as a substitutionary atonement] for himself and for the sins of the

people committed in ignorance. ⁸ By this the Holy Spirit signifies that the way into the Holy Place [the true Holy of Holies and the presence of God] has not yet been disclosed as long as the first or outer tabernacle is still standing [that is, as long as the Levitical system of worship remains a recognized institution],

The high priest could enter the Most Holy Place (9:3), the innermost room of the Tabernacle, one day each year to atone for the nation's sins. The Most Holy Place was a small room that contained the Ark of the Covenant, a gold-covered chest containing the original stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written, a jar of manna, and Aaron's staff. The top of the chest served as the atonement cover (the altar) on which the blood of a sacrifice would be sprinkled by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. The Most Holy Place was the most sacred spot on earth for the Jews, and the high priest was the only one who could enter it, and only once a year. The other priests and the common people were forbidden to come into the room. Their only access to God was through the high priest, who would offer a sacrifice and use the animal's blood to atone first for his own sins and then for the people's sins (also see 10:19).

⁹ for this [first or outer tabernacle] is a symbol [that is, an archetype or paradigm] for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which are incapable of perfecting the conscience and renewing the [inner self of the] worshiper. ¹⁰ For they [the gifts, sacrifices, and ceremonies] deal only with [clean and unclean] food and drink and various ritual washings, [mere] external regulations for the body imposed [to help the worshipers] until the time of reformation [that is, the time of the new order when Christ will establish the reality of what these things foreshadow—a better covenant].

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things to come [that is, true spiritual worship], He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not a part of this [material] creation. ¹² He went once for all into the Holy Place [the Holy of Holies of heaven, into the presence of God], and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, having obtained and secured eternal redemption [that is, the salvation of all who personally believe in Him as Savior].

This imagery comes from the Day of Atonement rituals described in Leviticus 16. Redemption refers to the process of paying the price (ransom) to free a slave. Through his own death, Christ freed us forever from the slavery of sin.

¹³ For if the sprinkling of [ceremonially] defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a [burnt] heifer is sufficient for the cleansing of the body, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal [Holy] Spirit willingly offered Himself unblemished [that is, without moral or spiritual imperfection as a sacrifice] to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works and lifeless observances to serve the ever living God?

Even though you know Christ, you may believe that you have to work hard to be good enough for God to love and accept you. But rules and rituals have never cleansed people's hearts. By Jesus' blood alone, (1) we have our consciences cleansed, (2) we are freed from death's sting and can live to serve God, and (3) we are freed from sin's power. If you are carrying a load of guilt or shame because you don't feel good enough for God, take another look at Jesus' death and what it means for you. Christ can heal your conscience and deliver you from the frustration of trying to earn God's favor. He can wash away the regret of the past. Bring your guilt-ridden life to Christ, confess your inability to clean up your own conscience, and ask him to forgive you and heal your

conscience. He can lift away the heavy load you have been carrying. All that's left is for you to thank him for his deliverance.

When the people sacrificed animals, God made them ceremonially acceptable according to Old Testament law. Consider how much more Christ's sacrifice transforms our lives and hearts and makes us clean from sin on the inside. His sacrifice far exceeds what animal sacrifices did. No sins or shortcomings on our part will stifle his complete and total forgiveness.

Sinful deeds are more than just wrong actions; ironically, they can also be our attempts to reach God by trying to be good enough! Our culture glorifies self-effort and personal achievement. It defines a successful person as one who obtains certain goals: financial security, health and fitness, and the respect of others. But here the Bible gives us a different picture of successful living: accepting Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, abandoning the futility of sinful deeds, and allowing the blood of Christ to purify our consciences (see 10:19-22).

¹⁵ For this reason He is the Mediator and Negotiator of a new covenant [that is, an entirely new agreement uniting God and man], so that those who have been called [by God] may receive [the fulfillment of] the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has taken place [as the payment] which redeems them from the sins committed under the obsolete first covenant.

People in Old Testament times were saved through Christ's sacrifice, although that sacrifice had not yet happened. In offering unblemished animal sacrifices, they were anticipating Christ's coming and his death for sin. Returning to the old sacrificial system was pointless now that Christ had become the final, perfect sacrifice.

¹⁶ For where there is a will and testament involved, the death of the one who made it must be established, ¹⁷ for a will and testament takes effect [only] at death, since it is never in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸ So even the first covenant was not put in force without [the shedding of] blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment in the Law had been read by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of the calves and goats [which had been sacrificed], together with water and scarlet wool and with a bunch of hyssop, and he sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT [that seals and ratifies the agreement] WHICH GOD ORDAINED and COMMANDED [me to deliver to] YOU." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the containers and sacred utensils of worship with the blood. ²² In fact under the Law almost everything is cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [neither release from sin and its guilt, nor cancellation of the merited punishment].

Why does forgiveness require the shedding of blood? This is no arbitrary decree on the part of a bloodthirsty God, as some have suggested. No greater symbol of life exists than blood. Blood keeps us alive (Leviticus 17:11). Jesus shed his blood—gave his life—for our sins so that we wouldn't have to experience spiritual death and eternal separation from God. Jesus created life, not death. With his own life he paid our penalty so that we could live. After shedding his blood for us, Christ rose from the grave and proclaimed victory over sin and death.

²³ Therefore it was necessary for the [earthly] copies of the heavenly things to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves required far better sacrifices than these.

In a way that we don't fully understand, the earthly Tabernacle and the things in it were copies and symbols of heavenly realities. The purification of the heavenly things mentioned here can best be understood as referring to Christ's spiritual work for us in heaven (see the note on 8:5).

²⁴ For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but [He entered] into heaven itself, now to appear in the very presence of God on our behalf;

Among references to priests, the Tabernacle, sacrifices, and other ideas unfamiliar to us, we come to this description of Christ as our mediator, appearing in God's presence on our behalf. We can relate to this role and be encouraged by it. With Christ on our side, we can be at God's side. Christ is our Lord and Savior. He is not present with the Father to remind him that our sins are forgiven but to present our ongoing needs to him (see 7:25).

²⁵ nor did He [enter into the heavenly sanctuary to] offer Himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer over and over since the foundation of the world; but now once for all at the consummation of the ages He has appeared and been publicly manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

The "end of the age" refers to the time of Christ's coming to earth in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Christ ushered in the new era of grace and forgiveness, and we are still living in this period. The last days began with the death and resurrection of Christ and will be completed at Christ's return.

²⁷ And just as it is appointed and destined for all men to die once and after this [comes certain] judgment,

God's judgment doesn't worry most people today, but the Bible teaches that everyone will stand before him to give account for his or her life. Do you look forward to Christ's return, or are you afraid of it? As sure as death itself, judgment awaits everyone. God's judgment will have no higher court of appeal should the verdict not be to your liking. If you hope for a favorable decision in this court, put your hope entirely in Jesus. Pray today—now, if you haven't before—for the freedom and pardon Jesus has won for you. Then rejoice that God's judgment of you will be based on the perfect life of his Son, Jesus, who will stand in your place. After that, tell others how they also can find God's mercy through him.

²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once and once for all to bear [as a burden] the sins of many, will appear a second time [when he returns to earth], not to deal with sin, but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly and confidently waiting for Him.

All people die physically, but Christ died so that we would not have to die spiritually. We can have wonderful confidence in his saving work for us, doing away with sin—past, present, and future. He has forgiven our past sin by his death on the cross, sacrificing himself once for all time; he has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin; he appears before God to represent us now in heaven as our High Priest; and he promises to return and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.