

A STUDY OF HEBREWS

Our New Covenant Mediator - Chapter 9:1-28

I. Review of Chapters 1-8

A. Jesus Christ is the greatest and final Prophet and enthroned Son of God.

1. Therefore we must pay closest attention to His Gospel... (1:1-2:18)

B. Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than Moses and gives eternal, not just temporal, rest.

1. Therefore we must persevere in faith lest we fall like those in the wilderness... (3:1-4:13)

C. Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest who sympathizes with us in our suffering and temptation.

1. Therefore we who have profound needs must fly to God's throne of grace... (4:14-5:10)

D. A SHORT DETOUR due to the dullness of hearers (5:11-6-20)

1. Warning against apostasy (6:1-12)
2. Assurance of God's promise (6:13-20)

E. The mysterious Melchizedek, the OT priest-king, is a foreshadow, or 'type', of the coming Christ.

1. Therefore flee to the eternal, oath-sealed, Mechizedekian sinless human sacrifice for sin (7:1-28)

F. Jesus Christ's heavenly priestly ministry mediates a more glorious new covenant (8:1-13).

Most recent thought: "In speaking of a new covenant, [the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 31:31; Heb 8:8)] makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." (Heb 7:26)

II. Text: Hebrews 9:1-10 – The Old Covenant Sanctuary (Moses' Tabernacle)

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. ² For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. ³ Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, ⁴ having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. ⁵ Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. ⁶ These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷ but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸ By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰ but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

THE TABERNACLE TENT

The entire tent was 45 feet (13.7 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (Ex. 26:15-29). Five wooden bars (overlaid with gold) passed through rings attached to each frame (Ex. 26:26-30).

The framed structure was covered by four layers of cloth and skin (Ex. 26:1-14).

The Most Holy Place was a 15-foot (4.6-m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-22; 37:1-9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud theophany (divine appearance). The high priest could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see note on Heb. 9:7).

The table for the bread of the Presence (Ex. 25:23-30)

The Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was 30 feet (9.1 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high.

The veil separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns woven with fine twined linen and embroidered with cherubim (Ex. 26:31-33). It hung on four golden pillars.

The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1-5; 37:25-29)

The golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31-40; 37:17-24)

The veil that formed the entrance to the tabernacle was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it. It was suspended on five golden pillars (Ex. 26:36-37).

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1. What was the lesson being taught by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Atonement?

2. What is the real barrier between God and the people, according to Hebrews (v. 9)? Did this mean they couldn't be "Christians" in the Old Testament?

"Only this difference was between them and us, that our redemption by Christ's death and passion was then only promised, and now it is performed and past. And as their sacraments were figures of his death to come, so be ours figures of the same now past and gone. And yet it was all but one Christ to them and us, who gave life, comfort, and strength to them by his death to come, and giveth the same to us by this death passed." - Archbishop Thomas Cranmer

III. Text: Hebrews 9:11-28 – The New Covenant Sanctuary (God's throne-room)

¹¹ 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) ¹² 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. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. ¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

1. How does the Day of Atonement ritual provide a beautiful picture of what Jesus accomplished on a heavenly scale (note the symbolism of the court, Holy Place, and Most Holy Place as modeling the cosmos)?
2. How might we, like the Hebrews, cling to external "purification of the flesh" (v. 13) and forget the greater work of the blood of Christ (v. 14)? Do you ever struggle to believe this?
3. What was the role of blood in the old and new covenant? Namely, how does the author use the idea of a "will" or "testament" to explain the answer to this question (v. 16)?
4. How often to you consider the blood of Christ? How important is it in the Bible? To the promises of God? To our worship? To our prayers? To the sermons we hear? To our communion with God? To our eternal inheritance?

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life..." (Lev 17:11)

"If this thought only came to our minds, that what we read [in Scripture, esp. 2 Cor :1 20] is not written so much with ink as with the blood of Christ, that when the Gospel is preached, his sacred blood distils together with the voice, there would be far greater attention as well as reverence on our part. A symbol of this was the sprinkling mentioned by Moses." - John Calvin

5. How might a recognition of the bedrock assurance, thorough forgiveness, and eternal glory given to us (now and in the future) hit us every week in Sunday worship at PPC?

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)