

## Hebrews Bible Study Week 10: Chapter 9

I hope you have been so encouraged by the truths we have been studying in Hebrews. No matter what the circumstances that the Lord has placed in our lives, the bedrock truths of the gospel—God’s great love and mercy to us through Jesus—are enough. Sometimes those truths are all we can cling to.

The promises of the new covenant in chapter 8 are a treasure. “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. . . 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” (Heb 8:10-12 ESV).

During this time of crisis, most of us are socializing with others/broadcasting our thoughts to each other solely by means of various social networks. I hope that when others remember us believers during this time, they would think of us as people whose hearts and minds have God’s words written on them (evidenced by the words we speak and write), whose allegiance is to the God who claims us as his people, and who are merciful to others as God has been merciful to us in our great sinfulness.

Chapter 9 is quite a bit longer than chapter 8 was, so there are a lot more questions. Don’t be overwhelmed; just take it one section at a time! Here are my questions:

### Hebrews Chapter 9 Questions

1. The first part of the chapter describes aspects of the old covenant, particularly what acc. to 9:1?
2. 9:1-5 describe the tent (or tabernacle). In verse 5b the author clarified that he could not speak in detail of these things. If you want to read in more detail, you can check out your cross-references and/or you can read Exodus 25-27, 30.
3. What was in the first section of the tabernacle? What was this section called?
4. A second curtain separated the first section from the second. What was this second section called? What was in this section?
5. How often did the priests go into the first section, and what did they do there (cf. Lev 6:8ff-7)?
6. This daily entry into the holy place by the priests is contrasted with entry into the second section, the Most Holy Place. Who was allowed into this second section? How often? What did he bring with him and for what purpose did he bring it? (I highly recommend reading Leviticus 16, explaining in greater detail this once-a-year offering of atonement.)
7. According to 9:8, what does the Holy Spirit indicate by this? (And what is “this”?)
8. What is symbolic for the present age?
9. To what is “this arrangement” referring (v9)?
10. What can gifts and offered sacrifices not do?

11. Rather, these gifts, offerings, and “regulations for worship” (v1) are simply what, according to v10?
12. What is the time of reformation?
13. Note the “But” in v11. The author has spent the first half of the chapter describing the earthly tent and the priests’/high priests’ duties, and he now contrasts this with what high priest and what tent?
14. Describe Christ acc. to v11.
15. Christ came through the “greater and more perfect tent.” Describe this tent. To what do you think this tent refers (check out the cross-references!)?
16. Christ as high priest entered where once for all?
17. Christ entered the holy places not by what (as the Levitical high priests did)? But by what?
18. What did Christ’s offering of his own blood do?
19. Concerning this eternal redemption (“For...”), if the blood and ashes of animals could sanctify and purify the flesh, “how much more” will the blood of Christ do what?
20. Acc. to v14, how did Christ offer himself?
21. Therefore, Christ is what? To what does the “therefore” refer?
22. For what purpose is Jesus the mediator of a new covenant?
23. What do those who are called receive? What is the condition for receiving it?
24. What else does that death do for the called?
25. Speaking in general about wills, what must be established? Why?
26. Since all wills require a death to become effective, how was even the first covenant inaugurated?
27. Summarize the rituals that Moses performed both after the law had been given and read to the people (vv 19-20; cf. Ex 24:3-8) and also to purify the tent and all its vessels (v 21; cf. Ex 29:12, 36; Lev 8:15, 19; 16:14, 16).
28. What was true about almost everything under the law?
29. What is necessary for forgiveness of sins?
30. If shed blood was necessary for forgiveness and purification for the copies of the heavenly things (tabernacle and old covenant worship rituals), than how would the heavenly things be purified (v 23)?
31. Jump ahead to v 25—what did the high priests do every year in the Most Holy place?

32. All the questions that follow point out how Christ's sacrifice of himself is a better sacrifice than any offered under the old covenant.

33. Where has Christ entered? (Here's another question to dig a little deeper. . . If Christ has always been in heaven except for the 33 years or so that he was on earth, his entrance into heaven referred to here occurred when? [cf. Heb 1:3b])

34. Why has Christ entered into heaven?

35. If Christ had offered himself repeatedly—as the high priests yearly offered their atonement sacrifices—what would be true of him?

36. Instead, what has Jesus done? Why? By what means?

37. What is appointed for man?

38. Vv 27-28 are making a comparison. The surety of mankind's dying and then facing judgment is compared to the surety of what concerning Christ?

39. What did Christ do the first time he came?

40. What will Christ do the second time he comes?

### **My notes on Chapter 9:**

#### **9:1-10. Limitations of the Old Covenant**

**9:1-5.** These verses briefly describe the "earthly place of holiness"/tent/tabernacle

1st section/Holy Place: contained the lampstand, table, and bread of the Presence

2nd section behind the curtain/Most Holy Place: contained the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant, holding manna, Aaron's budding staff, and the tables of the covenant. Covering the top of the ark was the mercy seat with the cherubim overshadowing it (this was the place where God would meet with them; cf Ex 25:17-22).

**9:6-7.** These verses briefly touch on some of the "regulations for worship"

The priests regularly went into the 1st section/Holy Place to perform their daily duties. They priest served as the representatives for the people of Israel in meeting with God.

The high priest was only allowed to enter the 2nd section/Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement (if he entered at any other time he'd die; cf. Lev 16). He would kill a bull (then take incense in before the mercy seat so the incense smoke would cover where God's presence manifested itself in the cloud so that he wouldn't die), and then sprinkle the blood in front of the mercy seat (first for his own sins and then the sins of the people).

### **9:8-10. Explanation of how this old covenant was limited.**

The Holy Spirit showed that the way into the holy places isn't yet opened as long as the 1st section/Holy Place is still standing. He shows this "by this"—referring perhaps to the need for the yearly atonement sacrifice by the high priest?? This 1st section—in which the priests regularly bring gifts/sacrifices and perform all the food/drink/washing regulations—is symbolic for the present age. None of these regulations and sacrifices can "perfect the conscience of the worshiper." These things are all required "until the time of reformation."

I think the present age referred to is the time in which the old covenant was still in place (before the "reformation"—Christ's inauguration of the new covenant); cf. 8:13. The continued need to follow all the rules and ceremonies that took place in the first part of the tabernacle that were ineffectual to perfect the conscience and the limited access to God even by the priests highlight the limitations of the old covenant.

"The first tabernacle [first section] normally describes the outer tent of Israel's earthly sanctuary. However, here the expression is apparently used to refer to the whole system of sacrifice and priestly ministry associated with the tabernacle and the temple. So the outer tent is an illustration (Gk. *parabolē*) for the present time. At a literal level, the outer tent obscured the way into the second tent. At a symbolic level, the tabernacle and all its ritual stood in the way of direct and permanent access to God. In certain respects the law foreshadowed and prepared for the ministry of Christ. But when the new covenant was inaugurated, the inadequacies of the old covenant cult became glaringly obvious. A particular weakness of the worship of that earthly sanctuary is then emphasized. Gifts and sacrifices were offered which were (lit.) 'not able to perfect the worshipper with respect to conscience' ('to perfect', as in 10:1; cf. 10:14; 11:40; 12:23). The rituals actually left the participants feeling guilty for their sins (10:2), because they were externally oriented regulations (10, lit. 'fleshly ordinances'). They were imposed until the time of the new order, until 'Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here' (11). The ability of Christ to cleanse the conscience is stressed in 9:14 and 10:22. With this removal of the burden of guilt, liberating us to serve God with confidence and gratitude (9:14; 12:28), Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant is fulfilled." [1]

### **9:11-28. Redemption Through Christ's Death and Exaltation**

**9:11-12.** "BUT WHEN CHRIST. . ." The first 10 verses are now contrasted with Christ's appearance as high priest. He came through the "greater and more perfect tent not made with hands"—heaven; cf. v24; 8:2.

I've always thought the "direction" of Christ's appearing as high priest was toward us on earth. But Christ's appearance through the real tent is his appearance before God in heaven after he had been to earth to live (perfecting obedience; cf. 5:8-9) and then to offer as a priest to God his own blood once for all to secure eternal redemption for believers. This ascension into heaven (cf. 4:14) and appearing before God and being exalted to God's right hand occurred after he had made purification for sins (1:3b).

The way into the holy places that “is not yet opened” under the old covenant (v8), Christ has entered once for all—not with animals’ blood, but with his own.

**9:13-14.** If animals’ blood could sanctify and purify the flesh, how much more will Christ’s unblemished sacrifice and blood offered through the Holy Spirit to God (all members of the trinity involved in redemption!) purify the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. One of the weaknesses of the old covenant was that it could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper (v9), but here Christ’s blood is fully able to (cf 10:22).

Jesus’ death and blood. . .

- Secures eternal redemption (12)
- Purifies worshipers’ consciences from dead works to serve God (14)
- Eternally redeems believers from transgressions (15)
- Guarantees the called receive the promised eternal inheritance (15)

“These rituals were for the benefit of those who were ceremonially unclean, to sanctify them by making them outwardly clean (lit. ‘for the purification of the flesh’). Those who were defiled could be restored to fellowship with God in the sense that they were able to participate again in the worship of the community. The fundamental truth that blood ‘purifies’ and ‘sanctifies’, even if only at a ceremonial level, provides the basis for the How much more argument that follows. The blood of Christ is a way of speaking about his death as a sacrifice for sins. This was uniquely effective because he offered himself unblemished to God. Once again the writer alludes to Jesus’ life of perfect obedience to the Father, culminating in the cross (cf. 5:7–9; 7:26–27; 10:10). Through the eternal Spirit most likely refers to the power of the Holy Spirit upholding and maintaining him (cf. Is. 42:1). . . . The purpose of cleansing in the OT was that the people might be consecrated again to God’s service. The new covenant promise of a renewed ‘heart’, based on a decisive forgiveness of sins (Je. 31:33–34), is echoed in v 14. Only the cleansing provided by Christ can set us free to serve the living God in the way that Jeremiah predicted. The nature of this ‘service’ or ‘worship’ (Gk. *latreuein*) will be discussed in connection with 12:28.”[2]

**9:15.** “Therefore” (because Jesus’ blood can secure eternal redemption and purify our consciences. . . ) Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, SO those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance SINCE a death has occurred that redeems (to buy back) them from since committed under the old covenant.

“Just as the old covenant promised the land of Canaan as an inheritance for God’s people, so the covenant inaugurated by Christ opens the way to an eternal inheritance. This is equivalent to ‘the world to come’ (2:5), the ‘Sabbath-rest for the people of God’ (4:9), ‘the heavenly Jerusalem’ (12:22) and other such descriptions of our destiny as Christians. Jesus has opened the way to his inheritance for us by dealing with the sin that keeps us from drawing near to God.”[3]

“Jesus’ sacrifice is retrospective in its effect and is valid for all who trusted God for the forgiveness of their sins in ancient Israel (cf. 11:40). But we also know that, by the grace of God, he tasted death ‘for everyone’ (2:9) and he is able to save all who ‘come to God through him’ (7:25).”[4]

**9:16-22.** Wills in general need to establish the death of the one who wrote it, going into effect only after his death (v17). Even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood, requiring the death of an animal(s). The author gives an example of Moses’ sprinkling of blood at the ratification ceremony after Moses read the Law to the people at Sinai (vv 18-20; cf. Ex 24:1-8). He also notes that the tabernacle and all the articles in it required a purification by blood (v21). Almost everything in the old covenant was purified by blood, leading up to the following principle: “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (v22).

“Although blood was largely used for ceremonial cleansing (13), these rituals pointed to the more profound needs of God’s people for release from the power and penalty of sin.”[5]

**9:23-24.** If the copies of the heavenly things—the Old Covenant and the Tabernacle—required a sacrifice, then the heavenly reality requires a better sacrifice—Jesus Christ. Christ entered not the tabernacle, but the presence of God in heaven. He stands before God as a high priest on our behalf (just as the OT priests entered the tabernacle on behalf of Israel).

“When the writer says the heavenly things themselves needed to be purified with better sacrifices than these, he can hardly mean that heaven is defiled by human sin, otherwise God would have to leave it! However, he may be suggesting that the sacrifice of Christ had cosmic significance, removing a barrier to fellowship with God that existed at the level of ultimate reality and not simply in human hearts.”[6]

**9:25-28.** Christ does not suffer repeatedly, offering yearly sacrifices. He appeared before God once—to finally and forever put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as men all die once then are judged, so Christ died once to bear many people’s sins. Then, Jesus will appear a second time—not to deal with sin—but to save those who eagerly wait for him.

Jesus’ “appearance signals the end of the ages, the time of fulfilment or the last days (cf. 1:2). The purpose of his coming was to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (26). Put another way, it was to take away the sins of many people (28, lit. ‘to bear the sins of many’; cf. Is. 53:12). So there has been a final settlement of the problem of sin by the action of Jesus at one point in human history and this gives a solemn significance to the present. There is ‘a fearful expectation of judgment’ for those who spurn the Son of God and his sacrifice (10:26–31). But for those who trust in him and eagerly await his second coming, there is the prospect of salvation—rescue from judgment and the enjoyment of the promised eternal inheritance (15).”[7]

[1] Peterson, D. G. (1994). Hebrews. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), New Bible commentary: 21st century edition (4th ed., p. 1340). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

[2] Ibid., 1341.

[3] Ibid., 1341-1342.

[4] Ibid., 1341.

[5] Ibid., 1342.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.