

Pt 10-Covenant: Why the New is Better

PREVIOUS
STUDY

NEXT STUDY

COVENANT: WHY THE NEW IS BETTER

Hebrews 8-10

CONTEXT: The book of Hebrews is a letter of exhortation ("But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly" Hebrews 13:22) addressed to Jewish recipients who had entered the New Covenant or were being drawn that direction. This letter provides many exhortations (strong urgings, appeals and encouragements) designed to undergird the readers so that they would hold fast to the truth about Jesus their great High Priest and conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the New Covenant into which they had entered, despite severe persecution ("a great conflict of sufferings" Hebrews 10:32) and strong temptation to return to Judaism and the regulations of divine worship under the Old Covenant ("who shrink back to destruction" Hebrews 10:39). **Chapters 5-7** presents a strong argument explaining why Jesus is a better High Priest than the Levitical priesthood and **Chapters 8-10** amplify why Jesus now has a more excellent ministry in the New Covenant and how this covenant is a better covenant with better promises.

Remember that the **Old Covenant** ("the first"), which was never referred to as everlasting, was inaugurated by God at Mt Sinai, with the nation of Israel, through the mediation of Moses, for the purpose of setting Israel apart as God's special possession and included promises of blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience (therefore a conditional covenant), and Israel agreed to obey the covenant laws ("All...we will do!"), this agreement being solemnly attested to and ratified by "the blood of the covenant".

Note: An attempt has been made in discussing Hebrews 8-10 to describe a related topic or subject on each row, usually from left to right and usually drawing out a contrast the writer is making between the old and new covenants (or the priesthood, tabernacle or other ritual associated with covenant).

Hebrews 8

THE FIRST COVENANT	THE BETTER COVENANT	THE BETTER PROMISES
How does the place of service of earthly priests contrast with that of our High Priest Jesus? (Heb 8:5-note) The earthly tabernacle was a Copy & shadow of heavenly - according to pattern God showed Moses on Sinai	What is the main point of the preceding chapters? (Heb 8:1-note) Jesus our High Priest has taken His seat at right hand of throne of Majesty in heavens Where does He minister? (Heb 8:2-note) In the sanctuary = the true tabernacle the Lord pitched, not man.	What is Jesus' ministry in the true tabernacle according to (Heb 7:25-note)? He ever lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him

How is the first covenant described? (Heb 8:7-note) Not faultless What was the fault? (Heb 8:9-note) People did not continue in OC What is the status of the first covenant? (Heb 8:13-note) Made obsolete Growing old Ready to disappear (Note: Even use of "new" implies something else is "old" and is ready to be replaced = the very point the writer seeks to emphasize.)	How is Jesus' ministry described? (Hebrews 8:6-note) More excellent (than OC priests) Mediator a better covenant Where is this better covenant first mentioned and to whom? (Heb 8:8-note) Jeremiah 31:31, 32, 33, 34 To Israel and Judah Why is it better according to (Heb 8:8-note) It is new in quality (see word study of kainos) = different nature from old = something never seen or done before	Why is the NC a better covenant? (Heb 8:6-note) It is based on Better promises than OC What are some of the better promises noted in Heb 8:10,11,12 (see notes Heb 8:10,11,12)? "I will" (6x) (no conditions) Put His laws into their minds Write laws upon their hearts Be their God, they His people All shall know God Mercy for their iniquities Remember their sins no more (In Greek "no" is a double negative which is the strongest negation - absolutely will not remember" is the idea! Hallelujah! cp Mic 7:18, 19, Ps 103:12 Isa 38:17 43:25 44:22, foreshadowed by the scapegoat - Lev 16:20, 21)
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Hebrews 9		
THE FIRST COVENANT	THE BETTER COVENANT	THE BETTER PROMISES
What structure does the writer describe in Heb 9:1; 2; 3; 4; 5 - see notes Heb 9:1; 2; 3; 4; 5)? The earthly tabernacle (see note) See Tabernacle Diagram See note on location of "altar of incense" How is the priestly activity characterized in (notes Heb 9:6; 7 -note)? Priests continually (daily) entered the outer tabernacle (note) Only High Priest entered the 2nd (Holy of holies) 1/yr & only with blood for himself & the people (note) How did the Holy Spirit use the Tabernacle to teach Israel	How does the writer allude to the New Covenant in (Heb 9:10-note)? The time of reformation (straightening out) (see note) Only the NC could set things right between God and man Application to NT believers: Are you still trying to earn a sense of being pleasing to God by trusting in your good deeds and/or good behavior. The problem with this approach is that you never know when you have done enough to please Him and the result is often an uneasy, troubled, restless feeling. If this is you beloved, you need to cease striving and know that He is God (Ps 46:10) and believe that He has graciously provided for your bold entrance into	What did the priestly activity of Christ accomplish (Heb 9:12-note)? Eternal Redemption Redemption = lutrosis (note) = Greeks used it to describe paying a ransom to free slaves, for all who enter the new covenant it means deliverance from the guilt, penalty and power of our old "master" Sin, so that now we don't have to obey Sin You can have confidence in your salvation because it is not temporary but eternal

according to (Heb 9:8-note)? He used it as a "Symbol" = The OC trappings were set beside the NC to allow comparison (See note) What truths did the Holy Spirit teach using the symbol of the Tabernacle (Heb 9:8, 9-note)? 1) The majority of the people had no access into the presence of God (Holy Place = Holy of holies) as long as the Tabernacle stood or as long as it had a significant standing in their mind (See note regarding translation) 2) Animal sacrifices were unable to cleanse one's conscience (remember that the heart of the problem is the problem with the heart) (note) What was the implied weakness of the OC according to (Heb 9:10-note)? (Clue: see NLT) The weakness of the priestly service under the OC was its inability to address the need for inner transformation in man; therefore it was only imposed until the time of reformation (when God would "set things right")	His glorious presence through His beloved Son's finished work as your Great High Priest! (He 4:16, He 10:19, 20) How is the priestly activity of Christ contrasted ("but when") with that of the OC (Heb 9:11-note; Heb 9:12-note)? 1) Where?: He entered the greater, more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, not of this creation He entered the "holy place" in heaven = very throne room of God! 2) When?: He entered once for all His work is finished. PTL! (See John 19:30-note) 3) How?: He entered through His own blood (not through the blood of animals) (Note that "but when" in Heb 9:11 marks a major contrast as the author shifts from discussion of the old system to the new - the time of reformation.)	
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What was the purpose of the blood of animals and sprinkled ashes of a heifer (Heb 9:12-note; Heb 9:13-note)? V12 Made it possible for the earthly high priest to enter the Holy Place on the Day of Atonement v13 Cleansed the body from ritual defilement - deals only with external cleansing and did not change the person's heart Phillip Hughes makes an important point that is not well understood by many NT believers, explaining that while the Old Covenant sacrifices were indeed superficial and external, nevertheless "faith in the reality to which as a type it [OC sacrifices and rituals] pointed led to the appropriation of the promised covenant blessings awaiting their fulfillment in Christ". In other words, OT sinners became saints by grace thru faith in the One to Whom the sacrifices and rituals pointed, i.e., the Messiah. Don't misunderstand - Performance of the OC sacrifices saved no one, but as men and women saw and believed upon Christ Who was pictured in these sacrifices, that is when they were saved. Does that make sense?	How did blood of Christ compare with the blood of animals (Heb 9:14-note)? Much more effective Blood of Christ was Without blemish (cf 1 Peter 1:18-note; 1Pe 1:19 note) Christ by the power of the eternal Spirit as the High Priest Who offered Himself as the sacrifice! OT priests carried animal blood in as their offering The High Priest became the sacrifice! <u>Note:</u> Through the eternal Spirit: Although disputed, this phrase most likely refers to the Holy Spirit's role in Christ's life as the Son of Man (cp Isa 42:1, 61:1, Mk 1:10, Lk 4:1, 14, 18).	How much more effective was blood of Christ compared to blood of animals (Heb 9:14-note)? The blood of Christ effects a complete cleansing of our conscience from dead works (deeds that only lead to death) to serve the living God Note the contrast: This better promise is based on the fact that the cleansing by the blood of Christ is internal not external like OC sacrifices
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	How does the writer refer to Christ in (Heb 9:15-note)? Mediator of a New Covenant (see comment) How did He become the Mediator? A death took place How does the writer explain why Christ had to die (Heb 9:16-note; Heb 9:17- note)? Note that "covenant" in this case is used like a will - while the person is alive the will does not go into effect - the person who made the will must die for the will to go into force - the point is that the promise of eternal inheritance is in the will so to speak and did not go into effect until Christ died	What did Christ death accomplish according to (Heb 9:15-note)? Redemption of the transgressions committed under the first covenant (see comment) Promise of eternal inheritance for those who are called Called is the verb kaleo in the perfect tense meaning they were "called" at some point in time and that "calling" was permanently efficacious.
Explanation of the writer's divinely inspired logic (and "apologetic") in Hebrews 9:16-9:28: "Being very much aware of that theological blind spot, the writer of Hebrews proceeds to give three reasons it was necessary for the Messiah to die: a testament demands death, forgiveness demands blood, and judgment demands a substitute." (MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press or Logos or Wordsearch) And so the writer of proceeds to explain (1) Christ's death had to occur in order for His "will" ("covenant") to become effective (Heb 9:16, 17 - see preceding columns), (2) Christ's blood had to be shed to effect genuine forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:18-26) and (3) Sin calls for judgment and the offering of Christ (and His death) served as the Substitute to "bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:27, 28)		

How was the first covenant inaugurated? (Heb 9:18; 19; 20; 21; 22) (see notes Heb 9:18; 19; 20; 21; 22) With blood (which was proof of death so that as is the case with a will the terms of the will could now be activated) - Moses sprinkled people, book, tabernacle, vessels of ministry The blood of the covenant What was the effect of this blood? (Heb 9:22-note) Almost all things cleansed with blood What does he reiterate regarding the blood in (Heb 9:23-note)? What was the blood used for? Copies of the things (emphasizing again that the tabernacle on earth was just a model) in the heavens were cleansed with blood	How were the heavenly things cleansed? (Heb 9:23-note) With better sacrifices than the blood of animals Why were better sacrifices necessary? (Heb 9:24-note) Christ entered not into a copy (like the earthly priests) but into heaven itself (OC priests could only enter into the earthly holy place with animal blood)	What is the better promise that is suggested in (Heb 9:22-note)? Forgiveness of sins Note: (Also see note) Strictly speaking this is not a promise although it does foreshadow or preview a better promise. The point the writer is making is that forgiveness cannot occur without the shedding of blood - shedding of blood in the OC brought a temporary sense of forgiveness but it was an incomplete forgiveness. Perfect forgiveness demanded a perfect blood sacrifice, which the writer has already presented in in verse 14. Christ's who was without blemish fulfilled the Law which paved the way for perfect forgiveness to be received by those who believed. Forgiveness = aphasis [from apo = away from + hiemi = send] (see word study on aphesis) which refers first to an action which produces a separation. Aphasis was used as a legal term meaning to repay or cancel a debt or to grant a pardon. Through the shedding of His own blood, Jesus Christ actually took the sins of the world upon His own head, as it were, and carried them an infinite distance away from where they could never return. That is the extent of the forgiveness of our trespasses. What's the better promise Christ accomplished by entering into the true holy place made without hands? (Heb 9:24-note) Appears in the presence of God for us (in our place)
What does he repeat about the high priest in (Heb 9:25-note)? Enters year by year with blood not his own	How often did Christ enter the true holy place? (Heb 9:26-note) Once at the consummation of the ages Why only once? (Heb 9:26-note) Would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world	What did Christ accomplish? (Heb 9:26-note) Put away sin (made void the power of sin forever) by the sacrifice of Himself (contrast with OC high priest)

	What analogy does the writer make to help us understand Christ's death just once (in contrast to the yearly deaths of animals)? (Heb 9:27-Heb 9:27; Heb 9:28 note) Men die once > judgment Christ died once	What is the better promise that is effected by Christ dying once? (Heb 9:28-note) Bear the sins of many What else is promised as a result of His dying once? Christ shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin (His second coming) Who will receive this future tense salvation (explained below)? All who eagerly await Him Beloved are you looking for Him? Looking will motivate living for Him! This verse speaks of... Future tense salvation = We will be saved = Glorification = Click Three Tenses of Salvation (Eph 1:14 - note, Ro 8:23-note) Redemption is completed and we receive our new bodies and are forever free from the presence & pleasure of sin! Hallelujah!
Hebrews 10		
THE FIRST COVENANT	THE BETTER COVENANT	THE BETTER PROMISES

How did the writer refer to the Law in (Heb 10:1-note)? Shadow not form (reality) Why was the Law a shadow... What could the Law never do? Heb 10:1; 10:2; 10:4)(see notes Heb 10:1; 10:2; 10:3; 10:4) 1 Yearly sacrifices can never perfect those who draw near 2 Cannot remove consciousness of sins 4 Impossible for animal blood to take away sins Was the Law useless? What was one purpose of the Law? (Heb 10:3-note) Constant reminder of sins	What was the Law a shadow of in (Heb 10:1, 2, 3 4)?(see notes Heb 10:1; 10:2; 10:3; 10:4) Good things to come The very form of things What are "the good things to come"? The New Covenant mediated by the Great High Priest Who offered the perfect sacrifice once for all time	What are the implied promises of the "good things to come"? 1) Make perfect those who draw near to God 2) Removes consciousness of sins 3) Takes away sins
How does Jesus explain the inadequacy of the OC burnt offerings and sacrifices according to (Heb 10:5-note; Heb 10:6-note; Heb 10:8-note)? Father did not desire them He took no pleasure in them	What was God's solution in view of the inadequacy of the Law? Heb 10:5; 10:6; 10:7; 10:8; 10:9 (notes Heb 10:5; 10:6; 10:7; 10:8; 10:9) God prepared a body for Jesus (He had to have a body to be a blood sacrifice) What was Jesus' response to God? (Heb 10:7-note; Heb 10:9-note) He came to do His Father's will What is the conclusion in view of the fact that Jesus states He will do His Father's will? (Heb 10:9-note) Takes away the first in order to establish the second How are we sanctified since the Law is taken away? (Heb 10:10-note) Through offering of body of Jesus Christ once for all	What is the better promise in (Heb 10:10a-note)? We have been sanctified Perfect tense indicates completed action at a point in time in the past with present and ongoing effect. This verse speaks of... Past tense salvation = We have been saved = Justification by faith = Click Three Tenses of Salvation We have been once and for all time declared righteous (our standing or position before God is that we are perfectly righteous because we are hid in Christ, our Righteousness)

How does he describe the work of the earthly priest? (Heb 10:11-note) Stand daily ministering and offering the same sacrifices What is the problem with their ministry? Can never (ever) take away sins	What is the contrast in (Heb 10:12-note)? Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins for all time How do we know it was a satisfactory sacrifice? Jesus sat down at the right hand of God = His work is finished What is Jesus doing now according to (Heb10:13-note)? Waiting until all His enemies are conquered (footstool for His feet)	What did Christ's one offering (in contrast to the many offerings of the earthly priests) of Himself accomplish? (Heb 10:14-note) He has perfected for all time those who are (being continually) sanctified This verse speaks of... Present tense salvation = We are daily being saved = Sanctification by faith = Click Three Tenses of Salvation This describes God's part (sanctified = passive voice = God exerts His power on us) to set us apart gradually from the world and our old self and unto Him, by the sanctifying work of His Spirit, and ultimately into conformity with the image of His Son. Note Philippians 2:12 (notes) clearly shows it is not just "<i>Let go and let God</i>" for there believers are to work out their salvation day by day, but the good news in Philippians 2:13 (notes) is that God is at work in us both to work and to will (gives us the "want to") to do His good pleasure (this latter equating with Hebrews 10:14-note) (See this same juxtaposition of God's provision and man's responsibility in Ezek 36:27 which foretells the promise of the New Covenant.).
	How can we be assured that God has perfected us for all time and is daily sanctifying us? (Heb 10:15-note) Holy Spirit continually bears witness with us What does the Spirit quote? (Heb 10:16-note; Heb 10:17-note) Jeremiah 31:33-34	What promises does the Spirit repeat? (Heb 10:16-note; Heb 10:17 note) God's Laws upon our heart Written upon our mind God will no more remember our sins and lawless deeds
	How complete is the work of the New Covenant? (Heb 10:18-note) There is no longer a need for blood sacrifices	What is the wonderful promise in Heb 10:18-note? There is now forgiveness of all our sins and iniquities

	What is the basis on which a believer can now enter the presence of God? Heb 10:19; 20; 21; 22; 23 (notes 19; 20; 21; 22; 23) 19) The blood of Jesus 20) A new and living way has been inaugurated for us through the veil (His flesh) in the very throne room of God 21) We now and forever have a great High Priest 22) Our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water 23) He Who promised all of these things is faithful!	What is the better promise in Hebrews 10:19-note? Confidently enter Holy Place Into presence of God What is the better promise in Hebrews 10:22- note? Hearts sprinkled clean (Compare with a new heart Ezek 36:26, a circumcised heart Dt 30:6) Clean conscience
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**What should believers now do
in view of the better covenant with better promises?**

- 1) **Draw near** with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith
 - 2) **Hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering for He Who promised is faithful
 - 3) **Consider how to stimulate** one another to love and good deeds and
- Not forsaking** our assembling together as is the habit of some
- But encouraging** one another and all the more as we see the day of Christ return draw near

**Summary of the Better Covenant:
The New Covenant**

The New Covenant...

1) Is made by God with Israel and Judah

2) Is an unconditional covenant - It does not rest on anything in man for its efficacy and is thus like the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. It is something God Himself said He would do.

3) Is a reiteration and an expansion of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.

The following prophecy in **Ezekiel 37** gives details which indicate that there is clearly a relationship between...

- a) **The Davidic Covenant** -- deals with the Kingdom and the King,
- b) **The Abrahamic Covenant** -- has to do with the land and the seed.
- c) **The New Covenant** -- deals with the forgiveness of sins and the redemptive aspects of God's working.

Legend -

i). Note the repetition of "**I will**" which speaks of the Lord God's sovereignty and the unconditional nature of his promises.

ii). Note God's emphasis on the unending nature on His promises to Israel - **everlasting, forever.**

iii). Note the Lord God's multiple promises (how many can you list?)

Ezekiel 37:21-28

21 "And say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, **I will** take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and **I will** gather them from every side and bring them into their own land (**Abrahamic Covenant**)

22 and **I will** make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. (**Davidic Covenant**)

23 "And they will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but **I will** deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and **will cleanse them** (**New Covenant** ~ forgiveness). And they will be My people, and **I will** be their God.

24 "And My servant David will be king over them (**Davidic Covenant**), and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. (**New Covenant** ~ redemptive aspect which gives a new heart and law now written on that heart to make obedience a real possibility)

25 "And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever (**Abrahamic Covenant** ~ everlasting aspect of God's promises regarding the land) ; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. (**Davidic Covenant**)

26 "And **I will** make a covenant of peace with them (**New Covenant** ~ redemptive aspect which gives a new heart and law now written on that heart to make obedience a real possibility); it will be an everlasting covenant with them (All three covenants are everlasting). And **I will** place them and multiply them, and **will** set My sanctuary in their midst forever.

27 "My dwelling place also will be with them; and **I will** be their God, and they will be My people.

28 "And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.""

4) Is superior to the Mosaic Covenant, which was a conditional covenant in which God and man both had certain responsibilities. Man of course failed.

5) Stresses the forgiveness of sins. The Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants stated nothing regarding the forgiveness of sins at least in the sense that they were completely sent away by God. Forgiveness in the OT associated with animal sacrifices was a shadow of the true forgiveness wrought by the sacrifice of Christ.

6) Was ratified and established by the son of David. (Lk 22:20, 1Co 11:25, Jn 19:30-note - **See also discussion of Kinsman Redeemer**).

7) Is to be consummated in the future At that time God fulfills His promises to Israel (Ro 11:25, 26, 27-note).

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

HEBREWS 9-10

Why is it important for NT believers to comprehend why God first gave the Old Covenant and then the New Covenant?

Andrew Murray suggests that...

The clearer our insight into the reasons, and the Divine reasonableness, of there thus being two covenants, and into their relation to each other, the more full and true can be our own personal apprehension of what the New Covenant is meant to be to us. us.

They indicate two stages in God's dealing with man; two ways of serving God, a lower or elementary one of preparation and promise, a higher or more advanced one of fulfillment and possession. As that in which the true excellency of the second consists is opened up to us, we can spiritually enter into what God has prepared for us. Let us try and understand why there should have been two, neither less nor more.

The reason is to be found in the fact that, in religion all intercourse between God and man, there are two parties, and that each of these must have the opportunity to prove what their part is in the Covenant. In the Old Covenant man had the opportunity given him to prove what He could do, with the aid of all the means of grace God could bestow. That Covenant ended in man proving his own unfaithfulness and failure. In the New Covenant, God is to prove what He can do with man, all unfaithful and feeble as he is, when He is allowed and trusted to do all the work.

The Old Covenant was one dependent on man's obedience, one which he could break, and did break (Jer 31:32).

The New Covenant was one which God has engaged shall never be broken. He Himself keeps it and ensures our keeping it: so He makes it an Everlasting Covenant. ([Murray, A: The Two Covenants](#))

MAJOR FEATURES OF THE NEW COVENANT

Frederick Diven summarizes the **major features of the New Covenant** as recorded in the Old Testament...

1. The covenant was made with the nation of Israel (Jer. 50:4, 5).
2. The covenant is in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant, which depended on the obedience of Israel for its fulfillment (Jer. 31:32).
3. The major portion of the covenant will be fulfilled after the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:7).
4. The New Covenant will take the place of the Mosaic Covenant and will be written "in their hearts" instead of on tablets of stone (Jer. 31:33).
5. The New Covenant will feature great spiritual blessings for the people of Israel (Ezek. 36:26-30).
6. The New Covenant will reveal the glory of God so that it will no longer be necessary to witness to others (Ps. 72:19; Jer. 31:34).
7. The New Covenant will feature forgiveness, grace, and blessings (Jer. 31:34).
8. In the covenant God promised the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:27; Joel 2:28, 29).
9. There will be universal knowledge of Jehovah among the people of Israel (Jer. 31:34).
10. The covenant includes a promise that Israel will obey God and have a right attitude toward Him forever (Jer. 32:39, 40). (Israel My Glory : Volume 51 Issue 4. 1999)

Hebrews 9:1 (He 9:1-note)

John MacArthur previews Hebrews 9:1-5 with the comment that...

God never asks anyone to give up anything without His offering something far better in return. The chief obstacle in the way of the Hebrews' faith was their failure to see that everything connected with the ceremonial law (covenant, sacrifices, priesthood, and ritual) was **preparatory** and **transient**. So the writer painstakingly and definitively pursues a clear revelation of the **better character of the New**. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

Hebrews 9:2 (He 9:2-note)

"There was a tabernacle prepared" Note that the writer does not mention the Temple (it was probably still standing at the time this letter was written) but instead his emphasis is on the **tabernacle**, the first sanctuary which was obviously the most temporary, which well illustrated the **transient nature** of the Old Covenant. The Tabernacle was composed largely of skins and was designed to be portable, emphasizing its impermanence. Note also that while there are only **two chapters Scripture dealing with the Creation story**, there are **some fifty chapters dealing with the Tabernacle** (especially Ex 25-40)! The Tabernacle was important and demanded one's attention because it represented a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ (See **Shadows of the Messiah**).

Hebrews 9:4 (He 9:4-Hebrews 9:4)

How does one resolve the writer's notation that the **"golden altar of incense"** is within the Holy of holies when the OT clearly states it is within the Holy Place? First, note that several versions translate the phrase "golden altar of incense" more literally as the **"golden censer"** and not as the actual altar. The Greek word in question is **thumiasterion** which in secular usage described a utensil or container for burning incense. The Jewish historian Josephus does use thumiasterion as a metonymy to describe the **altar of incense** in the Jewish Temple. A **metonymy** is a figure of speech in which one uses the name of one thing (**utensil for burning incense**) for the name of another thing (**altar of incense**) of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated. In the Septuagint (LXX) **thumiasterion** is used only twice (2Chr 26:19, Ezekiel 8:11) and both times describes a **censer** or utensil of incense and not the altar of incense. The point is that what the writer of Hebrews appears to be using the **thumiasterion** to describe the taking of coals of fire from the **altar of incense in the Holy Place** and transporting them through the veil into the Holy of holies, an event which occurred once each year on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:12,13). This explanation would present no contradiction with the location of the altar of incense in front of the **"second veil"**. (Ex 40:26, Ex 40:1, 2, 3, 4, 5). It is amazing that some commentaries go so far as to suggest that the writer must not have been familiar with the Old Testament Tabernacle and simply "slipped up"! This is a highly unlikely explanation.

Hebrews 9:6 (He 9:5-note)

The writer now shifts his focus from the Tabernacle to the priestly rituals. The fact that the priests were "continually entering...performing" (both present tense) emphasizes that their work was **never finished**. And despite their ceaseless religious activity, they still failed to gain entry into the presence of Jehovah in the Holy of holies. Are you so busy doing "religious work" that you don't have (or don't take) time to commune with the Lord of glory?

J Vernon McGee writes that...

"Accomplishing the service of God" should be "accomplishing the worship of God." This was the ultimate goal of it all, that God's people might worship Him. This is speaking of real worship, not just a church service where an order of service is followed. When real worship takes place it is a worship that draws us into the presence of Christ where we can adore Him. The word worship comes from the same Anglo-Saxon root word as worth. To worship is to give someone something of which they are worthy. The Lord Jesus Christ is worthy to receive our praise and our adoration. That is worship, and from that follows service. Real worship will always lead to service. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#)) ([Listen to Mp3](#))

Hebrews 9:7 (He 9:7-note)

In this verse the focus is on the activities associated with the **Day of Atonement**, emphasizing the limitations associated with the high priest's entry into the Holy of holies (in this chapter called "Holy Place"):

(1) Only once per year (Note that "once" means "on one day," because the high priest made more than one entrance into the room beyond the curtain, certainly entering at least twice, Lev 16:12, 15, and possibly a third time for the sprinkling of the blood of the bull Lev 16:14). Access into the Holy Place was thus severely restricted, and even when the high priest could enter, it wasn't for real fellowship with God, but was only symbolic of that possibility which became a reality under the New Covenant.

(2) Only by taking sacrificial blood for himself. The ancient Jewish Rabbis wrote of how the high priest would not prolong his prayer in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, because it might make the people think he had been killed. When he came out, he threw a party for all his friends, because he had emerged safely from the presence of God.

Both points emphasize the inferiority of the Levitical system compared with the "Better Covenant".

J Vernon McGee adds that...

"The way to God in the tabernacle was actually blocked by the three entrances and compartments. In other words, the people could come only to that outer entrance and bring their sacrifice. If a man brought a little lamb, he would put his hand on it in an act of identification since it would die in his place, and then the priest would take it from there. It would be slain and offered upon

the brazen altar. The individual who brought the lamb could go no farther than the entrance." (McGee, J. V. Thru the Bible Commentary. Vol. 5, Page 565. Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

What was the significance of the "[Day of Atonement](#)"? How was it different from the daily gifts and sacrifices? The answer is that whenever an Israelite sinned, his communion with God was broken and in spite of continually offering sacrifices, many sins were either forgotten (or not recognized as sins) and thus they would accumulate throughout the year with no sacrifice being made for these sins. The Day of Atonement was intended to remedy this problem and to make sacrifice for all those sins that had not yet been covered.

John MacArthur comments that the Day of Atonement was...

"A great day for liberation of the conscience. (**Ed note:** the writer of Hebrews emphasizes however that the sacrifices could never "make the worshiper **perfect** in conscience" see Hebrews 9:9-[note](#)) The Israelite knew that whatever sins may have been missed in the daily sacrifices would now be taken care of. The slate would be completely clean, at least **symbolically** for a while. Yom Kippur was a time of release and relief. The devout Jew longed for the Day of Atonement. He could not himself go into God's presence, but the high priest would go in for him and he would be delivered. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

The necessity of the annual visit established the fact that what took place was ultimately symbolic rather than efficacious. The offering of the blood of the goat and the carrying away of the scapegoat provided forgiveness only in that they typified the final sacrifice of Christ. As the writer explains later

it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (see [note Hebrews 10:4](#))

Sins committed in ignorance: The point is that there were only offerings and sacrifices for unintentional sins! Under the Old Covenant there was no offering for deliberate sins. Individuals who committed deliberate sins were cut off from the people of God. Jesus' work on the Cross is sufficient to atone for both the sins we do in ignorance and sins that we know.

On the other hand note that the sins "**committed in ignorance**" point to the truth that there is ignorance which is culpable. Sins of this kind do matter, and we should not minimize their seriousness.

Notice that even in the priestly activity (cf Heb 9:9 "**a symbol**") there was a shadow pointing to the work of the Messiah. For example, in the sentence "blood which he offers **for**... the sins of the people" note that the Greek word "**for**" is **hyper**, a preposition which means "for the sake of, in behalf of" and thus speaks of substitution. In this verse it clearly points to the necessity for the people to have a priest who was able to function as their **substitute** in the process of the atonement. For instance, Caiaphas without realizing what he was doing voiced a simple prophecy about the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross when he declared

"nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." (John 11:50)

John provides the commentary on Caiaphas' statement recording that

"Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation" (John 11:51)

Thus not only in John but here in Hebrews 9:7, the blood is offered as a type pointing to the substitutionary atonement of our Lord.

Hebrews 9:8 (He 9:8-note)

Amplified Version

By this the Holy Spirit points out that the way into the [true Holy of] Holies is not yet thrown open as long as the former [the outer portion of the] tabernacle **remains a recognized institution** and is still standing,

MacArthur explains that...

While the Tabernacle still stood, there was no way into God's presence. There was no access. The people could not even get into the holy place, much less into the Holy of Holies. The whole thing was meant to prove that without a Redeemer, without a Messiah, without a Savior, there is no access to God. The Holy Spirit was teaching the impossibility of access to God without a perfect priest, a perfect sacrifice, and a perfect covenant. By allowing the people to go no farther than the outer court, He was illustrating that through Judaism there was no access to Him, only a symbol of access. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press or](#)

[Logos](#))

Stedman has an interesting note on the phrase "**while the outer tabernacle is still standing**" writing that

"Unfortunately, the verse is almost always badly translated. Most versions, like the NIV (and the NASB), take the last phrase as suggesting that while the tabernacle/temple was still existing, the way into the true sanctuary was not yet revealed. But that would be tantamount to saying that until AD70, when the temple would be destroyed, there was no way of understanding how the death of Jesus had opened a new and living way into the true sanctuary, the presence of God. If taken in this way, it would give no meaning at all to the rent veil at the time of the crucifixion and no hope that anyone, before AD70, had found salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus! A better translation makes it all clear. The Greek phrase...should not be rendered, "while the first tabernacle is still standing," but "**while the first tabernacle still has any standing!**" That indicates the writer is saying that the repeated sacrifices of the old covenant were meant by the Holy Spirit to predict a perfect sacrifice that was yet to come, but it could not be apprehended while still relying on the old way of access to God! In other words, the truth of the reality could not be grasped while one was yet clinging to the shadows. The first tabernacle had to lose its standing before the reality it prefigured could be apprehended.

([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#) or [Logos](#))

Wuest agrees with Stedman translating Hebrews 9:8 as...

"the Holy Spirit all the while making this plain, that not yet was made actual the road into the Holiest while still the first tent **had standing** [i.e., **remained a recognized institution**]" ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#) or [Logos](#))

Hebrews 9:9 (He 9:9-note)

Amplified Version

"Seeing that that first [outer portion of the] tabernacle was a parable (a visible symbol or type or picture of the present age). In it gifts and sacrifices are offered, and yet are incapable of perfecting the conscience or of cleansing and renewing the inner man of the worshiper." ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

"A symbol"

The Holy Spirit uses the pattern of the tabernacle to teach important truths. Here the writer states that the tabernacle was a **symbol** which is the interesting Greek word **parabole** (from **para** = beside + **ballo** = throw) which literally means that which is thrown alongside of something else. Figuratively as used in this verse it refers to setting side-by-side the old versus the new for the purpose of comparison. **Parabole** also gives us our English *parable* and thus the old was only a parable, an object lesson, for Israel. The limited access into the Most Holy Place was meant to bring home the fact that ordinary men had no direct access to the presence of God. The **old covenant sacrifices** were never meant to cleanse from sin, but only to **symbolize** cleansing from sin. The conscience of the person sacrificing was never freed from the feeling of guilt because the guilt itself was never removed because the cleansing was entirely external. As a result the worshiper could **never** have a clear conscience with a deep, abiding sense of forgiveness.

Wuest adds that **symbol** as it referred to...

"the **tabernacle** (Ed note: as well as the "**gifts and sacrifices...various washings, regulations for the body**") was an object lesson used to explain spiritual truth. As long as it remained an object lesson, thus a recognized institution, it was clear that the actual tabernacle to which it pointed was not yet in use. The tabernacle in Israel, and later, the temple, remained that object lesson during the history of Israel, until the veil of the temple was rent (symbolizing the opening of the way into the presence of God). ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#) or [Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

Gifts and sacrifices...cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience: (Click word study on conscience = suneidesis) If complete remission of sins had been procured, then the offerer's conscience would have been free from the guilt of sin. But this never happened.

The Holy Spirit was teaching that sacrifices and even blood applied to the mercy seat could never change the heart or the conscience of the worshiper, because all of the ritual dealt with ceremonial purity, not moral purity, pertaining to the outer man but unable to change the heart, the inner man. This inability to achieve a completely clear conscience could not be relieved and for the honest Israelite would have been a constant reminder of their separation from God.

Wuest adds that...

These gifts and sacrifices could not make the worshipper perfect so far as his conscience was concerned. The word "**perfect**" is teleios which does not mean sinless, but complete, finished. The word described that which needed nothing to make it what it should be, complete. The Levitical ritual as such did not touch the **conscience**. No ritual in itself ever does. There was nothing in it that could deal with **conscience**. Only the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and the efficacy of the blood of the Messiah could do that. The Holy Spirit did in Old Testament times deal as He does today with the consciences of men, but the salvation which He applied under the Levitical system found its source in the New Testament Sacrifice, the Lord Jesus. Therefore, while operating under the jurisdiction of the First Testament, God was giving salvation to the First Testament believer by virtue of that which was accomplished through the New Testament (**Ed note**: see related comments on Hebrews 9:15-[note](#)). Since the First Testament could not do that which the New Testament did, it was set aside in favor of the New Testament. And this is the argument of the Book of Hebrews. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans or Logos](#))

Hebrews 9:10 (He 9:10-note)

"**Regulations for the body until a time of reformation**" or literally "*until the time of setting things right*"

The **NLT** renders this verse

"For that old system deals only with food and drink and ritual washing—**external regulations** that are in effect only until their limitations can be corrected."

The **Amplified Version** (which often can be utilized almost as a "mini" commentary) reads...

For [the ceremonies] deal only with clean and unclean meats and drinks and different washings, [mere] external rules and regulations for the body imposed to tide the worshipers over until the time of setting things straight [of reformation, of the complete new order when Christ, the Messiah, shall establish the reality of what these things foreshadow—a better covenant].

Reformation means to make straight, to make right and so to reform, an effect that in the spiritual arena only the New Covenant in Christ could accomplish. The Old Covenant **regulations** (such as "**various washings**") were symbolic, picturing or pointing to Christ, but unable to bring about the internal change that only Christ's perfect sacrifice could accomplish. The **regulations** of the Old Covenant served their purpose only **until** the New Covenant came, for it alone was capable of setting things right between God and man.

Ray Stedman comments on the **reformation** that had come when Christ rent the veil from top to bottom, setting things right, making the way fully open and doing away with the need for shadows, copies and symbols of Messiah...

This has been the argument of Hebrews all along. To cling to the shadows of the past and not to move on to the clear light of the great reality in Christ is to put our whole eternal destiny at stake and, in fact, to be in danger of drifting into a total apostasy. Let the tabernacle and its ritual lose its standing in our eyes. Go on to the reality to which the Holy Spirit is pointing—the full forgiveness of sins of the new covenant and the resulting intimacy with God. **Those who today try to earn a sense of being pleasing to God by good behavior need to hear this lesson.** Never knowing when they have done enough, they feel troubled and restive without any heart-peace and thus are often driven to extreme measures of self-punishment and despair. They need to cease from their efforts and trust in Christ's completed work. ([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

Hebrews 9:11 (He 9:11-note)

"**But when**" marks a major contrast as the writer shifts from discussion of the deficiencies of the old system to the new and better covenant. In keeping with the prior verse one could paraphrase it as...

"But when the appointed time of reformation came..."

Thomas Kelly puts the truths in this section in the form of a poem...

No temple made with hands,
His place of service is;
In heaven itself He serves,
A heavenly priesthood His:

In Him the shadows of the law
Are all fulfilled, and now withdraw.

Hebrews 9:12 (He 9:12-note)

Christ "through His own blood...entered the Holy Place once for all". Beloved let us rejoice in that glorious phrase **once for all**!

Warren Wiersbe asks...

How can the blood of animals ever solve the problem of humans' sins? Jesus Christ became a Man that He might be able to die for people's sins. His death was voluntary; it is doubtful that any Old Testament sacrifice volunteered for the job! An animal's blood was carried by the high priest into the holy of holies, but Jesus Christ presented Himself in the presence of God as the final and complete sacrifice for sins. Of course, the animal sacrifices were repeated, while Jesus Christ offered Himself but once. Finally, no animal sacrifices ever purchased "eternal redemption." Their blood could only "cover" sin until the time when Christ's blood would "take away sin" (John 1:29). We have "eternal redemption." It is not conditioned on our merit or good works; it is secured once and for all by the finished work of Jesus Christ. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor or Logos](#))

How Does One Explain Redemption to a person not familiar with this word?

A missionary in West Africa was trying to convey the meaning of the word **redeem** in the Bambara language. So he asked his African assistant to express it in his native tongue.

"We say," the assistant replied, "that God took our heads out."

"But how does that explain redemption?" the perplexed missionary asked.

The man told him that many years ago some of his ancestors had been captured by slave-traders, chained together, and driven to the seacoast. Each of the prisoners had a heavy iron collar around his neck. As the slaves passed through a village, a chief might notice a friend of his among the captives and offer to pay the slave-traders in gold, ivory, silver, or brass. The prisoner would be redeemed by the payment. His head then would be taken out of his iron collar. What an unusual and graphic illustration of the word **redeem**! Let Him take your head out of the enslaving collar of sin and set you free. Christ our Great High Priest was lifted up on the cross that we might be lifted out of our sin. He is now sitting in the true Holy of holies at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven interceding with His Father on your behalf. Next time before you give in to that sin which so easily entangles you, meditate on what it cost to redeem you from enslavement to the old Master, Sin.

Wuest explains **redemption** writing that it is...

the Greek word...**lutrosis**. The verbal form of this word means "to release on receipt of ransom, to redeem or liberate by payment of a ransom." The word "ransom," **lutron**, was used of the ransom-money that was paid in freeing a slave. Sinners are slaves of sin and Satan. Messiah by His sacrifice on the Cross, paid for their liberation, the ransom-money, His blood, for the wages of sin is death, and death means outpoured blood. Thus, the primal necessity of the Cross was in satisfying the claims of outraged justice, of paying the penalty of man's sin. The sinner, having placed his faith in Messiah as his High Priest, is liberated forever from sin's penalty. This is given us in the word "**eternal**." The believing sinner saved by the blood of Jesus, is saved for time and for eternity. **He can never be lost**. The Lord Jesus by His outpoured blood, procured for man, not a probation but a salvation. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

Hebrews 9:13 (He 9:13-note)

Hebrews 9:14 (He 9:14-note)

Cleanse your conscience

Isaac Watts wrote...

Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain.
Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all our sins away,

A sacrifice of nobler name and richer big than they.

(Play [Not All the Blood of Beasts](#))

Ray Stedman sums up this section writing that...

The point our author makes in 9:11-14 is that if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer offered in the tabernacle of old sufficed to cleanse the sins of those ceremonially unclean and to forgive (see Warren Wiersbe's note below on Hebrews 10:4 regarding the character of this forgiveness) the rebellions of the past so that the people were **temporarily acceptable** to God, how much more does the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences from sin's defilement today? They had only animals to offer in sacrifice, and it was necessary to repeat them again and again. But Christ offered only one sacrifice, not an animal but Himself, and He did it **once for all**. This indicated its **continuing, unbroken efficacy**, which obtained not merely a **temporary and outward cleansing**, but **eternal redemption**. As we have seen, it is the conscience within which acts as a barrier to God's presence. Like Adam after the Fall, we tend to hide ourselves from God, fearing his judgment. Conscience cannot be rendered inactive by our will, though its voice can be muffled. It is only silenced when we see that God is not unhappy or angry with us. But since Jesus offered himself unblemished to God in our place, God's justice no longer makes demands upon us. We may, therefore, set aside useless rituals and so feel ourselves free in his presence to serve the Living God. ([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

Hebrews 9:15 (He 9:15-note)

In this verse and through verse 17, the word "**covenant**" is used somewhat differently than in the rest of the book, for now the writer treats the covenant more like a **will**. In other words Christ is seen both as the One Who **makes the will** and Who **dies so that the "will" can come into effect**, but He also functions as the executor so to speak, the One Who administers the will.

"**And for this reason**" begs the question "what **reason**?" the context explaining that the readers can now obtain a clean conscience and serve the living God because they have obtained an "eternal inheritance". As explained in the next two verses, they could not have received this "inheritance" unless the one who made the will had actually died. But He has died and so now the "inheritance" is eternally theirs!

"**A death has taken place for the redemption of transgressions...under the first covenant**": This passage refers to the fact that Jesus' death not only was efficacious for believers who were alive but for all those believers who had lived under the Old Covenant. The point is that when Christ died, these Old Testament believers realized what heretofore had only been a promise. Stated another way, Christ's atoning death was "retroactive".

This same truth is taught by Paul in Romans, where he writes that

all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, **because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed** (NIV "in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished") (Ro 3:23, 24, 25-see notes Ro 3:23; 24; 25)

For example think of King David who was confronted by the prophet Nathan for committing adultery with Bathsheba and then having Uriah her husband murdered. Nathan says, "Why have you despised the word of the Lord?" (2Sa 12:9). David feels the rebuke of Nathan, and in (2Sa 12:13) he says, "I have sinned against the Lord" to which, Nathan responds, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die." Here we see bountiful mercy as David's adultery and murder are "passed over"! Nathan goes on to add that "The Lord has **put away your sin**; you shall not die." Christ's death hundreds of years later paid the penalty, the price of redemption, for David's transgression! This concept is difficult to grasp, but the gracious, all wise God clearly teaches it and that settles it!

This same truth is foreshadowed in **Micah's** prophecy...

Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and **passes over** the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18,19)

MacDonald adds that...

There is a sense in which God saved OT people "**on credit**." (Ed note: someone else has written that "Every

sacrifice for sin made in faith under the Mosaic command was an IOU cashed in at the cross") They were justified by faith, just as we are. But Christ had not died as yet. Then how could God save them? **The answer is that He saved them on the basis of what He knew Christ would accomplish.** They knew little or nothing of what Christ would do at Calvary. But God knew, and He reckoned the value of that work to their account when they believed whatever revelation He gave them of Himself. In a sense a great debt of transgression had accumulated under the Old Covenant. By His death, Christ redeemed believers of the former dispensation from these transgressions. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) or [Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

The promise of the eternal inheritance

Peter explains our **eternal inheritance** writing...

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an **inheritance** which is **imperishable** and **undefiled** and **will not fade away**, **reserved** in heaven for you (see note on 1 Peter 1:3-4)

Hebrews 9:16 (He 9:16-note)

NLT helps understand the author's intent...

Now when someone dies and leaves a will, no one gets anything until it is proved that the person who wrote the will is dead.

Morris comments that...

Although not all covenants require the death of one or both of the covenanters, but the particular covenants discussed in this section of Hebrews do involve death. The men with whom God was making the covenants all were under the judgment of death because of sin, but God Himself covenanted to die in their place, although they may not have understood its full implications at the time. In prophetic symbolism, both man's merited death and God's future substitutionary death were pictured by the animal sacrifices of the earlier covenants, and then finally fulfilled by the once-for-all death of God in Christ. All of these were sealed, as it were, by "the shedding of blood" (Hebrews 9:22), and their terms appropriated and effectuated by the faith of the men who received them in the covenant promises of God. ([Morris, Henry: Defenders Study Bible. World Publishing](#))

Ryrie adds that this verse

"strong proof that it is the **death of Christ, not His life**, that put into effect the New Covenant with all its blessings. His sinless life qualified Him to be the suitable sacrifice for sin, but it was His death that made the payment for sin." ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#)) (Bolding added)

Hebrews 9:17 (He 9:17-note)

Hebrews 9:18 (He 9:18-note)

Hebrews 9:19 (He 9:19-note)

Hebrews 9:20 (He 9:20-note)

Hebrews 9:21 (He 9:21-note)

MacArthur comments that..

Since the Tabernacle was not yet built when Moses ratified the covenant, his sprinkling the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood is obviously meant to be anticipatory. The blood he sprinkled at the initiation of the covenant continued, in a sense, to be sprinkled by the priests in the Tabernacle and Temple as long as that covenant stood. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press](#) or [Logos](#))

Hebrews 9:22 (He 9:22-note)

What does the phrase "**almost all things are cleansed with blood**" mean? **John MacArthur** helps us understand writing that...

we need to keep in mind that the blood was a symbol. If Christ's own physical blood, in itself, does not cleanse from sin, how much less did the physical blood of animals. It is not surprising, then, that the Old Covenant allowed a **symbol** for a **symbol**. A Jew who was too poor to bring even a small animal for a sacrifice was allowed to bring **one-tenth of an ephah** (about two quarts) **of fine flour** instead (Lev 5:11). His sins were covered just as surely as those of the person who could afford to offer a lamb or goat or turtledove or pigeon (Lev. 5:6, 7). This exception is clear proof that **the old cleansing was symbolic**. Just as the **animal blood symbolized** Christ's true atoning blood, so the **ephah of flour** symbolized and represented the animal blood. This non-blood offering for sin was acceptable because the old sacrifice was entirely **symbolic** anyway. Yet this was the only exception. And even the exception represented a blood sacrifice...Since the penalty for sin is death, nothing but death, symbolized by shedding of blood, can atone for sin...Because they (OT blood sacrifices) were symbols, God provided a limited and strictly qualified exception (flour) to the old sacrifices. But there can be no exception for the real sacrifice (Christ crucified), because it (He) is the only way to God...We cannot enter into God's presence by self-effort to be righteous. If we, on our own, could be good, we would not need atonement. Nor can we enter His presence by being model citizens or even by being religious. We cannot enter His presence by reading the Bible, by going to church, by giving generously to the Lord's work, or even by praying. We cannot enter His presence by thinking good thoughts about Him. The only way we can enter into God's presence, the only way we can participate in the New Covenant, is through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, made effective for us when we trust in Him as saving Lord. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

What does the phrase "**without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**" mean?

There is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood, and there is no **perfect forgiveness** without a **perfect** sacrifice. We in the Church Age need to understand that under the Old Covenant sacrifices merely **covered** over sin, but they could never **remove** it. The Old Covenant sacrifices were never meant to cleanse from sin, but only to **symbolize such cleansing**. The cleansing, like the Old Covenant as a whole, not only was **limited** and **imperfect** and also **temporary**.

The conscience of the person sacrificing was never freed from the feeling of guilt because the **guilt itself was never really removed**. The cleansing was entirely **external**. Consequently, the person could **never have a clear conscience, a deep, abiding sense of forgiveness**. There was a **degree of forgiveness**, but it was never comprehensive. **Permanent forgiveness**, and therefore **permanent access to God**, came only through Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant and of a new permanent priesthood. Had the Old Covenant sacrifices been able to bring a person into God's presence, the sacrifices would have ceased for they would have fulfilled their purpose. The Old Testament saints (an OT saint was not all or even most of Israel but only the "remnant" who like Abraham had believed in the Lord and had been credited with righteousness) **lacked the total sense of freedom from the consciousness of their sin**. They came short of that full privilege, because the sacrifices of that covenant **could not completely remove their sin** and bring them to God. Because their sins were not finally cleansed, their consciences could not be wholly cleansed, could not be freed. The New Covenant gives greater understanding of full forgiveness, freedom from guilt, and a cleansed conscience. The writer sums this up the finality of the New Covenant in Hebrews 10 writing...

Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. (He 10:18-note)

To reiterate, no one through the Old Covenant had complete access to God. There was only a temporary covering over of sin, not a removal of sin or of the guilt that sin brings. When Jesus Christ offered His sacrifice, however, He sat down at the right hand of His Father in the Holy of holies in Heaven because His work was done. Among His last words on the Cross were, "**It is finished.**" (John 19:30) Jesus accomplished in one glorious act what all the priests of the Old Covenant had not accomplished and could never have accomplished -- **forgiveness of men's sins** and thereby their reconciliation with a Holy God. What a marvelous and wonderful truth this is. Jesus did it all in one sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself.

The glory of the New Covenant is not only that sins are now **truly forgiven**, but that they are also **completely forgotten**. **Under the Old Covenant, sins could never really be forgotten, because they were never really forgiven**. As discussed above they were only covered, foreshadowing and anticipating true forgiveness in the Perfect Sacrifice, Jesus Christ. Now, for those who belong to His dear Son, whether they believed under the Old Covenant or under the New, God forgives and forgets every sin. **Beloved, do you really understand this great truth, the capstone of the New Covenant, the Better Covenant?** This truth can set you free from self-imposed guilt and condemnation over past sins assuming that they have been "put under the blood" rather than being "swept under the rug"! And when the Son sets you free with His perfect forgiveness, you are free indeed! (Jn 8:36) Free to confidently worship and serve in the presence of the Living God. How much more meaningful will it be for you the next time you celebrate the Lord's Supper, and you remember His words given to His disciples the night He instituted the New Covenant declaring...

"This is **My blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many **for forgiveness of sins**" (Mt 26:28)

MacArthur adds that...

God does not forgive sin by looking down and saying, "It's all right. Since I love you so much, I'll overlook your sin." God's righteousness and holiness will not allow Him to overlook sin. Sin demands payment by death. And the only death great enough to pay for all of mankind's sins is the death of His Son. God's great love for us will not lead Him to overlook our sin, but it has led Him to provide the payment for our sin, as John 3:16 so beautifully reminds us. God cannot ignore our sin; but He will forgive our sin if we trust in the death of His Son for that forgiveness. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press or Logos](#))

Hebrews 9:23 (He 9:23-note)

Ray Stedman commenting on the phrase "**the heavenly things** (to be cleansed) **with better sacrifices** (than those that cleansed the earthly copies of the heavenly things) writes that...

Though the imagery here is drawn from the Day of Atonement, we must not think of Jesus as bearing a basin of his own blood into heaven to present it before the throne of God at his ascension, as some commentators have concluded. The rending of the curtain in the temple at the time of the crucifixion is ample evidence to indicate that the blood shed in the death of Jesus was the moment when full atonement for sin was accomplished. ([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series or Logos](#))

Hebrews 9:24 (He 9:24-note)

Hebrews 9:25 (He 9:25-note)

Hebrews 9:26 (He 9:26-note)

Stedman notes that...

The phrase the end of the ages (NASB "**at the consummation of the ages**") designates the present age as the last of a series. It marks the end of human history as we now know it and will terminate in the events which Jesus foretold would occur "at the end of the age" ([Mt 24–25](#)). ([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series or Logos](#))

Guzik has an interesting comment on **Jesus' perfect sacrifice** writing that...

If the sacrifice of Jesus were not perfect, then it would have to be continual and constant - even since the foundation of the world. Imperfect sacrifices must be repeated continually but a perfect sacrifice can be made once for all time, and genuinely **put away sin** (not just **cover sin**, as with sacrifice under the Old Covenant). The message is clear: He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This principle of sacrifice explains why the suffering of hell must be eternal for those who reject the atoning work of Jesus. They are in hell to pay the penalty of their sin, but as imperfect beings they are unable to make a perfect payment. If the payment is not perfect, then it has to be continual and constant - indeed, for all eternity. A soul could be released from hell the moment its debt of sin was completely paid - which is another way of saying never. ([Commentary on Heb 9:26](#))

Hebrews 9:27 (He 9:27-note)

"**It is appointed for men to die once**" Just as any fallen human being is destined to die once for all time, with judgment awaiting beyond death, so Christ also died once for all time to deal with sin.

Hebrews 9:28 (He 9:28-note)

Christ...shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin"

Stedman writes that

This salvation points to the resurrection of the body. For them, the spirit has been regenerated already and the soul is being saved as Christ likeness is formed in that believer (2Cor 3:18). What yet awaits is the raising of the body so that the whole person becomes a dwelling place of God forever. This is the only place in the New Testament where the return of Christ is called a second coming. During his first coming, he dealt with the problem of human sin on the cross; at his second coming the full effect of that sacrifice will be manifested

in the resurrection (or "transformation"—1Cor 15:51,52) of the bodies of those who wait for him. ([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#) or [Logos](#))

Those who eagerly await (apekdechomai - word study) (present tense) **Him**

This brings to mind the picture of the Israelites who patiently waited for the high priest to emerge from the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. What are NT believers eagerly awaiting? Their "**future tense salvation**", known theologically as **glorification** (see Three Tenses of Salvation). Peter alluded to it after explaining to his readers that they had been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, writing that now...

(we) are (present tense continually being) protected by the power of God through faith for a SALVATION ready to be revealed in the last time (when Christ appears for a second time) (1Pe 1:5-note)

Paul also encouraged the Roman saints with the assurance that...

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit (a foretaste of future glory), even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly (present tense = continually, habitually, as our lifestyle assiduously and patiently waiting = apekdechomai same verb as in Hebrews 9:28) for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (that day when God will give us our full rights as His children, including the new bodies He has promised us). (Ro 8:23-note)

Hebrews 10:1 (He 10:1-note)

Same sacrifices year after year: the OC sacrificial system was temporary, and therefore could accomplish nothing permanent. The very repetition of the sacrifices day after day, and year after year, pointed out the weakness of the OC system.

Make perfect does not refer to sinless perfection but speaks to the removal of guilt which makes free access to God possible for worshipers who trust in the sufficiency of the Cross. See comment on Hebrews 10:14 below.

Guzik

Shadow isn't a bad thing. Sometimes a shadow can tell you a lot. But the shadow is not the substance. The Old Covenant and its law were not themselves bad or evil, they are only incomplete and insufficient to bring total cleansing from sin, and to save. The shadow . . . can never . . . make those who approach perfect. ([Commentary on Hebrews 10:1](#))

MacDonald comments that...

The law was only a shadow of the good things that were to come. It pointed forward to the Person and work of Christ but it was a poor substitute for reality. To prefer the law to Christ is like preferring a picture to the person represented. It is an insult to His majesty! The weakness of the legal system is seen in the fact that its sacrifices had to be constantly repeated. This repetition proved their total inability to meet the claims of a holy God. Notice the expressions used to capture this idea of repetitiveness: the same sacrifices; offer continually; year by year. The sacrifices were utterly unable to perfect the worshipers, that is, they never gave the people a perfect conscience as far as sin was concerned. The Israelites never enjoyed the consciousness of being cleared forever from the guilt of sin. They never had complete rest of conscience. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) or [Logos](#))

Hebrews 10:2 (He 10:2-note)

Guzik

repetition of sacrifice shows its inherent weakness. If animal sacrifice had "fixed" the sin problem, then they could have ceased to be offered. ([Commentary on Hebrews 10:2](#))

Hebrews 10:3 (He 10:3-note)

Hebrews 10:4 (He 10:4-note)

Warren Wiersbe comments on this section writing that...

Animal sacrifices could never completely deal with human guilt. God did promise forgiveness to believing worshipers (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35), but this was a **judicial forgiveness** and **not the removal of guilt from people's hearts. People lacked that inward witness of full and final forgiveness.** They could not

claim, "I have no more consciousness of sins." If those worshipers had been "once purged [from guilt of sin]" they would never again have had to offer another sacrifice. So the annual Day of Atonement did not accomplish "**remission** of sin" but only "**reminder** of sin." The annual repetition of the ceremony was evidence that the previous year's sacrifices had not done the job. True, the nation's sins were **covered**; but they were not **cleansed**. **Nor did the people have God's inward witness of forgiveness and acceptance.** Yes, there was a desperate need for a better sacrifice because the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins. It could **cover sin** and postpone judgment; but it could never effect a **once-and-for-all redemption**. Only the better sacrifice of the Son of God could do that. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

MacArthur comments that

The Levitical system was not designed by God to remove or forgive sins. It was preparatory for the coming of the Messiah (Gal 3:24) in that it made the people expectant (cf. see 1Pe 1:10, 11, 12 -note). It revealed the seriousness of their sinful condition, in that even temporary covering required the death of an animal. It revealed the reality of God's holiness and righteousness by indicating that sin had to be covered. Finally, it revealed the necessity of full and complete forgiveness so that God could have desired fellowship with His people. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word or Logos](#))

Hebrews 10:6 (He 10:6-note)

God was not pleased with sacrifices given by a person who did not give them out of a sincere heart. To sacrifice only as a ritual, without **obedience**, was a mockery and worse than no sacrifice at all. David in Psalm 51, a psalm that deals with David's confession and repentance of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah writes...

For Thou **dost not delight in sacrifice**, otherwise I would give it;

Thou art not pleased with burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (Ps 51:16, 17)

God does not delight in the external acts and the ritual of worship. God always inspects the **giver**, before he inspects the **gift**, offering or praise. How can one who is unclean offer a clean sacrifice? The constant urging is that God's servants give their hearts and their lives in deep contrition and brokenness of spirit before they observe feasts, fasts, sabbaths or sacrifices. Rote religion can never substitute for purity of heart.

Ray Stedman reminds us that...

Wholehearted obedience is the quality which God desires in sacrifices. He makes the point many times in the Old Testament, notably, in 1Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11, 12, 13, 14; and Amos 5:21,22. As Morris rightly says, "God takes no delight in the routine performance of the ritual of sacrifice". Undoubtedly, he feels the same way about routine worship services today! ([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series or Logos](#))

MacDonald adds that the writer quotes from Psalm 40 specifically noting...

Quoting from Psalm 40, He noted **God's dissatisfaction** with the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Covenant. God had instituted these sacrifices, yet they were never His ultimate intention. They were never designed to put away sins but rather to point forward to the Lamb of God who would bear away the sin of the world. Could God be pleased with rivers of animal blood or with heaps of animal carcasses? **Another reason for God's dissatisfaction** is that the people thought they were pleasing Him by going through ceremonies while their inward lives were sinful and corrupt. Many of them went through the dreary round of sacrifices with no repentance or contrition. They thought that God could be appeased with their animal sacrifices whereas He was looking for the sacrifice of a broken heart. They did not realize that God is not a ritualist! ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

Wiersbe adds that ...

Twice in this paragraph, the writer stated that God "had no pleasure" in the Old Covenant sacrifices (see Heb. 10:6, 8). This does not suggest that the old sacrifices were wrong, or that sincere worshipers received no benefit from obeying God's Law. It only means that God had no delight in sacrifices as such, apart from the obedient hearts of the worshipers. No amount of sacrifices could substitute for obedience ([Wiersbe, W: Bible](#)

Hebrews 10:7 (He 10:7-note)

MacDonald notes that...

What did bring pleasure to God was the Messiah's willingness to do the will of God, no matter what the cost might be. He proved His willing obedience by offering Himself on the altar of sacrifice. As our Lord uttered those words, He was reminded that from the beginning to the end of the OT, it is witnessed of Him that He took wholehearted delight in accomplishing God's will. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

Hebrews 10:11 (He 10:11-note)

The Levitical priests always stood before God for there were no seats in the sanctuary, indicating that the priests' job was never done.

Hebrews 10:12 (He 10:12-note)

Christ sat down after offering Himself as a sacrifice indicating that His work of atonement is finished. This truth parallels Christ's final words on the Cross "**It is finished**" ([John 19:30](#)).

Hebrews 10:14 (He 10:4-note)

Perfect is the Greek word **teleioo** (see study of related word **teleo**) and is used in the **perfect tense** meaning that this perfection began at a point in time in the past and has continuing or ongoing effects or benefits. The idea of the verb **teleioo** is that one has finally reached their goal and in the context of the book of Hebrews refers to believers as now once and for all fully cleansed from sin in contrast to the temporary, ineffective external cleansing that resulted from the sacrifices under the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is a Better Covenant with a Better Sacrifice which does once and for all what the Old could never accomplish. So from a positional view, that is in the presence of God's holiness, because we are in Christ and His perfect righteousness, God sees us now as perfectly righteous. In that sense, we will never be any more righteous than we are now, because we could never add anything to the righteousness found in Christ. On the other hand, we still live in these bodies of sin and have to contend with the flesh and thus our practice (as contrasted with our "position") before God is that we are "**those who are sanctified**". The verb for **sanctified** is **hagiazō** which means to be made holy in the sense of being set apart from the common, profane and mundane things of this world and unto God. **Hagiazō** is the same verb used in Hebrews 10:10, with a very important distinction -- in verse 10, the tense is **perfect** (past completed action with present ongoing result or effect) whereas here in verse 14 the tense is **present** which conveys the idea of a continual action. In other words we as believers are **perfected** as far as our eternal standing before God is concerned but we in another very real sense "works in progress", daily, even moment by moment being set apart by the "sanctifying work of the Spirit" (passive voice), "being transformed into His likeness" (2Co 3:18) and ultimately "conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29)

Kistemaker explains that "**perfected**" refers to the fact that...

The sacrifice of Christ, unique in itself, brought about **holiness** for the believer. That is, every believer receives these benefits of Christ's sacrifice on the cross: his sins are forgiven; his conscience is cleansed; he has peace with God, assurance of salvation, and the gift of life eternal. Christ has perfected the believer forever. But even though the author writes that Christ "has made perfect forever those who are being made holy," he shows in other passages the work of perfection is not yet complete in the recipients of his epistle. They are encouraged to resist sin, endure hardship, and submit to discipline (Heb 12:4, 7, 9). Perfection, in a sense, is here already and is also not yet here. We have this certainty, however, that we are perfected in Christ, who removed our sin by his sacrifice. ([Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. Vol. 15: New Testament commentary : Exposition of Hebrews. Page 282. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House or Logos](#))() (Bolding added)

Hebrews 10:15 (He 10:15-note)

Wiersbe adds that ...

How do we know personally that we have this perfect standing before God? Because of the witness of the Holy Spirit through the Word (Heb. 10:15, 16, 17, 18). The witness of the Spirit is based on the work of the Son and is given through the words of Scripture. The writer (Heb 10:16,17) quoted Jeremiah 31:33,34, part of a passage he'd also quoted in Hebrews 8:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. The Old Covenant worshiper could not say that

he had “no more consciousness of sins” (Heb 10:2). But the New Covenant believer can say that his sins and iniquities are remembered no more. There is “no more offering for sin” (Heb. 10:18) and no more remembrance of sin!

I once shared a conference with a fine Christian psychiatrist whose lectures were very true to the Word. “The trouble with psychiatry,” he told me, “is that it can only deal with symptoms. A psychiatrist can remove a patient’s feelings of guilt, but he cannot remove the guilt. It’s like a trucker loosening a fender on his truck so he won’t hear the motor knock. A patient can end up feeling better, but have two problems instead of one!” When a sinner trusts Christ, his sins are all forgiven, the guilt is gone, and the matter is completely settled forever. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor or Logos](#))

Hebrews 10:25 (He 10:25-note)

“The day drawing near” refers to the return of Christ (see [Table comparing Rapture vs Second Coming](#)) as in Heb 9:28 which records that...

Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

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