

# Hebrews Chapter 9

**Theme:** The Superiority of Christ's Sacrifice and the New Covenant

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## Introduction

Hebrews 9 contrasts the old covenant's earthly tabernacle and repetitive sacrifices with the new covenant's heavenly sanctuary and Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. The author emphasizes the insufficiency of the old system and the perfection achieved through Jesus' atoning work.

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## The Earthly Sanctuary and Its Limitations (Hebrews 9:1–10)

### Scripture:

- 1 Now the first covenant also had regulations for ministry and an earthly sanctuary.
- 2 For a tabernacle was set up, and in the first room, which is called the holy place, were the lampstand, the table, and the presentation loaves.
- 3 Behind the second curtain was a tent called the most holy place.
- 4 It had the gold altar of incense and the ark of the covenant, covered with gold on all sides, in which were a gold jar containing the manna, Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.
- 5 The cherubim of glory were above the ark overshadowing the mercy seat. It is not possible to speak about these things in detail right now.
- 6 With these things prepared like this, the priests enter the first room repeatedly, performing their ministry.
- 7 But the high priest alone enters the second room, and he does that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.
- 8 The Holy Spirit was making it clear that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed while the first tabernacle was still standing.
- 9 This is a symbol for the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the worshiper's conscience.
- 10 They are physical regulations and only deal with food, drink, and various washings imposed until the time of the new order.

### Key Greek Terms:

- **σκηνή (skēnē)** – *Tabernacle* (v. 2): A tent or dwelling; refers to the portable sanctuary used in the wilderness.
- **ἅγια (hagia)** – *Holy place* (v. 2): The first room of the tabernacle where daily rituals occurred.
- **ἅγια ἁγίων (hagia hagiōn)** – *Most holy place* (v. 3): The innermost part of the tabernacle, symbolizing God's presence.
- **ἱλαστήριον (hilastērion)** – *Mercy seat* (v. 5): The cover of the ark where atonement was made; signifies propitiation.
- **συνείδησις (syneidēsis)** – *Conscience* (v. 9): The inner sense of right and wrong; the old sacrifices couldn't cleanse it.

## Theological Insights:

- The earthly tabernacle and its rituals were symbolic, pointing forward to Christ's ultimate sacrifice.
- The repetitive nature of the old covenant sacrifices highlighted their insufficiency in providing complete atonement.
- The inability to cleanse the conscience under the old system underscores the need for a better covenant.

## Historical and Cultural Context:

- The tabernacle, as described in Exodus 25–27, was central to Israel's worship and represented God's dwelling among His people.
- The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) was the only time the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, emphasizing the separation between God and man.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Why were the rituals of the old covenant insufficient for cleansing the conscience?
2. How does understanding the symbolism of the tabernacle enhance our appreciation of Christ's work?
3. In what ways do people today attempt to earn favor with God through rituals or works?

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## Christ's Superior Sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11–22)

### Scripture:

11 But Christ has appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation),

12 he entered the most holy place once for all time, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,

14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God?

15 Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

16 Where a will exists, the death of the one who made it must be established.

17 For a will is valid only when people die, since it is never in effect while the one who made it is living.

18 That is why even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood.

19 For when every command had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll itself and all the people,

20 saying, This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you.

21 In the same way, he sprinkled the tabernacle and all the articles of worship with blood.

22 According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

## Key Greek Terms:

- **λύτρωσις (lytrōsis)** – *Redemption* (v. 12): Deliverance through payment; Christ's blood secures eternal redemption.
- **ἀμίαντος (amiantos)** – *Without blemish* (v. 14): Describes Christ's sinlessness, qualifying Him as the perfect sacrifice.
- **διαθήκη (diathēkē)** – *Covenant* or *will* (vv. 15–17): A binding agreement; context determines whether it refers to a covenant or a will.

## Theological Insights:

- Christ's sacrifice is superior, providing eternal redemption and cleansing the conscience, unlike the temporary purification under the old covenant.
- The necessity of blood for forgiveness is a consistent biblical theme, culminating in Christ's atoning death.
- The new covenant, established through Christ's death, fulfills the promises and surpasses the old covenant's limitations.

## Historical and Cultural Context:

- The old covenant's inauguration with blood (Exodus 24:3–8) prefigured the necessity of Christ's blood for the new covenant.
- The use of blood in purification rituals underscored the seriousness of sin and the cost of atonement.

## Discussion Questions:

1. How does Christ's sacrifice provide what the old covenant could not?
2. What does it mean to have our conscience cleansed, and how does this affect our service to God?
3. Why is the shedding of blood essential for forgiveness, and how does this truth impact our understanding of salvation?

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## The Finality and Efficacy of Christ's Sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23–28)

### Scripture:

23 Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves to be purified with better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands (only a model of the true one) but into heaven itself, so that he might now appear in the presence of God for us.

25 He did not do this to offer himself many times, as the high priest enters the sanctuary yearly with the blood of another.

26 Otherwise, he would have had to suffer many times since the foundation of the world. But now he has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment—

28 so also Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

## Key Greek Terms:

- φανερώω (**phaneroō**) – *To appear* (v. 24): To make visible; Christ appears before God on our behalf.
- ἀνενεγκεῖν (**anenegkein**) – *To bear* (v. 28): To carry or take upon oneself; Christ bore our sins.

## Theological Insights:

- Christ's once-for-all sacrifice contrasts with the repetitive sacrifices of the old covenant, highlighting its sufficiency and finality.
- His entrance into the heavenly sanctuary signifies the fulfillment of the earthly tabernacle's typology.
- The anticipation of Christ's second coming emphasizes the hope and assurance believers have in the completed work of salvation.

## Historical and Cultural Context:

- The high priest's annual entry into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) prefigured Christ's singular, efficacious entrance into heaven.
- The concept of judgment after death (v. 27) aligns with Jewish eschatological expectations and underscores the urgency of accepting Christ's atonement.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What does the heavenly tabernacle teach us about the nature of true worship and God's presence?
2. How does Christ's one-time sacrifice give us assurance and peace?
3. What impact does verse 27 have on your view of life, death, and evangelism?
4. In what ways should believers be “waiting for him” in light of His promised return?

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## Summary and Application

### Key Truths:

- The old covenant pointed to Christ but could never perfect the conscience or secure eternal redemption.
- Christ's sacrifice is complete, final, and offered in a heavenly sanctuary.
- Believers are now cleansed, redeemed, and awaiting Christ's return, not as Judge but as Savior.

### Application for Today:

- Rest in the assurance of salvation through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. There is no need to rely on religious rituals to maintain right standing before God.
- Examine your conscience. Has it been cleansed by the blood of Christ, or are you still trying to silence guilt through works?
- Live with an eternal perspective. Death is certain; judgment is real. So is the salvation that Christ promises to those who are