

The Reading of God's Will – Hebrews 9

1. This chapter is full of deep content so we will do what we can in our limited time...but take time to really go through this a few times this week.
2. As often happens in Hebrews, the chapter break doesn't really work so we will pick up with the last verse of chapter 8. [Hebrews 8:13-9:5] Remember that this was to be a representation of heaven. God was with them. You had light in the first room – and the Gospel of John makes it very plain that Jesus is that light. You had the consecrated bread that belonged to God – and we ask Him for our daily bread in the Lord's Prayer AND we eat the bread when we take communion (and we call it communion because we are communing with God and the family of God).
3. Because His flesh is now our flesh (the communion, again), we can enter the Holy Place. At the time this book was written, there was still the Most Holy Place, a curtained off area that was forbidden to all but the High Priest. In there was the Ark of the Covenant that contained manna (proof of God's provision), Aaron's rod that budded (proof of God's power and promises), and the Stone Tablets (the sacred law of God). On top were the cherubim, forming the seat. But...
4. "We cannot discuss these things in detail now." Why? Because the Ark was gone. We do not know where it went or even when it was taken but it had gone missing for hundreds of years by this time (probably – some believe it was within the last 150yrs). Remember Hebrews 8:13. The old law was not going away because it was bad but because a new law was in place and the pieces and relics of the old law were scattered and would continue to be scattered. Today, various Christian and Muslim sects argue about every square foot of the temple mount. Its glory has disappeared...but there is still the sense of the holy there for God walked there and, where He walks, He leaves tracks of the Divine.
5. Now this: [Hebrews 9:6-10]. The sacrifices of the people were not, then, enough to rid their lives, their histories, and the world of sin. There was still sin to be dealt with, so the High Priest had to enter the

Most Holy Place to ask for God's forgiveness even after a year of sacrifices. So were they worthless?

6. Not at all. By them, they were united as a people and reminded of their God and their status in the universe. It was also a way to provide for the poor, but that, too, was part of reminding them of their place in the universe. We care for the poor as a reflection of God's care and concern for them in heaven.
7. Now this: **Hebrews 9:11-14**. You could only bring your best to be sacrificed to God. The roads would have been choked with families bringing their lamb to Jerusalem when Jesus went out to be baptized of John the Baptist. When John saw him, he said "Behold the Lamb." This sacrifice is greater than that of lambs and bulls.
8. **Hebrews 9:15**. Job once cried for a mediator, a daysman, to stand between him and heaven. Now we have one. We are set free from our sins because – remember the Valley of Elah stories I used for chapter 2, death is the driver of sin and we are no longer subject to the fear of death.
9. This is not a case of vicarious atonement where an angry and vengeful God was just barely turned aside when His Son died for us. This is Jesus defeating death, defeating the power of sin, disarming Satan. But there's more...by dying, the Will of God came into effect. **[Hebrews 9:16-22]** Sacrifices were not there to please God, but to remind us of the ugliness of sin, the tragedy of sin (uncut stones for the altar, never cleaned).
10. But if sins on earth are forgiven after sacrifices that include blood...what is going on in heaven? Well – something new. **[Hebrews 9:23-28]** I'm going to go out on a limb here and say you've never received better news than this.
11. When God sees us, He sees Jesus. (my mother's comment about Duncan) Jesus has taken care of our reason for sin, our slavery to sin, and he has given us eternal life and forgiveness right now, right here, and for always.

12. So we mirror heaven with the bread and the wine. And we mirror heaven by baptism for, there, we start looking like Jesus.
[Galatians 3:23-29]