

THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW

Hebrews 9:11–28

Review

- The *recipients* of Hebrews: a mixed Jewish-Christian audience.
- The *purpose* of Hebrews: the superiority of Jesus Christ (“*Jesus is better!*”).
- The *context* of Hebrews 9:
 - Jesus’ Superior Position (1:1–4:13 → Psalm 8:4–6; 97:7–11)
 - Jesus’ Superior Priesthood (4:14–7:28 → Psalm 110:4)
 - Jesus’ Superior Ministry (8:1–10:18 → Jeremiah 31:31–34)



An Outline of Hebrews 9

I. The Operation of the Old Covenant (9:1–10)

- A. Its Sphere Is *Earthly*
(vv. 1–5)
- B. Its Function Is *Repetitive*
(vv. 6–7)
- C. Its Purpose Is *Illustrative*
(vv. 8–9a)
- D. Its Efficacy Is *Superficial*
(vv. 9b–10)

II. The Operation of the New Covenant (9:11–28)

- A. Its Sphere Is *Heavenly*
(vv. 11–12)
- B. Its Efficacy Is *Comprehensive*
(vv. 13–14)
- C. Its Validation Is *Authentic*
(vv. 15–22)
- D. Its Duration Is *Everlasting*
(vv. 23–28)

A. *Its Sphere Is Heavenly (9:11–12)*

[9:11] But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; [12] and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

- Verses 11–12 are the pivotal hinge in chapter 9, and central to the book.
- It begins with the contrasting conjunction, “**but,**” and connects the thought of “**reformation**” (v. 10) with “**the good things go come**” (v. 11).
- Verses 13–28 go on to summarize the truth contained in this sentence.

- The writer treats the “**appearance**” of Christ (v. 11) as an historical event.
- His appearance was as “**a high priest**” (v. 11; cf. 2:17; 4:14), but not according to the old covenant and its Mosaic/Levitical regulations.
- Instead, His high priesthood is according to a different, superior order—“the order of Melchizedek” (cf. 4:14–7:28; Psalm 110:4).
- This priesthood is associated with “**the good things to come**” (v. 11)—the “time of reformation” (v. 10) which the old covenant anticipated (cf. 10:1).
- These “good things” are the “better hope” (7:19) and “better promises” (8:6) of the *new covenant*—specifically, *free access to God* and all the privileges that access brings (cf. 4:16).

- As a superior high priest, Christ accessed “**the greater and more perfect tabernacle,**” the one “**not made by hands**” or “**of this creation**” (v. 11).
- What is this realm through which Christ passed?
- It is the *heavenly version* of the earthly “outer tabernacle” (vv. 2, 6) through which the high priest entered, after performing the sacrifice, on his way to the earthly “Holy of Holies” to present the blood.
- As the superior High Priest, Christ passed through the superior realm—“heaven” (v. 24)—into the ultimate “Holy of Holies,” *the very presence of God*.

- Essential to the entrance into the earthly Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement were the *contents* of a vessel the high priest carried.
- The old covenant required the high priest to bring *two kinds of blood* from the altar of sacrifice outside the tabernacle into the Holy of Holies:
 - (a) the “**blood of calves**” (v. 12) = an offering for his own sin (cf. Leviticus 16:11–14);
 - (b) the “**blood of goats**” (v. 12) = an offering for the people’s sin (cf. Leviticus 16:15).
- But Christ, who appeared in God’s immediate presence, did not present the sacrificed blood of animals but “**His own blood**” (v. 12)—blood of a *moral* nature which alone can atone for *moral* iniquity (cf. 2:17; 7:27).

- Such a sacrifice achieved what no other sacrifice in the Mosaic covenant could: “**eternal redemption**” (v. 12; cf. vv. 14, 15).
- “**Redemption**” is “the paying of a price in order to obtain freedom from bondage for those redeemed” (Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 395).
- This redemption, based on the kind of payment made, is “**eternal**” in nature because it is *final*.
- Therefore, on the basis of “**having obtained**” this redemption (the sacrifice accomplished on the cross—John 19:30), Christ was *uniquely qualified* to access the very presence of God, to present His accomplishment “**once for all**” (v. 12).

KEY THOUGHT: “Christ entered the holy place once for all” (v. 12b).

- When did this happen? “When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come” (v. 11a).
- How did He get there? “Through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation” (v. 11b).
- By what means did He enter? “Not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood” (v. 12a).
- What qualified Him to enter? “Having obtained eternal redemption” (v. 12c).

B. Its Efficacy Is Comprehensive (9:13–14)

[9:13] For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, [14] how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

- Verses 13–14 summarize the entire lesser-to-greater argument of chapter 9 in one statement.
- Verse 13 highlights the *lesser object*; verse 14 highlights the *greater object*.

THE LESSER
(v. 13)

- The reference to “**the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer**” (cf. Leviticus 16, 19) emphasizes *plurality*.
- The reference to cleansing “**the flesh**” emphasizes *limited efficacy*.
- The reference to the “**sprinkling**” of this blood (by the priest) emphasizes the *passivity* of the thing offered.

THE GREATER
(v. 14)

- The reference to “**the blood of Christ**” emphasizes *singularity*.
- The reference to cleansing “**the conscience**” emphasizes *total efficacy*.
- The reference to “**offered Himself**” emphasizes *willing participation*.

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain:

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away,
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.

—*Isaac Watts*



- To prove further the *comprehensive efficacy* of Christ’s sacrifice, v. 14 includes a beautiful description of the involvement of the persons of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit—in the atonement:

1) **“who offered Himself without blemish”** – Christ’s own volition (cf. John 10:15, 18); Christ’s obedient life (cf. Hebrews 7:26–27; 10:5–10);



The Son
 (“Who”)

2) **“through the eternal Spirit”** – by the Holy Spirit’s enablement (cf. Isaiah 42:1); and

The Holy Spirit
 (“by Whom”)

3) **“to God”** – the One who required propitiation (cf. Romans 3:25–26; Hebrews 2:17).

The Father
 (“to Whom”)

- Verses 14 also describes the superior achievement of the atonement in both *negative* and *positive* terms.
- Its purpose (which the old covenant could not achieve) is to “**cleanse your conscience**” . . .
 -  (a) *negatively* – “**from dead works**” (the inability to please God);
 -  (b) *positively* – “**to serve the living God**” (the ability to please God).
- The atonement of Christ solves man’s greatest problem—his guilty conscience—and provides him with his greatest privilege—to glorify God.

C. *Its Validation Is Authentic (9:15–22)*

[9:15] For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. [16] For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. [17] For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. [18] Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood. [19] For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, . . .

C. *Its Validation Is Authentic (9:15–22)* – cont’d

[20] saying, “THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU.”
[21] And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. [22] And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

- The focus in this section now shifts to the *consequences* of Christ’s atoning sacrifice.
- Because Christ’s sacrifice obtained what the old covenant sacrifices could not (“**eternal redemption**,” v. 12), Christ now “**is the mediator of a new covenant**” (v. 15; cf. 8:6, 8–12; Jeremiah 31:31–34).

“Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’”

—Jeremiah 31:31–34

“He is no mere go-between, but a Mediator who, on the basis of his all-sufficient self-offering, guarantees (7:22) the benefits provided to all ‘those who draw near to God through him’ (7:25). He functions now as Mediator for beleaguered believers, enabling them to obtain their promised ‘eternal inheritance.’”

—Gareth Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 402

MEDIATOR



- An inevitable question arises: If the old covenant sacrifices could not **“obtain eternal redemption”** (v. 12) and **“cleans the conscience”** (vv. 9, 14), could anyone under that first covenant be saved?
- So remarkable is the efficacy of this sacrifice and mediatorial ministry of Christ that it functions *retroactively*: **“so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”** (v. 15).
- “By the death of Christ all of those who have been effectively called by God, whether from the Old Testament economy or from New Testament times onward, have the promise of an eternal inheritance validated for them” (Kent, *Hebrews*, 174).

- Verses 16–22 proceed to deal with an issue of paramount importance for the skeptical Jewish audience which the writer partly addresses.
- The common Jewish belief was that the Messiah never needed *to die* to fulfill His mission (e.g., Matthew 16:21–23; cf. Acts 3:18; 17:2–3); that the new covenant would be achievable *without His death*.
- The writer provides the response: *covenants—even wills—have always assumed death for validation* (v. 16).
- The old covenant required the shedding of blood (vv. 18, 20; cf. Exodus 24:8), so also the new covenant required the shedding of blood—but of a superior kind (v. 22; cf. Matthew 26:28).

D. Its Duration Is Everlasting (9:23–28)

[9:23] Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. [24] For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; [25] nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. [26] Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. . . .

D. Its Duration Is Everlasting (9:23–28) – cont'd

[27] And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, [28] so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

- The writer now emphasizes one more aspect about the superior operations of Christ's new covenant ministry: it only needs to happen *once*.
- In contrast to the sacrifices and ministries of the old covenant, which needed repetition "**often**" (vv. 25, 26), Christ's was only needed "**once**" (v. 26).

- The writer compares this *once-ness* to *human life itself*: “**inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment**” (v. 27).
- “**So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time**” (v. 28; cf. Isaiah 53:12).
- However, this “**second time**” (v. 28) will have nothing to do with *atonement* (“**without reference to sin**”), but everything to do with *inheritance* (“**for salvation . . . to those who eagerly await Him**”).
- He will not forever remain in heaven—in the spiritual “*holy of holies*”—but as a great high priest who has finished his work, He will exit it to bring out the full blessings, so that “**those who have been called may receive [the realization of] the promise of the eternal inheritance**” (v. 15).

THE OPERATION OF CHRIST'S NEW COVENANT MINISTRY "APPEARANCES" IN THREE STAGES

| Text | Appearance | Timing | Purpose |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Hebrews 9:26</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">“Once at the consummation of the ages <u>He has been manifested</u> to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">A past moment in history</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Atonement</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Hebrews 9:24</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">“For Christ . . . [entered] into heaven itself, <u>now to appear</u> in the presence of God for us.”</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">The current era, ongoing</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Intercession</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Hebrews 9:28</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">“So Christ also . . . <u>will appear a second time</u> for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">A moment in the future</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Appropriation</p> |

IMPLICATIONS

- If you have believed in Jesus Christ . . .
 - Rejoice in Him as your sufficient sacrifice.
 - Rejoice in Him as your sympathetic mediator.
- If you have not believed in Jesus Christ . . .
 - Do not harden your heart through inaction.
 - Believe in Him today as your Savior.

