

The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה
אַחֲ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמְצָה
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



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Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

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- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)**

Outline of Hebrews

IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)

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Outline of Hebrews

- A. Jesus' Sacrifice Is Better Than the Temple Sacrifices (**9:1-10:18**)
 - 1. Ministry Under the Old Covenant. (**9:1-10**)
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 - 3. Further Reflections on the New Covenant (**9:15-10:18**)
 - a. The Need for the Death of the Covenant Ratifier (**9:15-22**)
 - b. The Need for the Ultimate to Replace the Type (**9:23-28**)

The Need for the Ultimate to Replace the Type (9:23–28)

²³ *Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* ²⁴ *For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.* ²⁵ *Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,* ²⁶ *for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* ²⁷ *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,* ²⁸ *so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

Introduction

- This section summarizes the argument of the preceding sections in a succinct and climactic manner.
- The ***repetition*** of the main points is ***deliberate*** and indicates their ***importance*** to the author.
- The ***stress*** throughout ***most*** of this section is on what Christ has ***already*** done, once-and-for-all, rather than on what ***remains*** to occur.
- But at the ***end*** of this section, the author affirms the second advent of Christ as the event that will complete the salvation experienced by those who have received the good news and eagerly await his return.

²³ **Thus it was necessary** for the copies of the heavenly things **to be purified** with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

- The word “*thus*” tells us that the author is building on something he said in the previous section (9:15-22), where he talked about the necessity of purifying the handmade instruments of worship in the OT tabernacle.
- “*It was necessary*” that the things made by sinful human hands had “*to be purified*” in order to serve as God’s holy residence.
- Such cleansing required bloodshed, the prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22b).
- This requirement **makes sense** when you’re talking about the consecration of the **earthly** tabernacle and its furnishings through blood.

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- But then the author makes a “how much more” argument that takes a surprising turn: If animal sacrifices were “*necessary*” to purify the handmade **earthly** tabernacle, then even “**better sacrifices than these**” are needed to purify “*the heavenly things themselves... not... made with [human] hands*”!
- The “**better sacrifices**” here actually refer to the one, unrepeatable self-offering of Christ himself.
- Of course, this reasoning is **consistent** with the letter’s pervasive theme: Christ and the new covenant **surpass** God’s **prior** provision for his people under the old covenant **in every way**.

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- But why would “*the heavenly things themselves*,” untouched by human hands and undefiled by human sin, need “*to be purified*”?¹
- I believe the answer can be found in the Old Testament texts to which the author has already been alluding.²
- In the instructions for the Day of Atonement given in the OT, the high priest was to take the blood from the goat presented as a sin offering for the people and sprinkle it on and in front of the mercy seat covering the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place (Lev 16:15).²

¹ Dennis E. Johnson; *ESV Expository Commentary* (Volume 12) (pp. 219-220)

² Guthrie, George H. *Hebrews* (The NIV Application Commentary Book 15) (pp. 408-409).

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- The text continues:
 - *Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins.* (Lev 16:16a)
 - In other words, “*it was necessary*” for the **earthly** tabernacle and its furnishings (which were “*copies of the heavenly things*”) “*to be purified*” because of its association with a **sinful people**.
 - And so that holy space was **made fit** as a place for continued interaction between God and his people by sacrifices that addressed the problem of the **worshipper’s** sins.

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- Likewise, the **heavenly** tabernacle, the place of God's presence (9:24), was made accessible to the new covenant people of God by **Christ's** sacrificial death.
- In other words, the “*heavenly things*” are “*purified*” in the sense that they are **kept** pure through the purification of God's people.

²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into **holy places made with hands**, which are copies of the true things, but into **heaven itself**, now to appear in **the presence of God on our behalf**.

- In verse 24 it tells us that rather than carrying out his high-priestly ministry in the “*holy places [i.e. the Holy of Holies] made with [human] hands*” (in other words, the **earthly** Holy of Holies), Christ entered “**heaven itself**” (the **heavenly** Holy of Holies) to bring his sacrifice before “*the presence of God on our behalf*.”
- The author then reminds us that **Christ’s** appearance before God was “**on our behalf**”, thus **distinguishing** his high priestly act from that of the **earthly** high priest, who had to **first** offer a sacrifice for **himself** (Heb 5:1-3; 7:27-28).

²⁵ *Nor was it to offer himself **repeatedly**, as the high priest enters **the holy places** every year with blood not his own*

²⁶ *for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared **once for all** at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

- The author now draws a **contrast** between the sacrifices offered “*repeatedly*” by Levitical high priests and Christ’s “*once for all*” sacrifice of himself.
- The mention of the high priest’s entering “*the holy places* **every year** with blood not his own” shows that the author here is thinking specifically of the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement.

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- The fact that the Day of Atonement ritual took place over and over, year after year, showed that Levitical rites could never remove defilement from human consciences.
- When we get to chapter 10, the author will tell us that if “*the blood of bulls and goats*” could take away sins, they would not have been “*offered every year*” (10:1-4).

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- Christ brought infinitely more costly blood when he entered “*once for all*” into the heavenly Most Holy Place.
- Whereas the Levitical high priest presented “*blood not his own*,” that of slain goats and calves, Christ “*put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*”

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- If Christ's sacrifice **did** call for repetition, then he would have to endure suffering and death an endless number of times throughout the ages of world history (i.e. *repeatedly since the foundation of the world*).
- But that involves a patent absurdity: “*it is appointed for human beings to die once*,” and the Son of Man, who became “*like his brothers*” in all things, cannot and must not die more than once.

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- Rather, in his first coming when he came to be sacrificed, he appeared “*at the end of the ages*” – the climactic moment in redemptive history.
- Christ’s incarnation, ministry, death, and exaltation are the series of events that mark the arrival of “*the last days*” (Heb 1:1-2; Acts 2:17) and “*the end of the ages*” (1 Cor. 10:11).

²⁷ *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,* ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

- The author's statement that "*it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*" refutes Eastern religions' belief in reincarnation and Western materialism's belief that physical death annihilates human beings' personal existence.
- But our ***author's purpose*** in making that statement ***here*** is to draw a comparison and contrast between human death and Christ's experience in dying.

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- Men and women die ***once***, by divine appointment, and in ***their*** case death is followed by ***judgment*** (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15).
- Christ died ***once***, by divine appointment, and ***his*** death is followed by ***salvation*** for all his people.
- Christ, who, like the suffering servant (Isaiah 53:4-5, 11-12), died “***to bear the sins of many***”, “***will appear a second time***,” just as on the Day of Atonement the Levitical high priest emerged from the Most Holy Place after sprinkling blood on the mercy seat.

²⁷ *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,* ²⁸ *so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **will appear a second time**, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

- The Israelites who watched their high priest enter the sanctuary for them waited expectantly for his reappearance.
- When he ***did*** finally reappear, it was a welcome sign that he and the sacrifice which he presented had been accepted by God.
- His reappearance from the Holy of Holies on the ***Day of Atonement*** was an ***especially*** welcome sight.

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- So our author thinks of Jesus as going into the heavenly Holy of Holies, to reappear appear one day in order to confirm finally to his people the salvation which his perfect offering has procured for them.
- Meanwhile they wait expectantly for his second coming.

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- But when he appears the second time to those who expect him, it will **not** be to deal with sin again.
- Sin was dealt with **decisively** at his **first** coming.
- All the blessings which he won for his people at his first coming will be theirs to enjoy in perpetual fulness at his second coming.
- Therefore, we should not grow faint and weary but persevere in patience and faith.

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- At the last portion of our text today, it talked about God's people eagerly waiting for Christ's return. Are you looking forward to Christ's return? What specifically are you looking forward to? What do you envision heaven to be like?
- John MacArthur in his book on heaven writes:
 - *I'm intrigued by the way the unbelieving world portrays heaven. At one end of the spectrum is this view that heaven exists to gratify earthly lusts. At the other is a cynical suspicion that heaven will be unbearably monotonous. The classic cartoon caricature pictures heaven's inhabitants sitting on clouds and playing harps. I don't know if anyone really imagines heaven will be like that, but I have no doubt that many people think of heaven as a bland, boring place with nothing enjoyable to do. A skeptic once told me, "I'd rather be in hell with my friends than in heaven with all the church people."*
- Have you heard unbelievers express these kinds of ideas? Have **you** had these kinds of thoughts about heaven?

*Class Discussion Time

- *It is hard for us to imagine a realm wholly devoid of sin and yet filled with pure and endless pleasures. But that is exactly how heaven will be. We will bask in the glory of God, realizing at last our chief end— to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. The psalmist wrote, “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16: 11). Such a thought is unfathomable to our finite minds. But Scripture repeatedly makes clear that heaven is a realm of unsurpassed joy, unfading glory, undiminished bliss, unlimited delights, and unending pleasures. Nothing about eternal glory can possibly be boring or humdrum. It will be a perfect existence. We will have unbroken fellowship with all heaven’s inhabitants. Life there will be devoid of any sorrows, cares, tears, fears, or pain. “Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35: 10).*

*Class Discussion Time

- *God himself “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true’” (Revelation 21: 4– 5). The best of our spiritual experiences here on earth are only small samples of heaven. Our highest spiritual heights, the profoundest of all our joys, and the greatest of our spiritual blessings will be normal in heaven. As we live now in the heavenlies, we are merely tasting the glories of the life to come. When we consider that Christ prayed that all who know him would spend eternity with him in unbroken fellowship (John 17: 24), our hearts should overflow with gratitude and expectation.*