

Lesson 12: Hebrews 9 A Better Sanctuary

I. Introduction

In furtherance of the argument that Jesus serves as a superior High Priest, the author of Hebrews 9 is delving deeper to establish that Jesus represents a more excellent Sanctuary than the former sanctuary. Under the Old Covenant, Moses was given directives by God to build the sanctuary, which included all its symbols, rituals, and guidelines for an earthly worship. These elements were all types and shadows of future realities (vv 2-5). The earthly sanctuary was divided into two sections: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, which were separated by a veil.

The priests, as designated, entered the sanctuary, specifically the first section known as the Holy Place, on a daily basis to fulfill their priestly duties, which included maintaining the lampstand and replacing the showbread, also referred to as the bread of the Presence. In contrast, the Holy of Holies, which contained the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, was entered by the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement to offer up sacrifices. On that day, He approached this sacred place with great fear and trepidation, fully aware that failure to be in right standing before God could result in his death. In the offering up of the blood of bulls and rams to God, he first had to atone for his own sins and then for the intentional sins of the people.

In verses 5-26, the initial sanctuary and its continual sacrifices of the blood of bulls and rams were only able to address sin on a temporary basis, failing to purify the consciences of the worshippers. In contrast, the blood of Jesus, which was shed once in the heavenly sanctuary of the new covenant, thoroughly cleanses the consciences of believers and guarantees an eternal redemption. Jesus did not enter an earthly sanctuary; rather, He entered the true, heavenly sanctuary, the very presence of God, once and for all with His own blood to atone for our sins, thereby securing an eternal redemption.

The focus of this chapter is to illustrate that Jesus serves as a superior sanctuary compared to the one built by Moses under the Old Covenant. By means of His blood, Jesus effectively addressed the issue of sin.

II. Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Hebrews 9

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

III. Think Through the Following Questions:

1. What barriers in the earthly sanctuary limited access to God, and what did those barriers communicate about sin? How does Christ's once and for all entry into the heavenly sanctuary show that His work is complete and final?
2. According to Hebrews 9:7-9, how did the restricted access to the Holy of Holies reveal that full access to God was not yet available? How does the tearing of the temple veil at Jesus' death reveal a change in humanity's access to God?
3. According to verse 14, what does Christ cleanse that the old sacrifices could not? How does a cleansed conscience change the way a believer serves God?
4. How does the author explain that a covenant, like a legal will, requires death to take effect? Why is Christ's death essential for the New Covenant to be enacted?
5. What does the repeated nature of the old covenant reveal about their ineffectiveness? How does Christ's once and for all give full assurance of complete sacrifice?
6. How does knowing that Christ is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary give you confidence in your relationship with God?
7. Christ appeared once to bear the sins of many, and he appeared in the heavenly sanctuary in the presence of God. What will happen when Christ appears a third time? How do these appearances inform the way a believer lives today?

IV. Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

V. Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?