

The Better Tabernacle

Hebrews 9:1-14

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 23, 2022

If you would, please open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews. And as you're doing that, I don't know if you've ever read a book like Hebrews before. Many of you I can see have been with us through this whole series, but some of you are new to our church. If you've read this book, you'll know it can be hard to interpret at times. When you preach through it week by week, like we do here at Grace, there are days when you come to a passage and may not be sure what it means at first. You have to do some digging, but not today. This morning, the subject is a pretty clear one; and I have a good way to jump into it with you because I can tell you the story of the time I got engaged.

If you believe it or not, of all things to talk about in the book of Hebrews in chapter nine, the text reminds me of the time I proposed to my wife. Because on March 2, 2007, I picked Katie up at the Los Angeles airport and asked her to marry me. We had been dating for some time and talking about getting engaged while she was living in one part of the US and I was in another attending seminary. And so the time finally came for me to pop the question and I met her at the airport, and I drove her to the most romantic place on earth – an old abandoned Cuban missile lookout point in Encino, California. I'm serious. It's a true story. Now, before you judge me too harshly, I didn't have any money; I was in seminary. And she liked it too. So just know that - she liked it. It was a big five story building built on a mountain on an old dirt road in the desert. And from one side you can see downtown LA and the ocean. From the other side, you can see the San Fernando Valley, and that's where I asked her to spend the rest of her life with me. I got down on one knee and I said, "Katie, will you marry me?" She said "yes", and it made me the happiest man in the world. I was living on cloud nine for the whole day. We called our family and friends and told everybody we knew, and spent the day making plans for the rest of our life the way young people do when they get engaged. But as it is with pastors, we didn't stay in that place for too long, because I had to do a Bible study that night on the subject of the tabernacle

Of all things to talk about on the day you got engaged, that was the subject, because it was my turn to preach through the book of Exodus. That's where we were in our series, we were at the place where the Lord told him to build a dwelling place in the desert, which was hard to talk about for me on a day like that. It was sort of anticlimactic if you can put yourself in my shoes. But as I studied it, I realized it really wasn't that hard because the tabernacle was an exciting thing for the people of Israel just like my engagement was an exciting thing for me. And so what I want to do this morning is share some of the things that I learned from that day and that study because that's what our text is about in the book of Hebrews for today.

So, if you look in Hebrews chapter nine, it says this. It says in the first verse, "Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary, for there was a tabernacle prepared there." Now, what does that mean? Why does the author bring up the subject of the tabernacle at this point in the book of Hebrews? Well, he does that because if you remember, he's comparing the

old covenant with the new covenant in this passage. And he's contrasting the promise God made with Israel to the promise God is made with the church, in order to show you that the one you have is better. As Israel had a tabernacle, you have Christ; and He does more because He's not just a building, He's the Son of God Himself.

Now, you read this as a 21st century person living in Canada, and that doesn't strike home with you, but it would have struck a chord with the Jews when they first read this because they knew what the tabernacle was all about. When they saw this word, they would have recalled passages like Exodus 25:22, which says that "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark." which means the Lord did not meet with Israel anywhere, He did it from the tabernacle. God did not just talk to them from any place, He did it from this tent in the desert where the Ark was. It's a very important place for the people of Israel. They would have also recalled that in Exodus 40 It says "All throughout their journeys, as the Lord led them in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a fire by night." When it came time to stop, the fire stopped over the tabernacle. And when it came time to move, it moved from the tabernacle. It was a guide for them in the wilderness. It became like a divine compass for Israel. They would have also remembered Numbers chapter two, which says the tabernacle became the centerpiece of their camp every time they set up camp. The way it worked is that they would put the tabernacle in the middle and put the people all around it with three tribes to the north, three tribes to the south, three tribes to the east, and three tribes to the west to symbolize that their entire life was built around Yahweh.

So when the author says that Jesus here, in Hebrews nine, when he says Jesus is better than that, the Jews understood that to mean that He's better than anything. There is nothing in the world that can compare to your Savior's glory.

It's a very strong argument he makes here and just to say some more words about this, so you can really get a feel for what the tabernacle was like. Because I'm afraid many of us aren't familiar with this. This is a subject that we may not have studied before. But if you remember your Bible history for a moment, you will recall that when the Jews left Egypt, they plundered the Egyptians because the Lord made them so favourably disposed to them that they could ask for whatever they wanted and they would give it to them. And so that's what they did. They asked the Egyptians for articles of clothing and fabric and yarn, they asked them for things of gold and silver and brass, they asked them for spices and perfumes. With that material, they went into the desert, and build for Him a place called the tabernacle, or the *Mishcon* in Hebrew, a dwelling place. It was a large mobile tent that can be picked up and carried from one place to another through their journeys. The reason they didn't build a temple yet is because they never stayed in one place. They couldn't build a permanent building, so the Lord told them to build a pavilion instead. And when they finished it look like this.

We could pull up the PowerPoint here. This picture is a replica of the tabernacle that was built by the Israeli government in place in the Negev desert, in the southern part of Israel. It's about 200 miles south of Jerusalem, in the same area where they would have wandered for 440 years in the wilderness. In fact, if you look at the picture, you can kind of get a sense of what the wilderness was all about, because it

was about punishment. There just wasn't anything out there. It was a very dry and dusty place to be. The compound itself was surrounded by a courtyard that was 30 feet wide and 150 feet long, which is about half the size of a football field, to shield it from intruders. The tent you're looking at there was much smaller. It was about 15 feet wide, 15 feet high and 45 feet long; that's about the length of a basketball court. So when you go into the gym next door for fellowship after church, that's about how big the pavilion was. At first glance, it doesn't look that impressive to you because you're used to living in really fancy houses here in Chilliwack in the 21st century. But if you've visited this part of Israel, and you've seen how the Bedouins live in the desert, this place is amazing. It's much greater than anything else they had in that part of the world. As the picture depicts, it was covered in four layers of special cloth such as fine linen fabrics made out of goat's hair, a covering of ram skin. It was held up by wood plated in gold that was screwed into silver sockets. In fact, almost everything in the tabernacle was made that way; about every piece of wood was covered in gold.

And once you entered the courtyard, the first thing you came across was a brass altar, which we see in the next slide here. This picture and all these other ones I'm going to show you are taken from that model in the desert. One thing that's worth pointing out about the altar here is its size. It's nowhere near the size of the one in the temple. Remember, I told you last week how big the altar in the temple was? It came up over your head, 15 feet tall, this one is much smaller, it would come up to about your waist. And the reason is because they had to move it. Everything you're going to look at here had to be packed up and carried every time it was time to leave, so the Jews had to build it with that in mind. Another interesting thing about the altar is that unlike the temple, there were no slaughter tables next to it. Because Leviticus chapter one says that the animals had to be slaughtered on the north side of the altar. Now the tabernacle always faced east, which means that they would slaughter the animals toward the right of this picture, presumably in the dirt. From what I could read, they would just kill them on the ground. They would take the animals to the north side of the courtyard, cut their throat, drain the blood into a bowl, and then take it over to the altar in order to sprinkle it there before going back to the northern side to skin it, cut it up and put the pieces back on the altar in order to burn. So the priests would spend most of their time just going back and forth between those two places. They would spend all their day moving from one spot to the other. At this time in Israel, there weren't too many priests. There was only a handful of them just Aaron and his sons, and so it kept them very busy. Because not only did they take care of the things outside the tabernacle, but they took care of the things inside as well. Because once you entered the tent there were two rooms inside of it. There was the outer room and the inner room or what was also referred to as the holy place, and the most holy place.

And in the holy place, there were three objects, not very cluttered. The first was the table of showbread, we have a slide for that. It was located on the north side or the right-hand side of the tent. It was a small wooden table covered in gold and used to hold twelve cakes of finely baked breads sprinkled with frankincense to symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel. Later, tradition says that each tribe was required to bake its own loaf of bread, and bring it to the priest every morning to make sure that they were represented at the table. They did that to show that all this was being done not just for one tribe, but every tribe. Everybody was represented before the Lord.

And the next item was the gold lampstand which stood on the south side or the left-hand side of the tent. It was a large candelabra made out of solid gold whose height and dimensions are unknown. But Exodus 25:39, says that it was made out of one talent of pure gold.; one talent of gold is 90 pounds. That's a lot of gold for an object like this. As you can see in the picture, it had a center stand with branches which allowed it to hold seven candles on it, so it could put forth a lot of light. The significance to it is that it was the only light in the tabernacle. There were no windows in there to show that Yahweh was Israel's only light in the desert; He was their only source of hope.

Then the next object further in was the altar of incense, which stood in front of the curtain that led into the Holy of Holies, because it was the last thing you would come across in the tabernacle before you went into the presence of God. Just like the table of showbread, it was made out of wood covered in gold. It was used to burn three types of incense. Stacte, which was a type of sweet gum extracted from a tree that grew in that region; Onycha, which came from the shell of a mollusk; and Galbanum, which was an herb that admitted a balsamic odor; all for the purpose of killing the smell of the sacrifices in the courtyard. The purpose of the altar was to aid the priests in worship by bringing forth a sweet aroma into the tabernacle, and in doing so getting rid of the stench of those dead animals. As you can imagine, the smell would have been horrific.

After you walked past the altar, you would come to the big curtain that blocked off the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, which held the Ark of the Covenant. Now, they did have a picture of the Ark of the Covenant in this replica, but I've always felt like the ark was such a sacred thing, I never really felt comfortable showing pictures of it. And since I talked about it last week, I'm not going to go into the dimensions of the ark, other than to point out that the ark was the place where the cloud actually settled over the tabernacle. Leviticus 16 says it was the exact spot where it rested when it came time to stop. And it was so important to the Jews, that it was the only object in the tabernacle that they would never rebuild again or duplicate.

Once the temple was built, the Jews took these objects and put them in the temple. And then once the temple was torn down and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, they took all this stuff with them. Zerubbabel, and later King Herod came back and rebuilt all those objects that I just showed you. They took the time to remake the altar and the labor, I didn't show you that the washbasin out there in the courtyard, and the table of showbread, and the lampstand, and the incense, and they multiplied a lot of them, because they made ten tables of showbread and ten lampstands. They change the dimensions of the altar to make it bigger, at least Solomon did that, but they left the Ark alone. They didn't touch it because they considered it to be too sacred, so when the temple was built, there was just an empty room in the most holy place.

That's hard to relate to. I mean, as Christians, we don't have anything like that in the church. There's no objects we hold in high esteem like that. There's no articles that we put up here for worship in such a way, but the Jews did that. And with that said, I want to read all our passage for you today because I think it'll make more sense to you. If you look in Hebrews chapter nine. Let me just read all of this to you because I think it helps to unpack what it's saying. It says,

Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly, both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

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; 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. 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, 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?

We'll stop the reading there, but just to summarize, I think you could focus your attention on verse eleven. Because there it says, "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle." That means he entered into the presence of God. When Christ appeared as our high priest, He didn't just enter a tabernacle made out of wood and go like Israel did, He entered heaven itself so you can too.

This was a problem with the old covenant, or the challenge it had. And that is that you couldn't always come fully into the presence of God whenever you wanted. The issue with the tabernacle is that you couldn't draw near to Him anytime you please because in order to do that, you had to set up the tent. Whenever you sinned, and you wanted forgiveness, the Jews had to stop what they were doing, come to a resting place, go gather objects like the altar, and labor, and tent, and table, and lampstand, and incense, and altar, and put them all together and assemble them; and fetch wood for the altar, and bread for the table, and oil for the lampstand, and perfume for the incense, and get it all running properly, which was just so difficult. It was exhausting.

But on the other hand, what verse 11 is telling you is that when Christ appeared, He changed all that. When He showed up, He made it possible for you to just go to God and anytime you wanted to for forgiveness. Isn't that good news? Can we say "Amen" to that? This verse says He enter through the

more perfect tabernacle through His own blood. That means He didn't enter through the blood of an animal at the tabernacle, and He didn't do it at the death of a bull or goat. He did it through His own death, did it through His own cross. It says as He did so, He obtained an eternal redemption for us. The salvation He bought was so perfect that it does not have to be repeated over and over again through ceremonies, and done over and over again through sacrifices. He died one time, one death, one cross and that was it, so that you can let go of the old covenant. Now. You don't have to cling to all those things that the Jews had to do.

I don't have to tell you this is encouraging stuff. This is a blessing to read this morning. Can you imagine trying to go to God like that today? It would be very, very difficult, but you don't have to do that anymore because of what Christ has done. I don't know if we always grasp the full weight of that sometimes as Christians. I don't know if we understand how big of a deal this was. It's so easy to take these things for granted, which is why I'm so thankful for a passage like this because it helps to draw this out for us. And so that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at four ways the New Covenant tabernacle is better than the old one. So if you're taking notes, that's our outline for today in Hebrews 9, we're going to look at four ways the New Covenant tabernacle or sanctuary or Saviour is better than what they had before.

And the first one is that the new one is heavenly. The first way the New Covenant tabernacle is better is that the New Covenant tabernacle is heavenly, which means it is focused on the things of heaven before anything else. I'm not going to read all of verses one through five to you, just for the sake of time. We just went through all those objects. But if you read verse one again, it says this. It says "Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary."

And if you notice that the verse starts off with the word "now," that points you back to previous verse in chapter 8:13, where it says, "When He said a New Covenant, He has made the first one, obsolete." And that's helpful because the author is comparing two things here: two covenants, the old one, and the new one. In order to say that now that Christ has come, He has made the Old Covenant obsolete for us. Ever since Jesus stepped into this world, and died for our sins, and rose from the grave. All those things like the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant don't matter so much, because He fulfilled them. The word "obsolete", it refers to something that's become old and worn out with the passing of time because that's what's happened to those ceremonies. Because of Christ, they've become outdated with the passing of time. They served their purpose for a season, but now that's it.

And in order to explain that some more, our verse in chapter nine says, "Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship, and the earthly sanctuary." And when it says the first covenant had regulations, that means it had its way of doing things. The first covenant had its own set of rules and instructions and guidelines for how to approach God that are different now. I don't have to tell you that there's a reason why you don't see a tabernacle setup next door on your way to church today. And there's a reason why we don't have a gold lampstand standing up here on the stage. That's because we don't use those things anymore. Israel did, but we don't. The Jews approached God that way, but we do something different.

It says here, the first covenant had regulations of, it uses the word “worship”, that shows you that the Old Covenant was set up for the same purpose the new one was, and that is to worship God. This is why you will never hear us talk disparagingly about what Israel did as a church. And you'll never hear us put them down and say, “Why would the Jews do all this? Why would they set up a tabernacle? How stupid can they be?” Well they did that because Yahweh told them to. They were worshiping God. They were being obedient, just like us. And one more thing to point out here is it says all this took place in the earthly sanctuary because that's what the first covenant was primarily caught up with. It was focused mainly on earthly things you could smell, taste, touch and feel. The challenge there is that it often led the Jews to think that's what worship was all about. As long as you were doing the external stuff, God was pleased, but He wasn't. You had to be more than that.

To be honest, after saying this, and going through these objects in verses one through five, the author just goes on to talk about something else. He doesn't pause to make an application here because if you can remember, he's comparing the covenants and contrasting the way Israel did things with the way that we do them now as a church. So in order to understand this, it would be good to skip ahead a little bit, and see what it says about Christ. Because if you look in verse 11 again, it says this. It's the verse, I quoted to you a moment ago, it says, “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.”

Now why does the author bring up Christ here? Well, he does that because that's the turning point in the chapter. That's where it all shifts gears; and that is when Christ shows up. In fact, you can look at Hebrews nine like this, starting in verse one. “Now even the first covenant had regulations for divine worship and the earthly sanctuary, for there was a tabernacle prepared.” And then down in verse 11. “But when Christ appeared, He changed all that.” When Jesus showed up, He took the tabernacle away, or the need for it.

John 1:14 says, “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us.”

Jesus lived with us in the tent of His flesh. And then if you look in verse two where it says, “For there was a tabernacle, in which were the lampstand, and the table, and the sacred bread, this is called the holy place.” And then down in verse 11, “But when Christ appeared, He put a stop to that as well.” When Jesus came on the scene, you don't need a lampstand anymore, because He's the Light of the World. And you don't need a table of showbread because He's the Bread of Life. You don't need sacrifices, because He's the perfect sacrifice.

Then down in verse three it says, “Behold, behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense, and the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold.” And then down in verse 11 again “But when Christ appeared, He did away with that.” Because where's the Ark today? It's gone. Where's the veil that once guarded it, it's been ripped in half. Matthew 27:51 says when Jesus died, He tore the veil into from top to bottom.

Whatever the case, I want to stop and take a few moments to talk about verse 11 because it is such a rich verse. Because it says here that Christ appeared as a high priest for us. In other words, whereas Israel had a priest, you have a priest. And whereas they had someone to make sacrifice for them, you have someone to make a sacrifice for you. But the difference is, you don't have just anybody doing it, you have Christ, or the Messiah, the One Israel was waiting on for centuries.

And then it says He appeared as a priest of the good things to come. That means, whereas Israel's priests served the people, your priest serves you; and whereas they gave them good things, yours gives you good things, but they're good things to come. That's a reference to all the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament, Jesus made came to make sure they would be kept.

It says that He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation. That means Jesus entered the presence of God for you. After He died and rose again, He went into heaven itself, which is something no other priests could do, no other Levite could say. But the point in all of this is that He is greater than all of those things. Jesus is better than anything the Old Covenant ever had to offer the Jews.

At every level, whether it be in the area of the priesthood, or the Levites, or leaders, or whether it be in the area of the sanctuary, or the author of the tabernacle, He supersedes it all. If you need a priest, He'll give you a priest. If you need a sanctuary, He gives you a sanctuary. If you need a sacrifice, He gives you a sacrifice. If you need an offering, He gives you an offering. If you need a tabernacle, He gives you a tabernacle. But the difference is that He can give you one that's superior to all. So that if you have Him, you have all you need. You don't require anything else to be saved.

I think it's so unfortunate that people forget this today, even in our day and age. We don't have all the stuff that Jews had. But some people today when they want a Saviour, you know what they do? They go to the mass, or they go to the confession, to the sacraments. When they want to go to heaven, they turn to the Pope, or the bishops, or Cardinals. Depending on what tradition you come from, some people try to find salvation by being sprinkled into this or that denomination, or baptized into this or that church or taking communion over here or over there, all that kind of stuff. But it doesn't work. The only thing God ever gave to help you in this department and then save you from your sins is Jesus Christ. And that's it. Amen. There's nothing else.

One of the magazines that I read on preaching, the story was told at the time, a man in the first century saw someone dying on a cross. And he said, "You would have to hate someone terribly to do that to them." to which his friend replied "Yes, but you would have to love them terribly, to go do that in their place." That's what Christ has done for you. So if you have Him, you should be satisfied because His death is sufficient.

All these other things, all these other objects, all these other articles are just secondary. You could toss them aside in Israel's day, you can toss them aside in our day. Friends, you don't need a beautiful church

building to worship God, you just need Christ. A lot of you started coming to our church when we were worshiping Him in a field, remember that? He is all you need.

Which brings us to another way the New Covenant tabernacle is better. And that is because it's accessible. So the first one is because it's heavenly, built on the things of heaven. The second way the New Covenant tabernacle is better is because it's accessible, which means it's not off limits anymore. The first one was, the one we have is not. And I want to remind you that as we go through this passage, we're going to bounce back and forth between the top and the bottom, so we can understand what the author is saying here. But if you look back up in verse six it says this, it says, "Now when these things have been so prepared," all these objects we just talked about, "the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship."

Now when the author says "these things have been so prepared," he's referring to all those things like the lampstand and the showbread and the altar of incense, because when those things were prepared, the priests had to continually go in and out of the first room of the tabernacle. He had to make sure there was bread for the show bread, there was incense for the altar, there was oil for the lampstand. It was an ongoing thing he was constantly in and out of that room. But on the other hand, if you look in verse seven, it tells you about the second room, and it says, "but into the second, only the high priests enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed an ignorance." What that means is that when it comes to that second room or the most holy place, there was no going in and out of there. It can be entered one time and one time only, and that was done once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. Other than that, no one ever went in.

The Day of Atonement is not mentioned by name here, but that's what this was referring to because verse seven mentions the high priest making a sacrifice for himself and for the sins of the people. And the only time he did that was on that Day of Atonement. The rest of the year, when the Jews sinned, they were expected to make a sacrifice or bring a sacrifice for their own sins. But on the Day of Atonement, the high priest made one for everybody at once. Since we haven't talked about that day too much in this series, I want to give you a few details about it because it helps to shed light on this.

Leviticus 16 says that on the Day of Atonement the priests could go into the Holy of Holies, but he had to do it through several steps. He couldn't just walk in, he had to prepare himself. So for example, the first thing he had to do was bathe himself and put on a special garment. He couldn't go into God's presence with dirt on his body or dirt on his flesh, so he had to remove all that first. Later tradition says that he had to wash his hands and feet ten times on that day, and change his clothes five times; so it was quite an ordeal. It took quite a bit of work. And then after he did that, he had to sacrifice a bowl, he had to take it to the right of the tent like I showed you and cut its throat, drain the blood. With the blood, he would enter into the Holy of Holies, past the veil, to sprinkle it on the Ark of the Covenant for the first time. That was his first trip in that room all year which would have been very strange for him.

Later tradition also says that the Jews would actually tie a rope around his foot so that if he went into the Holy of Holies, and God struck him dead, they could pull him out. They wouldn't have to go in there and

get him. Then when he came out again, he would take two goats to symbolize the people and cast lots for them. And the goat the lot fell on would be allowed to live. It would be known as the scapegoat, many of you have heard of that, while the other one that did not receive the lot would be slaughtered in the same way the bull was. They would cut its throat, collect the blood in a bowl, and the high priests would enter the holy of holies past the veil again, to sprinkle the blood on the Ark of the Covenant. That was the second time in there all year. Some scholars said he wouldn't sprinkle it as much as he would almost fling it like a whip seven times from floor to ceiling, saying one and one, two and two, three and three. And that's probably what he did when the Ark of the Covenant was taken out of there by the Babylonians. But when it was still there, Leviticus 16 says he was supposed to sprinkle it in a very reverent manner, not in some kind of forceful way. Then he would go out, place his hands on the head of the other goat that was allowed to live, and release it into the wilderness to symbolize the fact that Israel had been forgiven, and the Lord had taken their sins away. And after that was done, the Day of Atonement was over, it was finished. And he would have to wait an entire year before he could go back into that room again.

And the author brings all that up here in verse seven in order to say that that was the only time anyone could come into the presence of God. The rest of the time, the door was closed. But in contrast to that, if you look down in verse 12, again, it says that when Christ appeared, He entered the Most Holy Place once and for all. Let me read this to you. It says "But when Christ appeared as a High Priest," in verse 11, "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; 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." And that phrase, "once for all," it's helpful because it shows you what this is about. It's a compound from the Greek word, *ephapax* from *epha* "upon" and *pax* "all" it needs to come upon something all at once so that it doesn't have to be repeated. And that's how Jesus entered the presence of God. He came into the Holy Place and stayed there. He walked into this room and never left.

It also says here that He obtained an eternal redemption for us. That means that whereas the high priest had to keep making redemption, Jesus didn't. And whereas he had to keep providing atonement year after year through the death of the bull and goat, it wasn't necessary for Christ to do that because the sacrifice He gave you is permanent. Which means for the rest of human history, there will never be another sacrifice. For the rest of time and eternity, there won't be any other death to save you because this one death was enough to save everyone who would believe. So that if people are saved today, it will be through the death of Christ. And if people are saved tomorrow, it will be the same way. Amen? And if people are saved the day after that it will come through His cross. And if they're saved the day after that, and the day after that, and the day after that, it will happen through the same thing. God hasn't given us many ways to be saved. He's given us one way.

You know, I tell you this because I talk to parents sometimes who say they're scared to death about the future for their kids, because they don't see any hope. And I talk to old people who say the same thing about their grandkids. And when I hear that, I say, "Do you have hope as a Christian?" They say, "Yes."

"Where does your hope come from?" "It comes from Jesus," "There's does too. If it was good enough to save you, it is good enough to save them.

Jesus made God accessible to us now. He opened a doorway to heaven that was formerly closed. Because let me tell you something friends, nobody gets to heaven without Jesus. And I mean nobody. I don't care who you are. No Jew or Mormon or Muslim will get there. No Buddhists or atheist or Sikh will do it. No Canadian or American or European no matter how nice they are. That's shocking to hear, isn't it? That's offensive to our ears. Because Canadians think they're the nicest people on the planet. "Why wouldn't God want us? He should be honored to have us. We're so well-mannered." This chapter says, He's not, on account of your sin. He can't stand your sin. Your evil deeds make Him furious, whether you're well-mannered or not. So here's what Jesus did in His grace and mercy, He died to open a way to heaven for you, so God could look on Him and pardon you. And He could see His perfect righteousness, and give it to you in faith.

If you notice, the word "enter" is repeated twice in this section. It's mentioned once in verse 11, and again in verse 12, to remind you that this is what Christ has done. He has entered heaven with His blood to make it possible for you to do the same. This is something that would have hit home with the Jews because when they thought about entering the presence of God, it was scary. Because remember, this is the same God who just did the 10 plagues over Egypt. And this is the same God who just killed Pharaoh's son. And this is the same God who just parted the Red Sea. And this is the same God who appeared to them on a mountain on Mount Sinai and thunder and lightning. This is the same God that just killed Nadab and Abihu. And the idea is that even so, this is the same God now who is available to you, because of Christ. Only because of Him.

And that brings us to another way the New Covenant tabernacle is better, and that is because it has better blood in it. A third way the New Covenant tabernacle is better is because it has better blood, which means it doesn't just have the blood of bulls and goats anymore, but something more precious than that. If you look in verse eight, above this again, it says that

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly, both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience.

Now, when he says here that the Holy Spirit is signifying that the way into the holy place has not been disclosed, he's just summarizing what he just said. And that is that the way into that Ark of the Covenant was off limits under the Old Covenant. They couldn't get in there, but there was something they could do when they sinned. And verse nine says it was to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Now at first glance, that expression, "gifts and sacrifices" sounds like it's saying the same thing, but it's not. Because in the Jewish world, those terms represented two types of offerings you could bring to Yahweh when you sinned. You could bring gifts or non-bloody sacrifices, and you could bring offerings or bloody ones.

The way that sacrificial system operated in Israel is that there's several categories that the offerings fell into. We've talked about this before, but for example, you had the grain offering which involves the offering of a plant or fruit of the ground. And that's summarized in the word "gift." So that when you sin you could bring, you could go to the Court of Tabernacles, walk up to the altar, and hand him some heads of grain, and he would put it on the altar and burn it. That's how they would do that. And then there were four other types of offerings which involve the slaughter of an animal. And that's summarized in the word "offerings" here. Just to name them, they were known as the burnt offering, sin offering, guilt offering and peace offering, which involves all kinds of bloodshed. They involve all kinds of killing out there in the courtyard.

But the idea here is that even so, even with all that bloodshed, even with all that killing, it didn't do the job because it could not make the worshipper perfect in conscience. It could satisfy your conscience for a while, and it could take away the guilt of your sin for a time; but eventually, you're going to sin again, and you'll have to do it all over again. Never ending thing. Some commentaries have called the priests professional butchers for this reason. They just killed things and killed things and killed them all day long.

But if you look down in verse 13, it says when Christ appeared, this is what happened. Again, we're focusing on how Christ is compared to that. And I want to warn you, this is a mouthful to say, but I want to read it to you. Verse 13, says, "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, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience?"

And the author says all that now to contrast the blood of those sacrifices with the blood of Christ, and say that His blood is greater because it can cleanse your conscience. Whereas the blood of bulls and goats sanctify for the cleansing of flesh, and that means they sanctify you outwardly, or they give an outward demonstration of sanctification, Jesus' blood goes deeper than that, because it can change your soul.

In fact, when it mentions the blood of Christ in verse 14, you may not have picked up on this, but that's the fourth time the author mentions the word "blood" in this passage. We're going to see next week, by the time he ends the whole chapter, he's going to mention the word "blood" about nine times. Because there's a progression of thought here, and that is that in verse seven, the blood of an offering was needed for the high priest's sacrifice. In verse 12, the blood of an offering was needed for Christ's sacrifice, which He paid for in his own blood. In verses 13 through 14 tell you why. And that is because His blood is the only thing that can cleanse your conscience and wash your sin away and purify your wicked heart. The blood of an animal can't do that. I mean, how could it? The blood of a bull and goat can't purify your heart, they don't have the power, you can kill animals all day long, they'll never do that. So Christ gave you something more.

In fact, there's a very helpful verse that's mentioned right in the midst of that discussion about the Day of Atonement in the Book of Leviticus that I just talked to you about, and it highlights what this is talking about. If you want to write it down it's Leviticus 17:11. And there it says, this, let me read it to you, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of life that makes atonement." What that's telling you is that atonement was made for Israel, not because the blood had magical power in it, and not because it had some kind of mystical influence when it was offered. It happened because it represented life. That's why God forgave Israel on the Day of Atonement. Because as He watched the animal dying, it was precious to Him. And as He observed the priests putting it to death, it was deeply significant. And so He looked on that animal and forgave the people. I don't know about you, but I read the Old Testament, and I've often wondered, Does God care about animals? There's so many of them dying all the time? Does it even matter to Him? And the answer is, yes. That's why He forgave the people. And the argument here is that if God did all that through an animal, how much more will He do for you through His own Son?

Jesus' blood doesn't have magical power in it, or mystical things. That's not what this is talking about. There were some in the Middle Ages who thought it did. There were monks back then who claimed to have flasks that had some drops of Jesus blood and that's what the Holy Grail was all about. They got into all that kind of silly stuff, but that's not what this is saying. The idea is that Jesus blood is symbolic of His life. So when it says that the blood of Christ cleanses you, it does that because it represents who He was. Because it wasn't just anybody dying for you on a cross, He was the Son of God.

In fact, just to show you how precious His blood is here, verse 14 says it was offered through the eternal Spirit. That means it was offered through the work of the whole Godhead. Jesus' death was so important to the Father that He sent the Spirit down to earth in order to be with Him. It's a mysterious thing, we don't always know how all that works. And it says He offered it without blemish. And that means He presented without any defilement, because under the Old Covenant, an animal could not have imperfections. If it was going to be a sacrifice, it had to be perfect in every way. That's what Christ was. And then it says He offered Himself, which means Jesus was the priest and the victim. He was the offerer and the offering.

Which leads me to a very simple way to apply this because I can do it with a question, and that is this. Are you worried about being saved today? You shouldn't be. Are you worried about going to heaven like we just talked about? You don't need to. Do you know why? It's because of Christ, because He died for you. He gave up His life at the cross. Are you worried about fighting your sin? You don't have to do that either. Are you worried about getting victory over it and afraid that the world and society and the culture are going to bring you down? You don't have to do that. Do you know why? It's because He shed His blood for you. And if that blood was enough to satisfy God, it should be enough to satisfy your conscience. You don't need to be worried and afraid anymore. This is not about you; this is about Him. I don't say this, because you're good enough or smart enough or holy enough; that has nothing to do with it. I say that because He is. You keep your eyes fixed on the cross.

I'll never forget the time I was talking to someone who told me they were a Christian because they were a decent person. Don't ever say that to a pastor, by the way. And I told him, I said, "Friend, that doesn't make you a Christian, it just makes you a conservative," or something like that. I said, "To be a Christian, you need blood." God has to take your sin and nail it to the cross, He has to take your wicked deeds and crucify His son for that. When He does that, you're a Christian. And when He does that, that's when everything changes for you.

And it brings us to one more way this New Covenant tabernacle is better. Just to review these other ones, the first one is because it's heavenly; second, because it's accessible; and then thirdly, it has better blood in it. Aren't you glad it does? Aren't you grateful for this? Where would you be without this? How are you gonna pay for your sins? The Bible says if God kept a record of sins, who could stand? Nobody. You couldn't stand, I couldn't stand. So it's such a blessing. He's given us such a precious gift, and that gives us one more way the New Covenant tabernacle is better.

That is because it cleanses your conscience from dead works. I just said a little bit about this a moment ago, but I want to dig into it some more here at the end. But a fourth way, the New Covenant tabernacle is better is because it cleanses your conscience from dead works, which means it cleanses it from the dead works of false religion.

As you come to the end of the passage, you can tell the author's wrapping up this part of his argument, because he's summarizing all he said so far about the tabernacle by tying it into the issue of the conscience, because the tabernacle was created to help the Jews with that. The whole reason it was set up in the wilderness was to help them find forgiveness when they sinned, and cleanse their conscience from guilt, and provide freedom from that. But the problem was, it didn't always work like I just showed you. Because verse 13 implies that all the blood of bulls and goats can do is cleanse the flesh, because that's what they were, they were fleshly objects. Now, they could do more than that if you combine them with faith. And the blood of bulls and goats could cleanse the conscience to a degree if you believed, but the problem is a lot of Jews didn't do that. They had a tendency to look at those sacrifices as just a ritualistic traditional kind of thing, which verse 14 alludes to, when it says, "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?" And that phrase dead works, it's not really explained here. But it seems to refer to works that are dead because they're not done in faith. And they have no life because they're not done for worship. They're just done out of habit.

It's kind of like the man who goes to church just because his wife made him go to church. He doesn't really want to be there. He just goes to get her off his back. That's the way a lot of people worship God in the Old Testament, they just did it to get God off their back. You can't do that. This passage here calls God, the living God. And the reason it does that is you can't serve a living god with dead works, can you? You can't serve Him with no passion. It's got to be more than that, or else He doesn't want it. And so, this is what Christ has come to do for you. He's come to cleanse your conscience and pull it away from that useless form of worship.

When it says that He cleanses our conscience here, it's another phrase that he mentions and kind of keeps going. But as we saw last week, under the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31 says one way that God does this is by putting His law into our minds, and writing it on our hearts. In other words, He cleanses our conscience by putting His law in the deepest part of us, so that His law will impact everything we do and provide forgiveness that way, or cleansing that way. Another passage says that under the New Covenant, He will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, which means He will transform you and make you into a new creation, because he'll take the cold dead soul you previously had, and give you a new one that lives and breathes and moves for God. So it will impact your conscience that way.

But the idea here at the end is that, listen friends, you may not have all the wonderful things that Jews did in the tabernacle. But that's okay because you have this. And as believers in the New Covenant, you may not have access to all those beautiful objects that they used in the wilderness, like the altar, and the labor, and the showbread, and the lampstand, and the incense, and the ark, but that's no problem, because you can come to God with a clean conscience now, and that's all that matters. You can do it because your sins have been forgiven, and washed away.

In fact, when I read a passage like this, I'm reminded of the fact that a lot of Jews still worship God today in a cold dead manner. It wasn't just a problem back in those days, it's still a problem now. If you've ever visited a Jewish synagogue before, or been to a place like the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, you really get a taste of this. Because it's very common for them to go take out a book, The Wailing Wall actually has a library right next to it, you go get a book full of prayers, put on your prayer shawl over your head, put it on the table, read it out loud, and rock back and forth, and chant. That's worship to them. The ironic thing is a lot of them don't know what they're saying, they don't speak Hebrew. It's just words because that's what worship is. It's dead because they're dead. It has no life because they have no life in them spiritually.

What the passage is telling us here is that Christ has come to make sure the same thing doesn't happen to you. He's gone into the most holy place, and the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, obtained eternal redemption here, not through the blood of bulls and goats, but through His own blood, so you can turn from that false form of things and live. He did this so your songs can live and your prayers can live. He did this so your family can live spiritually, your marriage can live. He did it so this church can live, and this congregation can live, and the power of Christ can live in you and be evident to others and change this community. It all goes back to the miracle of a changed heart.

Do you believe Jesus can do this for you today? Do you think He has the power to take your cold dead heart and give you something better? After all we've talked about this morning, you should because you have every reason to.

Next week we're going to finish our study on the tabernacle because we're going to go through the rest of Hebrews chapter nine and see what it says there. So please come back and join us for that. For today, I want to do something different because I want to close our sermon with a song.

We've been talking about this subject of worship here at the end, so I think there's no better way to wrap things up then to sing about it. This reminds us that you don't have to go to the tabernacle now when you want to do that. You can praise God wherever you are, amen? You don't have to set those objects up and come to a resting place and put up a pavilion. You can just sing right there in the pew, and I want to ask you to do that. I've asked the worship team to come up. We're going to sing the song "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus." And after they do, I'll pray and we'll take the Lord's Supper. So if you would stand with me, and we'll sing this song together.

*What can wash away my sin
Nothing but the blood of Jesus
What can make me whole again
Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

Chorus

*Oh precious oh precious is the flow
That washes that washes white as snow
No other no other fount I know
There's nothing but the blood of Jesus*

Verse 2

*This is all my hope and peace
Nothing but the blood of Jesus
This is all my righteousness
Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

Bridge

*Now by this I'll overcome
Nothing but the blood of Jesus
Now by this I'll reach my home
Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

Ending

*Oh precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow
No other fount I know
Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

Would you pray with me? Heavenly Father, Your blood is precious to us and it is so precious that we celebrate it now in the Lord's Supper. There is no way to get to heaven without Christ. There is no way to be forgiven without Christ. There's no way to have peace with God without Christ. There is no way to have anything spiritually without Him Lord, and you have given Him so freely, that we may be saved if

we believe. Lord, I pray that this message today would strike home in our hearts, and make us go home rejoicing in our Savior. For those who are lost, I pray that this would open their eyes to what they can have in Him. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen