

Session 4

Hello and welcome back.

The New Testament book, Hebrews, has been an encouragement to Christians for 2000 years. Today we will be exploring Hebrews, chapter nine.

First – a reminder of the background on Hebrews.

Written about 70 years after Christ's death and resurrection. Written to First century Christians who came from Jewish backgrounds.

Written because these first century Christians were discouraged. Christ has been gone for more than 50 years and some Christians are losing hope. Their entire history and almost certainly all family are Jewish; many sects spinning off teaching “Christ” but in ways that are only half-true; **Christians are being persecuted throughout the roman empire from Rome to Jerusalem so “remaining Jewish” could protect them from persecution.**

Judaism, the religion of their birth, was not a second-rate religion. It was divinely designed, expressing true devotion and worship of God. **And, it was familiar and convenient.** Many of those who accepted Christ still longed for Judaism's familiar routines and lived a kind of hybrid faith. The commandments, rituals, celebrations, and the promises described by God's prophets revealed the way to forgiveness and salvation.

Are current day Christians similar to those first century Christians? The events of the last year, as well as the persecution of Christians outside the U.S. and the scorn of Christians within the U.S. are enough to make the weakhearted fall into doubt and despair, instead of being steadfast in faith.

Gist of this letter:

Jesus is better. Christ is supreme and completely sufficient for salvation. He is the perfect revelation and reflection of God, the complete sacrifice for sin, the compassionate and understanding mediator, and the only way to eternal life.

Christ is my only security in a changing world.

Last week I asked you, “Do you have any rules you live by?”

Told you that I have a few:

- Love the lord; love people
- Assume best intentions. Example: You didn't get invited to an event. Assume the host had a very good reason, or that your invitation got lost, or anything you want as long as it "assumes the best of the host." [Hope people do this for you and me.]
- Give people the benefit of the doubt. Note: Everyone can have a bad day, including you and me.
- Give people a second chance. Note: Everyone makes mistakes, including you and me.
- Give people a graceful exit when you can. Example: In my business we draft from people's bank accounts and sometimes we get a non-sufficient funds return. When we talk to the customer rather than saying, "You need to handle your money better" we say, "This is not unusual. Often your deposit doesn't post before the bank's cut-off time. If we move your draft day by one day that should help." This allows the customer to avoid embarrassment.

I also told you that the lesson **created a new life rule and addition for this list. I'll share that today.**

So far, we've learned that Jesus is a High Priest, appointed by God in the Order of Melchizedek, and He meets God's criteria of "one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."

We also learned that Jesus doesn't make sacrifices for his own sins because he didn't sin.

Furthermore, the author said to us "Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven to intercede on our behalf before God."

And late in the last session we learned the reason that Jesus had to become that heavenly high priest was because there was something wrong with the first covenant.

Chapter 8 Verse 7 states:

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another."

The problem wasn't with the covenant itself, but with the people. They couldn't live up to their end of the covenant. They couldn't follow the law, be obedient, love the lord. They couldn't even follow the first commandment – "Have no other Gods."

In the LAST session I asked you to pretend that you are one of those first century believers, doubting and discouraged, asking questions of the person who wrote the letter to the Hebrews. Let's do that again.

As I recall, when we ended the last session, you had more questions.

YOU: Why all the laws and sacrifices all these years, and how exactly does Christ change that?"

The Author tells you, "keep reading to understand the reason for ceremonial sacrifices" READ **C9V8-10**

8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that **the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed** as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. 9 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that **the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper**. 10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—**external regulations applying until the time of the new order**.

Again, the Author tells you, "This is the reason for the regular sacrifices from Moses until now. Keep reading to understand how Christ changes everything about the sacrifices." READ **C9V11-14**

11 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but **he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption**. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are **outwardly clean**. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, **cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!**

Jump to v15

"For this reason...he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant."

Author now looks you in the eye and asks, "Do you see now the difference? The 'acts that lead to death is sin.' And Jesus died so that our sins are forgiven. *But, don't skip the last part there* – we are cleansed of sin for a reason - **"so that we may serve the living God."**

You: "Okay, I get it. But will you let me ask one more question?"

Author: "Ask as many as you need to ask."

You, "I get that He died and that my old sins are forgiven, but what about any sins today or tomorrow? The old priest would go back to the tabernacle to seek forgiveness for those. What now?"

Author, I need to explain this in two ways – old way, new way. READ **C9V18-22** for old way.

This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20 He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." 21 In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. 22 **In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**

Now read about the new way – READ C9V23 – 28 and 10:10-14. First C9V23-28

23 It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now **to appear for us in God's presence**. 25 **Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again**, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But **he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself**. 27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so **Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many**; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

To complete the understanding, we can't stop in chapter 9. Chapter 10 is needed for a complete answer. READ C10V1 which may explain to you why the years and years of laws and sacrifices.

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all and **would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.** 3 **But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.** 4 It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

PAUSE before going on. V1 describes the law as “only a shadow of the good things...” What the heck does that mean? What is “The Law”? How can it be a “shadow of the good things?”

Many people look at the Bible as a bunch of rules/laws that make no sense. They also take the position that some laws seem arbitrary or make no sense, therefore “I ain't gonna follow 'em.”

But perhaps we need a new perspective on the law as seen in Proverbs. Proverbs 13:14 “The teaching (torah) of the wise is a fountain of life.” Proverbs 31:26 “speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction (torah)”

Psalms 1:2 in the Jewish translation reads as, “The teaching of the Lord is his delight, and he studies the teaching day and night.”

V3 explains why the sacrifices were required all those years – as a reminder of their sins. Easter is for many Christians both an annual reminder of our sins, a reminder that they are forgiven – AND of the sacrifice made for me.

Let's wrap up today in Chapter 10 vv 10-14

And by that will, **we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**.

11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again, and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when **this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God**, 13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. 14 For **by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy**.

Q: As a first century Christian: What is your reaction to what you've just heard about OT sacrifices, the New Covenant, no more need for repeated sacrifices, your sins(past, present, and future), and the sacrifice (singular) that Christ made for you? For me; I am amazed; thankful; grateful; and humbled because of Christ's sacrifice

As a 2021 Christian, I have the same reactions.

SUMMARY

Mentioned a New rule for life: Be grateful. Don't take for granted the joy, blessings, and life that I have because it comes at a great sacrifice; and not my own. Christ's **suffering**, death and resurrection.

Jesus is the Son of God, the High Priest, eternal, and our "source of eternal salvation." **Jesus is eternally interceding for me.** I am to be a mature Christian, not one easily swayed by fear, anxiety, or the arguments of men. I am to stand firm, as I **"have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."**

And finally, I want to close with the John Piper quote:

"The Bible was not written as a self-help book, or a guide to our mental health. Though you may find help from it, the Bible was written to explain to us about the **massive holiness or God.**"