

Sunday School Lesson

Hebrews 9: The Final Answer to Sin (March 15, 2026)

Cowboy Bible

A devout cowboy lost his favorite Bible while he was mending fences out on the range.

Three weeks later a cow walked up to him carrying the Bible in its mouth.

The cowboy couldn't believe his eyes. He took the precious book out of the cow's mouth, and exclaimed, "A miracle! It's a miracle!"

"Not really," said the cow. "Your name is written inside the cover."

My Bible study is "who, what, where, where, why, how – and so what?" I used Gemini to help me with the "so what" – relevance to today.

Setup

Hebrews bridges the gap between ancient ritual and modern faith. It explains why the old systems changed and how that affects a believer's relationship with God today.¹

The Earthly Sanctuary

Last week we discussed the locations of God's sanctuaries. Where are they?

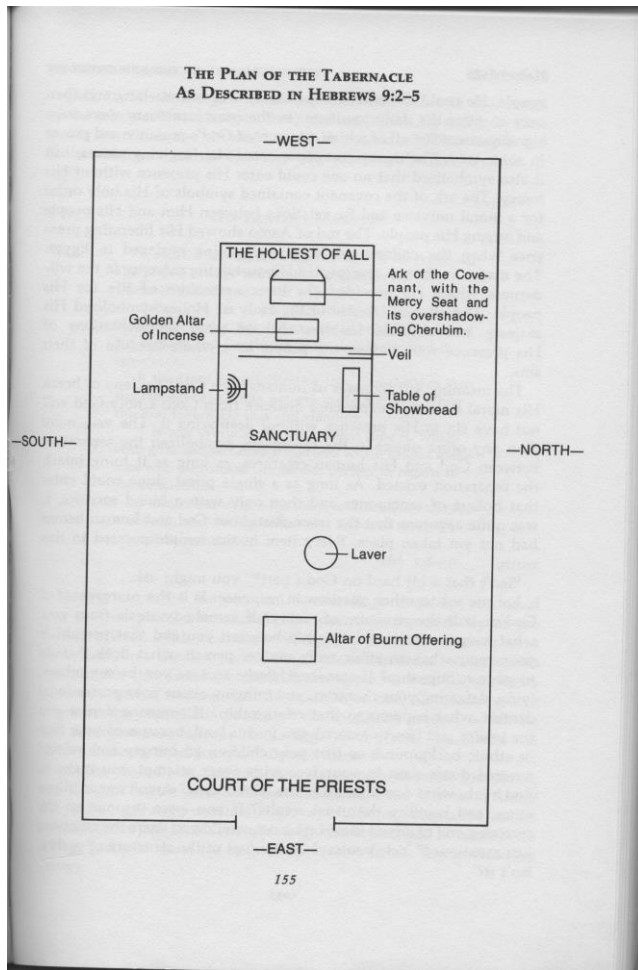
Heaven; human hearts; the Tabernacle (tent); the Temple

The Old and New Testaments both describe the rituals of service and sacrifice. In this chapter the author will demonstrate that the old rituals were only effective in cleansing the flesh, but the New, including the ministry of Christ, is superior because it cleanses the conscience and secures eternal life!

As a "heads-up," this lesson is a bit gory; it is all about blood sacrifices.

Following is the layout of the Tabernacle, as described in Hebrews 9:2-5 (draw it on the board)

¹ Gemini AI



God ordered up His Tabernacle in Exodus 25 and 30. It must have been depressing to Moses that he had such a close relationship with God, but God filled his Tabernacle with symbols of alienation and atonement. The people were to be continually reminded that they were separated from God. Keeping in mind that the Hebrews were all about symbolism and representations, let's read the author's description of the Tabernacle. Read **Hebrews 9:1-5**.

9¹⁻² Now in that first agreement between God and his people there were rules for worship and there was a sacred tent down here on earth. Inside this place of worship there were two rooms. The first one contained the golden candlestick and a table with special loaves of holy bread upon it; this part was called the Holy Place.³ Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was a room called the Holy of Holies.⁴ In that room there were a golden incense-altar and the golden chest, called the ark of the covenant, completely covered on all sides with pure gold. Inside the ark were the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them, and a golden jar with some manna in it, and Aaron's wooden cane that budded.⁵ Above the golden chest were statues of angels called the cherubim—the guardians of God's glory—with their wings stretched out over the ark's golden cover, called the mercy seat. But enough of such details.

Each item in the Tabernacle has a position and a purpose. Only priests could enter the Court of Priests. Before venturing further into the Sanctuary, he must first wash his hands and feet in the Laver. The altar for burnt offerings is also there for the daily sacrifices.

Each of the items in the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies had special significance, representing the presence and power of God. Inside the Sanctuary:

- Lamp stand (7 lights)
- Table of Showbread. Among the Hebrews communion with anyone involved sharing food; that is why Jesus broke bread with His disciples at the Last Supper, and we still use it for our Communion. Once a week a loaf of bread for each of the tribes was displayed on this table to remind the people of their communing relationship with God.

Inside the “Holiest of All” or “Holy of Holies”

- Burning incense symbolizes God’s majestic presence
- Arc of the Covenant contained the stone tablets given to Moses: God’s rules for His people
- Golden jar of manna was a reminder of God’s provisioning for His people
- Aaron’s staff, which had budded, represented God’s continuing presence among His people.

The Arc, itself, had rings on each corner for the carrying poles – which could be inserted to carry the Arc without ever touching it (remember what happened to Uzzah when he tried to catch the Arc when the donkey stumbled?). On top of the Arc is the Seat of Mercy, which reminds the people that God is most merciful, but also that one cannot enter God’s presence without mercy from God.

Perhaps the most significant item is the veil between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. It symbolizes the separation of all mankind from God.

But, the people are NOT allowed into any of this because sin has separated them from God! As long as the veil was in place, and only one priest could enter annually, and then only after a blood sacrifice, then the redemption of mankind had not yet taken place. Let’s read the author’s explanation of this earthly ministry in **Hebrews 9:6-10**.

⁶ These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; ⁷ but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people. ⁸ By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰ but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

This is only a brief/summarized description of the process for the priest. One of the commentators gives a more detailed description of what went on:

The Priests' Route & Procedures:

“According to *Mishnah Yoma* 5:1, he moves south to the opening in the outer veil between the two curtains. Then he turns north, having in his left hand a ladle of incense as large as his two hands, and in his right, a pot of coals. He enters the space between the two curtains, which was less than two feet wide, and when he reaches the north end, turns to his left so that the curtain is on his left until he comes to the ark, which we would take to mean in front of or even with the ark where the altar of incense was. There he deposits the pot of coals and heaps the incense upon the coals, which suddenly fills the sanctuary with smoke. He then retreats by the way he has come, saying a short prayer so as not to cause anxiety in the people who might fear he has been struck down by the holy God. (I can imagine he retreated as quickly as possible, after a short prayer indeed, because of the stifling density of the smoke.)

He then takes the blood that is being stirred by an attending priest so it will not congeal and enters a second time into the Holy of Holies and stands where he has stood before, sprinkling the area. He then returns to the outer sanctuary and places the basin of blood upon the golden stand.

Attendants then bring him the he-goat which he has slaughtered, and they receive its blood in another basin. A third time he enters the Holy of Holies, sprinkling the mercy seat and the area in front of the mercy seat. (Note that the *Mishnah's* order of goat and bull is inverted from that of Leviticus 16.) He pours the blood of the bull into the bowl of the he-goat and then sprinkles the altar outside the tent as an atonement for it. The blood of his offering, according to the *Mishnah*, is mixed with the blood of the peoples' offering, indicating his complete identification with them.

The second goat is then brought to him. Laying his hands upon it, he confesses the sins of the people as though transferring the guilt of them to the goat. Notice again the vicarious nature of the sacrifice. The goat is then taken into the wilderness and released in a lonely place, a symbol that God separates us from our sins by a vast distance so that we do not see them again. Yet the people did see their sins again, year after year. The process had to be repeated regularly. It was obvious there was nothing permanent about the sacrifice. Our author's spiritual insight loses no time identifying the real problem. It is, after all, quite obvious that the way is not yet open into the presence of God as long as that first tabernacle stands isolated and cut off from every person's access to the Holy Father of us all.”³

With all the blood and smoke in that place, I'm thinking someone ought to clean it up once in a while with some Lysol !!

Regarding verse 8, in his gospel, John quotes Jesus in describing the way into the sanctuary.

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. – John 14:6

The New Kind of Cleansing

This Old Covenant cleansing process was NOT permanent, it had to be repeated, and it only pertained to the flesh. How could they ever get their souls purified to become acceptable to God? The people knew from Isaiah and Jeremiah that only God can accomplish this, but how would He do it? The author answers this by comparing all their currently established rituals to the “new and improved” priesthood of Christ. Read **Hebrews 9:11-15**.

³ Evans, pp. 158-159.

¹¹ He came as High Priest of this better system that we now have. He went into that greater, perfect tabernacle in heaven, not made by men nor part of this world, ¹² and once for all took blood into that inner room, the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled it on the mercy seat; but it was not the blood of goats and calves. No, he took his own blood, and with it he, by himself, made sure of our eternal salvation.

¹³ And if under the old system the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of young cows could cleanse men's bodies from sin, ¹⁴ just think how much more surely the blood of Christ will transform our lives and hearts. His sacrifice frees us from the worry of having to obey the old rules and makes us want to serve the living God. For by the help of the eternal Holy Spirit, Christ willingly gave himself to God to die for our sins—he being perfect, without a single sin or fault. ¹⁵ Christ came with this new agreement so that all who are invited may come and have forever all the wonders God has promised them. For Christ died to rescue them from the penalty of the sins they had committed while still under that old system.

If the blood of animals can cleanse the flesh, then how much more effective is the cleansing power of Christ's undefiled blood? The author emphasizes the singularity of Christ's sacrifice: "once for all." And the rending of the veil is the powerful message that any heart seeking communion with God can do so directly and unhindered; no mediator is required for access. This communication channel was not available under the Old Covenant, but is available under the New Covenant. Read **Romans 8:15-17a**.

¹⁵ And so we should not be like cringing, fearful slaves, but we should behave like God's very own children, adopted into the bosom of his family, and calling to him, "Father, Father." ¹⁶ For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we really are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for all God gives to his Son Jesus is now ours too.

An inheritance comes to us by a will, and after the death of the author of the will. The full inheritance from God, which we share with Christ, was promised to us by Christ, and only comes to us because of His death. The author now details this. Read **Hebrews 9:16-22**.

¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸ Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Read **Leviticus 17:11**.

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.

In those days covenants were ratified (sealed) with blood. When Moses returned from the mountain with the Covenant from God, he sealed it with blood offerings.

Read **Exodus 24:3-8**.

³ Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do." ⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." ⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

This New Covenant is no different: it is sealed by the blood of Christ.

The Greatness of Christ's Sacrifice

Christ's sacrifice is superior to all that have gone before. The author summarizes this by making distinct comparisons. Read **Hebrews 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 a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, 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 Place yearly 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 age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for men 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.

Very interesting that the author closes this section by inserting the theme of the Second Coming of Christ! And, he explains that the next appearance will not be about redemption, but about collection of the believers.

¹⁰ *The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.* - Romans 6:10

Summary (Why do we care - what's in it for us?)

- Christ's sacrifice did not involve animal blood and ashes; it was His own undefiled blood.
- Christ's sacrifice cleanses the soul as well as the flesh. It is relief from guilt for acts that lead to death, so that we are free to serve the Living God!
- Christ's sacrifice was singular, and does not need repeating – once for all people, for all sins, for all time!
- The veil to the Holy of Holies is now open; we all have a direct and open communion with the God of the universe!

From 1 Peter 2:24:

²⁴ *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

References:

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7. Free on-line commentaries:

http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/new_testament_studies/new_testament_studies.htm

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Reading Assignments:

1. Hebrews 9:1-5	2. Hebrews 9:6-10
3. Hebrews 9:11-15	4. Romans 8:15-17a
5. Hebrews 9:16-22	6. Leviticus 17:11
7. Exodus 24:3-8	8. Hebrews 9:23-28