

The Book to the Hebrews

Remember:

The purpose of the book is to encourage despondent, weak believers suffering ostracism and denunciation from the Jewish communities, not to drift away from all that they gained in Christ. Or, to get over the “blues”, look up to what Christ in His love provided for you!! The Old Testament saint had to long from a shadowed distance and wait for what you and I have been given.

I. The Argument of the Book: The Pre-eminence of Christ in His Person and Work, 1:1-10:18

A. The Superiority of Son to the Angels. 1:1-14, 2:5-18

Parenthesis I: Warning against drifting, 2:1-4

(The path to glory is the way of suffering.)

B. The Superiority of Christ to Moses, 3:1-6

Parenthesis II: Warning against Doubting, 3:7-4:13

(The path to rest is the way of trusting.)

C. The Superiority of Christ to the Aaronic Priesthood, 4:14-10:18

1. Superior because of a better position, vv. 14-16

2. Superior because of better qualifications, 5:1-10

Parenthesis III: Warning against immaturity, 5:11-6:20

(The path to growth is the way of obedience.)

3. Superior because of a better order, 7:1-28

4. Superior because of a better covenant, 8:1-13

5. Superior because of a better sanctuary, 9:1-28

The argument in this section is that the actual presence of God is superior to the shadowed presence, the earthly tabernacle. No mere priest could enter God's shadowed presence and live. Jesus, however, could enter the actual presence of God because of His superior personhood. Therefore, we should listen to Him.

a. The earthly sanctuary, vv. 1-10

The tabernacle itself is not the point of the passage; it is here because the writer desires to create a comparison with the superior “tabernacle (John 1:14).” The symbolism of the tabernacle is not exploited; it is simply factual.

1) The sanctuary described, vv. 1-5

The ancient tabernacle, the shadowed presence of God among His people, consisted of two chambers within a single tent-structure. The Holy Place consisted of the Table of Showbread and the golden lamp stand, the Menorah.

The Holy of Holies contained the Altar of Incense (this likely stood in the Holy Place because it had to be maintained daily), indicating the mysterious presence of God. Within the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant covered by the mercy seat and overshadowed by two bowing cherubim with touching wings. Inside the ark were: a jar of manna, Aaron's rod (Korah's rebellion, Num. 17:8-20), and the second copy of the Ten Commandments given to Moses on the mountain.

The jar of manna and Aaron's rod were likely lost in the capture of the ark by the Philistines. Only the Ten Commandments were in the sacred ark afterward. In the second temple, after the captivity and Herod's restoration, the Holy of Holies was empty, the ark also lost (it was most likely taken by the Romans after the destruction of the Temple it appears in artwork of Titus' Arch commemorating his triumph).

2) The service in the sanctuary described, vv. 6-7

Priests entered the Holy Place daily to trim the Menorah and burn incense, weekly to exchange the twelve loaves representative of the tribes.

Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur is a fall festival associated with the Feast of Tabernacles; Passover is in the Spring associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread). He entered twice on that day, once for his own sin with blood to be placed on the mercy seat and once for the sins of the people he represented.

"Ignorance" seems to be a synonym for sin (see 5:2), perhaps simply stressing the sinfulness of sin. The Day of Atonement ritual covered all the sins of the people, not merely unintentional sins. Num. 15:22-31 distinguishes between unwitting and overt sins, but that would not apply here. The ritual was observed annually covering for all sin (two goats were selected, one to be sacrificed as a blood-covering poured out on the mercy seat and the other

set free in the wilderness signifying the separation of sin from God's people. The two were chosen by lot [Lev. 16]).

- 3) The significance of the sanctuary service described, vv. 8-10
The tabernacle-ritual was significant as a pointer of something far greater (v. 9). It was inadequate to cleanse the conscience so there was a constant reminder of incompleteness for the worshipper. The godly saint participated in a ritual, whose significance was its shadowed anticipation of a future, once-for-all cleansing. The tabernacle-ritual, however, dealt with external cleansings, not the cleansing of the heart!

b. The heavenly sanctuary, vv. 11-28

Here the writer draws the connection between the merely shadowed and the fulfillment, the presence of God on earth and the present of God in heaven.

1) The fact of Christ's superior presence, vv. 11-12

a) The fact: explained, v. 11

"But now" alerts the reader to a startling contrast. Christ has come; the shadow has been set aside by the brightness of His presence.

b) The accomplishments: stated v. 12

(1) Entrance into the perfect "tabernacle," v. 12a

Christ, using the Day of Atonement analogy, entered into the actual presence of God, a heavenly one. The rending of the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom upon Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51) signaled the dawn of a new day of access to God. The New Covenant brought a new access to God, a direct one through Christ.

(2) A superior and final sacrifice, v. 12b

Christ entered the very presence of God once (not at all for His sins, only for ours and not with animal blood but His own). He was the offerer and the offering combined.

Righteousness, mercy, and justice met in Jesus before the throne of God.

2) The results of Christ's superior sacrifice, vv. 13-28

a) The fact of cleansing, vv. 13-14

"For" alerts the reader to the basis, or reason, for the superior accomplishments of Christ.

-a superior place

-a superior sacrifice

-a superior cleansing (the conscience)

b) The basis of cleansing, the new covenant, vv. 15-22

(1) The fact of a new covenant, v. 15

In contrast to the Old Covenant with its constant reminder of inadequacy and separation from God, the New Covenant secures an eternal cleansing or inheritance that reaches to our consciences.

- (2) The ground of a new covenant, the death of the testator, vv. 16-22
 - (a) The necessity of a death to secure a covenant, vv. 16-17
The Old Covenant was inaugurated with the sacrifice of animals; the New Covenant with the death of Christ. Death was required to affirm the promise in both covenants.
 - (b) The example of the attestation of the Old Covenant, vv. 18-22
 - [1] The fact, v. 18
The inauguration ceremony is rehearsed in Exodus 24:3-8.
 - [2] The proof, vv. 19-21
The quotation is from Exodus 24:8.
 - [3] The conclusion, v. 22
Blood and forgiveness are interconnected in the Old Covenant (and the New Covenant).
- (3) The ministry of cleansing, the new covenant, vv. 23-28
 - (a) A necessitated fact, v. 23
A superior sacrifice, since the location was in the very presence of God, was required.
 - (b) A superior tabernacle, v. 24
Christ entered heaven for us!
 - (c) A superior cleansing, vv. 25-26
Christ sacrificed Himself for us once and forever. There is no need for further sacrifices; the old order ended.

The phrase “consummation of the ages” means the end of the era of sacrifices, the era of endless ritual cleansings. It can be translated “the age of re-formation.” In this context, the Bible speaks of two eras or periods of time, the era of shadows with its endless sacrifices and the era inaugurated by Christ’s final solution to sacrifices in His one perfect sacrifice.

Contrasts between the Ages

Before Christ	With Christ (v. 11)
Old Covenant (OT)	New Covenant (NT)
Exodus 19-24	Jeremiah 31:31-34
Age of Anticipation	Age of fulfillment
Age of Shadows	Age of Light
Many sacrifices	One Sacrifice

(d) A superior cleansing, vv. 27-28

All mortals have been divinely predestined to die (Gen. 2:17), evidencing the fact of their mortality (eternal life, therefore, being an impossibility within ourselves). Christ has made eternal life possible a reality.

V. 27 states that all mortals will die, but only some will live forever. The emphasis here is on quality of life, not life itself. Only some will experience life with Jesus! Christ's one sacrifice is sufficient to secure our eternal salvation. His death will not prevent our death, but, through His death, we will experience a resurrection to newness of life forever. The salvation that Jesus will bring in His second coming (the judgment that awaits us is a good one; it is God's declaration that we have true life forever) is the ultimate experience of redemption, granting us new bodies and God's presence forever. This is the third great age, eternity.

Three Great Ages Contrasted

Shadows of Salvation	Coming of Salvation	Ultimate Experience of Salvation
The Old Testament	Gospels to Rev. 20	Rev. 20-22
Paradise blighted	Paradise purchased	Paradise restored
On the earth	On the earth	In heaven
Christ as anticipated	Christ as Savior	Christ as reigning king
Many sacrifices	One sacrifice	No sacrifices

Thoughts:

1. In OT worship, the worshipper was reminded of his/her separation from God and the cost of cleansing. He/she stood outside the tabernacle precinct and another received the sacrifice and took it to the altar for them. He brought his

own family possession, carried it to the tabernacle, slew it (hearing it's cry and experiencing the smells of death in its bodily liquids), and then gave it to the priest for an offering. Jesus offered himself for us; He is both the offerer and the offering.

2. Do you take the time daily to think of what Jesus has done for you, the superiority of His offering, and the greatness of His accomplishments? How should the truth of having a great priest like Jesus help you in your struggles and doubts? Does it make a difference to you that Jesus is your priest in heaven today? Do we have a clue to handling disappointment and discouragement?
3. The reason that we experience troubles in our lives, make unwise and wrong decisions, and entertain doubts of God's faithfulness is that we have not experienced salvation in its fullest and will not until we stand in Christ in God's presence. What you and I experience in this life are lengthening shadows of a redemption that will be ours after this physical existence. This should give you help in explaining the crazy things we do and fill us with hope that these are only temporary.
4. Meditating on Jesus as our great high priest should fill you with joy and delight. To think that you are so loved, to think that someone cares for you so deeply, to think that He has done so much for you should bring a smile to your face and peace into your soul regardless of circumstance. It reminds me of the words of a great hymn.

“And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who cause His pain, for me who Him to death pursued.
No condemnation now I dread; Jesus in Him and all is mine. Alive in Him,
my living head. and clothed in righteousness divine.”
5. God does not delight in the performance of duties. He delights in duties when they are done with a heart of gratitude and thankfulness to Him for all His kindnesses. Duties do not impress God, necessitate Him to be kind to us, or obligate Him to return the favor. When the slightest duty is conducted with a thankful, appreciative, affectionate heart attitude, God delights. The emphasis is not on duties in the Bible; it is upon heart attitudes.
6. Jesus has conquered His foes and is now enthroned, exalted in the heavens. He is waiting to receive the kingdom that He purchased with His blood and the ultimate defeat and judgment of all His enemies. God is longsuffering and patient. God waited for centuries preparing for the final sacrifice to end the old order; now He waits for the ultimate realization of His victory. Is there a message in this for us? Should we be anxious when God promises to us are not immediately forthcoming?