

Hebrews

Chapter 9

The Earthly Holy Place

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. 2 For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, 4 having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. 6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, 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 unintentional sins of the people. 8 By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing 9 (which is symbolic for the present age).[d] According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, 10 but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

9:1 *regulations for worship.* The Levitical, ceremonial law (cf Lv 1–7). On the character of worship in the NT, consider the background provided from the Psalms (pp 959, 993), synagogue practices, apostolic adaptation of synagogue practices (see notes, 1Co 14:1, 16–17, 23), and descriptions of Christian gatherings. (TLSB)

earthly place of holiness. The tabernacle and, later, the temple. (TLSB)

9:2 *A tent was prepared.* The tabernacle built under Moses. (CSB)

First section of the tabernacle, where the priests carried out the daily liturgy. John Chrysostom: “The holy place then is a symbol of the former [OT] period (for there all things are done by means of sacrifices); but the Holy of Holies [is a symbol] of this [NT period] that is now present. And by the Holy of Holies he means Heaven” (NPNF 1 14:438). (TLSB)

lampstand. Made of hammered gold and placed at the south side of the Holy Place (Ex 40:24), it had seven lamps that were kept burning every night (Ex 25:31–40). (CSB)

the table and the consecrated bread. Made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, it stood on the north side of the Holy Place (Ex 40:22). On it were twelve loaves, arranged in two rows of six (Lev 24:5–6). (CSB)

9:3 *the Most Holy Place.* Or, “the Holy of Holies.” Inner section of the tabernacle into which no one but the high priest could enter. Cf Lv 16:2–3. (TLSB)

9:4 *having the golden altar of incense.* Although the altar of incense stood in the Holy Place, the author describes it as belonging to the Most Holy Place. His purpose was to show its close relationship to the inner sanctuary and the ark of the covenant (cf. Ex 40:5; 1Ki 6:22). On the Day

of Atonement the high priest took incense from this altar, along with the blood of the sin offering, into the Most Holy Place (Lev 16:12–14). (CSB)

Located near the Most Holy Place (Ex 40:26–27). (TLSB)

ark of the covenant. A chest made of acacia wood, overlaid inside and out with gold (Ex 25:10–16). (CSB)

9:5 *cherubim of Glory.* Two winged figures made of pure gold, of one piece with the atonement cover, or mercy seat, and standing at either end of it. It was between them that the glory of God’s presence appeared (Ex 25:17–22; Lev 16:2; Nu 7:89). (CSB)

God spoke from this majesty, which appeared between the two cherubim (Nu 7:89). (TLSB)

mercy seat. Fitting exactly over the top of the ark of the covenant, it was a slab of pure gold on which the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:14–15). (CSB)

(*mercy seat.* Gk *hilasterion*, “place of atonement,” the golden lid on the ark of the covenant. It was the focus of the ritual for the OT Day of Atonement (Lv 16). (TLSB)

9:7 *only once a year.* On the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 16:29, 34). (CSB)

unintentional sins. Though the Day of Atonement was for all sins (cf Lv 16:16, 30), the sinful ignorance of priests and people is stressed here (cf Rm 10:3). (TLSB)

9:8 *the Holy Spirit indicates.* The Holy Spirit spoke through Moses and gave all the OT rituals a divinely intended meaning. (TLSB)

not yet opened. The way to heaven, symbolized by the temple’s Most Holy Place, was not fully revealed until Christ appeared. (TLSB)

as the first section is still standing. As long as the Mosaic system with its imperfect priesthood and sacrifice remained in effect (8:7–8, 13). (CSB)

9:9 *is symbolic for the present age.* The Mosaic tabernacle, though superseded, still provided instruction through its typical (symbolic) significance and was a reminder that returning to the old order was useless, since it could not deal effectively with sin. (CSB)

The first section of the temple represented the OT sacrificial system and earth. (TLSB)

cannot perfect the conscience. The sacrifices could not provide lasting atonement for the people, but were effective only as they pointed to Christ’s sacrifice. (TLSB)

9:10 *until the time of reformation.* The new covenant, with its new priesthood, new sanctuary and new sacrifice, all introduced by Christ. (CSB)

Institution of Christ’s new covenant; change from OT ceremonies to NT sacramental life. (TLSB)

9:1–10 The Holy Place of the tabernacle was a picture of the old covenant and the old sacrificial system. But the Most Holy Place was a picture of heaven and of Christ’s new covenant. OT services, therefore, pointed ahead to Christ, while NT services celebrate His work, distribute His benefits, and anticipate His return. Christ is the true Priest who sacrificed Himself to reconcile us to the Father. • O Lord, send us Your Holy Spirit and increase reverence in us toward Your Word and service. Amen. (TLSB)

Redemption Through the Blood of Christ

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. 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 Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated 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 that God commanded for 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. 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 holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, 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 places every year 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 ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And just as it is appointed for man 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.

9:11 *the good things that have come.* These good things (redemption, salvation, forgiveness) have come to believers in the Word and Sacraments and will be fully bestowed in the future resurrection (cf 2Co 1:10). (TLSB)

more perfect tent. Heaven and the new covenant that Christ brings (cf 10:20). (TLSB)

not of this creation. It was not an earthly tabernacle, but the heavenly sanctuary of God’s presence (v. 24; 8:2). (CSB)

9:12 *he entered ... once for all.* Not repeatedly year after year as did the Levitical high priests. Christ’s sacrifice was perfect, because it was completely effective and did not need to be

repeated. After he had obtained eternal redemption, Christ ascended into the true heavenly sanctuary. (CSB)

Christ entered heaven to present His sacrificed blood to the Father. (TLSB)

eternal redemption. With His sacrifice, He freed us from our imprisonment. Because His sacrifice is eternal, it needs no repetition like the OT sacrifices. Luther: “With His own blood, to be sure, He redeemed and sanctified all men just once. But because we are not yet perfectly pure but remnants of sin still cling to our flesh and the flesh wars against the spirit, therefore He comes spiritually every day; day by day He completes the time set by the Father more and more, abrogating and abolishing the Law” (AE 26:360). (TLSB)

9:13 *blood of goats and bulls.* As on the Day of Atonement. (CSB)

ashes of a heifer. As prescribed in Nu 19 for those who became ceremonially unclean as a result of contact with a corpse. (CSB)

These sacrifices showed that cleansing was necessary in God’s sight (cf Nu 19). (TLSB)

purification of the flesh. Such sprinkling, since it was only external, could not cleanse a person from sin. (CSB)

9:14 *how much more.* Infinitely more, because Christ is not only man, but is also the infinite God. (TLSB)

offered himself. He was the one who offered the sacrifice, and he was the sacrifice itself. (CSB)

Christ’s human blood does a divine work, purifying us from sin; this results in a joyful conscience. (TLSB)

Sacrificed Himself in the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:34; Ac 10:38) (TLSB)

without blemish. In the entirety of Christ’s being, not just superficially. (CSB)

Without sin. (TLSB)

purify our conscience. Remove sin’s defilement from the very core of our beings. (CSB)

9:15 *mediator.* John Chrysostom: “The Son became Mediator between the Father and us. The Father willed not to leave us this inheritance, but was enraged against us . . .; [the Son] accordingly became Mediator between us and Him, and prevailed with Him” (NPNF 1 14:443). (TLSB)

called. Summoned to salvation by the preaching of the Gospel. See SC, Third Article, p xxxvii. (TLSB)

the promised eternal inheritance. Defined in the passage from Jeremiah (31:31–34) quoted in 8:8–12. On the basis of Christ’s atoning death, this inheritance has become real for those who are called by God (cf. Ro 8:28). (CSB)

since a death has occurred. By shedding his blood, he paid the necessary price to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant, i.e., violations of Mosaic law. (CSB)

Christ's death was the just punishment for our sins, which He took upon Himself to buy back the whole human race from God's wrath. (TLSB)

9:16–17 Christ's death put His last will and testament into effect. (TLSB)

9:16 *will.* Translates the same Greek word as that for “covenant” (v. 15), but here and in v. 17 used in the sense of a last will and testament. (Verse 18 returns to the concept of covenant.) Beneficiaries have no claim on the benefits assigned to them in a will until the testator dies (v. 17). Since Christ's death has been duly attested, “the promised eternal inheritance” (v. 15) is available to his beneficiaries. (CSB)

Gk *diatheke*, translated elsewhere as “covenant.” A will, or testament, is a specific kind of covenant, which promises an inheritance to others upon the writer's death. (CC)

9:18 *without blood.* Without death—the death of the calves from which Moses took blood to seal the old covenant. (CSB)

The new covenant would require Christ's death. (TLSB)

9:20 With these words, God through Moses confirmed the old covenant through blood. Christ used similar words to give us His blood of the new covenant in the Holy Supper (1Co 11:25). (TLSB)

9:21 *used in worship.* Gk *leitourgias*, “of the liturgy or service.” The holy vestments (Ex 29:21), etc. All the vessels of the OT tabernacle assisted with blood sacrifice and received their holiness from God through that sacrifice. (TLSB)

9:22 *almost everything is purified with blood.* Even where blood was not applied to the objects being purified, sacrifice often was part of the purification (cf Nu 19:4). (TLSB)

without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Cf Heb 9:7, 18. Christ's bloodshed and death were the actual work of reconciliation. Christ “was crucified, died, and was buried. He did this to reconcile the Father to us” (AC III 2–3). (TLSB)

9:23 *copies of the heavenly things.* See 8:5. Whereas it was necessary for the earthly sanctuary to be purified with animal sacrifices, it was necessary for the heavenly sanctuary to be purified with the better sacrifice of Christ himself. (CSB)

The tabernacle seen by Moses was the original; the tabernacle made by the Israelites was a copy. *heavenly things.* Moses saw these (Ex 25:40); Christ opens these heavenly realms to us. (TLSB)

9:24 *copies.* Gk *antitypa*, “antitypes, counterparts,” things patterned off an original (Gk *typos*). (TLSB)

into heaven. Christ ascended, but neither God nor Christ according to His humanity is limited to “heaven.” Cf Eph 4:10; see FC SD VIII 27–28. (TLSB)

now to appear for us in God's presence. God sees believers through Christ. (TLSB)

The purification in verse 23 is now explained: For not has Christ entered into the holy places made with hands, the mere counterparts of the genuine, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God in our behalf. Christ, our High Priest, is in every way elevated far above the high priests of the Old Testament. For, unlike them, He did not enter into the sanctuary, into the Most Holy Place of the earthly Tabernacle, made by the hands of men, this being a mere type, figure, or counterpart of the real Holy Place in heaven. Into heaven itself, the true sanctuary, Christ has entered; by the shedding of His holy blood He laid open the entrance to the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle above. And it is not a mere earthly mercy-seat before which He appeared, at a place where the glory of the Lord was revealed only occasionally, to commune with His servants, but it is the throne of glory itself where He is now standing, in the very presence of the Lord of glory. All this He did in our behalf, as our Mediator, the Mediator of the new and better covenant. (Kretzmann)

God sees believers through Christ. Hebrew panim, “face” so “to be in front of someone/something.” To “enter God’s presence” typically refers to visiting the temple or tabernacle for worship. (TLSB p. 843)

9:25 *nor was it to offer himself repeatedly* – This fact of Christ’s vicarious sacrifice is emphasized also from another side: Nor that He might offer Himself often, just as the high priest entered the Most Holy Place yearly with strange blood; for in that case He would have been obliged often to suffer since the foundation of the world; now, however, once, at the end of the world periods, has He been manifested for the abolition of sin through His sacrifice. The sacrifice which Christ made for us differed from that made by the Jewish high priests year after year, on the great Day of Atonement, also in this respect, that their offering had to be made repeatedly, had to be renewed every year, or the covenant would not stand. Like everything else that is performed by human beings, all the rites and ceremonies and sacrifices were incomplete and imperfect. And the high priests of old, in addition to this, performed the work of the atonement with, or in, strange blood, the blood of the offering being the instrument which enabled them to enter the sanctuary. But the sacrifice of blood not one’s own is necessarily imperfect. If the same thing held true in the case of Christ, then it would have been incumbent upon Him to suffer again and again since the creation of the world. If the entrance had always required repetition, then Jesus would have been obliged to be subject to periodical suffering and death. But now that Christ’s Passion and death is eternally efficacious, it was altogether sufficient for Him to appear now, at the consummation of the ages, in the fullness of the times, in the period of the world when all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament find their interpretation and fulfillment, in the period preceding the end of the world. Instead of making His sacrifice for every succeeding generation of men, He has made a single offering, this sacrifice being altogether sufficient to abolish and put away sin forever, because it consisted of His own body as the sacrificial victim. On the basis of Christ’s single sacrifice we are justified in saying that all is finished that was necessary for the salvation of the world. (Kretzmann)

Christ did not enter heaven to sacrifice for us daily but to pray for us. (TLSB)

No earthly priest is He, standing before a gold-covered ark in some man-made sanctuary smoky with incense. Our high priest stands in the very presence of God, not to look upon Him, but to be looked upon by Him as the accepted sacrifice for sin. There He pleads “for us” and always successfully. His blood shed on earth has already paid our penalty and won for us God’s acquittal. What need is there for such a perfect sacrifice to be repeated? (PBC)

Christ did not enter heaven to sacrifice for us daily but to pray for us. (TLSB)

9:26 *once for all*. Christ's sacrifice is perfect and finished. It is repeated neither in the Holy Supper nor in the suffering of believers. Instead, in the Lord's Supper we eat and drink His body and blood, already sacrificed once, and we receive the benefits of His sacrifice (forgiveness, life, and salvation). Therefore, the Spirit conforms our lives to His life so that we offer to Him sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Luther: "That, I say, is our gospel, that Christ has made us righteous and holy through that sacrifice and has redeemed us from sin, death, and the devil and has brought us into his heavenly kingdom. We have to grasp this and hold it fast through faith alone.... All our own works undertaken to expiate sin and escape from death are necessarily blasphemous. They deny God and insult the sacrifice that Christ has made and disgrace his blood, because they try thereby to do what only Christ's blood can do" (AE 36:313). (TLSB)

end of the ages. His coming has ushered in the great Messianic era, toward which all history has moved. (CSB)

Christ's sacrifice was the fulfillment of all past ages, and it ushered in the last age of the world in which we now live. (TLSB)

To substantiate his statement that Christ's sacrifice was once and for always, the inspired writer refers to the normal conditions of the death of men: And insomuch as it is fixed for men once to die, but after that the Judgment, so also Christ, being offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear the second time without sin to those that patiently expect Him unto salvation. It is a stern truth which the writer here uses to emphasize the point he wants to make. It is fixed, appointed, to men, to all men, once to die. That is a fact stated in Scripture and supported by the experience of the ages: mortal men must die. But death is not the end, death is not destruction; it is rather so that after death there comes the Judgment, when all men must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether they be good or bad, 2 Cor. 5, 10. But just as the results of every man's life are settled when he dies, thus the death of Christ settled the matter of sin and salvation. He was offered up as a sacrifice once, to bear the sins of many. That was the burden which Christ took upon Himself and bore, even to the death on the cross: the trespasses, the guilt, the punishment of many, of the entire human family. But just as certain as this fact is the other, that Christ will appear a second time, that He will return in glory to judge the quick and the dead. And when He does appear, visible to the eye, it will not be for the purpose of establishing a millennial kingdom here on earth, but of giving, transmitting, to those that have patiently waited for Him in faith, eternal salvation, of taking them up to the eternal mansions. Cp. 2 Tim. 4, 8. Thus Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant than that of the Old Testament. Thus may we put our firm trust in Him as our Savior. (Kretzmann)

Christ's sacrifice is perfect and finished. (Note from John 19:30 *It is finished*. Literary and theological climax of John. Jesus' word to atonement was finished, or accomplished.) It is neither repeated in the Holy Supper nor in the suffering of believers. Instead, in the Lord's Supper we eat and drink His body and blood, already sacrificed once, and we receive the benefits of His sacrifice (forgiveness, life and salvation). Therefore, the Spirit conforms our lives to His life so that we offer to Him sacrifices of praises and thanksgiving. (Note from Hebrews 13:15 *a sacrifice of praise to God*. "These sacrifices are not satisfaction ... He asks us to offer praises, that is, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, and the like. These benefit not by the outward act, but because of faith" Ap XXIV 25-26.) Luther says, "That, I say, is our gospel, that Christ has made us righteous and holy through that sacrifice and has redeemed us from sin, death and the devil and has brought us into His heavenly kingdom. We have to grasp this and hold it fast through faith alone... All our own works undertaken to expiate sin and escape from death are necessarily blasphemous. They deny God and insult the sacrifice that God has made and disgrace His blood, because they try to do what only Christ's blood can do" (TLSB)

9:27 *it is appointed for man to die once...comes the judgment.* As in the natural order man dies once (v. 27; as a consequence of sin, Ro 5:12), so Christ died once as the perfect sacrifice for sin (v. 28). And as, after death, man faces judgment, so Christ, after his death, will appear again, bringing salvation (see next note) from sin and its judgment. (CSB)

Because all humans die once, Christ's sacrifice cannot be repeated. Also, one cannot hope for a second life by which he might appease God through his own actions. (TLSB)

It is a circumstance of life over which man has no control and which, though he try to forget, he cannot avoid. And death is serious because judgment follows. At death's moment God's verdict is pronounced – with the soul going either to heaven or to hell, to be followed on the Last Day by his body. (PBC)

9:28 *will appear a second time.* The consummation, in all its glorious fullness, of the salvation purchased for us on the cross (see Ro 8:29–30; Php 3:20–21; 1Jn 3:2–3). (CSB)

He comes without our sins (Is. 53:6), which He bore as a heavy load (John 1:29) when the father made Him to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Also, He comes not in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), but in the majesty of His transfigured body (Mt 24:30; Php 3:21). (TLSB)

waiting for him. As the Israelites waited for the high priest while he was in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement (see 2Ti 4:8; Tit 2:13). (CSB)

The final chapter remains to be written. When Christ returns to earth, He won't be concerned about sin. Oh yes, He will have something to say to unbelievers about their sins and for a million worlds none of us would want to be in their shoes. But for those "who are waiting for Him," holding out eagerly for that great Last Day, His return will bring full enjoyment of salvation. The apostles words in 1 John 3:2 mirror our thoughts: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." How we wait for His return. (PBC)

That itself was a shock to the Greek for he tended to believe that death was final. "When earth once drinks the blood of a man," said Aeschylus, "there is death once and for all and there is no resurrection." (Barclay)

9:11–28 Christ will come from His heavenly sanctuary and take us to Himself with joy. Our greatest joy should be Jesus and His priestly ministry, for He delighted in us, making us the heirs of His last will and testament. • Lord Jesus, by Your blood there is forgiveness of sins. Continue to purify me that I might honor You. Amen. (TLSB)