

### **The Greater Glory of the New Covenant**

So far in our study of Hebrews we have learned just how Jesus Christ both completes and far exceeds the Old Covenant. We have understood it is Christ who ushers in the New Covenant and with it, Jesus brought salvation to God's people and I believe what Jesus accomplished is far better than the Old. God's people have much greater benefits in the New Covenant with the Great High Priest; as chapter 8 concluded, <sup>13</sup> **"In speaking of a new covenant, *Jesus* makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."** So, we have learned all this from the perspective of greater things for those who believe in Christ. But, let me ask, "What about God? Has the New Covenant benefited Him in any way?" This text shows us there is great benefit to us and it also shows from God's perspective there is great benefit for Him as well. The goal of the writer and my goal in preaching and your goal in the study of God's Word, if we are to be god-centered people, must be to consider all aspects of the New Covenant to take into our hearts God's Word and let it change us. Here is something I want you to think about and consider; ***Christ's great mediatory work not only brings sinners to God but allows God to be approached by sinners.*** This is an great difference between the Old and the New. I hope you understand what a great privilege it is having a relationship with God – the Old Testament saints longed for what we have been given.

**Pray**

## **Lesser Glory Old Testament Worship** (v. 1-5)

The author begins chapter 9 by explaining the various regulations and symbols for Old Testament worship. Because of mankind's sin, if God was going to meet with His people, He had to make provisions to do so. Thus, God designed the tabernacle that allowed priests to mediate for the people and in addition pointed to future Messiah that was brought into reality by Christ. The tabernacle was the special place where God's holiness could exist on earth. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, when sin entered the world and death through sin, God had been separated from His zenith of creation; man who was made in God's image, He could not enjoy the fellowship that once was there because He could **NOT** be in the presence of sin. Man's sin not only affected man's relationship with God but also affected God's relationship with man.

Let's dig into chapter 9 and see what God wants us to learn, please open you Bibles to Hebrews chapter 9, reading at verse 1, "Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail." The writer lays out for us the setting of the tabernacle. Each piece had a symbolic purpose. I want us to understand that each piece pointed to Christ. The tabernacle was on earth but what it pointed to was heavenly. So, the tabernacle was an earthly symbol of a heavenly reality. Paul explained that the Old Testament worship was meant to point people to Christ,

<sup>16</sup>“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>**These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**” (Colossians 2:16-17) These were all observed and part of ritual and this would include the tabernacle or temple.

The tabernacle was divided into two sections. The first section was called the sanctuary or holy place. In the sanctuary there was the lamp stand, table and the shewbread. The **lampstand** was always lit. The oil had to be continually filled up and the wicks trimmed on a daily basis. The light from this lamp filled the sanctuary at all times. This light was the symbol of Christ the true light and when the Messiah came the light would be eternal. God spoke of Christ to the Old Testament prophets, like Isaiah preparing people for the New Covenant, **“I will make you, speaking of the Messiah, as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”** (Isaiah 49:6) This is what Jesus was referring to when He told the Pharisees, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** (John 8:12) Christ is the light of the world and just as the lamp was filled with oil continually bringing light to the sanctuary of God’s tabernacle, believers are filled with the light of Christ; the Holy Spirit continually. So, we understand the tabernacle lamp pointed to Christ but it was not Christ.

The **shewbread**, 12 loaves one for each tribe, was prepared every Sabbath by the priests and eaten at the end of the week. This was similar to the manna that fell in the wilderness feeding the people. The loaves were a symbolic acknowledgment that God was the resource for feeding Israel’s spiritual life and nourishment of their souls and also served as Israel’s act of thanksgiving to God for all He provides. The bread was displayed in 2 piles of 6 topped with pure frankincense (*see Leviticus 24:5-8*) on a table made of acacia wood and overlaid with

gold. The way it was displayed looked a lot like one would prepare a serving plate at a meal and in this case, it was prepared in the presence of God. This symbolism takes us to the Book of John where the people asked Jesus, <sup>30</sup> “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ <sup>34</sup> They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘**I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.**’ <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> **For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.’**” (John 6:30-40) I hope you see the connection of the Old pointing to the New.

The next piece mentioned is the **altar of incense**. Verse 3, “Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup> having the golden altar of incense...” The incense burned night and day and represented the prayers of the priests before God. Prayers can only be offered to God through a Mediator. The Old Testament priest served this purpose temporarily. Now, we have the eternal Mediator Jesus Christ. Just as Paul taught the early church, <sup>18</sup> “For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no

longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” (Ephesians 2:18-19)

As the Old Testament priests kept the incense burning night and day, so Jesus offers the prayers of the saint’s night and day to the Father. When we pray, we are not alone. In our weakness we pray and Christ makes our prayers suitable God the Father through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us,<sup>26</sup> “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”<sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27) Not only does the Holy Spirit intercede, but Christ, Himself intercedes on our behalf with God the Father,<sup>31</sup> “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?<sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.<sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? **Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.**<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?<sup>36</sup> As it is written, *‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’* (Psalm 44:22)<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> **For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,**<sup>39</sup> **nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 8:31-39)

The last item in the Holy of Holies is the **Ark of the Covenant**. It is called this because it contains the tablets of the covenant God made with Moses. It also contained Aaron's staff that budded to show he would be the first priest. In addition, it contained the manna, which we have already discussed. All these items in the Ark also pointed to Christ. Just as the dead rod of Aaron budded or came to life, we have a great High Priest who also came to life after He was dead. Jesus is the One who brought in the New Covenant. He is the true manna or bread from heaven.

### **Lesser Glory of Old Testament Ritual** (v. 6-10)

The writer now brings to the forefront how the ritual in the tabernacle pointed to the One Holy God whose presence had to be veiled from the people by a double curtain. Reading at verse 6, "These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties,<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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<sup>9</sup> (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,<sup>10</sup> but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation." The people were not allowed in the presence of God; the only exception was once a year the priest could enter into God's glory. This showed that because Messiah had not come, the rituals of the tabernacle sanctuary was all the people could hope for and that the priests were able to be mediators between them and God through their rituals and prayers. The high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies symbolized that there would come One that would remove the barriers of sin and bring people

back into the presence of God. So, the high priest's entrance at the Day of Atonement into the Holy of Holies was glorious and symbolic of the work the Messiah would someday make authentic. Christ had not made atonement for those who believe, as of yet, this is why verse 8 says, **“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.”** Because of God's holiness and our sinfulness, there was a barrier built so that the glory of God could be present on earth. Think of it, God created man to give Him glory. He made man in His image, the crowning of all His creation but because of sin, all this was marred. God could no longer walk with man as He once did in the garden. He had to separate Himself from us for our protection. God was on one side of the veil and His people on the other. At best all that could happen was a once-a-year encounter with God's glory - but the encounter was not with God Himself.

How could this problem be solved? God's plan was something the world and Satan could not imagine and certainly did not expect, even though God had been telling the prophets and priests it was coming for thousands of years.

### **The Greater Glory Of Worship In Spirit and Truth!** (v. 9-14)

Verses 11 and 12 we see God's plan for redemption that lasts through all history and beyond to eternity. **“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) <sup>12</sup> 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.”** Verses 13 and 14 shows by the blood of Christ believers are brought back to God and live to serve Him as His children. <sup>13</sup> **“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, <sup>14</sup> 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.” Jesus literally passed through the true Holy of Holies into the very presence of Almighty God to take His divine place as God the Son and by shedding His own blood the final sacrifice is made for the salvation of mankind.

Just as the priest would make a sacrifice for the people, Christ made the perfect and final sacrifice for His people. The Old Testament priest was not sacrificing the animals for other countries or others peoples but for the Israelites. In the Book of Exodus during the Passover, the father was commanded to sacrifice a lamb and to paint the blood on the doorpost of the home. That lamb’s blood was only meant for that particular household. It was not intended to cover the neighbor’s house. If the neighbor did not also do what was commanded the death angel entered and took the life of the firstborn. When a sacrifice was made it was applied directly to a certain person or group.

When Jesus made His sacrifice, it was sufficient to save everyone in the world. Listen closely - it was efficient to save those who are His. At the moment Jesus died on the cross we read in John chapter 19 verse 30, He yelled with every fiber of His being, “**It is finished!**” after which Jesus “**bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**” What did Jesus mean by this statement? When He said these words, He was declaring that salvation for His people was accomplished. Their sins were now paid in full. Jesus paid our sin debt for us. Also, at that moment some strange events took place around Jerusalem.

Matthew tells us the first, <sup>45</sup> “**Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.**” (Matthew 27:45) The sun went dark from noon



until 3 pm just as Amos spoke of over 700 years before Jesus' crucifixion, <sup>9</sup>“ ‘And on that day,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.’ ” (Amos 8:9) For three hours there was darkness. This was no eclipse. Passover is always held during a full moon. Therefore, it is scientifically impossible to have an eclipse during a full moon. There is no other possible explanation – this was an act of God.

Luke records another amazing event that took place, reading from Luke chapter 23 at verse 44, “It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, <sup>45</sup> while the sun’s light failed. And **the curtain of the temple was torn in two.**” When Jesus cried out, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” (Matthew 27:46 - quoting Psalm 22:1) He called out to the darkness, not just darkness of the day around Him, but into spiritual darkness; God had so turned His back on sin that everything went dark. The veil of the Holy of holies tore from top to bottom. This is amazing, the physical tearing, again beyond human ability, it would be worth your while to study the veil to better understand, and it was also amazing spiritually; the split-second divine payment was made for the sins of God’s people; He ripped the veil that for so many centuries had kept Him from His people. God must have always hated that veil. But now by the atoning sacrifice of God’s Son and the Savior, Jesus Christ, God’s people could have access to Him through the Son. Jesus would win souls to God. I can only imagine the shock and awe of the priests at the at the moment the curtain veil was ripped. Yet, for them it did not change how they saw and related to God – how very sad.

Matthew tells us of the next supernatural event, “**behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.**” (Matthew 27:51) God had told the people through His prophet Amos that

this would happen, “Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who dwells in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?” (Amos 8:8) An earthquake that would have an effect all the way to the Nile River – amazing!

Here we are told about the anger of God, another sign of the wrath that was poured out on Jesus for our sins. When the rocks were broken - the New Covenant was beginning and the hard rock of the human heart began to break. The New Covenant would change the believers of Christ from the inside out. As Ezekiel wrote 500 years before Christ, that God “will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,<sup>20</sup> that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 11:19-20) I believe this may have been that passage John the Baptist was thinking about when he addressed the Pharisees concerning their need for repentance saying, “do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.” (Matthew 3:9)

And, if these events so far were not amazing enough to get the attention of everyone in Jerusalem, it continues,<sup>52</sup> “The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,<sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.<sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’ ” (Matthew 27:52-54) In that instant Jesus, our Great High Priest, rendered the complete Mosaic System obsolete. In 3 days, Jesus would conquer the grave and death forever! What is also amazing is the priests did not understand for the prophet Isaiah foretold this, “Your dead shall live; their bodies

shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.” (Isaiah 26:19) Jesus’ sacrificial death conquered death for all true believers and to make clear this point of the resurrection, it appears from Matthew’s wording, God opened the graves of the saints – the graves and tombs were ripped open on Good Friday and the dead rose on Sunday showing the power of Jesus’ resurrection. Yet, the greatest miracle, the sin of mankind was finally atoned for. This means forgiveness for the elect of God and they receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ. To show this to all gathered that dark day God showed them one who could not save himself and by God’s grace and mercy he is saved in a miraculous way. God wanted everyone to know one cannot earn salvation. Reading from Luke chapter 23, <sup>35</sup> “the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!’ <sup>36</sup> The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup> and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’ <sup>38</sup> There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’ <sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ <sup>40</sup> But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? <sup>41</sup> And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ <sup>42</sup> And he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ <sup>43</sup> And *Jesus* said to him, ‘**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.**’ ” (Luke 23:35-43) How badly did God want sin removed? So badly that the second it happened forgiveness was the result. God had everything ready that day, as He does every day. I can see in my mind’s eye angels ready and watching for God’s signal. One was at the cross, another at the temple, one was ready to cover the sun and another ready to shake the earth, one ready to

break open the tombs of the saints and Jesus ready to pronounce eternal forgiveness for a repentant thief.

Jesus is the Great High Priest who gave His all for His people. He shows love and mercy toward all who come to Him. It should be our greatest desire to serve Him and bring Him glory. The death and resurrection of Jesus showed the wrath of God against sin and His mercy toward those He had chosen in Christ for salvation. This will be true at Jesus' return – He will show mercy to all believers bringing them home to heaven. This is followed by, <sup>12</sup> “When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, <sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. <sup>14</sup> The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. <sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, <sup>17</sup> **for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’ ”** (Revelation 6:12-17) When the Lord Jesus returns, He comes in judgement for the unsaved. I plead with you do not fall under the wrath of God.

Let me ask, “***Do you know this Priestly King as Lord and Savior?***” God has made provision to save sinners like you and me. If you do **not** know Christ, call out to Him like the thief on the Cross and come to Christ today and serve Him with all your heart because He is worthy.