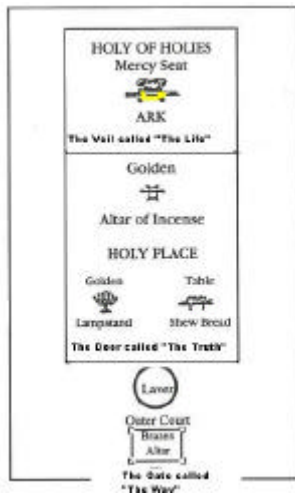


The Letter to the Hebrews

Lesson 5

Hebrews 9:1 – Hebrews 11:3

With the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, the old Mosaic system of Judaic faith disappeared. The Jewish leadership changed their worship practices into a rabbinical system without regard to the finished work of their Messiah who came to fulfill His promise to them. The rules of the Sanhedrin were as important, if not more important, than the word of God in this new system. Even before the fall of Jerusalem, the writer of this letter to the Hebrews compares the old covenant with the new covenant, clearly defending the need for the old system to disappear. Yet the Jews could not let go of their traditions in order to put their faith in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah.



Hebrews 9:1 Now even the first *covenant* had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.

2For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. **3**And behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, **4**having a golden altar of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna,

and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant. **5**And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.



Verses three and four do not agree with Exodus 30:1-10. In the Exodus passage, the Altar of Incense is placed in front of the second veil in the Holy Place near the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant so the priest could perpetually feed it incense. The Hebrew text, which puts it behind the second veil in the Holy of Holies, can not be correct. One possible answer assumes that this discrepancy occurred in the text sometime within the copying process in the first two centuries of Christianity. Another answer assumes that this Hebrew passage refers to the golden censer carried into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest rather than the Altar of Incense which was outside the second veil.

Hebrews 9:⁶ Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship,⁷ but into the second only the high priest *enters*, once a year, not without *taking* blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.⁸ The Holy Spirit *is* signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing,⁹ which *is* a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,¹⁰ since they *relate* only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

Once the craftsmen created the tabernacle, the curtains and all the furniture, the priesthood began its perpetual service into the Holy Place to perform the continual worship required by the Mosaic Law. When King David developed the plans for the Temple, he created a seven year cycle for the priestly service. Twenty-four family groups were identified from the line of Levi for this service. A priest from each family line would serve for one week and be replaced the following week by a priest from the next family line. After 24 weeks, the first family line would again send another priest, different from the first, and the rotations would begin again in the seven year cycle. It took seven years for the entire course of rotating priests to return to the starting date. We have always known these family groups, but we have not known the order in which they served. The Dead Sea Scroll discoveries provided us not only with the order but also the exact starting dates of the cycle. With this information, calculating certain dates, such as the destruction of the Temple under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC and the destruction of the Temple under Emperor Titus in 70 AD, can be accurately and dependably accomplished. The Dead Sea Scrolls provided the following order of service for the 24 Levitical families.

Twenty-four Levitical Priest Families

1. Jehoiarib	6. Mijamin	11. Eliashib	16. Immer	21. Jachin
2. Jedaiah	7. Hakkoz	12. Jakim	17. Hezir	22. Gamul
3. Harim	8. Abijah	13. Huppah	18. Aphses	23. Delaiah
4. Seorim	9. Jeshua	14. Jeshebeab	19. Pethahiah	24. Maaziah
5. Maichijah	10. Shecaniah	15. Bilgah	20. Jehezkeel	

The first priest of the family of Jehoiarib began the service in the first Tabernacle on Sunday, Nisan 1, 954 BC. Seven days later a priest from the family of Jedaiah began his service. Another seven days later a priest from the family of Harim began his service, and the rotation continued until the 24 families had served. Seven years later the first family, Jehoriab, would once again start the cycle anew on Sunday, Nisan 1, 947 BC. Over and over the cycle continued; the Holy Place was never without a priest serving in worship within its walls, continually feeding the Altar of Incense and performing the rituals of the traditions. This service continued without interruption from 954 BC until the destruction of the Temple on Sunday morning, August 5th, 586 BC just after a priest from the family of Gamul began his service. After the return from Babylon in 536 BC, the service returned in regular order as if it had never stopped according to the perpetual 24 course calendar determining the proper family to serve in worship. The cycle and rotation then continued until

Sunday morning, August 5th, 70 AD when a priest from the family of Gamul began his service in the Temple. That day, the armies of Titus destroyed the Temple 656 years after it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, on the same day, on the same course of priestly worship.

The routine of temple worship by the priest from 954 BC until 70 AD could not save a single person. It had evolved into a ritual, focused on the outward actions of dead works with no regard to the heart and soul.

Hebrews 9:¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; ¹²and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. ¹⁷For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. ¹⁸Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU." ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. ²²And according to the Law, *one may* almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The writer has made it perfectly clear that the new covenant came into effect with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But why did it come into effect at that time? The clue to this passage is found in the statement, "a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives." Today we use the phrase "Last Will and Testament," to describe the document that will determine what will be done with our possessions after we die. We even call our Old Testament the Old Covenant and the New Testament the New Covenant. In biblical terminology, "Testament" and "Covenant" are interchangeable. Today, when a person draws up and properly signs a "Last Will and Testament," that testament is virtually a worthless piece of paper which has absolutely no power until the person dies. At the moment of death, the testament legally holds all the power of the deceased person's will and guides the distributions of his life's collection to those he has designated. Likewise, the Old Testament was a covenant made with God's people that would not be fulfilled until His death on the cross. During the time of the Old Testament, the death of animals ritually satisfied the penalty of sin only for a time and then the process had to be repeated. But the death of the One who made the covenant with His people, paid the penalty for sin, once and for all time. Never

again would anyone die for the forgiveness of sin; God in the flesh died for all, one time, and one time only! Under the old law which is the Old Testament, no one could receive salvation and forgiveness of his sins without the shedding of blood. The shed blood of Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament and brought about eternal salvation and forgiveness for sin.

Hebrews 9:²³ Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The sprinkling of the blood of bulls was necessary to activate the cleansing and temporary forgiveness in the law and Old Testament. Eternal salvation needed a perfect sacrifice and Jesus was the only candidate worthy to shed His blood for the perfection of the saints.

Hebrews 9:²⁴ For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵ nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without *reference to* sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

When Jesus came to earth to finish the Old Covenant, He did not follow the rules of the law by offering a bull, ram, or even turtle doves. He did not offer Himself on the altar of the Temple where the temporary offering had been slain for the past 1473 years. He took Himself to an old rugged hill to die on a tree to satisfy His own prophecy. There, on April 7th, 30 AD, known in that day as Nisan 15th, 30 AD, 1475 years to the day after the Lord took the Israelites by the hand and led them out of Egypt, He died on the cross to put an end to the covenant He had made in the wilderness. He did not have to repeat His death over and over; He had one life to give, and His death was enough to satisfy all the needs of salvation for all mankind.

Hebrews 10:¹ For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near.

² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

³ But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The old system represented only a picture here on earth of what needed to transpire for total forgiveness of sin. Even in those days, the Lord looked at the heart of man and his desire for forgiveness. If the bull was just ritually offered for forgiveness but without the correct heart, forgiveness was not granted. The old system saved no one.

Hebrews 10:⁵Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING THOU HAST NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY THOU HAST PREPARED FOR ME; ⁶IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN THOU HAST TAKEN NO PLEASURE. ⁷"THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME ~~(IN THE ROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME)~~ TO DO THY WILL, O GOD.' " ⁸After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN THOU HAST NOT DESIRED, NOR HAST THOU TAKEN PLEASURE *in them*" ~~(which are offered according to the Law)~~, ⁹then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO THY WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The author uses a Psalm in referring to the words and attitude of the Lord when He came to earth. He repeats the Psalm twice with a few changes.

Psalm 40:⁶*Sacrifice and meal offering Thou hast not desired; My ears Thou hast opened; Burnt offering and sin offering Thou hast not required. ⁷Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me; ⁸I delight to do Thy will, O my God.*

The oldest and most reliable manuscripts do not include the two phrases in parenthesis in the Hebrews New Testament passage; however, they are found in the Old Testament Psalm. The Psalm attributes these words to the Lord. They are restated for emphasis. The old system did not satisfy the Lord. When the Lord came to earth in the flesh, He came to do away with the old system and establish the new. It was the will of the Lord that this change took place. At His death, the old ended and the new began making the Jews who believed in Him holy, once for all.

Hebrews 10:¹¹And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹²but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, ¹³waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶"THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND UPON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," *He then says,* ¹⁷"AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE." ¹⁸Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin.

Repeating again the words of Psalm 110 and Jeremiah 31, the writer concludes the theological portion of this letter stating one more time that the Lord died once for all the sins of mankind and then took His rightful place at the right hand of God. One day, during His 1,000 year reign on earth, which is the context of the Jeremiah passage, the Lord will write His law on the hearts and minds of all the inhabitants of the world. As for now, between the cross and the 1,000 year kingdom, forgiveness has been satisfied and the perpetual offerings are not needed.

Hebrews 10:¹⁹Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He inaugurated for

us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and since we *have* a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

With the theological section of this letter completed, the writer proceeds to offer advice about practical living in the New Covenant. The Jews entered into this new forgiven relationship with the Lord through the shedding of His blood and His death on the cross. They had accepted Him as their Savior and they needed practical advice in no longer living under the restrictions of the old ritualistic covenant. Here begins the practical advice. We are to:

- Draw near to the Lord with a sincere heart, full in the assurance of your belief in the Lord.
- Draw near to the Lord with a clean heart and body, washed with the pure living water of the Lord.
- Never doubt our profession of faith in the Lord because He always keeps His promises.
- Make sure the entire congregation perpetually love one another and care for the needs of each other.
- Make sure everyone in the congregation comes and participates in worship together, for the purpose of encouraging each other as we unite in worship.

Hebrews 10:²⁶For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

Practical advice

- To hear the Gospel message and reject it constitutes willful sin against the Holy Spirit; dying in this willful sin brings the judgment of fire since there is no possibility of salvation after death.

Once a person has rejected the final and only sacrifice for sin, no other sacrifice will satisfy the demands of God the Father for the forgiveness of sin. A person who has rejected the full knowledge of Christ can expect only the worst in eternity.

Hebrews 10:²⁸Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

In the Old Testament Law, a person could be put to death if he refused to follow the Mosaic Law upon the evidence of two or three witnesses against him. This law is found in Deuteronomy.

Deut. 17:6 *"On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.*

Every Jew in the church knew the Mosaic Laws by heart and understood what this writer was saying to them. If a Jew could die for failing to follow the Mosaic Law, how much more will he die eternally if he fails to follow and put his faith in the Son of God? Everyone must understand that there is a great difference between physical death and eternal death. A person might be wrongfully put to death on the witness of two or three and still have the mercy of God upon him, but rejection of the Savior results in eternal death at the hands of the living God.

Practical advice

- A person must make sure that he has not insulted the Holy Spirit by rejecting His call to accept the Son of God as Savior.

If by following the Son of God as Savior, the Jews of the Judaic system ascertained a rejection of the Mosaic Law, that person could be put to death based on the testimony of two or three witnesses. In the first century, Jews died at the hands of Jewish zealots for accepting the call of the Holy Spirit as they rejected the Old Covenant, and made the Son of God Lord of their lives. The Jews in the church had put aside the Mosaic covenant, and although they did not die for their faith, the Jews of the Levitical system persecuted them.

Hebrews 10:³²But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. ³⁷FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. ³⁸BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

The writer describes the mistreatment these Jewish believers endured after abandoning the Judaic system. Not only were they persecuted physically; they also lost their property and possessions for their faith in the Lord. And yet, through all their struggles, they continued to do all they could to help the needy. Their actions will be rewarded by doing the will of God.

Practical advice

- The Lord will reward those who live out their faith in doing the will of God no matter what circumstances come their way.

Using a passage from Isaiah as an introduction to his main quotation from Habakkuk, the author assures the Jewish believers that the Lord is coming to redeem them and they must live by their faith.

Isaiah 26:20 *Come, my people, enter into your rooms, And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while, Until indignation runs its course.*

Habakkuk 2:3 *"For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. ⁴ "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.*

Practical advice

- The Lord preserves the souls of those who live by their faith in Him.

Hebrews 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

A sobering warning is presented to the recipients of this letter. The souls of those who would shrink back from their faith are not preserved by the Lord. They have not entered into His salvation, and they are lost without hope. They must reconsider their faith in the Lord. Is He really Lord of their lives? Have they let go of this world and the old system and embraced the new covenant in their faith? What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the men of old gained approval. ³By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

In Hebrews 10:39 the author has just said to the Jewish believers, "we are not of those who shrink back," meaning they are of faith and not of the apostasy of the old covenant that has become obsolete. With great eloquence and great passion the author will remind the Jews of their ancestors who were heroes of the faith in an attempt to spur them on in their loyalty and devotion to the Lord. Their faith in the Lord has established a guaranteed transaction by Him. It is a title deed to their eternal future anchored to the Lord whom they cannot see at this time. They have secured the salvation of their souls. The Lord created everything out of nothing and He has guaranteed a place for us which He has prepared beyond the bounds of the physical, visible universe.