

# HEBREWS

(Primary textbook: Holy Scriptures. Primary translation: NIV.)

## VI. JESUS' SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF IS SUPERIOR TO THE SACRIFICES OF THE OLD COVENANT AND SETS US FREE FROM SIN (9:1-10:39)

- A. The Tabernacle and Its Tools (9:1-5)
- B. The Day of Atonement (9:6-10)
- C. Jesus' Sacrifice Cleanses Our Conscience (9:11-14)
- D. Jesus' Death Inaugurates the New Covenant (9:15-22)
- E. Jesus' Sacrifice Was Once for All (9:23-28)
- F. Old Covenant Sacrifices Could Not Take Away Sin (10:1-4)
- G. Christ Offered His Body to Make Us Holy (10:5-10)
- H. Our High Priest Now Reigns (10:11-14)
- I. Witness of the Holy Spirit through Jeremiah (10:15-18)
- J. Let Us Draw Near to God and Spur One Another On (10:19-25)
- K. The Judgment of God on Those Who Keep Sinning (10:26-31)
- L. Reminder of Earlier Suffering (10:32-34)
- M. The Need to Persevere (10:35-39)

(This lesson will cover Section A.)

The New Covenant, which is superior to the Old Covenant, stands at the center of Hebrews (chapter 8). Its two main features, according to Hebrews, are its superior High Priest (chapters 5-7) and its superior sacrifice (chapters 9-10). The sacrifice of the New Covenant is discussed in three stages. First, the Old Covenant system at the tabernacle is presented as a background picture to help explain what Jesus did in the New Covenant (9:1-10). Second, the effectiveness of the blood of Christ is described in detail (9:11-28). Finally, the sacrifice of Christ is exhibited as being made once, but effective for all time (10:1-18). The “therefore” of 10:19 introduces a section of exhortation based on this three staged discussion of Christ’s sacrifice.

The central Old Testament quotation for this section is found in 10:5-7 and is taken from Psalm 40:6-8. Most sections in the book of Hebrews place the major Old Testament quotation at the beginning of the section. Only the discussion of the covenant in chapter 8 and this discussion of the sacrifice in chapters 9-10 place the Old Testament quotation near the end.

Note how one commentator introduces the opening verses of chapter 9: “The Hebrews writer continued in chapter 9 to emphasize the greater ministry of Christ under the new order. In the preceding chapter, the superiority of His ministry and the better promises of the covenant under which He serves were discussed. Here the reader is exposed to a more thorough contrast between the sanctuary and priestly ritual order under the two covenants. Continuing to affirm the superiority of the real to the unreal, the author kept before his readers the background idea that the old sanctuary, ritual, and priesthood were only transitory figures of their true counterparts under the new. Their very physical and material nature testified to their temporary character.”

## A. The Tabernacle and Its Tools (9:1-5).

### 1. Now, which covenant? It had what? And also what? (v.1)

The place of religious worship under the Old Covenant was highly visible, with its various items of furniture, the different personnel, etc.

### 2. What was set up? (v.2)

The plans and construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings are recorded in Exodus (chapters 25-40). Hebrews here in these verses will only mention a few of the items of the tabernacle. Detailed descriptions of the rest can be found in Exodus. These other furnishings, utensils, equipment, etc., would have been needed so that the worship described in the Old Testament could occur. These items were all holy and whatever touched them became holy (Exodus 30:22-29).

### 3. In which room? Were what three? This was called what? (v.2)

Before our author describes the main ceremony of “the Day of Atonement” (*Yom Kippur*) and its unique entrance into the Most Holy Place, he reviews the layout and furniture of the tabernacle for his readers.

The tabernacle had two rooms. The first room was “called the Holy Place” and housed the lampstand, the table, and the consecrated bread. They are presented as three separate items, although the bread was placed on the table.

The Holy Place was where the priests ministered daily – offering incense and trimming the lampstand. Once a week, on Saturday, the loaves on the table were replaced with new ones, and the old unleavened loaves were then consumed by the priests.

### 4. Behind the second what? Was a what? Called what? (v.3)

The Holy Place in which the daily service was done was separated from the Most Holy Place (also called the Holy of Holies) by a heavy curtain made of fine cloth.

### 5. The Most Holy Place had what two items in it? (v.4)

It needs to be noted that the NIV says the golden altar of incense while the KJV says the golden censor. Also, the NASB has the same as the NIV but lists in the note section the alternate reading of the KJV.

Listen to what one Biblical scholar writes about this: “Some question has arisen among students of Hebrews concerning why the writer placed the golden censor inside the Holy of Holies, whereas in Exodus 30:6 the altar of incense is located in the Holy Place just before the veil separating the two. One possible explanation is that he was referring to the incense from off the altar, without which the high priest did not enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. It may be reference to the smoke pan containing the coals from the altar of incense that he used on that day. The pan was kept in a side chamber at the entrance to the Holy of Holies.”

6. The ark had a jar made of what? Containing what? (v.4)

7. Whose staff was in it? Which had done what? (v.4)

8. What kind of tablets? Tablets of the what? (v.4)

9. What were above the ark? Overshadowing what? (v.5)

Of course, the most important article in the inner sanctuary (Holy of Holies) was the ark of the covenant. It was a box made of acacia wood and overlaid inside and out with gold. It contained the jar of manna (see Exodus 16:33), Aaron's staff that budded (Numbers 17:1-10), and the two tablets of stone on which God had inscribed the Ten Commandments at Horeb (Exodus 34:1-4). On the ark lay a slab of gold called the mercy seat (atonement cover), on which the blood of the atoning sacrifice and the sin offering were sprinkled on the Day of Atonement. In one piece, and rising above it, were two golden cherubim with outspread wings and faces turned toward each other. Between them glowed the perpetual Shekinah glory, which symbolized the very presence of God. (See Exodus 25:18-22).

Note the words of one commentator: "The mercy seat, called the place of propitiation/expiation (see 2:17), represented the place where sins were recognized, atoned for, and forgiven. It was the place, in effect, where God allowed man to submit an acceptable offering and be reconciled to God."

10. The Hebrews writer says that we cannot do what? (v.5)

Many worthwhile things could be written about the typology of the tabernacle and its furnishings. The author of the Hebrews letter at this point was more concerned about the failure of the priestly services performed in and with them to provide any lasting satisfaction for the people.

As we study these various things, let us not neglect to observe that they are but types, shadows, predictive in nature. We are not told here what each of them specifically represents, if anything, in the Christian system. What is made plain is that all of it has been replaced by Jesus and the system He represents. He is the sacrifice, offered once for all, for sins. The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, once divided by a curtain, have been united, the veil having been torn in two pieces at Jesus' death (Matthew 27:51), signifying that the two are one. They both are equal to the true tent (8:2) which is in Heaven, made by God. Some over the years have said that each item represents something in Christianity, but our text does not so speak. We may find some similarities in the different items, but our text does not so affirm. We need to practice teaching what is plainly taught, but also recognize what is unclear, or a matter of inference.

***"Making Disciples for the Master"***