

# Hebrews 9

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[ 0 : 00 ] Jesus says doesn't he that God hides his wisdom from the wise and clever. That he reveals it to babies and children.! And that is the reason I think why it is only adults have problems with the Old Testament.

Children don't seem to have any problems with the Old Testament. In fact, I don't know what your experience is with teaching children, the more perplexing and the more morally challenging it becomes, the more the children love it.

And when it comes to the book of Leviticus in particular, I can't tell you the amount of people who have just skipped it when reading the Bible. I don't think those daily Bible reading plans often help, is it? So you end up doing one reading from Leviticus, one from Proverbs, one from the Gospels, one from the Epistles.

And I don't think Leviticus is meant to be read in kind of one chapter chunks. I think in the end it can be discouraging. And so it's often people skip it. Or when they get to the book of Leviticus, which is in the daily reading plans, it's probably about mid-February, isn't it?

But they give up reading the Bible altogether. And that was a pity. Because the book of Leviticus, if you actually read it, is not intellectually challenging. But it is spiritually challenging. It's actually one of the most important books for us as Christians, because it teaches you and I how we should understand the cross of Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 32 ] So let me recap. When we get to the book of Exodus, halfway through the book of Exodus, God announces to Moses, he wants to live with his people. He's rescued them from slavery with his mighty power, an outstretched arm. He's brought them to Sinai, he's given them the law.

But before they go into the land, God says, I am the Lord of all the earth, the creator of the ends of time. And I want to come and dwell with my people. That's the second half of Exodus.

And there's this detailed plan that's given twice that we've seen. To build a tent for God. To build a tabernacle. And the book finishes, as we saw this morning, with the glory of God coming down from heaven and dwelling in the tabernacle. It's wonderful.

But there's a problem, isn't there? The problem is this. God is holy and the people of Israel are not. In fact, we note in the Bible that God burdens with such purity, with such purity of love and holiness, that no human being can see God and live.

Which is a major problem, isn't it? If God wants to come and live with you. But in his kindness and in his mercy, God makes a way possible. He gives his people a system of life.

[ 2 : 48 ] To teach them about the holiness and the seriousness of sin. A system that deals with human sin in such a way that they might enjoy the presence of God. Because the problem is not really God's holiness.

The problem is our unholiness. And it's not possible to break free from that, is it? Or to hide it. Or to cleanse ourselves. Only God can provide a way for us to draw near to him in love.

And the way that he gave his people in the Old Testament is the way of sacrifice. He gives his people a sacrificial system. Not because of the inherent value of human sacrifices.

But to teach people that sin always demands a death. And the only way to be cleansed from sin is by the shedding of blood. So if you lived in the Old Testament, if you were part of the Old Testament people of God, each week you and your family would go to the tent.

At the center of the camp, you weren't allowed inside it. But at the door of the tabernacle was an altar. It was set out. And you could purchase a clean animal. And you could take it to the priest.

[ 3 : 53 ] And the priest would lay his hands on the live animal. And confess your sins on the animal in such a way that your sins would be transferred to the animal. And then the animal would be killed. And you would be sprinkled with its blood.

The animal would be burned. It was a dramatic lesson. The penalty for sin was death. And before your sins could be forgiven, a death had to be performed.

The priest could go into the tabernacle. But there was one place they couldn't go. And that was the Holy of Holies. It was the room we talked about this morning.

In which the very presence of God dwelt. There was only one person in all the tribe of Israel who could go in. And that was the high priest. And he could only go in one day a year.

And that was the day of atonement. And he would have to make sacrifices for his own sins. And for the sins of the priests. And then he would take some of the blood from the sacrifice of bulls.

[ 4 : 55 ] And he would go into the Holy of Holies. And he would present that blood. And then he would come out of the Holy of Holies. And he would take a live goat. And he would put his hands on the goat.

And he would confess the sins of Israel on that goat. And then the goat would be sent way out into the wilderness. And they would have to return. Bearing the sins of the people.

From which we get the word sleep goat. Day after day. Week after week. Month after month. Year after year. God's people brought sacrifices for their sins.

And after they entered the land. And the sanctuary was replaced with the temple. Sacrifices were offered to God. And Israel's whole understanding of reality.

Was built on these symbols. The incalculable gulf. Between the holiness of God. And my own sinfulness.

[ 5 : 52 ] The dramatic need for sacrifice to bridge that gulf. And the death. The death powerfully formed their understanding. And that is why the promise of the new covenant is so precious.

Because God says. There's going to come a time when I'm going to forgive your sins. And remember them no more. And take them completely away.

I'm going to deal with that gulf. Between God who is holy. And you who are sinful. Once and forever it will be dealt with. And you will have joyful.

Uninterrupted. Access into my presence forever. Which brings us to the letter of the Hebrews. It's written for a group of Jews. Who have converted to Christianity. But they're under pressure. They are sliding back into Judaism. And the writer says. That is because you've not grasped. What has happened to you. In the death of Jesus Christ. And chapters 9 and 10.

[ 6 : 51 ] Are an explanation of the cross. Because in his death. Jesus has become our high priest. He has become the mediator. Of a new covenant. And the author wants us to see.

There are three realities. That come to those of us. Who are in Christ tonight. That have come to us through his death. Number one. If you are in Christ.

You have permanent access. To the presence. To the heavenly presence. Of God. Look down at chapter 9.

And verse 11 and 12. When Christ. Appeared. As 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. He entered once and for all. Into the holy place. Not by means of the blood.

[ 7 : 54 ] Of goats and calves. But by means of his own blood. Thus securing. Eternal redemption. You can hear the writer's astonishment.

All the symbols. Of the old covenant. Which showed the privilege. Of access to God. Have come to an end. Now that Christ.

Has appeared. Verse 11. And has died. The shadow. And the symbol. Have given way. To the perfect. And eternal reality.

And Jesus has died. Not to win us. Access to a human structure. Not to the holy of holies. But into heaven. Into the presence of God.

And the blood. That has opened the way for us. It's not the blood of an animal. But it is the blood. Of the perfect son of God. Jesus has gone. Through the heavens.

[ 8 : 52 ] Into the presence of God. Where he is today. Where he is tonight. Verse 24. For Christ has not. Entered. Not into the holy. Places made with hands.

Which are copies of the true things. But into heaven itself. Now which will appear. In the presence of God. On our behalf. Under the old covenant. We saw it.

This one. We. The high priest. Went into the holy of holies. And came out very smartly. Very quickly. But Jesus has entered. Into the actual presence of God. And he stays there.

On our behalf. And that is why. When Jesus died on the cross. God. Tore the curtain. From top to bottom. To demonstrate.

That there is no longer. Any barrier. Between him. And his people. So long. As Jesus has gone to heaven. Our sins. Can no longer be counted. Against us.

[ 9 : 46 ] There is no more sacrifice. That is needed. And if you cast your eyes. Down to chapter 10. And verses 11 to 13. The writer makes a great deal. That Jesus is now. Seated in heaven.

He's sitting down there. In the old covenant. The priests. Would never have dared. Sit down. In the holy of holies. Day after day. Year after year.

They keep offering sacrifices. But when God raised Jesus. From the dead. He exalted him. And seated him. At his own right hand. Because of his death.

Jesus has. Achieved. What all the generations. Of the Levitical priesthood. Could not. His sacrifice. Has purified us. For all time. And has made those.

Sacrifices. Obsolete. Void. Nothing can now be added. His death. Is a single sacrifice. Offered for all time.

[ 10 : 43 ] And now he sits. In God's presence. And God has received. His work as successful. And so if you are his people. Our sins. Are forgiven.

And paid for. And that is why. The author to this letter. Urges us. To draw near. To the throne. Of grace. With boldness. Because we have.

Somebody who has gone before us. Who has gone through the heavens. Into the presence of God. Jesus the son of God. And that means this. That when we are tempted. To think.

That our sin. Is very deep. And when we are tempted. To think that. I am not welcome. In God's presence. And what I have done.

Is beyond forgiving. This book says to us. Look at Jesus Christ. Seated. In God's presence. He has died. Our death.

[ 11 : 39 ] He has purified us. For all time. The one seated. Guarantees. Our welcome. The one seated. Guarantees.

Our welcome. And we find. Grace. Our mercy. To help in time of need. Jesus died. To give us permanent access. To the presence of God. In heaven. Secondly. Jesus died.

To purify our conscience. Jesus died. To purify our conscience. Look down. Verses 13 and 14. Of chapter 9. You see there.

That. The system of sacrifice. Under the old covenant. Was not just an education. They did restore. Formal. Communion. With God. But they could never deal. With the internal. Impurity. And. Unholiness. And guilt. So do you remember.

[ 12 : 37 ] Psalm 51. We read it. As our call to worship. Oh God. You have no delight. Oh Lord. If I were to. If I were to. Give a burnt offer. You would not be pleased.

What is the sacrifice. That's acceptable to God. Oh God. The sacrifice. That's acceptable to you. It's a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart. Oh God.

You will not despise. The death of Jesus. Is a different kind of death. Than the animal. Symbolic death. It operates.

In a moral. And spiritual plane. It brings inward. And spiritual. Purification. And it makes real. Communion. Fellowship. Friendship.

With God. Possible. And that is why. You can always tell. If Jesus' death. Has become real. In someone's life. Because it changes them. At the level of their heart.

[ 13 : 30 ] And at the level of their appetites. And at the level of their motivation. It doesn't make church going. And reading God's words. Suddenly easily.

And suddenly easy. And always brilliant. But it means the reason we do so. Is we have an inward desire. To do so. Jesus' death.

Not only brings us access. To the heavenly presence of God. It not only purifies us. But thirdly. His death. Is a single sacrifice. An eternal. An unrepeatable sacrifice.

Forever. It's a single sacrifice. Here's the third one. We come to the core of the passage. We find it again and again. In the book of Hebrews. And particularly in these two chapters.

We are told that Jesus Christ. Has died once and for all. Or once for all time. And that is why. Through his death.

[ 14 : 26 ] We have an eternal redemption. We have an eternal salvation. It's an eternal covenant. In his death. Jesus accomplished our salvation.

And forgiveness. And it needs never to be repeated. It is permanent. And it is eternally valued. And such is its power. That even those who sinned under the old covenant.

They are forgiven through it. It works forward. As well as backwards. That's the point of verse 15. And it's not that Jesus has gone to the Father's presence.

And is offering himself. Over and over again to God. Rather what the writer is saying. That in that one event. On a particular Friday afternoon. Outside the walls of Jerusalem. Under the reign of Pontius Pilate.

Jesus fully and finally secured our redemption. By what he did on the cross. And what he did on the cross. He did in relation to God.

[15:24] And now he has entered into the holy place. And for all who trust in him. The consequences are eternal. Look down at verse 25 of chapter 29.

Of chapter 9. Not 29. 25 of chapter 9. Nor was it. To offer himself. Repeatedly. As the high priest. Enters the holy place. Every year. With blood not his own. 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 himself. And just as it is appointed. For man to die once. And after that comes judgment. So Christ. Having been offered. Once. To bear the sins of man.

He will appear a second time. Not to deal with sin. But to save those. Who are eagerly waiting for him. Jesus appeared once. And the purpose of his appearing. Was to conclusively.

[16:19] And finally. Take away sin. By the sacrifice himself. By dying in our place. Jesus has removed our sin.

And the atoning work is final. And it is finished. Let me finish. By pointing to three implications. For us. The first implication. Has to do with purgatory.

We live. In an incredibly Catholic borough. It amazes me.

If you go to the Polish Catholic Church. I think now there are eight Catholic masses. On a Sunday morning. That are all packed. You can go to a Catholic charismatic service. On a Tuesday night.

In the Polish Catholic Church. Where they sing Hillsong. And it's remarkable. Not that I've been. But I've used. You can go to Ealing Abbey. It is bundled. On a Saturday night.

[17:13] On a Sunday. You can go to St. Joseph's Hanwell. It is absolutely packed. On a Saturday night. On a Sunday morning. Now you may be aware. Of purgatory. Purgatory is an official teaching.

Of the Roman Catholic Church. And it was invented. Around the 8th century. And purgatory teaches us. That after death. God kind of offers us. A second chance. And we get the opportunity.

Of a period of moral improvement. Where we can purify ourselves. Before we get to heaven. But I want to say to you. That the idea of purgatory. Or a second chance.

Not only flies in the face. Of the plain teaching. Of verse 27. If you see it there. I want to say. Even more importantly. Purgatory degrades. The death of Jesus. From being.

Our internal redemption. Into something. That actually. Is not quite good enough. That Jesus death. Is actually not quite good enough. To get us into heaven. There's something more.

[18:09] That is needed. Just in case you think. I'm being a grumpy Presbyterian. Listen to the Church of England. Article 22. The Romish doctrine. Concerning permitting.

Paths. Worshipping and aberration. As well as images. As of relics. And also invocation of saints. Don't worry about that. Is a fond thing. Vainly invented. And grounded upon.

No warranty of scripture. But rather repugnant. To the word of God. What Cranmer is simply saying. And what I want to say. To you tonight. Is that there is a cruelty.

In the doctrine of purgatory. Is very very cruel. And it is a vain hope. Why is it a vain hope? Because it takes our faith. Away from the cross of Jesus.

Doesn't it? The one true sacrifice. For sin. That's the first implication. Second implication. Is pluralism. All of us have friends.

[19:08] Don't we? You children who are in school. You have friends. That belong to other religions. And it is vital. For us as Christians. To affirm. Much that is good. In other religions. I think as the man.

Discovered yesterday. Went to the mosque. There are. There are many people. In many other religions. That are asking. Very perceptive questions. We need to build bridges. We need to be good listeners. But when it is our turn.

