



“Jesus: Name Above All Names.”

(Slide 1)

It is a common question as to how the OT fits into the NT. The first century Christian Church needed this to be resolved and reinforced. This passage today is a helpful conversation about this.

While heavy theologically, remember Hebrews is offering us hope. Jesus is *superior*. Jesus is *best*. Be encouraged. Persevere in your faith. Trust in the redeeming work of Jesus. The writer takes the reader on a journey; through the wilderness, following Jesus the pioneer, then into the Sanctuary, following Jesus the High Priest and finally to a celebration on the heavenly Mt Zion.

The journey we are taken on today in this passage from Hebrews, shows that the Old Covenant sacrificial system was temporary and imperfect. However, it was the way at that time.

God used that system to point to our need for Him to step in and resolve what was clearly impossible for us to resolve. The Old Covenant opened the way for the New Covenant; the superior, final sacrifice of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who by His blood, restored our status before God as forgiven and righteous.

Jesus explained the manual as Emmanuel for evermore!

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Hebrews 9 can be divided into two main sections:

1) The Earthly Tabernacle and its Limitations (v1-10)

Firstly verses 1-5. The Earthly Tabernacle as a Picture of Christ.

The Tabernacle was the centre of Jewish worship under the Old Covenant. The writer describes the layout of the Tabernacle and its components, emphasising its essential symbolic nature. Is it like the same understanding for us, with regard to the Lord’s Supper, that Jesus has left for us?

Knowing the Tabernacle, the furniture in the Tabernacle and where each piece of furniture was placed was understood by every Jew, so the writer is using very familiar language in this passage. The writer focuses on the Tabernacle and not the Temple because they are making a point that the Tabernacle was temporary.

As we saw in chapter 8:5, the design of the Tabernacle and its worship was not left to human ideas, but God revealed everything to Moses on the mountain.

Let me read you the verse: “They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

The writer is making the point that the Tabernacle was an Old Testament portrait of Jesus Christ.

The temporary Tabernacle, in this way, is compared with the true Tabernacle in heaven, where Jesus entered into the very presence of God.

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Can I just go into a little bit of the detail about the description of the Tabernacle offered here in Hebrews 9?

The lampstand represents Christ, the light of the world. As the world was not allowed into the Holy place, Jesus is the One who illuminates the things of God through the Holy Spirit (the oil of the lamp) to those who draw near.

The table of sacred bread represents Jesus as the sustenance of His people and their communion with Him.

The altar of incense shows Christ interceding for His people in God's presence.

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Secondly, verses 6-10 The priests in the Tabernacle as a Picture of the Work of Christ

The Holy of Holies, veiled from view, represented the presence of God. The High Priest, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, entered this inner sanctum to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. The Jewish people understood that they could only approach God through the proper mediator, the high priest. The high priest brought the blood of a sacrifice, animals that he had killed, as gifts to God. The cost of atonement was the life of these animals.

Leviticus 17:11 says "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

So, the 'blood' stands for life.

None of the people, and not even all the priests, could enter the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest, and only once a year. This was not a relational time with God. It was transactional. He had a job to do. He had to follow the ritual described to Moses perfectly. There was proper process and procedure for holiness.

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Verse 9 says "This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper."

How interesting! A clear conscience. It is not about what we do. It is about who we are before God.

Hosea 6:6 says "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."

Day after day, month after month, year after year, these ceremonies were carried out. If this system could have worked, then the repetition would not have been needed. They

would not have offered the same gifts and sacrifices over and over. Understanding this, we see why the entire system serves as an illustration. **The sacrifices made, never cleared the conscience of the worshipper.** What was offered was never able to renew the inner person because it only dealt with external rules and regulations for the body.

This is why a new order was needed, one that dealt with the *heart*. There needed to be a “once and for all” sacrifice made. Later in the chapter the writer emphasises the once-for-all nature of Christ’s sacrifice by contrasting it with the repetitive nature of the Old Covenant sacrifices.

What was the purpose of the law within the Old Covenant? The apostle Paul says, “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). In His one act, once for all, we are justified by faith.

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2) Christ’s Superior Sacrifice (v 11-28)

The writer then moves forward in time to the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice. The writer explains how Jesus, as the Great High Priest, entered the heavenly Tabernacle.

The radical difference between the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and that of animals under the Old Covenant is expressed in the words of Jesus.

John 10:17-18 says “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

It was freely His own choice; no one imposed it upon Him. Jesus was unblemished, perfect and of His own volition, made the decision to die in the place of those who need forgiveness. Jesus offered Himself on the altar to restore our relationship with God. Jesus fully understood the will of God with all of its implications as no human being could possibly know. Christ offered Himself as the eternal Son of God. This single act of sacrifice transcended the limitations of the Old Covenant rituals. The shedding of Christ’s blood provides eternal redemption, cleansing the conscience of believers from dead works to serve the living God.

We can only produce dead works until the Holy Spirit creates a new spirit within us. By the grace of God, we are made alive, together with Christ. Our purpose is to live transformed lives that serve the living God. When we do this, **we are glorifying Him.**

There couldn’t be a stronger contradiction than “dead works” and the “living God”. They are completely incompatible. Dead works lead to judgement. Judgement refers not to condemnation but rather separation. Separation from the living God who gives abundant life.

And He promises He will come again. God’s kingdom will come, and His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven; Heaven and Earth will at last be united. This is the promise of Hebrews as the writer builds firmly on ancient Jewish roots and brings them into fresh focus through Jesus and his death and resurrection.

This is our hope and so we draw near to God with confidence, knowing of His love and goodness through the completed work of Christ. What a wonderful assurance.

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That is my first application: live with confidence before God and let go of any burdens of guilt. We do not need to earn our salvation. Rest in the finished work of Christ. Approach God boldly in prayer, knowing He is your Abba, Father. Trust that you are freed from guilt forever. Your conscience is clear.

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My second application is the reminder that just like the Jewish Christians, it is all too easy to fall back into legalistic tendencies and practices and impose these on others. Don't limit God to our experience of Him. Our relationship with God is based on grace and forgiveness. Rest in the finished work of Christ and show the same grace and forgiveness to others. In humility, "consider others greater than yourselves." Do not confuse discernment and judgement. Refuse to devalue anyone based on convictions or preferences.

Michael Birrell shared this with our Bible study recently: "Love is not some small minded ideal that we bypass on the way to weightier theological principles. Love is PhD-level Christianity. In our pursuit of Jesus, we will spend the rest of our lives learning to love more passionately, intimately, intentionally, and transformationally. There is no higher call." Hence at KAC this is our Vision set by Jesus' Mission for us. Practice His teaching seeking together to be a witness in His name, "As we are prayerful, connecting, and being transformed by Jesus". Is not this a worthwhile repetition as part of building God's house wherever He takes us?

This takes me back to the passage from Hebrews 5:13-14 "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Solid food is really about how we love. It's not about what we know. Don't be tempted to make conformity, theological or otherwise, the pre-requisite for community. I believe a loving community can naturally and organically transform people's perspectives. But I've never seen it work where conformity was expected first.

When conformity is required, it forces people to hide the truth about who they are. And community is an impossible expectation when people are pretending to be something they're not. Be careful not to expect anything from others above beyond your own commitment to love and serve following Christ's example.

Living like this requires us to pursue holiness through transformation by the Holy Spirit. Our lives must reflect the word of God being visible in the character of Christ. This is the rich journey Hebrews 9 calls us toward: Today in the present, we are to live lives for Christ. He is *superior*. He is *best*. Show this to the world. Proclaim His name. Salvation is now, and then completed when He returns, taking all believers to be with Him forever. Praise Him and Hallelujah.

