

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: Hebrews

Week of November 2 (Week 8)

Hebrews 9



CHAPTER 9 SUMMARY

Hebrews 9 provides a comprehensive contrast between the old covenant sanctuary (the tabernacle) and the new, demonstrating that the earthly tabernacle's rites and sacrifices were only a transient, symbolic depiction of heavenly reality. In contrast to the previous covenant's repeated animal offerings, Chapter 9 emphasizes that Jesus, as the higher high priest, gave his own blood once and for all to accomplish permanent redemption. Christ's sacrifice tore the veil, representing that all believers now have access to God, bringing forgiveness and a clear conscience.

SERMON DISCUSSION

Topic:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

OBSERVING AND APPLYING THE TEXT

Old Covenant Ministry (9:1-10)

"Although the old covenant is a vanishing shadow, our writer does not dismiss it hastily, casually or unappreciatively. He recognizes something of its former glory, even when he is explaining its partial worth. At the beginning of this chapter, therefore, the writer turns to a description of the tabernacle or earthly sanctuary (cf. Ex. 25; 26), concluding his brief account of its furnishings with the tantalizing comment that he cannot stay to discuss these items in any detail. Would he have liked to give some enriching typological interpretation of these historical details?" (Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, 227).

1. What does the writer of Hebrews say about the old or first covenant in Heb. 9:1-10? Notice the two aspects mentioned in verse 1.

2. What, according to the writer of Hebrews (in 9:1-10), are the limited characteristics of the old covenant?

Reflection: "Our writer's passionate desire is to expound the gospel against the background of law, the new covenant in the light of the old, all its incompleteness contrasted with the present secure blessings. He goes on to mention three limitations of the old covenant. A better covenant was necessary because the old could offer only restricted access, partial cleansings and limited pardon" (Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, 228).

New Covenant Ministry (9:11-28)

The writer of Hebrews now turns from the frustration caused by the limited effectiveness of the ceremonial laws to "the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)" (9:11).

3. According to 9:11-14, what are the spiritual effects of the new covenant and its better sacrifice offered by Christ himself?
4. How does a better understanding of the ritual system of the old covenant heighten our gratitude for the work of Christ in establishing the new covenant?

Reflection: "According to the author of Hebrews, the human conscience may be cleansed from the moral defilement that disqualifies the individual from worshipful access to God (cf. Heb. 10:22). Sacrifices that were merely animal and physical were ineffectual in this regard, but he maintains that Christ's sacrifice offered through the eternal Spirit, in the realm of the divine, can equip his addressees and himself for worship of 'the living God'" (Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews*, 122).

5. How does the writer of Hebrews present the superiority of Christ—the "better things" of the gospel, and the benefits of the new covenant in 9:15-22?

6. How can the understanding of Christ's sacrifice as a final and comprehensive act of atonement influence our perspective on forgiveness and reconciliation?

Reflection: "In 9:15–22, he [the writer of Hebrews] takes advantage of the fact that the Greek word for "covenant" can also mean "last will and testament" and explains that just as a will does not come into force until a death occurs, so also is a death necessary for a covenant to come into force . . . he [also] notes that 'not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood' (9:18) . . . What Hebrews declares is that the new covenant is now in force, that it has been ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ" (Frances T. Gench, *Hebrews and James*, 54).

7. How does the writer of Hebrews summarize the superiority of the new covenant in verses 23-28?

8. How does Heb. 9:27-28 contrast the death of human beings and the death of Christ?

9. How does the certainty of Christ's return impact your perspective on life's challenges?

Reflection: "Did you notice that the word 'appear' is used three times in Hebrews 9:24–28? These three uses give us a summary of our Lord's work. He *has appeared* to put away sin by dying on the cross (v. 26). He *is appearing* now in heaven for us (v. 24). One day, He *shall appear* to take Christians home (v. 28). These "three tenses of salvation" are all based on His finished work" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Confident*, 107).

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

October 27-31, 2025

Read Hebrews 9

Monday: 9:11 “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^[a] then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation).” For believers, through Christ as our high priest, “the good things” have already arrived, so we can be thankful to God for this.

Tuesday 9:15 “Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.” Thank you, Lord, for being the “mediator” and calling me to receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Wednesday: 9:22 “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Lord, I thank you for shedding your blood for the forgiveness of my sins.

Thursday: 9:26b “But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Lord, I thank you for dealing with the penalty of my sins by your sacrifice once and for all.

Friday: 9:27-28 “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” Lord, I thank you that I will not face the judgment for my sins when I die because you paid the price for my sin on my account and were judged in my place. I thank you, Lord, that you are returning to take me into your presence.