



# HEBREWS

Jesus is **GREATER THAN...SO STAND FIRM**

**JESUS IS GREATER THAN...**

**THE TABERNACLE—CHAPTER 9**

## **FACILITATOR'S NOTE**

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Last week we emphasized that Jesus is our great High Priest who is at God's right hand ministering and mediating the New (and better) Covenant established on better promises. This covenant is written on our hearts rather than tablets of stone and is eternal. The author now continues his thought on this by comparing the differences between the two covenants. In particular, he focuses in chapter 9 on each covenant's respective sanctuary and services administered in those sanctuaries. He starts by looking at the earthly sanctuary and the limitations of the services administered there (vv. 1-10) and then the heavenly sanctuary with a particular emphasis on the better and eternal sacrifice of Jesus (vv. 11-28). This chapter is full of good news and hope.

**IMPORTANT:** As always, we encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by committing the class and the teaching to God in prayer. After this, we encourage you to dig into not only the specific chapter in Hebrews for this week (Chapter 9), but also the book of Hebrews as a whole and the Scriptures at large. As you move through your readings, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is **ONLY AFTER DOING THESE THINGS** that you should approach this lesson plan and perhaps use it as a guide. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

## **PRAYER**

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Begin your time with a prayer thanking God for His better plan to save us from ourselves in order to bring us back into His presence.

## FOCUS

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- Understand what the earthly tabernacle and sacrifices were for, yet were not able to fully restore the people to God.
- The heavenly tabernacle and High Priest (with His sacrifice) is superior to any earthly alternative.
- Recognize that **JESUS IS GREATER THAN** the Tabernacle and sacrifice of a high priest.

## LESSON

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### Discussion Starters (OPTIONAL)

- The Christian Hebrews were faced with neglect, unbelief, and spiritual immaturity. They were dangerously close to losing their faith in Jesus and returning to their old ways (the Old Covenant). After all, it had become so comfortable to them and this “new way” was so difficult and brought about persecution from both the Romans and their own Hebrew communities. Today we are faced with similar circumstances. How? Well, we find ourselves receiving a message of grace that requires obedience to the One who gives us that grace. That obedience is hard and requires us to give up our “old way” of life. We often find ourselves wanting to just give up and return to what is comfortable. But Jesus never promised happiness or ease. Instead, He promised suffering, but the suffering would be temporary and nothing compared to what He went through to save us.
- Knowing Jesus and what He has done for us brings us hope and pushes us to carry on and never give up. We must continue in the race and not allow Satan to side-track us with illusions of comfort and ease.
- Have you ever felt like giving up and checking out in your faith? Describe the feelings during that time. What kept you in the race?

### FROM GOD’S WORD

- 9:1-5
  - Key Points
    - The first five verses of chapter 9 describe the earthly Tabernacle and its sections:
      - What are the two sections of the Tabernacle?
        - Holy Place (9:2) – Golden Lampstand (providing light), Table of the Bread of Presence (12 loaves representing the 12 tribes), Altar of Incense (burned incense as an offering to the Lord morning and evening)
          - The author of Hebrews states “having the golden altar of incense in regards to the Most Holy Place. However, the golden altar was actually in the Holy Place (Exodus 30:1-10) just outside the curtain to the Holy of Holies. By saying “having”, the author

is more than likely referring to the altar as being closely linked to the Most Holy Place as the fragrant offering of incense offered to the Lord would drift into the Holy of Holies and fill the room.

- Most Holy Place or “Holy of Holies” (9:3-5) – Ark of the Covenant (containing the two tablets, urn of manna, and Aaron’s staff—the urn and staff are described in the OT as being outside the ark [Ex. 16:32-34; Num. 17:10-11], however, the author may have been privy to information of his time that we do not have. These two items may have ultimately found their way in the ark over the years.) and the Mercy Seat (could be the ark’s cover or something on top)
  - Both the ark and the mercy seat represent the presence of God amongst His people.
- 9:6-8
  - Key Points
    - Verses 6-8 focus on the services/worship administered in both the Holy Place and Most Holy Place.
      - Holy Place (9:6) – Only Levitical priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place and this was done regularly (daily). The duties the priests would perform included changing the lamp oil, replacing the bread of presence, and burning the incense (Ex. 25:30; 30:7-8; Lev. 24:4).
      - Most Holy Place (9:7-8) – Only once a year (on the Day of Atonement) the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies (behind the curtain) after the incense cloud had shielded him from the mercy seat (keeping him from seeing the glory of God or he would die [Lev. 16:12-13]). He would sprinkle the blood of a bull or goat on the mercy seat as a sin offering for both his sins (for he was not perfect; See 5:3) and for the sins of the people.
        - In verse 9, the author shares that this system restricts access to God only to the Levitical priests. This was symbolic of the spiritual separation between God and humans due to sin. While the veil remained, only priests (and specifically the High Priest) could enter God’s presence on behalf of the people. This system kept the people from being able to directly draw near to God since the way to Him was not yet opened.

- For Discussion
  - Do you think that the church can put up a “veil” to people outside the church that keeps them from entering God’s presence? How/Why?
    - We can often make people feel that they have to be “good enough” to enter our place of worship. Therefore, only a select few are worthy to enter behind the “veil” into God’s presence.
    - Jesus tore the veil in two from top to bottom so that all could draw near to God and have access to Him. What could the church do to tear the “veil” in two from top to bottom to help people know they too have access to God?
  
- 9:9-10
  - Key Points
    - These two verses describe why the earthly tabernacle and sacrificial/worship system was limited.
      - It was meant to be symbolic of a more perfect Tabernacle and worship that would be brought about by Jesus.
        - Two ages are contrasted here. For simplicity, the **present age/time** represents the time when all humankind (believer and non-believer) were separated from God’s presence due to sin under the old law. The **time of reformation** or **new order** is what Jesus inaugurated through His sacrifice and will find completion/fulfillment when He returns again. It is His kingdom, which He established while here on earth but will not be fully known until He returns (the “already-but not yet”).
      - No matter how many sacrifices were made, they could not make one’s conscience perfect.
        - God’s concern is the heart, not outward appearance. The old law would tend to see people work hard to perform the rituals and fulfill the obligations outwardly, but would be left void of devotion in the heart. The sacrificial system could not bring sanctification (being made holy) of the soul nor bring about God’s peace in the inner life. However, the new covenant base on a once-for-all sacrifice could (8:10-12; 9:14; 10:14, 22; 11:40; 12:23).
        - Ritual cleansings, food, etc. could not reach the conscience/heart of the believer (See Mark 7:1-23).

- For Discussion
  - Can we be devoted to outward appearances of holiness while inwardly we are wasting away? How?
  - How do we know if our “acts of righteousness” are a matter of the heart or merely out of obligation?
  
- 9:11-28
  - Key Points
    - Begin this section by reading all the verses together. Encourage your class participants to underline, jot down notes, etc. while reading. Then move through it’s meaning by asking a series of questions below:
      - What is Jesus a High Priest of?
        - Vv. 11, 24. A new and perfect tent/tabernacle in the presence of God in heaven.
      - What did Jesus offer in way of sacrifice?
        - Vv. 12, 14. Himself, not an animal. He gave His own blood as a perfect and unblemished sacrifice.
      - Why is the shedding of blood necessary for forgiveness?
        - Vv. 15-22.
        - Death was the price/judgment of sin. That price must be paid to give life. The Hebrew writer discusses it in terms of a “will” or covenant. In order for a will to go into effect, the death of its maker must take place. Therefore, the shedding of blood had to take place to initiate the new covenant (as it did the old covenant). Jesus’ death inaugurated the new covenant.
        - The deaths/sacrifices under the old covenant merely represented a substitutionary death of the sinner for the sin. However, no amount of sacrifices could permanently stay the judgment pronounced on the accused. However, the death of one who was perfect for those who were not, could! God took His own punishment/judgment **for us** (CRAZY!!!).
      - What does Jesus’ sacrifice accomplish?
        - Vv. 12, 14-15, 26, 28.
          - Eternal Salvation/Redemption (even for those under the old covenant).
          - Cleansing of the conscience/heart from dead works in order to serve a living God.
          - Puts sin away forever! PRAISE GOD!!!

- What has been appointed for men according to verse 27?  
Why is this important?
  - Humans have but one life and then judgment.
  - Jesus also dies once and then (at the second coming) brings life everlasting. This is hope!
- What is the purpose of Jesus' second visit?
  - V. 28. For those who are His and eagerly await Him, Jesus has already paid the price and will therefore bring with Him salvation forever.

## REFLECTION

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- Why is it important to deepen our understanding of Jesus' sacrifice?
- Two things we know for sure: 1) Death is coming and 2) so is judgment. Based on what we have discussed today, how would you encourage someone to face judgment/eternity with peace and hope? How would you share this message in the simplest of terms?
- Knowing the Christ is coming back, how should we spend our time "eagerly awaiting Him"?

## PRAYER

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**LESSON OUTLINE** – Here are the lessons we will be studying the weeks to come.

- INTRODUCTION (January 5)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 12)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 19)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...But Still Human–Chapter 2 (January 26)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Moses–Chapter 3 (February 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 4 (February 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 5 (February 16)
- THEREFORE, Don't Fall Away–Chapter 6 (February 23)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Melchizedek–Chapter 7 (March 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Law–Chapter 8 (March 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Tabernacle–Chapter 9 (March 16)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Sacrifices–Chapter 10 (March 23)
- THEREFORE, Have Faith–Chapter 11 (March 30)
- THEREFORE, Stand Firm–Chapter 12 (April 6)
- THEREFORE, Offer Acceptable Sacrifices–Chapter 13 (April 13)
- CONCLUSION (April 27)