

Hebrews 9:1–28

From Shadows to Substance: The Blood of Christ and the Open Way to God

Introduction: When God Promises “New,” the Old Must Give Way

Hebrews chapter nine continues the argument introduced in Hebrews chapter eight: God promised a new covenant, and that promise implies that the former covenant—good as it was—was never meant to be the final arrangement.

Under the first covenant, God’s law was written on stone, and forgiveness was administered through priests and repeated sacrifices. Under the new covenant, God writes His will within His people, and forgiveness is secured through the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself declared the turning point on the night of the Passover:

“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”
(Matthew 26:28)

The new covenant stands on a blood foundation—Christ’s blood. Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

I. The First Covenant: Real Worship, Earthly Sanctuary

Hebrews 9:1–5

“Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.”
(Hebrews 9:1)

The first covenant was not empty religion. God Himself gave Israel ordinances of worship and a sanctuary—first the tabernacle, later the temple. But Hebrews calls it “earthly,” because it was never the ultimate destination.

The Holy Place (the first section)

“For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary.” (Hebrews 9:2)

This outer room contained:

- The **lampstand**, giving light in a place with no windows.
- The **table of showbread**, with twelve loaves representing the tribes.
- The **altar of incense**, symbolizing prayer rising to God.

The Most Holy Place (the second section)

“And behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All... the ark of the covenant... in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.” (Hebrews 9:3–4)

Above the mercy seat were the cherubim:

“And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.” (Hebrews 9:5)

All of it preached one message: God is holy, sin is serious, and access to His presence is not casual.

II. The Limits of the Old System: Restricted Access and Repeated Blood

Hebrews 9:6–10

The priests served daily in the first section:

“Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.” (Hebrews 9:6)

But the second section—the Holy of Holies—was restricted:

“But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance.” (Hebrews 9:7)

This annual day of sacrifice testified to a painful truth: the job was never finished. The conscience remained troubled. The worshiper remained at a distance.

And the Holy Spirit was teaching through the layout itself:

“The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.” (Hebrews 9:8)

As long as that veil remained, it was God’s visual declaration: humanity cannot approach Him on its own terms.

The tabernacle was:

“Symbolic for the present time... concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” (Hebrews 9:9–10)

The old system was not pointless—it was preparatory. It was designed to point beyond itself to Christ.

III. Christ’s Superior Work: The Greater Tabernacle and Eternal Redemption

Hebrews 9:11–12

Now everything changes:

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” (Hebrews 9:11)

Jesus did not enter the earthly copy. He entered the true sanctuary—heaven itself.

And He did not enter with the blood of animals:

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12)

Here is the heart of the gospel: one sacrifice, one time, for eternal redemption.
Not temporary covering—eternal rescue. Not annual repetition—final accomplishment.

And the resurrection declares that His offering was accepted and His priesthood is everlasting.

IV. The Blood That Cleanses the Conscience

Hebrews 9:13–14

Animal blood could produce outward ceremonial cleansing:

“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer... sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh.” (Hebrews 9:13)

But it could not heal the deepest problem: guilt before God.

The blood of Christ does what religion cannot:

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14)

This is more than forgiveness on paper. It is freedom in the inner life. A clean conscience. A restored relationship. A new purpose: to serve the living God.

Practical Application

Many people still live with a “dead works” mindset—trying to balance the scales, trying to earn peace, trying to outwork guilt. But the gospel offers a better way: Christ cleanses the conscience so we can serve God from love, not fear.

V. The Mediator of the New Covenant and the Eternal Inheritance

Hebrews 9:15

“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” (Hebrews 9:15)

Jesus is not only the sacrifice; He is the Mediator—the living One who brings God and man together in peace.

The result is not merely escape from judgment, but entrance into inheritance—life with God, forever.

VI. A Covenant Activated by Death

Hebrews 9:16–17

Hebrews uses the example of a will:

“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead.” (Hebrews 9:16–17)

The new covenant came into effect through the death of Jesus Christ. His blood did not simply demonstrate love—it secured a covenant reality.

VII. The Unchanging Principle: Without Blood There Is No Remission

Hebrews 9:18–22

The first covenant was inaugurated with blood:

“This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.” (Hebrews 9:20)

And then the writer states a foundational truth:

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:22)

This is not a mere ritual detail. It is a moral reality: sin brings death, and forgiveness requires a righteous basis. God is not overlooking evil; He is dealing with it.

That is why the cross matters. Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross.

VIII. Christ Appears in Heaven for Us

Hebrews 9:23–24

The earthly sanctuary was a pattern; the heavenly reality required a better sacrifice.

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands... but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” (Hebrews 9:24)

Right now, Jesus is present before the Father on behalf of His people. Christianity is not just about what Jesus did then—it is also about what He is doing now: representing, interceding, sustaining.

IX. Once for All, Then Judgment, Then His Return

Hebrews 9:25–28

The high priest entered yearly with blood not his own. Christ is different:

“He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Hebrews 9:26)

Then comes one of the most direct statements in Scripture about life’s urgency:

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27)

And the gospel answer:

“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” (Hebrews 9:28)

The first coming dealt with sin through the cross. The second coming brings the completion of salvation (spirit and new body) for those who belong to Him.

And the resurrection guarantees it. The risen Christ is not a religious memory—He is the living Lord who will return.

Practical Application

1. Stop living under guilt Christ already carried

If your conscience still condemns you after you have trusted Christ, you are treating the cross like it was insufficient. The blood of Christ cleanses the conscience so you can serve God freely.

2. Do not confuse religious activity with spiritual life

“Dead works” can look impressive and still be dead. God is calling you into living fellowship—service that flows from a cleansed heart.

3. Live ready

You will die once. Then comes judgment. That is not meant to terrify believers, but to sober us and keep us anchored in what matters most.

A Challenge for Believers

Are you living like someone still stuck outside the veil—always striving, always uncertain, always trying to prove yourself?

The veil has been opened through Christ. Walk in the confidence of a cleansed conscience. Serve the living God with gratitude. And live like the risen Lord is coming again—because He is.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

God has not left you to guess how forgiveness works. He has made it clear: without shedding of blood there is no remission—and Jesus has shed His blood for sinners.

He died on the cross for your sins. He rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He will appear again.

Today, you can come to God through Him—not through your works, not through religious effort, but through trust.

If you will turn to Jesus Christ, He will cleanse your conscience, forgive your sins, and give you eternal life.

“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.” (Hebrews 9:28)

Come to Him now.