

Last week we studied what necessitated a new covenant between the Lord God and people. We knew already we should worship Yahweh, the Lord God alone. But last week we saw additional illustration of the 2nd commandment—*how* we worship also matters. We also wrestled with whether the new covenant is “Plan B” or God’s plan from the very beginning. Unfortunately, we live in a culture where “old” as in “old testament/covenant” has negative connotations, and “new” as in “new covenant/testament” has connotations suggesting the “old” was inferior.

A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:

WHY SHOULD POST-CHRIST BELIEVERS BE CONCERNED ABOUT PRE-CHRIST BELIEVERS' TEMPLE ARRANGEMENTS AND TRADITIONS?

Understanding “covenant” is critical to the mature believer. More than a mere contract where the involved parties stipulate conditions to “get out of” the agreement, a covenant specifies **who** will fulfill the expectations. When a covenant fails, the one with the superior resources “steps up to the plate” and ensures the expectations of the covenant are indeed met.

Thus, when people are married, the state defines the relationship as a contract where if one party violates the expectations of this relationship, then that relationship can be dissolved or even annulled. When people are married, the Lord God, however, defines the relationship as a covenant. When one party violates the expectations of this relationship, He provides a way to keep that covenant in force. Unfortunately, most people, even believers, don’t want a covenant with the Lord God when it comes to marriage; they want a contract.

Understanding the nature of the “new” covenant which the Lord God had to create warrants special attention by believers—its applications are robust and theologically pragmatic. God is glorified. And, we get Him to dwell within our *raison d'être*. Wow! God is smart.

In chapters 9 & 10 the Hebrews writer uses the familiarity of the temple and its body politic to introduce some new understandings and to reinforce further previous teaching about the role of the new High Priest, the new Covenant, and how the Christ makes manifest all of what was foretold to our forebears in the lives we now live in a special new temple, a dwelling place pitched by the Lord God Himself. We now tabernacle with the Lord God.

CONTEXT—REMEMBER...

1. *The God we serve is just—He keeps His promises.* Hebrews 6:9-20.
2. *The superiority of Melchizedek—even Abraham showed him fealty.* Hebrews 7:1-10.
3. *The Levitical priesthood had serious limitations, but not the Christ.* Hebrews 7:11-19.
4. *The change was warranted by oath from Father God Himself.* Hebrews 7:20-22.

"BECAUSE OF THIS OATH, JESUS THE CHRIST HAS
BECOME THE GUARANTEE OF A BETTER COVENANT."

5. *The permanent priesthood of Christ assures our sins are forgiven.* Hebrews 7:23-28.
6. *Our High Priest oversees a superior relationship with Father God.* Hebrews 8:1-6.

Here's the bottom-line... We do have such a High Priest; i.e., One who is holy, blameless, pure, and exalted in heaven! Our High Priest has sat down, and done so and on the right hand of Majesty Himself. He serves in a sanctuary (σκηνης, skay-nays, a tent, tabernacle, dwelling place, mansion), a true tabernacle, made/pitched not by men,²⁸ but by the Lord God Himself.

Every high priest has been appointed to provide gifts and sacrifices. But what has the Christ, the new High Priest, given and what sacrifice has He offered?

Well, if He were still on earth, he would have nothing. There are already high priests on earth to provide the gifts prescribed by the Law. And, they serve in a temple which is a mere shadow, a lousy copy of the tabernacle in heaven. Remember, Moses warned us — "See that you build it according to the pattern shown you by the Lord God Himself!"

BUT... the ministry to which Jesus the Christ has been called is *superior*. He is a mediator to a new and superior covenant. This covenant is found on *better* promises.

7. *Our God saves by becoming part of us — He alone has the resources to ensure we can be sufficiently sinless to be a partner within His new temple.* Hebrews 8:7-13.

If the previous covenant were not problematic, there would have been no logical reason for another covenant. BUT... the Lord God found fault in us, the believers for whom He created the covenant. Here's how He told us a long time ago (Jeremiah 31:31-34), about what was to happen when **we** failed to faithful...

Listen up! I will make a new covenant with all the children of Abraham²⁹ — including, Israel and Judah. This new covenant is different than the one which let believers out of Egypt yet did not

²⁸It was this assertion by Stephen which got the Sanhedrin riled up, so much that they were able to kill him legally. Stephen had insulted the "temple" by saying it was not the Temple God had in mind. Only for temple desecration did Rome allow capital punishment. Here are the words which incensed his accusers and got him stoned—

"The Most High does not live in houses made by men... and you stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered Him—you who have received the Law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

²⁹Remember the "descendants of Abraham" are no longer those who can (Judah, Levi, Benjamin) or might be able to (diaspora) trace their ancestors to Abraham. Then, as today, "descendants of Abraham" are determined more accurately; to wit, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to [the] Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." —Galatians 3:28-29

stop us from becoming unfaithful. In that case, I turned away from them,³⁰ wanting to destroy them and start over (see Exodus 32:10).

This covenant? It is different for My character (as reflected in My laws) will become part of who they are—in their minds, and make My will part of their raison d'être.³¹ I will be their God and they will be My people.

No longer will people be dependent upon others to teach them about Me, for I will be in them; all will know Me, from the least to the greatest. I do not abide within the wicked. So, most importantly, I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.

So, when the Lord God called this covenant “new,” He made the old one obsolete and what is obsolete and aging? It will soon disappear.

³⁰The Hebrews writer is using the LXX (Septuagint) version of Jeremiah 31.

³¹Sounds similar to a fulfillment of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4ff), does it not?

Hebrews 9:1-10. While our orthopraxy was instructive, it had its limits. We were given pedagogically valuable commandments by the Lord God for worship and the pattern for an earthly temple. Recall...

The Holy Place was the first room which contained a lampstand, and the consecrated bread.

The Most Holy Place was the second room containing the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. Within the ark was a gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff, and stone tablets of the Covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of Glory, overseeing the atonement cover. Now there's more detail here to consider, but that's beyond our purpose here.

With everything set up like

this, priests entered the outer rooms regularly to carry out their duties. But only the high priest entered the inner room—the Holy of Holies—once a year on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). He never entered without blood, blood which was offered to cover his sins and the sins people had committed because they knew no better.



Holy Spirit showed us in this manner that the way into the Holy of Holies had been kept a mystery as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. By doing so, He taught us to realize and recognize our conscience was not cleaned by such gifts and sacrifices. They were only a matter of food, drink, and ceremonial washings. All were external directives to be used until a new order could come to be.

Q We can not understand mountains without valleys nor “me” without “other.” What is there about the old temple that allows us to understand the new temple?

Q What is the value, and the problem, with iconic representations of worship means and objectives? How do we identify when veneration becomes idolatry?

HEBREWS 9:1-10

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ² A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. ³ Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, ⁴ which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. ⁵ Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

⁶ When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. ⁷ But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. ⁸ Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

Hebrews 9:11-14. *The blood of Jesus the Christ justifies the new relationship between people and the Lord God. As the High Priest, Christ went through the more perfect tabernacle, a spiritual tabernacle not part of the material world.*

He did not enter the temple by means of goat or calf blood, but He entered the Holy Place by means of His own blood. In doing so, He alone secured³² (εὐραμενός) eternal redemption.

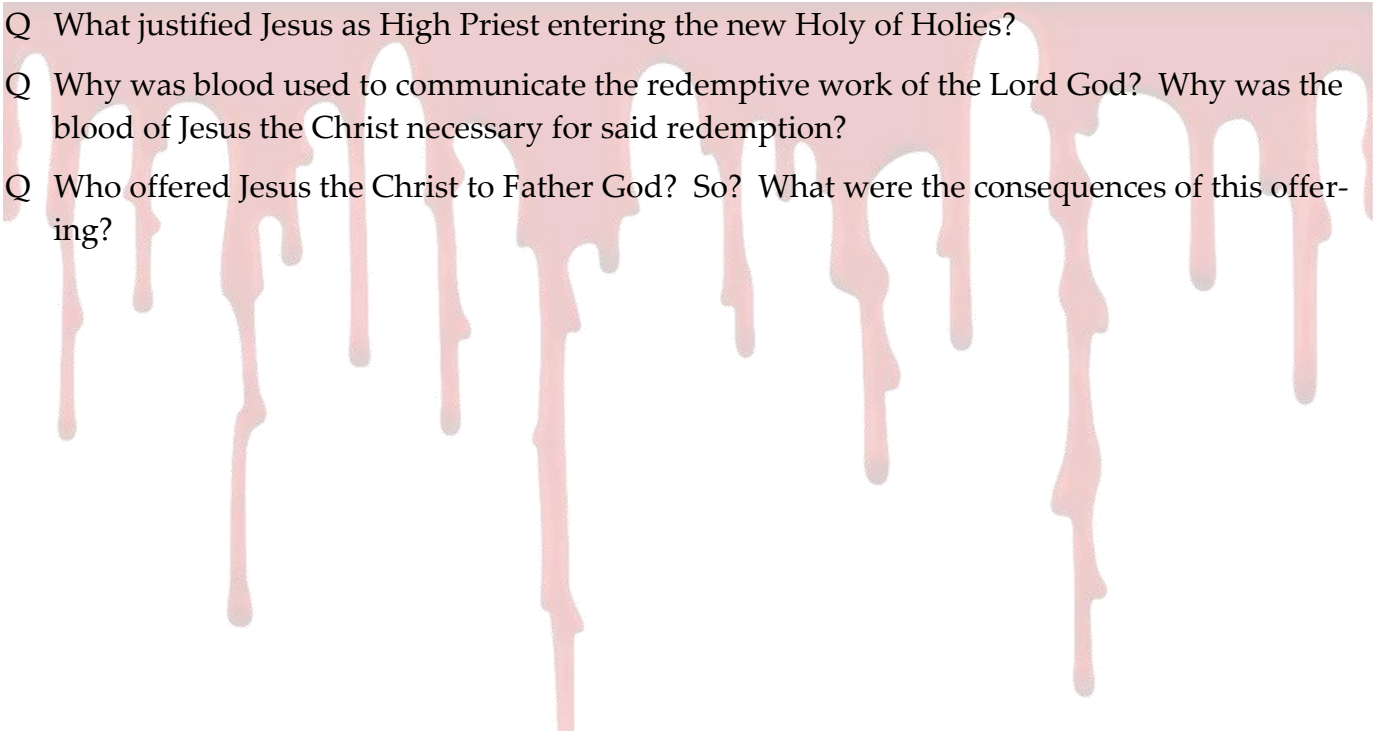
Remember, goat blood, bull blood and heifer ashes sprinkled on ceremonially unclean people only makes them *outwardly* clean. Consider, then, how much more the blood of the Christ Himself will cleanse our *inward conscience* from those acts that lead to death. Holy Spirit offered the Christ, unblemished to Father God. And, this was all done so we could serve the living Lord God Almighty! It was not about us; see Romans 3:25. The Christ was sacrificed to demonstrate that the Lord God Almighty is righteous, just.

HEBREWS 9:11-14

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, [some early mss. read *are to come*] he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, [or *from useless rituals*] so that we may serve the living God!

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- Q What justified Jesus as High Priest entering the new Holy of Holies?
 - Q Why was blood used to communicate the redemptive work of the Lord God? Why was the blood of Jesus the Christ necessary for said redemption?
 - Q Who offered Jesus the Christ to Father God? So? What were the consequences of this offering?

³²εὐραμενός, heur-mea-nos, middle voice aorist, as in “he alone secured” or “he and no other secured,” 2147.

Hebrews 9:15-28. *The death of Jesus the Christ validates the new relationship between people and the Lord God.* In order for a will to be executed for any designated heirs, the death of the owner of the will must be established. A will has no legal standing unless death can be proven. Accordingly, the first covenant never took effect because the One who made it lives, then and now.



When Moses proclaimed the Law to believers, he used the blood of calves, mixed it with water, and using wool and hyssop branches to sprinkle the scrolls on which the Law was written, and the people to whom the Law

was directed. Moses even said, “This is the blood of the covenant...” In a similar fashion, he sprinkled both the tabernacle and everything used in their religious practice with blood. Remember, the Law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

These copies of heavenly things were purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things require a superior sacrifice. Christ, God Himself, is that superior sacrifice. Christ did not enter a copy of the true tabernacle—He entered heaven itself on our behalf.

And, He did not enter heaven repeatedly, in the manner a high priest on earth must do. If not, then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the world’s creation. But now? He has appeared so He can do away with sin by sacrificing Himself. Just as mortal humans are destined to die once and then face the judgment, so Christ also was sacrificed just once. His sacrifice, however, took away the sins of many people. And, He will appear a second time—not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

HEBREWS 9:15-28

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.¹⁶ In the case of a will, [same as the Greek word for “covenant;” i.e., διαθηκη, dia-they-kay; will, covenant, 1242] it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it,¹⁷ because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.¹⁸ This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.¹⁹ When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.²⁰ He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.”[Exodus 24:8]²¹ In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.²² In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

²³It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.²⁴ For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.²⁶ Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

- Q Why does the Law require “that nearly everything be cleansed with blood?”
- Q Why is there “no forgiveness” without the “shedding of blood,” without death of the sacrifice?
- Q How do you know you are indeed “waiting for Him?”

Hebrews 10:1-18. *Awake from death's imitation and see death's reality*. God's character as found in the Law was and is a mere shadow of He who is to come. Thus, the endless sacrifices, year after year, century after century, never made people sufficiently perfect to draw near to worship the Lord God. Believers were never cleansed, for it is theologically nuts to contend bull and goat blood could take away sin.

So, when Christ came to earth, a body was prepared—His. “Here I am, I have come to do Your will O Father God.”

The Lord God was not pleased with what we did with our burnt offerings and sin offerings. His will was that we be made holy through a sacrifice of Himself—the literal body of Jesus the Christ, one time, for all time, for all people.

Previously, the priest would *stand* and perform his duties, standing again and again and again and again. The same sacrifices, again and again and again, sacrifices which can never take away sins.

But, when the new High Priest offered for all time one sacrifice for sin, He *sat down*, at the right hand of Father God Himself. He is now there, waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool. All because? By *one* sacrifice, “He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”³³

- Q Why weren't sacrifices by faithful people year after year conducted by the pattern required by the Law sufficient to meet God's purpose for believers?

HEBREWS 10:1-18

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ²If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.’ [Psalm 40:6-8, Septuagint]

⁸First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). ⁹Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus [the] Christ once for all.

¹¹Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

³³Here is another instance of the Scriptures speaking of salvation as “*process*.” Salvation as *process* suggests it is complex, and dynamic, and systemic and caffective, in contrast to a *static act* by the Lord God. Consider also Luke's declaration in Acts 2:47—“... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were *being saved*.”

- Q In those instances (e.g., Isaiah 1:11-17)³⁴ where the Lord God was “over” sacrifices, what part of our efforts was He displeased — what did He find unacceptable? So?
- Q Why was the *body* of Christ necessary to fulfill Father God’s will?
- Q When will Christ’s enemies be His footstool? [Hint: When’s He’s through waiting?]
- Q What are the implications regarding soteriological security as being extended to “those who are being made holy?”

Holy Spirit Himself has provided evidence to us about this. He said in Jeremiah 31:33 & 34...

In the days of individual accountability for sin³⁵ I will create a covenant where I will put My character within a believer’s raison d’être, and I will write my commands on their mind. I will ignore their sins and their lawless acts — they have been forgiven by what I’ve done.

Sin has been forgiven — there is no longer need for any sacrifice for sin. I the Lord God have made all things whole. I make people holy, not sacrifices. Therefore... ???

- Q What important insight about the Lord God Jehovah does the writer of Hebrews provide in verse 15? [Compare and contrast to Hebrews 8:8]
- Q For what purpose, then, are we to sacrifice? [Clearly no longer for remission of sins; vs. 18]
- Q What is evidence of Christ’s sacrificial work within us?

HEBREWS 10:15-18

Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

¹⁶"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." [Jeremiah 31:33]

¹⁷Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." [Jeremiah 31:34]

¹⁸And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

³⁴"The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹²When you come to appear before Me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of My courts? ¹³Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to Me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. ¹⁴Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

¹⁵When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; ¹⁶wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, ¹⁷learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed, rebuke the oppressor. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

³⁵See Jeremiah 31:29-31—"In those days people will no longer say, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' ³⁰Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes—his own teeth will be set on edge.

³¹"The time is coming," declares Yahweh, the Lord God Almighty, "when **I** will make a new covenant ..."