

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 9, Verses 1-12**  
**Notes From Class on January 12, 2010**  
**Last Revised on (January 18, 2010)**

Good evening everyone!

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Welcome to our continuing study of the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

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Before we begin please make sure that you have everything you need.

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Tonight you will need a Bible and a song book.

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If you are using an English translation of the Bible other than the English Standard Version ("ESV") then you may wish to have the handout we have prepared, which has the ESV text of Hebrews.

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There is also a handout with a diagram of the tabernacle, which you might like to have.

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Please get what you need and, then, let's get started.

**Review**

So far in this class we have finished reading the first **eight** Chapters of Hebrews

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Before we continue reading, let's begin, as usual, with a brief **review**.

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We recall that Hebrews is perhaps best thought of as the text of a **sermon**,

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Which the Church has long understood to be **inspired by God**

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It was written around the end of the **First Century**, A.D.,

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not very long after (within about one generation of) the time of Christ

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and at about the same time (70 A.D.) of the **destruction of the temple** in Jerusalem.

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We do not know much about the **preacher** or his **audience**.

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They were **Christian**.

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And they evidently **knew each other**.

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The preacher evidently perceived that some of his listeners were in danger of "**falling away**."

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He is, among other things, encouraging them to "**hold fast**" to their confession of faith.

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This is a sermon that **all** of us who call ourselves Christians need to hear!

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**So far** (through Chapter 8) the preacher has...

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 reminded us in wonderful ways of the **unqualified supremacy of Christ** (1:1 - 3:6)

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 warned us **not to imitate the history of Israel** (3:7 - 4:13) which is itself a history of falling away

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 introduced the idea of **Jesus as our great high priest**. (4:14 - 5:10)

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**warned against apostasy** and **reassured us of God's faithfulness**. (5:11 - 6:20)

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 He has explained how Christ **supersedes** and **replaces** both the **priesthood** and the **law**. (7:1 - 8:7)

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 and establishes a New **Covenant** which supersedes and replaces the **Old** Covenant. (8:8-8:13)

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 This business of establishing the **New Covenant** was the subject of our last Bible study, before the long holiday break, which seems a very long time ago.

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 Let's reread that, shall we?

### **Chapter 8, Verses 8 - 13**

Would someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 8, Verses 8 - 13, in Japanese (Shin Kaiyaku)

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 Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

**8** For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

**9** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

**10** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**11** And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

**12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."**

**13 In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

Thank you.

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Although this passage begins and ends with the words of the author of Hebrews, it is mostly a quote from the Old Testament scriptures,

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specifically Jeremiah, **Chapter 31, Verses 31-34**.

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This is the only passage in the Old Testament that expressly mentions a "**new covenant**."

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which is one of the things that recommends it to the author of Hebrews.

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Hebrews is the only book of the **New** Testament to cite this passage.

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This passage is an **important** part of the argument our preacher is developing.

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You may recall that Jeremiah was a prophet at the time of the Babylonian **exile**.

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Basically he told the people that they had constantly failed to keep up their end of the bargain, under the Old Covenant, but that God had always had a better idea anyway:

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a New Covenant in which God would transform the people and reconcile himself with them.

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Several hundred years later, Christ **established** this new covenant. (c.f. Mark 14:24)

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Consequently the old covenant **has** vanished away.

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Now we are **free** to follow Christ

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and to become **like** him. (cf Romans 8:3 f)

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Then and now, however, most of God's people have had some trouble letting go of the Old Covenant.

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and had a dangerous tendency of falling back into elements of the Old Covenant.

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This sermon, the New Testament book of Hebrews, speaks to all of us

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Are there any **questions** or **comments**?

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OK. Let's read on.

## Chapter 9, Verses 1-5

Would someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 9, Verses 1-5, in Japanese (Shin Kaiyaku)

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Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

**1 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.**

**2 For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.**

**3 Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place,**

**4 having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.**

**5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.**

Thank you.

(Verse 1)

**Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.**

"Now" continues the thought from verse 13 of Chapter 8.

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Where he has just spoken of the **first** covenant having become **obsolete**.

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What he is generally doing here, is making sure we understand how **inadequate** the first covenant was compared to the new covenant.

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He begins by discussing the regulations for **worship** under the old covenant....

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The word translated "**even**" --- "Now **even** the first covenant had regulations and etc. ---is not present in all of the manuscripts and its sense is a little hard to understand here.

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Clearly the author does **not** mean to say that the new covenant has an earthly place of holiness.

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nor does he mean to say that there are **more** regulations for worship under the new covenant than the old.

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So some translations drop out the word "even" and this passage reads "Now the first covenant had regulations..." thus avoiding the comparison.

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But it occurs to me that proper worship always **is** regulated, even under the New Covenant, which is the perfect and eternal covenant.

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We are taught to worship **together**, and not to give up meeting together.

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We are taught to worship in spirit and in truth, which is a sort of **inward** regulation.

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We are taught to worship in an **orderly** manner, and in accordance with God's **word**.

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Our worship is to reflect our **unity** in Christ and his **headship**, his lordship. Etc.

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So there definitely **is** a certain way in which God's people are to supposed worship.

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This was **always** true "**even**" under the Old Covenant which has now passed away.

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And the author of Hebrews wants to go back and have a look at the old regulations,

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which were, we should not forget ordained by **God**.

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And **nothing** is ordained by God without a **reason**.

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These old regulations, ordained by God, included having a special holy **place**, on earth, where man could approach God, and a certain way of approaching him...

## (Verse 2)

**For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.**

The special holy place was not a fixed location, at least not a first.

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It was rather **movable** --- a tent.

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God was never tied to any particular **location**.

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It was a tent prepared and kept by God's chosen **people** and it moved with them and they moved with it.

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The tent was the symbol of God's presence **among** them.

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This tent was divided into two **sections**.

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Please have a look at the handout.

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The first section --- i.e. the one entered first --- was called the **Holy Place**.

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That is the place where the lampstand and showbread were kept.

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Only **priests** could go there. (To tend the lamps and replace the bread as e.g.)

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**Ordinary** people had to stay **outside** in the courtyard,

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which was itself established by a large outer fence.

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God's people needed to remain in the outer courtyard

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And appoint priests to enter the Holy Place on their behalf.

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What is said here has the early tabernacle in mind, but it is all generalizable for the temples that would later be built in Jerusalem.

### (Verse 3)

#### **Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place,**

The second section of the tabernacle was separated from the first by a curtain.

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This second section was called the Most Holy Place.

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Not even **priests** could go there, with the exception of the high priest once per year, as discussed below

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At other times of the year, not even the high priest could look inside, because of the second curtain.

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It is called the second curtain, because there was a first curtain that blocked the view of the people into the Holy Place.

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This whole arrangement seems to have been conceived to manifest a gradation of holiness,

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from the secular world outside the fence, into the courtyard, into the holy place, into the holy of holies.

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At each step things become more rare and special and valuable and set apart

### (Verse 4)

**having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.**

Inside this Most Holy Place, we are told, were kept the alter of incense and the ark of the covenant, all covered with gold

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Inside the ark, we are told, were the tablets of the covenant and (at some point) a golden urn holding manna and Aaron's budded staff

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We are familiar with these items, having read of them in the Old Testament

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However there are several problems here for the meticulous student of the Old Testament.

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First the Old Testament teaches that the alter of incense was **outside** the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place (as shown on the handout).

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Second we are told in 1 Kings 8:9 that the ark contained **only** the tablets of the covenant, and not these other items which are mentioned here.

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And there are several **additional** apparent inconsistencies between what the author of Hebrews says here and what we read in the Old Testament --- things more technical than what I have already mentioned.

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And there are several ways to **reconcile** these apparent inconsistencies which have been advanced and debated down through the centuries.

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There is a place for such discussions, but to turn aside to examine them here would be a mistake.

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Because none of these details have a bearing on what the preacher is preaching about!!

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He is not **interested** in these detail at this point.

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And he says so.

**(Verse 5)**

**Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.**

The ark, as most of you know, was covered with a golden lid on which with figures of two cherubim overshadowed something called the mercy seat.

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This is the place where the presence of God was thought to dwell --- to the extent that God's presence can ever be localized --- and such localization has always been understood to be a difficult concept.

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If we want to talk about these things in detail, then the place to go is to the Old Testament, or to the continuing discussions and debates of the Rabbis.

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But here is sufficient to have a rough general idea of the tabernacle and the ark and the worship that centered around them.

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Here these things are merely a backdrop for the main lesson, which is Christ.

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And indeed the thrust of the argument here is that all of these things which were artifacts of the Old Covenant have now been completely set aside by Christ and the New Covenant.

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Let's read on.

### **Chapter 9, Verses 6-10**

Would someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 9, Verses 6-10, in Japanese (Shin Kaiyaku)

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Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

**6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties,**

**7 but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.**

**8 By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing**

**9 (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,**

**10 but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.**

Thank you.

**(Verse 6)**

**These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties,**

O.K. So under the old covenant, once the special holy place had been prepared, special holy men, the priests, regularly went into the first section to perform ritual duties, on behalf of themselves and the people.

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There were all kinds of things they did there, on a regular schedule, day in, and day out, in accordance with the ceremonial and sacramental laws of Israel.

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But of course non-priests could not enter even the first, least holy, section of the holy place.

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They stayed out in the courtyard where they could witness offerings and sacrifices on the alter, as these were performed by the priests on their behalf.

**(Verse 7)**

**but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.**

As has been said, only one man, the high priest, could enter the most holy place,

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and he could only do that once per year

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When he went in there, he had to take the blood of animals

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which he used to atone for his own sins and for the sins of the people.

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Here the ESV translates "unintentional sins"

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My understanding is that most sins **are** unintentional in the sense that is meant here.

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Which is to say that rarely do men set out for the sole and express purpose of committing **sin**.

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Q. Do they?

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Q. Have you ever...said to yourself..."today I really want to go out and sin against God!"

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A. Mostly we don't do that.

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It's just that sinning is what fallen Man naturally does.

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So we find ourselves constantly in need of a way to deal with sin.

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The rituals performed under the Old Covenant were ordained by God Himself for such purposes

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and with the intention of teaching us something besides.

**(Verse 8)**

**By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing**

Q. "By this" ... by what?

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A. I think this is referring back to what the High Priest alone does each year on the Day of Atonement.

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He goes in there, year after year after year, to atone for sins that he and the people he represents keep committing constantly.

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What happens in the Holy place and the Outer Courtyard during the rest of the year doesn't really change anything in the inward disposition of the people.

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So they all remain constantly separated from God,

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And constantly reminded of this separation.

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One of the main lessons here seems to be the degree to which Man, even God's chosen people, are separated from God.

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Temple worship, in other words, is a barrier --- or at least evidence of the barrier --- between us and God.

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We must go to a priest, the highest of which cannot even approach God.

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The best he can do, once a year, is go to some earthly place that has been specially prepared and perform rituals using earthly things, like the blood of animals and so forth.

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This can only affect ritual purity and not actual purity.

**(Verse 9)**

**(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,**

These things are symbols for the present age.

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The word here translated symbols is only used outside of Hebrews to describe the **parables** that Jesus taught.

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Some translations of verse 9 say that these things are a parable for the present age.

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That is the tabernacle and the worship that happened there was patently symbolic, parabolic.

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There is ambiguity in the term "present age."

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This may refer to the age then present (i.e. the people who lived under the Old Covenant) in which case the sense is that they were being taught about their separation from God and their unresolved sinful nature, etc.

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Or this may refer to the age in which the preacher (and we) live in which Christ has already been revealed, in which case the sense is that worship under the Old Covenant is a parable for us, teaching us about what Christ has accomplished on our behalf.

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I think both things are true.

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The author of Hebrews tends to allow such "polyvalent symbolism" (Bruce)

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In either case, the point is that the things of the Old Covenant were **symbolic**

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They had no effectiveness in and of themselves.

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Just as our Christian ordinances have no effectiveness in and of themselves.

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But this does not mean such things are not important!

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The Spirit fills them with real meaning and effect!

**(Verse 10)**

**but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.**

These gifts and sacrifices were made out of food and drink and water and various regulations for the body and would have had value only until the time of reformation.

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Q. When is the time of reformation?

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A. It must be the time of the New Covenant foreseen by Jeremiah.

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Prior to the New Covenant in the blood of Christ, men needed **something** else to guide them.

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These gifts and sacrifices, and the moral laws also, were ordained by **God** for their benefit.

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All these things were of great worth, until Christ should finally come and fulfill them.

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Indeed all of these things were pointing forward to Christ and all of their value derives from him!

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These things are what they knew instead of Christ until he should be fully revealed.

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And what does a perfect conscience look like?

1. We know that we are guilty of sin against God.
2. We agree that we are at fault and deserve death.
3. We believe that God has forgiven our sins nonetheless, because he is gracious
4. We believe that God really loves and accepts us
5. We truly repent (stop sinning)
6. We no longer desire to do sinful things.

These are the things that Christ accomplished.

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Before Christ these things were symbolized in Old Testament worship

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We read on

### **Chapter 9, Verses 11-12**

Would someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 9, Verses 11-12, in Japanese (Shin Kaiyaku)

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Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

**11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)**

**12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.**

Thank you.

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The point here is that, when Christ came, all of the old ceremonies became obsolete.

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Christ passed into the real holy place, not an earthly substitute, but a place beyond creation.

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He went there once for all, in a way that secures eternal redemption for everyone.

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There is no way to repeat this atonement.

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There is nothing further we must do or, ever, can do to atone for sin. Jesus did it all.

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All of our sins --- past, present, and future --- have been covered in the blood of Christ.

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We are free to approach Christ directly and to follow him without fear.

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There can be no priest or other intermediary between Christ and his people.

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