

# Hebrews 9:1-14

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[ 0 : 00 ] and open your Bibles to Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 9, the passage that Sandy read for us. It started off talking about the temple, the first covenant with regulations for worship, and it described the tabernacle and the items, the consecrated bread and the golden altar.

Isn't all that temple stuff in the Old Testament just boring? Why do we need to think about that? It's hard to even get through sometimes, isn't it? Well, I don't know if you've had those thoughts.

I certainly have, to my shame, because it's actually incredibly exciting because of what it means. What happened in the temple with all of its arrangements and pieces and rooms that he's just described very briefly, but the Old Testament describes in great depth?

What goes on there? It's a drama. It's exciting. Because at the heart of the temple is God's presence that he gives to his people, his presence and his glory, that he lets them experience so that they can be helped.

That's what is happening in the temple in the Old Testament, and that's what the author of Hebrews draws our attention to. What happened then? God's presence, God's glory, and what happens now in Jesus, which far surpasses the glory that they experienced.

[ 1 : 46 ] This morning we looked at Jesus as our great high priest, and we focused on Jesus' heart for helping, his desire to help, and some of the things he did to do that, to help us.

And this evening we're going to, again, focus on Jesus as high priest, but from a different angle. I mentioned it this morning. It's God's plan for his presence with sinners, bringing sinners into his presence.

So let me simply repeat. This morning, Jesus helped, we saw, in that he defeated Satan's power of death, and he freed from the slavery to the fear of death all of those who turned to him.

He wanted to help, and so he did some amazing things. He also wanted to help us in our sins, and so he offered his own blood in exchange for ours, which should have been spilled.

He made atonement for us as our high priest. Those were the things we looked at this morning, how Jesus, as high priest, helps us. There was a third help, though, in that passage this morning that we didn't look at.

[ 3 : 00 ] That third help, in chapter 2, verse 18, I'll simply read it to you. Because Jesus suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

We focused on those cosmic victories that Jesus won and that past act of helping us from our sins, but this, he also helps us presently when we're tempted and when we're suffering under this temptation because he's gone through it, and he can help us.

And it's actually that third thing that we didn't really talk about this morning that I hope we can focus on a bit tonight. His help now for those of us who trust him.

Let me read to you Hebrews chapter 4, verses 15 and 16, because this basically says the same thing, but it fills it out a little bit more. We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us in our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he was without sin.

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we might receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

[ 4 : 25 ] I hope we can keep that grace, that kindness, this access to the throne of grace, I hope we can keep that in our minds as we dwell on God's presence.

Because these two things are tied together. The help that we need in life when we struggle, that and actually being in God's presence. He says, draw near to the throne of grace and you'll find help.

So being in God's presence is intimately tied with us being helped daily when we struggle. And all of that because of Jesus as our high priest. So we're gonna focus, we're gonna concentrate on God's presence, his kindness to let us enjoy that presence.

Now, I do have a question. Do people have these handouts? I don't wanna refer to it a lot if not many people have them. They're at the doors. Can you wave them if you have them so I can get a general gist?

There are some out there, there are gaps. If you could share with somebody who's nearby you, Donald, could you check if there are any more right by the front door?

[ 5 : 39 ] And if there are, do you mind bringing them in? Oh, there are no more. All right. If you could share, that would be great. I hope that this will help as we work through God's presence and what it means for us because this is a picture of things that happened in the Old Testament in the temple which the author of Hebrews here describes.

So this will really give us a picture of what he's talking about. We're gonna look at three things. We're going to look first at God's kindness in the Old Testament by giving us the tabernacle or the temple.

His kindness in the Old Testament giving sinners his presence. And we're gonna look at some of these things to do that. That's the first thing. God's dwelling place with sinners.

Then we're gonna turn to the limits of that. God limited his presence and his glory in the temple of the Old Testament. He didn't give it all.

He didn't give full access to it. We're gonna look at God's own limits on that presence in the Old Testament. And then we're gonna third focus on what God offers in Jesus because that is unlimited.

[ 6 : 57 ] So those three things. Let's look at God's kindness in the Old Testament giving the tabernacle and the temple as a gift to his people.

You'll remember that humanity is lost. They were able to have access to God at the beginning when he created them perfect and sinless.

They had access to God. But very quickly they threw it away. They spit in God's face. Our forefather, Abraham. Our forefather, Adam.

He's the one. And his wife, Eve. They rejected God as their king. They said, we don't trust your word. We don't want to do what you say.

We don't think you're actually good and we think you're a liar. We won't actually die if we disobey you. They slapped him in the face and they disobeyed him and they lost access to him.

[ 7 : 54 ] He kicked them out of the garden, out of this special place. He sent them away. And all of their offspring are now in a situation where we don't have access to God.

The God of life, the God who created peace and joy and harmony and life, we don't have access to him. Because like our parents, because of them and like them, we spit in God's face too.

However, and this is the paradox of God's character that I mentioned this morning. God at the same time was angry and had wrath towards sinners and yet provided the possibility of them coming back to his presence.

At the same time, he extended both of those and he did that most dramatically when he saved Israel out of Egypt. He saved them and then he gave them a temple.

First a tabernacle, it was a tent, but this structure where they could meet with him. They could see a bit of his glory. They didn't deserve that, but he gave them this gift of kindness that they could see his glory and that he would live with them, dwell with them.

[ 9 : 09 ] He would be present in a special way in the tabernacle at that place where the high priest offered that blood of exchange.

Not the blood of sinners, though that would have been just, but the blood of the animal exchanged for the life of the sinner. At that point, that's where God gave his presence and his glory to Israel at the tabernacle.

After Israel was in their land and weren't moving around having to take down and put back up this tabernacle wherever they went. After they were situated, they then built the temple, the same basic thing as the tabernacle, that place where they offered sacrifices to God for forgiveness, where he would dwell with them, his presence and his glory.

And that's what Hebrews talks about in chapter 9, verses 1 through 10. So look at Hebrews 9, 1 to 5. If you will.

This is the arrangement of that temple or that tabernacle and then later the temple. Now, we've already read this, so I'm going to point out on this picture which you can look at what he is talking about.

[ 10 : 24 ] He mentions the tabernacle that was built. It had two rooms. The first room that had things like the lamp stand, the table, the consecrated bread.

It's called the holy place. And then he mentions the second room, the most holy place behind a curtain where the Ark of the Covenant was.

Now, you can see that on this. You see, the top picture is the temple. So he's talking about the tabernacle, but it's basically the same thing. This is the temple in Jerusalem.

And you see the tall part right in the middle at the top. It looks a bit like an upside-down T on its roof. That's the heart of the temple. If you were to blow that up bigger, you'd have the second picture.

That's that blown up. And there's a slice cut out so you can see inside. And that's what the Hebrew author is talking about. Here, you can see that little tiny person. Do you see him on those steps walking up into the temple, going into that holy place, that first room?

[ 11 : 28 ] That's what the author of Hebrews talks about. He enters there, and then there's a dividing curtain, which you can see part of, and behind that is a small room, the most holy place. That's where God gave His presence and glory.

Now, if you flip it around, you'll see a zoom in on that guy walking up the stairs. You'll see the high priest who's walking up the stairs into the temple that I just pointed out to you.

Behind him, this big structure, if you can see in the corner, that's the altar where they would sacrifice the animals. He would take the blood from that, he'd carry it down in this little thing, I don't know the proper term that he's carrying the blood in.

He'd carry that as well as coals to burn incense, which represented the prayers of the people. And he would carry that into the temple, into the holy room, and then, on one day, into that most holy place.

Sprinkle the blood on the Ark of the Covenant, the place of exchange that God calls it. God would forgive the people, and they could enjoy his presence and his glory. We'll look back at this in a moment, but I'm going to draw your attention now to some of the limits of God's presence in that system right there, which the author of Hebrews draws out.

[ 12 : 54 ] God didn't give his total glory or his total presence to them. Think about it this way. Could all the Israelites go into God's presence?

His presence was in the temple. Could all the Israelites go in freely when they needed something from God? Could they approach his throne of grace?

No. No. Barely any of them could, in fact. You've got all of these Israelites, and God says, you don't have access to my presence. I will dwell in the temple, but you don't have access.

There's one tribe of the twelve tribes. Levi, the tribe of Levi. God chose them. They can serve the temple area on behalf of everyone else, so they can draw a bit closer to God's presence in the temple, a bit closer.

But even the Levites couldn't actually go in to the main temple, to the holy room. Within the Levites, God chose the Aaronites, the descendants of Aaron specifically.

[ 14 : 04 ] They were the priests who actually did the service of priests in the holy place. So they got to go even closer to God's presence, but still, they couldn't go any further.

God had a thick curtain that blocked the way to the most holy place. Only one person in all of Israel, out of all the Levites, out of all the Aaronites, one person could go through that curtain into God's presence.

The high priest. But even he, could he go any time he wanted? Well, the author of Hebrews, following the whole Old Testament, he says, he could only do that, enter into the inner room, this is verse 7, only once a year, and never without blood.

Even the high priest did not have free access to God's presence in the most holy place. Only once a year, and only with blood carrying it in.

Can you see how God limited his presence in the Old Testament? It was a great, kind gift to give them the chance to experience his presence, to see his glory, but in a very, very limited way.

[ 15 : 22 ] King David, in the psalm that we started with, Psalm 27, David wrote, one thing I ask, that I may enter God's house, the temple, constantly gazing at the Lord's beauty.

David was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi. David actually couldn't go in to these places and gaze constantly at God's beauty. He could only do that by the priests going in.

He couldn't, actually, himself. Those aren't the only limits to God's kindness and presence, yet limited kindness and presence in the temple.

Those aren't the only limits that God put. Look at verse 11. So we've just briefly gone through verses 1 to 10 where the author explains what happens in the temple and explains how limited it is, only one man and only one time a year with blood.

Look at verse 11. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not part of this creation.

[ 16 : 45 ] Does anybody else think that's a fairly strange statement? What does that mean? He went into the true tabernacle, to the greater and more perfect tabernacle that's not man-made.

What does that mean? He says something similar a few times before this and a few times after. Let me read you a few verses in chapter 8 and 9 that are similar.

This will start to give us a bigger picture of what the Old Testament temple and tabernacle and everything that happened in it, what they were really like in God's plan.

In 8.2, Hebrews 8.2, the author says, Jesus serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle, set up by the Lord, not by man.

Very similar statement to what we just read. In 8.5, he says, they, these Aaronic Levite priests, they serve in a sanctuary that is a copy and a shadow of what is in heaven.

[ 17 : 51 ] A copy, a shadow of what is in heaven. And in chapter 9, verse 24, he says, for Christ did not enter into a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one.

He entered into heaven itself now to appear for us in God's presence. What are we to make of that, of all of these statements? Think about shining a torch, a flashlight, since I'm American, I can use that term.

Shining one of those, let's say, on your hand. You shine the torch on your hand and what appears on the table in front of me? I couldn't find our torch, otherwise I would have actually demonstrated.

You shine the light, the hand is here, you see a shadow on the table. I can sort of do it with the lights here, but you can't see it. This is the real thing right here.

The shadow is down there. The shadow looks like what is real, the body. It has five digits, it wiggles when I wiggle this, but this is the real one, the true one, the full one, and that's the shadow down there.

[ 19 : 02 ] That one is a copy of this. And the author of Hebrews, following some verses in the Old Testament, says that this tabernacle, that this temple and the priests and this whole system that God established in the Old Testament, that's a shadow of God's true presence, God's true tabernacle.

That's amazing to think about because of how real it is. These people are offering real sacrifices, they're real people, it's a real tabernacle, but it's a glimpse of what is true and full.

In other words, God dwells in heaven. Now, of course, God's everywhere, but he dwells in a special way. His glory is manifest, seen for what it truly is, and his presence is full in a way in heaven that it's not on earth.

But God gave a glimpse, he gave a shadow of his presence, but the full, true, glorious presence is in heaven where God dwells.

The author draws attention to this to say what Jesus did is greater than what the Levites and the Aaronites, the priests, in the temple and tabernacle were doing.

[ 20 : 30 ] They were serving in a shadow. Yes, God's presence was there in a limited way that God guarded because of their sin, but Jesus went into God's actual presence, not just a shadow of it, not just a taster of it.

He went into God's actual presence, into the true tabernacle where God dwells in his full manifest glory. That's where Jesus went as he died on the cross.

By the Spirit he took his blood to God's presence and offered it for us. So could the people in the Old Testament be with God?

Could they go into his presence? Sort of. Yes. Sort of. By the priests representing them, by the one man.

And it was just a shadow. Could they see God's glory? Yes. Sort of. Not his full glory. God didn't give them that ability, that freedom or right.

[ 21 : 37 ] To conclude, I'm going to draw our attention to the third point. the third thing. We've looked at God's kindness in the Old Testament in giving the tabernacle so that sinners could come in some way into his presence and see his glory.

But then we've looked at the limits of that. God limited that. They didn't have full access into his presence. Now let's finish by looking at what God has offered in Jesus.

And I'm going to do that simply by reading a number of statements that the author of Hebrews makes. Because they speak for themselves in light of all that we've talked about.

Hebrews 9, 11 to 12. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now here, he went through the greater, the more perfect tabernacle that's not man-made, that is to say not part of this creation.

And what's more, he did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves. He entered the most holy place once for all time by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

[ 22 : 53 ] Look at 9, 24. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was a copy of the true one. He entered heaven itself now to appear for us in God's presence.

Hebrews 9, 13 to 14. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean do sanctify them so that they're outwardly clean.

How 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 so that we may serve the living God.

In Hebrews chapter 4, verse 14 to 16. Since we have such a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, and this is the challenge for us and the application.

Since we have such a great high priest who has done this, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet he was without sin.

[ 24 : 22 ] Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

The Levites, even the high priest in the Old Testament, would have longed to have what we have been given in Jesus. Full confidence to access the throne of grace and see God's glory that is shining in the face of Jesus.

They would have loved to have that access. God's given it to us. When you're in need of mercy and grace, when you're struggling in your temptation, you can actually go with confidence to God, which had been barred in so many ways in the Old Testament.

you can go into his presence, to his throne, to receive help when you need help. Because Jesus, our great high priest, has already gone there and has secured for us eternal redemption.

Let us pray. God. God's music God's life is here. What you see when you're working lest when you're in newannée. We'll come now with another man to find it in the world.

[ 25 : 49 ] We'll continue when you're in awe with some bullying. We can ask you when you're in s■ associates and therapy. In the morning, We'll take your countyATHI and graveyard with your Unit and hand with some rule.

Even whether it's heavenly or whatever or whatever