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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 9



Part 13/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

If you have your outline there you need to turn to Page 9/1. We are in the middle of going through that opening section. Hebrews 9, the first 5 verses, I'm reading from the New American Standard.

> "Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle [or a sacred tent] prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. And behind the second veil [or curtain], there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables [or tablets] of the covenant. And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail."

We're going to take just a little longer to comment on that passage about the tabernacle because an understanding of the tabernacle is really essential for an understanding of Hebrews. If you don't know the basic facts about the tabernacle you can't really understand what the writer of Hebrews is bringing to us.

We're told that in the first compartment of the tabernacle, the Holy Place, there was the table of what's normally called showbread, the bread that was exposed every day, twelve loaves, fresh and arranged in order which was on the right-hand side. On the left-hand side opposite, casting light upon it, was the seven branched lampstand. Also in the Holy Place was the golden altar of incense.

We have to observe rather carefully what the writer of Hebrews says because if you look in verses 3 and 4 he says "behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle which

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is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark" and so on. According to the description given in the book of Exodus (and the references are given here), the golden altar of incense was the third item of furniture in the Holy Place, in the first compartment, immediately in front of the second veil. It was there because, as we'll see in a little while, when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies—which he did only once every year— he had to take two things with him: the blood of the sin offering and the censer—that's one of those containers for live coals which are suspended by a chain that are usually made of brass. In a censer you put the live coals in the bottom and then you put the incense on top of it and the incense on top of the live coals gives off this beautiful, white, fragrant smoke. The second thing the high priest had to have to go in was this censer with the incense off the golden altar of incense. So, both from the description in Exodus and from sheer logic, it must have been available to him in the Holy Place before he went through the veil, because he couldn't go through the veil without it. If he omitted to take either the blood or the incense, he would have died instantly. Both were absolute requirements for him to enter into the immediate presence of God in the Holy of Holies.

So, when the writer of Hebrews says that the Holy of Holies had a golden altar of incense, what I understand him to mean was the golden altar of incense was there for the sake of the Holy of Holies. It was to get you in. So although its location was in the Holy Place, its purpose was for the Holy of Holies. In this outer compartment, the Holy Place, there would be three items of furniture: the table of showbread, the lampstand with the olive oil, which enabled it to burn bright and clear, and then immediately before the second veil was the golden altar of incense.

In my series of cassettes on "The Way into the Holiest," I've gone into this in considerable detail, I don't want to do that tonight but I'll just say that, for me, amongst other things, the bread on the table signifies the human will, which is the strength; the lampstand, which provides the illumination, is the intellect; the altar of incense is the emotions. I compare that compartment of the tabernacle to the human soul, which, I believe, consists of will; intellect and emotions.

The area behind the second veil I compare to the spirit. You have to get your soul in order before you can go into the realm of the spirit. So, the first thing that's lined up is your will, the second thing is your understanding, which must be illuminated by the oil of the Holy Spirit, and the illuminated understanding casts light upon the showbread. Then, in order to get through the second veil, there is the golden altar of incense which typifies, I believe, the emotions and the fragrant smoke that comes up typifies worship.

You see, there are some interpretations of Christianity which place all the emphasis on the emotions. There are some which deny any importance to the emotions. I believe each is one-sided, but I believe that in order to be able to give free reign to your emotions you first have to get your will lined up. Second, you have to get your intellect illuminated. Then you can let your emotions loose in worship. Only in that way can you pass into the immediate presence of God.

I think a person who is totally intellectual and totally unemotional really never makes it into the presence of God. The daughter of William Booth—who is the founder of the Salvation Army in France— once made a statement which has always stuck with me. She said, "Christ loves us passionately and He wants to be loved passionately." I think a Christianity without passion is an incomplete Christianity. Most of the people that have really made an impact on the world for Jesus Christ have been people of passionate conviction and passionate feeling. And I leave that thought with you: "Christ loves us passionately and He wants to be loved passionately." There is a kind of passion of adoration for Jesus, which is the only way through the veil. And, if you went through without it, in terms of the Old Covenant, you'd die. Maybe that's why there are some dead church members.

Now we're going to look for a little while at the objects inside the golden chest, or the ark, beyond the second veil. It's quite interesting. The writer of Hebrews is rather specific about the contents of it. If you look in verse 4 there was a golden jar holding the manna, Aaron's rod which budded and the tables [or tablets] of the covenant.

The ark is always a picture of Jesus Christ. That's not its sole significance but its primary significance. In the Scriptures of the Old Testament there are two arks: the big ark of Noah and the small ark of the tabernacle. Each of them represents Christ. The big ark represents you in Christ. The small ark represents Christ in you. Christ in you contains in Him these three items: the golden jar that has manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.

I have interpreted these, according to my understanding. I want to make it very clear that I'm not saying this is the only way to interpret them, it's simply the way they have become very vivid and real to me. The jar of manna, which was Israel's provision of food for 40 years in the wilderness, typifies, to me, inward communion with Christ. In the

Anglican (or Episcopalian) communion service there is a phrase where they say at the end, "Feed on Christ by faith in your heart." That's what the manna represents to me. It's feeding on Christ in the heart. It's an unseen communion which cannot be touched or disturbed or hindered by anything in the world around because it's in the realm of the Spirit, it's in the heart and it's placed there by God.

The rod—which was Aaron's rod which was placed together with eleven other rods before the ark and which in 24 hours blossomed, budded and brought forth almonds, which was God's endorsement of Aaron as His chosen high priest as against the leaders of the other eleven tribes—represents resurrection life. Interestingly, the almond has a very white blossom, completely white blossom, and it's the first tree that comes into blossom every year in the land of Israel. It blossoms with amazing rapidity. Here's a picture of resurrection life—Jesus endorsed as God's Savior and High Priest by resurrection from the tomb. And because He was raised from the dead He also became the prince, or the ruler, of the kings of the earth. There's a reference which you might want to jot down, which is Revelation 1:5. This is the greeting from the Godhead. I think it's rather thrilling. Every person of the Godhead sends greetings. If you read Revelation 1:4–5:

> "John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come [that's God the Father]; from the seven Spirits who are before His throne [that's the Holy Spirit in his sevenfold aspect]; and from Jesus Christ [who is three things], the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth."

Those three things go in a logical sequence. Because He was the faithful witness He became the firstborn from the dead, and as the firstborn from the dead He became the ruler of the kings of the earth. So resurrection life also leads to rule, to authority. The rod typifies both resurrection and rulership, which are ours in Christ.

The tablets with the Ten Commandments on them, as you will see in my interpretation, typify God's eternal law.

If you look back a little higher up in your outline, in the time of Moses the ark contained all three items: the jar with manna, the rod that budded and the tables of stone. But, when it was brought into Solomon's temple it only contained the stone tablets. We better look at that, that's in 1 Kings 8:9. This is a description of what was put into Solomon's temple and in verse 9; it's very specific.

> "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel."

In my outline I explain very briefly—and I'll just read what I've said—and again, this is my understanding: The tabernacle of Moses typifies the church in its earthly pilgrimage—mobile, portable, to be carried partly on men's shoulders. All the most sacred items were carried on the shoulders of men; they weren't even placed on carts. You remember, when somebody put the ark on a cart and then tried to steady it he was struck with death. God's ordinance was that everything that was most holy was to be carried on the shoulders of men.

Then the ark was without visible beauty. Its outer covering was what's normally called "badger's skin," although there's some uncertainty as to what kind of skin. It was rough, it was not attractive. There was nothing in the outward appearance that would indicate the tremendous items of beauty that were inside. So, that's the church in earthly pilgrimage. There's no outward glory or splendor or beauty, it's mobile, it's portable. If it's persecuted in one place it packs up and sets up somewhere else.

It's very, very important that we don't try and build the temple in the period of the tabernacle. I think a great many different denominations and religious groups have tried to make the tabernacle into a temple but it wasn't intended to be a temple. It's always to be mobile, it's always to be light, it's always to be flexible and easy to adjust. One thing that's so much impressed me in studying the church of the New Testament was it was so flexible. It didn't have to have one particular type of situation. Drop it down anywhere, it flourished. It was just like the tabernacle, it could be moved around. It was easy to assemble, easy to take to pieces. It didn't take long to move it.

Don't ever try to persuade yourself that you're living in a temple because you're not. Conditions in the tabernacle are very different from conditions in the temple. Don't settle down and say, "This is it from now on," because you might be surprised. When the cloud moved, the ark moved. The temple of Solomon never moved, it was settled once and for all. A lot of Christians are not used to mobile life, I think I can say without exaggeration! I got used to it! If the cloud moves, I'm ready to move. The church has got to be ready

to move. Here we have no continuing city, that's later on in the book of Hebrews.

The temple of Solomon was tremendously solid, absolutely permanent and dazzlingly beautiful. That's the church in the next age, as I understand it, when God's kingdom is established on earth. Then we won't be fugitives, we won't be refugees; we'll be rulers.

It's interesting, we don't have time to go into it, some things changed in the transition from the tabernacle to the temple. As I've pointed out, some things were taken out of the ark. We never know who took them out or when but they just weren't there any longer. The inward communion that the church has in this age will become open communion. Jesus said to His disciples at the Last Supper, "I've desired to eat this with you because I'm not going to taste of the fruit of the vine until it's established in the kingdom of God." But when it's established in the kingdom of God everybody will see it, it'll be there. It won't be just secretly in the Spirit that we commune with Christ, we'll have open face-to-face communion.

Then the rod was taken out because we'll have passed through resurrection into an incorruptible, eternal life in a glorified body. That will not be hidden any longer, it will be manifest. We already have tasted of resurrection life but our bodies still haven't got the message.

There's one thing that remains forever, what's that? The eternal, unchanging Law of God. This has impressed me deeply. There's an eternal law of righteousness which will never be taken out of the heart of Christ and must be permanently in the heart of every one of us. The righteousness which God requires through faith. It's an eternal law of righteousness. I think we don't sufficiently appreciate God's evaluation of righteousness. That's the message of Hebrews: holiness and righteousness.

That's a little picture of the contents of the tabernacle and of the transition from tabernacle to temple. Let me just add this: In the temple of Solomon the cherubim—which is the plural of cherub, the Hebrew word is ?keroove? which, interestingly enough, is modern Hebrew for "cabbage." It doesn't sound very romantic, but my personal opinion—and I make no extra charge for this and I could be completely wrong—my personal opinion is that a cabbage is called a cherub because the leaves of the cabbage relate to the body of the cabbage the way the wings of the cherub relate to the body of the cherub. That's my personal theory. I'm not demanding anybody else to believe it, but there it is!

Anyhow, in the tabernacle the cherubs faced inwards over the ark and they stretched out their wings only over the ark, nowhere else, and they occupied just the area over the ark. If you read in the temple of Solomon, the cherubim faced outward, their wings were extended in each direction and each wing extended five cubits which is seven and a half feet which is a substantial wing. Together they made up the twenty cubits which was the full width of the Holy of Holies so that, again, there's a picture of expansion. What was very compact and focused only around the ark, or Christ, has been extended and covers the entire extent of the Holy of Holies.

But, one thing that's very, very interesting is the dimensions of the ark never change because the ark represents God. God doesn't have to get any bigger, He doesn't have to extend any further; He's already the Creator, the Almighty, the Alpha and the Omega. That was just a little on verses 1–5.

We're going on now at verse 6 of chapter 9. We're going to go through verse 10 and I'm going to translate from the Greek. I need to point out to you that at this point the writer of Hebrews in the tenses that he uses, moves from the time of Moses to his own day and is mentally picturing the temple, the second temple, which still stood in his time. So, the tense has become present tense but the picture is still referred to the tabernacle. You find that there are differences of translation. For instance, the New American Standard has the present tense, the New International Version sticks to the past tense from the previous five verses. That's the reason. I'm going to translate as literally as I can which may not be elegant and then you will be able to form your own conclusions. Beginning at verse 6:

> "When these things have been thus prepared, into the first compartment the priests enter continually, carrying out the divine service [notice the present tense—he doesn't say 'entered' but 'enter'] but into the second, once a year, the high priest alone, not without blood, which he offers on behalf of himself and the sins of ignorance of the people. The Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the Holy of Holies has not yet been revealed, while the first tabernacle still stands, which is a parable [or a symbol] for the present time."

But there's an alternative translation, I don't want to get too involved.

> "In which the present time both gifts and sacrifices are being offered which cannot perfect their worshiper in regard to conscience, since they are based only on food and drink and various ceremonial washings [the word 'ceremonial' I've put in], regulations relating to the body imposed until the time of reformation [or the new order]."

You'll see, if you've been following in those translations—which you probably haven't—I take some words from one and some from the other.

I want to go into this and I'm going to read a little bit from my own notes. We're on Page 9/2. The writer continues to draw lessons from the tabernacle of Moses but now applies them directly to the service of the second temple still standing at that time. One unique feature of the Holy of Holies, it was entered only by the high priest once every year on the Day of Atonement (Hebrew: Yom Kippur).

And now we will turn to Leviticus 16 but let me just read the next sentence first. The high priest symbolized in the earthly sanctuary what Christ was to do in the heavenly sanctuary.

We go back now to Leviticus 16, I'm going to read from the New American Standard. I think I have to read those verses because it's essential that we know what went on. Beginning at verse 1:

> "Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died."

That's Aaron's two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu. They went in with what the Bible calls "strange fire" or "unsanctified fire" into the immediate presence of God and died instantly. So, Aaron lost his two eldest sons. The lesson was: Be careful how you go into the presence of the Lord. Now the Lord applies this, verse 2:

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil ... The "holy place inside the veil" is the Holy of Holies. I'm sorry because the language switches around but I'll try and make it clear.

> "... the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud [that's the shekinah glory] over the mercy seat."

The place where God appears in person is the Most Holy Place. It's most holy because of God's appearing there.

> "Aaron shall enter the holy place with this: with a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering."

I think it's significant that the moment the Bible talks about entering the Most Holy Place it talks about a sin offering. The implication is sin must be dealt with before anyone can enter.

> "He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be girded with the linen sash, and attired with the linen turban (these are holy garments). Then he shall bathe his body in water and put them on."

Notice now, he does not wear his full regalia but he's dressed only in linen. Those of you that were here last year will recall what linen represents which is? Purity, that's right. Righteousness. But he's stripped of his glory and he's stripped of the robe, which had the bells on the hem. You remember as long as he moved around with the bells and they tinkled, Israel knew he was alive. Now no longer is he wearing the bells because this typifies Jesus Christ laying down His life having first laid aside His glory going in in His humanity, but always in His absolute purity. The emphasis is on perfect, sinless purity without divine glory. Verse 5:

> "He shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering."

Let me point out to you that though sin is always sin, some people's sins create greater problems than other people's sins. The higher up a person is in the kingdom of God, the more problems his sin creates. There were three main levels of sin offerings. If the high priest sinned, he had to bring a bull. If a ruler sinned, he had to bring a ram. If one of the common people sinned, he could bring a goat or a sheep. It always impressed me because I think whatever

happened, if the high priest should sin he'd have to go right outside the camp, pick his bull, make sure it was without blemish and then lead it all the way to the door of the tabernacle and kill it there. There was no way he could conceal from the people that he was in trouble! Everybody knew when they saw Aaron or the high priest taking his bull along that he had sinned. He had a very large sin offering. Also, a very valuable one. A ruler was required only to bring a ram and, as I said, one of the common people, a sheep or a goat. There are further distinctions, which we won't go into.

Verse 6:

> "Then Aaron shall offer the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household."

Notice that there's great emphasis on the fact that this high priest has to, first of all, offer for his own sin. And, interestingly enough, it's for his own sin and the sin of his house or family. That's the principle: the father is responsible for the house. As in the Passover where it was the father's business to sprinkle the blood on the house.

> "And he shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat."

Azazel in Hebrew, a very familiar word to Jewish people. We're going to spend a little time looking at the significance of the scapegoat. Let me say—I hope I can say this right—I think there's some very solemn lessons in this chapter relating to the Jewish people. I would say the lesson here is: either accept the scapegoat or become one. See, the Jewish people habitually speak about themselves as the scapegoat for the sins of other nations. In some sense, they are. If you lived in Israel a little while you get to appreciate that point of view, because Israel is judged by totally different standards than other nations. However, we won't go into that.

Verse 9:

> "Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the LORD fell, and make it a sin offering."

That's the sin offering. The other goat is unique, there's never anything else like it anywhere in the Bible. It's only on the Day of Atonement. Verse 10:

> "But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat."

To make atonement, that word, "to cover over."

> "Then Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his household, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which is for himself. And he shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil."

Notice, he couldn't go inside the second veil without the incense lifting up its cloud which, in a sense, veiled him. It kept him from being directly exposed to the immediate presence of God.

> "And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, lest he die. Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some blood with his finger seven times."

The mercy seat, in case you don't know, was the lid that covered the ark. And on either end of the mercy seat were the cherubim. Why it was called the mercy seat you'll see in due course.

Notice the blood had to be applied to the mercy seat on the east side, which is the side from which the priest

approached it and also sprinkled seven times in front of it. Seven speaking of something that is done by the Holy Spirit. Verse 15:

> "Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat."

First of all, he brought his own sin offering, then he went back and brought the sin offering of the people. His own sin offering, the bull; the sin offering of the people, the goat.

> "When he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, no one shall be in the tent of meeting until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household and for all the assembly of Israel."

Everything in this chapter emphasizes this tremendous solemnity and sacredness of everything. Verse 18:

> "Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar on all sides."

The altar had four sides. Every side had to be touched with the blood. Purifying the altar, I think, speaks about making the worship of God's people acceptable. It depended on the altar. Verse 19:

> "And with his finger he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times, and cleanse it, and from the impurities of the sons of Israel consecrate it [or make it holy]. [Verse 20] When he finishes atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat [this is the scapegoat]. Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins..."

Or the margin translation, "in addition to all their sins." So it covers iniquities, transgressions and sins. They're not exactly the same. Iniquity essentially is rebellion, transgression is breaking a known law, and sin is just failing to live for God's glory. There are three types of evildoing. They're all laid symbolically on the head of this poor goat. When you think of what's involved ...

Are you with me? We're in the middle of verse 21.

> "...and he shall lay them [the iniquities, the transgressions and sins] on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. And the goat shall bear in itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."

I don't know whether you've ever pictured that goat, but it's released into a completely desolate area where there's no water, no pasture, no other animals, and abandoned and left there to wander around until it dies. It's a terrible picture. There's a reason for it, we'll look on. Verse 23:

> "Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting, and take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. And he shall bathe his body with water in a holy place and put on his clothes, and come forth and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people."

Now he has on again his beautiful and glorious garments, he's back in his glory to offer the burnt offerings.

The burnt offering also makes atonement for the people, but the order is important. The sin offering has to be offered first, then the burnt offering. It might surprise some of you to know that in Greek the word for the burnt offering is holocaust. So it is in French. It means "something which is

totally burned." Again, the word has got a terrible meaning for us in the twentieth century, a meaning that it never had until this century. We talk about progress, but I don't know of any other century that has invented some of the words that we've invented like holocaust, overkill, genocide ... But again, I want to say this and I hope I can be understood. I think the message is this: either accept the Holocaust or become a holocaust. There's nothing in between.

Going on reading, and I'll make some comments from my note outline in a few minutes. Verse 25:

> "Then he shall offer up in smoke the fat of the sin offering on the altar."

The fat of the sin offering was also offered. One of the very interesting things in the Old Testament sacrifices is God never allowed His people to eat fat, it always had to be burned. Without going into dietary principles, which some people would refer to today, and maybe rightly, I think it means that God will not accept anything that we do with an attitude of "I've got it all, I have everything, I'm doing fine." I think the fat represents something in the principles of God of self-sufficiency, arrogance, making one's own rules, being pretty well at home in this world. God says, "I will not accept any of that, it all has to be burned."

There's a lot of interesting things. You know, for instance, that you're not allowed to offer honey with any of the sacrifices to God. Because, when you burn honey it becomes a sticky, black mess. But, on the other hand, frankincense, which is completely unattractive when you look at it, when you burn it, it gives off this most beautiful fragrance. You see? God says, "I only want things offered to Me that can go through the fire. If it can't stand the fire, don't offer it to Me. And fat I don't want under any conditions. It's got to be burned."

We're there at verse 26.

> "And the one who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water; then afterward he shall come into the camp."

Notice everything associated with sin was defiling and they had to take the most elaborate precautions to escape from the defilement and not to transmit it to others. I don't think any of us can picture how utterly unacceptable and unclean sin is in the sight of God. I don't know whether you've ever seen a leper, as I have a good many times in the streets of Jerusalem. Maybe with just a stump of a leg and open sores, maybe part of his face eaten away. I don't know how I could bring myself ever to go up to such a person and touch him. Yet I realize there's many things that are far worse than that. But that's just a little inkling of how sin appears in the sight of God.

Verse 27:

> "But the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp, and they shall burn their hides, their flesh, and their refuse in the fire."

Anything whose blood was brought into the Holy of Holies to make atonement had to be totally burned, nobody could partake of it. This is referred to again in Hebrews 13, we'll find it later on. Verse 28:

> "Then the one who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water, then afterward he shall come into the camp."

Notice again everybody that had any contact with anything to do with sin had to be cleansed from defilement.

Then we come to three very important verses, verses 29–31.

> "And this shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls, and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you..."

What day is that in the Jewish calendar? Yom Kippur.

Where it says in verse 29 "you shall humble your souls," I suspect the NIV says "deny your soul." Even that isn't really sufficient. How have the Jewish people always interpreted humbling your soul or denying your soul? In what way? Fasting, that's right. It wasn't necessary for Moses to say fast because when he said, "humble your souls," they knew that's fasting.

I am so glad that God showed me years ago there is a way to humble my soul. I don't have to try and feel humble, I don't have to reach around in the air and see if humility is

there, but I can do something simple, practical and specific. If I do it with the right motives, I will be humbling my soul and that is fasting.

Verse 30:

> "...for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is to be a sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls as a permanent statute."

Not merely did they have to fast, they had to abstain from all kinds of work. If you have ever been in Israel on the Day of Atonement it's a very sort of memorable day. At least in Jerusalem. I think right throughout the country. All vehicular traffic ceases, nobody moves around except for emergency vehicles. There's a strange hush that comes over the entire place. I don't think we in our modern civilization can realize how inundated we are with noise and what a difference it makes when a lot of the noise has ceased. It's like an immediate rest to your nervous system. It's something very, very memorable and that's how God intended it to be. He intended it to be a unique day that would be indelibly imprinted on their minds once they had experienced it.

We'll go to the end of the chapter, then I'll make some comments.

> "So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father's place shall make atonement: he shall thus put on the linen garments, the holy garments, and make atonement for the holy sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year."

Notice it only was valid for one year. When the Day of Atonement came around the next year they had to repeat the whole procedure, which is what the writer of Hebrews is emphasizing.

Let me go to my note outline and just amplify some of what we've been talking about. I hope this is not too heavy for some of you. It's just kind of how you react. For me, interpreting this is like taking a journey into a country to which there is no ordinary access. Either you go this way or you don't get there. I personally have tremendous excitement and pleasure in taking this journey. I can understand if it hasn't reached you that way; it seems rather strange and what's the use of it all? Why bother about some strange ceremony that was enacted 3400 years ago? What does it have to say to us today? What to me is remarkable about all that is that Moses and the children of Israel had the faith to make that tabernacle, make all the furniture, do all these things not knowing the real meaning of what they were doing. Then surely it's a miracle that something that was done in a remote desert 3400 years ago is known all over the world today and has been interpreted by countless millions of Christians to their own blessing. If there was no other evidence, I would have to say that makes the Bible a unique book, there's no other book like it.

Let's go to our note outline, 9/2. I've put there "Truths Illustrated by the Day of Atonement." I've listed five. First, its purpose: to propitiate God's holiness and to make the worship of God's people acceptable. In a sense, God's continuing presence with Israel was dependent upon their propitiating His holiness and making their worship acceptable. The altar had to be cleansed. That speaks of the channel through which the worship of all the people came up to God.

Second, the high priest laid aside his glory and was clothed only in the linen of personal righteousness. There was no sound of bells—signifying His life laid down.

Three, the two goats both picture Jesus. I am giving you my interpretation. First, as the slain sin offering. That's a very familiar picture for many of us. The second is unique as the one who bore away sin in His own person.

I want to dwell on that for a moment because, as I say, I believe it's a unique truth which is not really unfolded in the same way anywhere else in Scripture. I want you to think of that poor goat led off into a completely barren, uninhabited place without any kind of living creature to keep it company, without sustenance, without drink; just doomed to wander till it fell and could not rise again. It's surely a pathetic picture but I want you to have it in mind.

Let's look at the words in Leviticus again for a moment. Leviticus 16:7–10.

> "And he shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. [Verse 10:] But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat."

Then continuing in verses 20–22:

> "When he finishes atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."

No one ever saw the goat again but they were glad. Do you know why? Because the goat carried their sins. Then let's look in Hebrews 9 but right at the end of the chapter. Hebrews 9:28:

> "...so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await Him, for salvation."

Notice, Christ bore the sins of many and that's emphasized throughout Hebrews. He bore away sin.

He removed it. That's pictured by the goat.

Now I want to turn to what I believe is a prophetic picture of this in the book of Psalms. Psalm 88 and I think I'll read it in the NIV, which is very vivid in some passages. This is an almost unique psalm. It is totally unrelieved by any light or relief or joy. It is totally dark, there is no other psalm that I know of, no other passage in Scripture. Even the book of Lamentations has some light moments in it. I'm not going to read the whole psalm but I suggest you would perhaps benefit from doing so. Keep your finger in Psalm 88 and I want you to turn to 1 Peter 1:10–11. I'm reading this to bring out a principle which will help us.

> "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that [would] come to you [that's you believers], searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."

There's a principle of how many Old Testament prophecies about the Spirit of Christ, that's the Spirit of the Messiah, was in them and through them testified of two things: the sufferings and then the glory that was to follow, both of the Messiah. But the particular point is that they spoke in the first person. They said "I" and "me" but they said things that never happened to them. No wonder they were baffled. When you think of David saying, "They pierced my hands and my feet, they divided my garments and cast lots for them. They gave me vinegar to drink." It never happened to David. How would you feel if the Holy Spirit moved upon you to make statements about yourself that never happened to you? No wonder they were baffled, no wonder they searched, no wonder they said, "What is this I'm saying?" The answer is, they're not speaking of themselves, they were speaking to us and it was the Spirit of the Messiah speaking in them in the first person revealing the sufferings and the glory. You'll find in many, many passages, many of the psalms, many of the prophets the person speaking starts out in his own experience. He's having a hard time, his enemies are pursuing him, he's sick, whatever it may be. And he's dealing with his own situation but then he goes on to say things about himself that are no longer true of himself. They're only true and they're only fulfilled in Jesus. The Holy Spirit didn't just put the person in a totally isolated, artificial situation but used the situation of the person to project them into a prophecy which went beyond their own situation and unveiled the sufferings of Christ and the glory that was to follow.

If you can accept that principle, then I think you'll understand Psalm 88 which is one conspicuous example of this, as I see it. I'll start at the beginning and read through verse 7.

> "O LORD, the God who saves me [the God of my salvation], day and night I cry out before you. May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry."

That is purely or could be purely a human situation. But the next words go beyond that.

> "For my soul is full of trouble, and my life draws near to the grave [I prefer to say Sheol, the place of departed spirits]. I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength."

There's one translation that says "I am like a man without God."

> "I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care."

That, I don't think, happened to the psalmist. He's gone beyond his own experience. "I'm like the slain who lies in the grave." Verse 8 is clearly beyond his own experience.

> "You have put me in the lowest pit..."

All this is speaking about the other world, the world down below the earth.

> "... in the darkest depths [the darkest of all the pits]. Your wrath lies heavily upon me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves."

Another translation: "all your waves have gone over me." What a picture!

Then we could read more but I'll move on to the end of the psalm, verses 15–18.

> "From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death..."

Always ready to die. That was certainly true of Jesus. He was born to die.

> "... I have suffered your terrors and am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me."

This is not in this world, this is what the soul of Jesus went through in completing the atonement for our sins. This is part of the penalty of sin: to be banished from God, for all his waves of wrath to go over you. And if Jesus was to pay the price of sin He had to pay the full price. Verse 17:

> "All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. You have taken my companions and loved ones from me; the darkness is my closest friend."

What a vivid translation.

Now, in this passage the psalmist asks six questions. Psalm 88:10–12, you'll see there are six questions. I suspect that when the psalmist asked the questions he assumed the answer was no to each one: Will Thou perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise and praise Thee? Will Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave, Thy faithfulness in the place of destruction? (Hebrew word, abaddon, which you'll find in Revelations 9.) Will Thy wonders be made known in the darkness and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Historically, what is the answer to those six questions? Yes or no? Yes, that's right. The psalmist didn't know it, but when Jesus went down into the grave, every one of those questions received the answer yes. That's why He went down.

He went and preached to the spirits that were in prison. He released the righteous dead who were in Abraham's bosom. Every one of those things that the psalmist asked in unbelief was answered by the atonement of Jesus. To me, that's pictured by the scapegoat led off into a land bearing the iniquities of all God's people; without hope, without any way out. I say again to everybody here, you either accept the scapegoat or you become one. It's not God's will that that should be the lot of any person here, but the only way to escape is through the sacrifice of Jesus.

We're still on Page 9/2, are you with me? The fourth point about two-thirds of the way down the page: After atonement the high priest resumes his glory and offers the burnt offerings [or holocaust]: total commitment to God. Let's look at that for a moment again, Leviticus 16:24–25.

> "And he shall bathe his body with water in a holy place and put on his clothes, and come forth and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. Then he shall offer up in smoke the fat of the sin offering on the altar."

Notice that their burnt offering was required to complete the atonement but there are two principles which God has made so vivid to me this time—I've never seen them so clearly. First of all, let me say that the holocaust, the total burnt offering, represents total commitment to God. You're just there and it's over, you're consumed, there's nothing left. That's commitment. That's God's picture of commitment. You're on the altar and there's nothing there to be taken back. It all goes up to God.

There's two principles. First of all, you can't make commitment till you've offered your sin offering. Sin has to be dealt with before you can make a commitment. Some of you people said, "I made a commitment and God didn't seem to accept." Maybe He didn't because you can't make a commitment until sin has been dealt with. God sets the terms. I've seen a lot of people try to make commitment which didn't work. You can't commit until sin has been dealt with. The sin offering comes first, then the burnt offering.

But, if you want a complete atonement it's not enough to have the sin offering, you have to make the burnt offering. God says, "I want you, all of you. Without reservation, just the way you are. No bargaining, I want you. I want you to be the burnt offering." It's interesting, if you go back in Leviticus— we won't do that—but everything in Leviticus when it's dealing with the tabernacle and furniture and the priesthood starts from God's end, not from man's. So the first item of furniture is the ark and then it moves outwards.

Another thing, the first sacrifice described in Leviticus is the burnt offering. Why? Because Jesus was the first burnt offering. He didn't need a sin offering but He had to be the burnt offering before we could have a sin offering. See that? Just meditate on that. Think of the burnt offering in terms of your total life given to God, consumed in the fire of the Holy Spirit, ablaze with a fragrant odor that's acceptable to God. And then bear in mind the relationship of that to the sin offering.

One more point from the Day of Atonement, the bottom of Page 9/2. The fifth point, atonement was only effective when accompanied by the people's self-humbling or repentance. You remember they had to humble their souls by fasting. In other words, God does His part but that's never a substitute for our response. The high priest could have done everything but if the people had not fasted, their sins would not have been covered.

I think we need to look at that because it's so specific. Leviticus 16:29 and following.

> "This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls, and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you..."

God wants repentance but you can do nothing to purchase your salvation.

> "... for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins ..."

Being clean depended on meeting God's requirements. I think it's very important to see that because there's a kind of sacramental version of Christianity which is sometimes interpreted to mean that as long as the sacrament is performed, you're all right. I don't believe that's true, and I don't believe there's any responsible church which actually teaches that, but it's been interpreted that way millions of times. You can be baptized, christened, confirmed, or whatever; but something in you has got to respond to what's done by the sacrament or it's of no avail. There's nothing automatic that bypasses the human will and the response of the human heart to God.

We're going back now to Hebrews 9. You remember that I said Hebrews is the Leviticus of the New Testament and Leviticus is the Hebrews of the Old? I think as we go on with this in the next chapter you'll see that time and time again. I'm just going to go through my outline and I'll use the NASB translation for the sake of simplicity.

Verse 7 where it says "not without taking blood," is the first occurrence of blood. It's one of the key words. I think we might turn back for a moment, keep your finger on Page 9/2 and turn to Pages 0/4 and 5. You'll find there the key words that we analyzed, high priest, promise, swear, covenant, offer, sacrifice, and, number seven, blood. Interestingly enough, it doesn't occur till chapter 9 and in chapter 9 it occurs twelve times. This is one of the major themes of this chapter.

Going back now to your outline, 9/2. Verses 7–10, God's end purpose is perfection, which includes direct access to God. The Levitical sacrifices could not provide this, since they could not change the heart. You remember the essence of the Old Covenant was an external law which didn't change the heart. A changed heart is required for access to God. The theme of this, in a sense, the goal of Hebrews is perfection, completeness, maturity. Together with that there are two other words, how many of you can remember the other two words? I remember! Inheritance and rest. You remember the three goals: perfection, inheritance and rest. They're all wrapped up together.

Anything that doesn't produce perfection is insufficient. And perfection, in turn, requires direct access to God. If we stop short of the second veil we have not attained to perfection.

Now looking in Hebrews 9.

> "... both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience..."

Okay. That's the problem, they cannot make the worshiper perfect. Look at some other Scriptures in Hebrews for a moment. Going back to Hebrews 6:1.

> "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ [or the Messiah], let us press on to maturity."

But I would prefer that they say perfection because it's that word. You remember it's got three different translations: perfection, maturity, completeness. But it's all one and the same word; it's the goal—perfection. So, let us press on to perfection, let us not stop short. Let's not stay outside that second veil.

Then in chapter 7:19:

> "... (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God [through which we have access to God]."

So notice, being made perfect includes having access to God. Anything that stops short of that is not perfect.

Then in Hebrews 10:19–22:

> "Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter [into] the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience ..."

You notice where it says "perfection" it also implies "inside the second veil." Let us draw near into the Holy of Holies. In other words, in a certain sense, the theme of Hebrews is how to get into the Holy of Holies. That's all contained, in a certain sense, in my outline called "The Way into the Holiest."

Now we have just a little longer so let's continue with verse 10. We're in Hebrews 9:10.

> "... [the sacrifices and ordinances of the Levitical covenant] relate[d] only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation [or of setting things right]."

That time of reformation or of establishing a new order is referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:16–18. Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

We are no longer interested in the historical Jesus—that's the essence of it. We are concerned with the eternal, divine, unchanging Christ who doesn't just speak Aramaic but can understand all languages. Verse 17:

> "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature [I much prefer new creation]; the old things have passed away... new things have come."

That's the new order. It comes through the knowledge of Christ, through direct access to Christ. And in Revelation 21:4–5 we have the same picture. We'll begin in the middle of verse 4.

> "... there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

All those belong to the old order, thank God! Are you glad they belong to the old order? No more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. There was a man who had a serious illness which gave him tremendous pain and he ultimately died of it. But, he was a believer so he ordained that on his tombstone they should write, "There shall be no more pain." I think there are many people that will be glad of that. The first things have passed away. And then it says:

> "And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"

So, there's going to be a totally new order brought about by a divine, creative act of God who's on the throne, who carries out His own edicts.

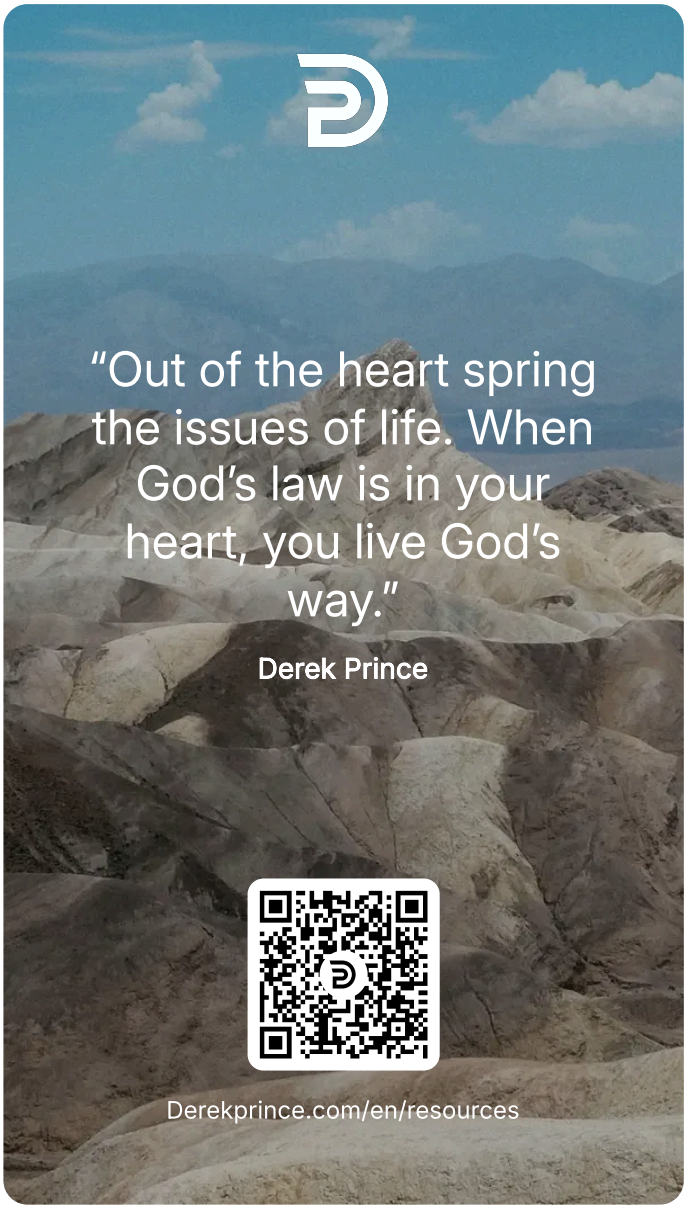
Then I'm sure John paused and thought, Could that be true? That's surely too much. And the one on the throne said:

> "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

We did succeed in getting to the top of Page 9/3. God helping us, we'll continue there.

Sermon

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