



## 22. Jesus the Great High Priest (Hebrews 8–13)

*“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”  
(9:11–12)*

### “O Thou, Before the World Began” (hymn no. 189)

1. O thou, before the world began,  
Ordained a sacrifice for man,  
And by th’eternal Spirit made  
An off’ring in the sinner’s stead;  
Our everlasting Priest art thou,  
Pleading thy death for sinners now.

2. Thy off’ring still continues new  
Before the righteous Father’s view.  
Thyself the Lamb forever slain;  
Thy priesthood doth unchanged remain.  
Thy years, O God, can never fail,  
Nor thy blest work within the veil.

3. Oh, that our faith may never move  
But stand unshaken as thy love,  
Sure evidence of things unseen;  
Now let it pass the years between  
And view thee bleeding on the tree:  
My Lord, my God, who dies for me.

<https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/o-thou-before-the-world-began?lang=eng>

## Structure of Hebrews

- **Introduction (Treatise): God Has Spoken by His Son (1:1-4)**
- **Body (Homily)**
  - Superiority of Jesus as God's Son (1:5-4:13)
  - Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood (4:14-7:28)
  - **Superiority of Jesus' Sacrifice and Ministry (8:1-10:18)**
  - **Availing Oneself of Jesus' Priestly Work: Faith and Endurance (10:19-12:29)**
- **Conclusion (Epistle)**
  - **Ethical Exhortations: Injunctions about Practice (13:1-19)**
  - Blessings and Greetings (13:20-25)

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## Jesus and the Aaronic High Priest



- **Represented the people to God and God to the people**
- **Wore distinctive vestments**
  - Onyx stones on his shoulders and the twelve gems on his breastplate represented the tribes of Israel
  - Golden plate on his miter bore **the sacred name of the Lord, YHWH**, in the formula "Holiness to the Lord"
  - The blue, purple, scarlet, and white colors of the ephod matched the colors of the temple veil, which Josephus said represented the air, sea, fire, and earth
- **On Yom Kippur, the high priest alone, dressed all in white, entered the Holy of Holies**

Above: **Temple Priests Pronouncing the Priestly Benediction.** In this scene the high priest, dressed in his colored, formal vestments is joined by his fellow priests to pronounce the blessing recorded in Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Here the clothing of the priests is depicted in accordance with the biblical evidence of Exodus 28 and the first century AD description of Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* 6.7.1-6 (§151-178). Used by permission Balage Balogh.

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## Superiority of Jesus' Sacrifice and Ministry (8:1–10:18)



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- **Mediator of a Better Covenant (8:1–13)**
- **The Mosaic Sanctuary and Sacrifices versus the Atonement of Christ (9:1–28)**
  - **Earthly vs. Heavenly Sanctuaries (9:1–5)**
  - *Yom Kippur* and Blood of Christ (9:6–14)
  - **Christ, Mediator of the New Covenant (9:15–22)**
  - Christ's Sacrifice Takes Away Sins (9:23–28)
- **Christ's Sacrifice Once and for All (10:1–18)**

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## Mediator of a Better Covenant (8:1–13)

- “Now has [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant (*diathēkē*), which was established upon better promises.” (8:6)
- “For if the first covenant [the Law of Moses] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second . . . For **this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days**, saith the Lord; ***I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.***” (8:7–10; Jeremiah 31:31–34)
  - Cf. the Last Supper: “And he said unto them, ***This is my blood of the new testament (diathēkē or covenant), which is shed for many.***” (Mark 14:24)

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# Earthly vs. Heavenly Sanctuaries (9:1-5)

The Mosaic Sanctuary and the Atonement of Christ (9:1-28)



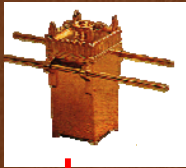
- Hebrews focuses on **the Mosaic Tabernacle** rather than the Temple of Solomon or Herod, perhaps because it was the prototype of all subsequent sanctuaries or perhaps because the Jerusalem Temple was seen as deficient (no ark, etc.), rejected, or had already been destroyed

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The Tabernacle and Its Furnishings



Altar of Incense  
(representing prayer)


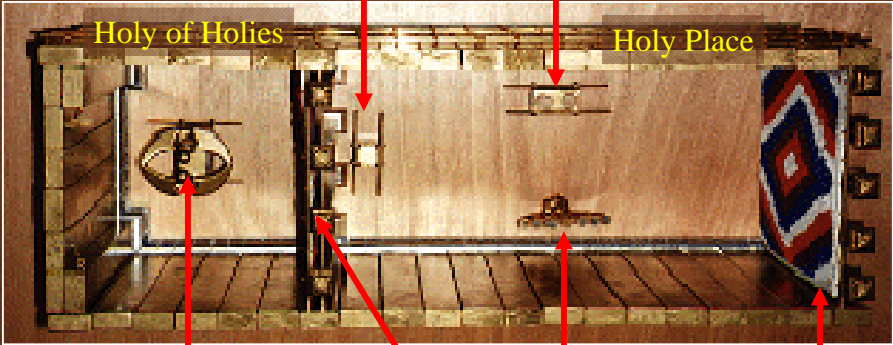



Table of Shewbread




Holy of Holies      Holy Place


East  
→



Ark of the Covenant



Menorah  
(light and power of the Holy Ghost)



Second Veil

First Veil



# Yom Kippur and Blood of Christ (9:6-14)

The Mosaic Sanctuary and the Atonement of Christ (9:1-28)



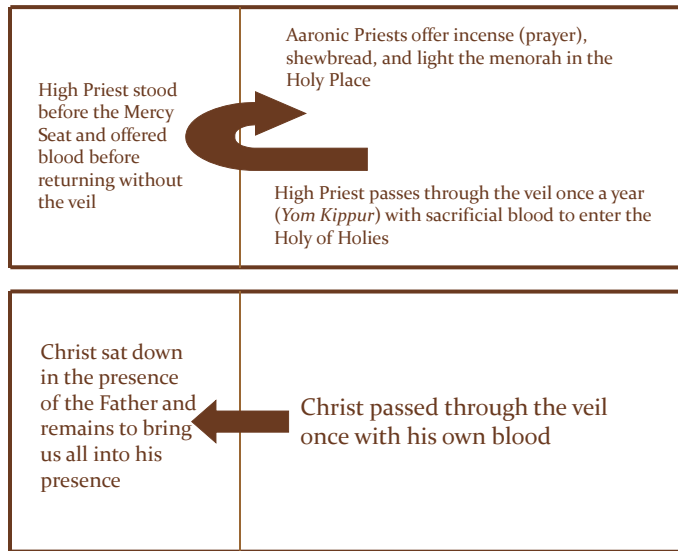
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- **Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement**
  - The only time each year that the high priest went into the Holy of Holies (symbolizing the presence of God) and stood before the mercy seat
  - “But **into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood**, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing . . .” (9:7-8)
- **Whereas the Aaronic high priest performed the Yom Kippur rites yearly, Christ performed the Atonement once and for all**
  - “But **Christ being come an high priest of good things to come**, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, **but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us**” (9:11-14)
  - “. . . **How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**” (9:14)
    - “**from dead works**” sounds Pauline!

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## Christ, the New High Priest

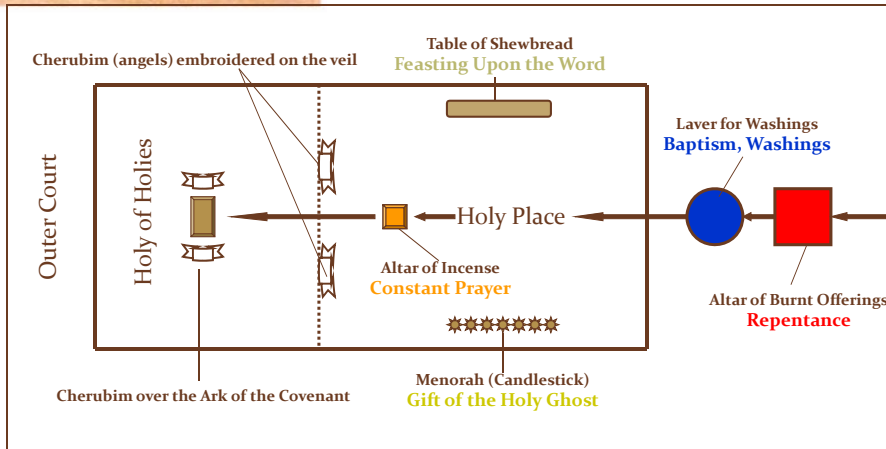


When Christ died on the cross, the veil of the temple was rent (Matt 27:51), symbolizing that all (not just the high priest) now had access to the presence of God through Christ

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## Pressing Forward in Christ: Using Tabernacle/Temple Imagery to Illustrate the Doctrine of Christ (vis-à-vis 2 Nephi 31!)



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## Christ, Mediator of the New Covenant (9:15–22)

- “And for this cause **he is the mediator of the new testament (*diathēkē* = covenant)** . . . **For where a testament (*diathēkē* = will) is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament (*diathēkē* = will) is of force after men are dead:** otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” (9:15–17)
  - ***Diathēkē* means both “covenant” and “will” [exegesis]**
    - In these passages the Greek goes back and forth between these two meanings
    - A “will” does not go into effect until the one who makes it dies
  - **The JST uses “covenant” throughout and changes “testator” (the Greek means “one who makes a will”) to “victim” (meaning “sacrificial victim) [exposition]**
    - **The sense in the JST is that a covenant in antiquity was “sealed” with a sacrifice**
    - The Law of Moses (the “old” covenant) was inaugurated with the sacrifice of animal victims; the Law of Christ (the “new” covenant) was ushered in by the death of Jesus (see again Mark 14:24)

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## Christ's Sacrifice Takes Away Sins (9:23–28)

- “**For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, **as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others . . .** but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and **unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.**” (9:23–28)
  - Note the eschatological reference to the Parousia, thus a possible point of contact with 1 Thessalonians

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## Christ's Sacrifice Once and for All (10:1–18)

- “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: **But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God**; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (10:11–14)

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## Transition: A Call to Persevere (10:19–39)

### Availing Oneself of Jesus' Priestly Work (10:19–12:29)

- **“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . .** Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. **Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;** (for he is faithful that promised;) **And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”** (10:19–24)
  - **“let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works** the call to good works (as opposed to the “dead works” of the law) provides the transition to a discussion of faith and endurance
- **Beware of Willful Sin** (10:26–31)
  - “For if we sin wilfully (*hekousiōs*) after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (10:26–27; cf. 6:6 )
    - “If we deliberately sin . . .” (NIV)
  - **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”** (10:31)
- **Recall Past Persecution and Faithfulness** (10:32–39)
  - “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions” (10:32)
  - “For ye had compassion of me in my bonds . . .”
    - **Sounds like Paul!**

## Availing Oneself of Jesus' Priestly Work: Faith (10:19–12:29)

- **The Meaning of Faith** (11:1–3)
  - “Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.” (11:1)
    - **substance** (*hypostasis*): confidence, assurance, conviction
    - **evidence** (*elenchos*): verification, certainty, proof
    - **“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”** (11:1 NIV)
- **Examples of Faith** (11:4–40): “But without faith *it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” (11:6)
  - The Examples of Abel, Enoch, and Noah (11:4–7)
  - The Faith of Abraham (11:8–22)
  - The Faith of Moses (11:23–28)
  - The Faith of Other Israelite Heroes (11:29–40)



## Availing Oneself of Jesus' Priestly Work: Endurance (10:19–12:29)

- **The Example of Jesus** (12:1–13)
  - “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**” (12:1–2)
    - Run the race . . . Cf. 2 Tim 4:7
- **Warnings Against Rejecting God's Grace** (12:14–21)
  - The negative example of Esau (12:16–17)
  - The negative example of the Children of Israel who could not approach fiery Mt. Sinai (12:18–21)
- **Seeking a Heavenly Kingdom** (12:22–29)
  - “But ye are come unto **mount Sion**, and unto **the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels, **To the general assembly and church of the firstborn**, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant . . .” (12:22–24)
    - Heavenly Jerusalem—cf. Augustine's *City of God*
    - The general assembly, etc.—cf. D&C 76:66–69, 107:19, etc.
      - **Church of the Firstborn**—firstborn here is actually plural “the firstborn ones!”
      - *Reference to those who come forth as the “firstfruits of the resurrection?”*