



The Great High Priest

FINISH CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED LECTURE.
JESUS AND MOSES. JESUS AND MELCHIZEDEK. THE
DAY OF ATONEMENT AND THE WORK OF JESUS.

Hebrews 1-9.

“With Wondering Awe” (December hymn no. 210)

1. With wond’ring awe the wisemen saw
The star in heaven springing,
And with delight, in peaceful night,
They heard the angels singing:

Chorus

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna to his name!

2. By light of star they traveled far
To seek the lowly manger,
A humble bed wherein was laid
The wondrous little Stranger.

3. And still is found, the world around,
The old and hallowed story,
And still is sung in ev’ry tongue
The angels’ song of glory:

4. The heav’nly star its rays afar
On ev’ry land is throwing,
And shall not cease till holy peace
In all the earth is growing

“O Thou, Before the World Began” (April 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>

Hebrew: A Glorious Conundrum



WHAT IS IT? WHO WROTE IT? TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN?

Overview of the Book of Hebrews

- Technically not a letter: **starts as a treatise, reads like a sermon, closes as an epistle**
- Date: **Unknown**
 - Written either in A.D. 60's, *before* the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which is never mentioned)
 - Perhaps in the A.D. 80's, *after* the temple was destroyed, because of the emphasis on a heavenly temple and the replacement of the Mosaic system)
- Authorship: **Not identified in the text**
 - The attribution to Paul in the superscription (title) appears late
- Place of Composition: **Not identified**
 - Greetings are extended from “those *from Italy*” (13:24), perhaps Jewish Christians living in Rome or Italy or, more likely, Jews from Rome away from home in Jerusalem or elsewhere (see Acts 2:10).
- To: **Not specified**
 - Presumably to Jewish Christians (hence the title “To the Hebrews”) or to other Christians attracted to or influenced by the Jewish temple cult
 - The addressees may have themselves lived in Italy (see above).

The Question of Authorship

- **“As to who actually wrote the epistle [to the Hebrews], only God knows the truth of the matter.** According to the account which has reached us, some say that the epistle was written by Clement, who became bishop of the Romans; **others, that it was written by Luke**, the writer of the Gospel and the Acts.” (Origen of Alexandria, c. A.D. 185–254, quoted in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 6.25.14)
- **Jerome (A.D. 340–420), who translated the Bible into Latin, thought that Paul was the author.**
 - Subsequent mss. listed “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews” in the superscription, but there is not reference to Paul by name or event in the text
- **Did Joseph Smith think that Paul wrote Hebrews?**
 - There seems to be a reference to Pauline authorship in D&C 128:15, which quotes Hebrews 11:40
 - Referred to Paul as the presumed author in relation to verses from Hebrews 4:2, 6:2, 11:4–7, 11:5–6, 11:10, 12:22–24 in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 59, 99, 158–59, 168, 170
 - The JST simply repeats the title that the Phinney KJV edition of Joseph Smith had “the Epistle to the Hebrews” (does not mention Paul but neither did most of the other epistles)

Proposal on Authorship

- The ancient idea of authorship
 - The *auctor* was the originator of or the authority behind the ideas of a work
- The earliest Church authorities already suspected a Pauline connection
 - “[Clement] says indeed that it was Paul’s, but that it was written for Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue, and that *Luke, having carefully translated it, published it for the Greeks*; hence as a result of translation, the same complexion of style is found in this Epistle and in the Acts . . .” (Eusebius citing Clement in Hist Eccl 6.14.2f)
 - “. . . If I were to state my own opinion, I should say that **the thoughts are the apostle’s**, but that *the style and composition belong to one who called to mind the apostle’s teachings and, as it were, made short notes of what the master said.*” (Eusebius citing Origen in Hist Eccl 6.25.11-13)
- Luke, Barnabas (he was a Levite!), or someone else closely associated with Paul may have written it, but the ideas and teachings could still be Paul’s!
 - *“I am not really concerned, and no man of faith should be, about the exact authorship of the books of the Bible. More than one Prophet may well have written parts of books now collected under one heading.* I do not know. There may have been ‘ghost writers’ in those days, as now. The Lord gave Aaron to Moses in an equivalent capacity, and spoke to Israel through Moses by the mouth of Aaron. He may have done the same in other cases. If so, what of it? Shakespeare’s literature is neither lost nor dimmed because Bacon may have written it.” (J. Reuben Clark, *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life*, 210)

Superiority of Jesus in Hebrews



“God hath spoken to us by his Son . . .”

Christological Treatise Statement

- *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” (1:1–4)*
 - *Earlier dispensations, particularly that of Moses, were incomplete compared to the full revelation of the gospel by and in Christ*
 - Reflects an extraordinarily high christology, like that in John 1:1–18
 - **Christ as creator and sustainer of the universe** reflects the hymn of Colossians 1:15–17
 - **Christ’s superiority over the angels** also recalls the argument of Colossians

Superior to the Angels, Jesus nonetheless Suffered *Exaltation Through Abasement (Hebrews 2:5–18)*

- **“Abasement” in Hebrews = kenosis or “condescension” in the Philippians Christ hymn**
- “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; ***that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*** For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren . . .” (2:9–11)
- “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, ***that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation (hilaskesthai) for the sins of the people.*** For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” (2:17–18)
 - ***hilaskesthai***: NIV renders this “make atonement for the sins”; NJB, “expiate the sins”

Superiority over Moses

Jesus as God's Son (Hebrews 3:1-4:13)

- **Moses a Servant, Christ a Son (3:1-6)**
 - “And Moses verily *was* faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But **Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we**, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” (3:5-6)
- **The Promised Rest of God (4:1-11)**
 - **“Rest” = Promised Land (Canaan) = Heaven**

Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood (Hebrews 4:14–7:28)

- **Jesus the Great High Priest (4:14–5:10)**
 - “Seeing then that **we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God**, let us hold fast *our* profession. *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (4:14-16)
 - “**Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest...as [God] said also in another place, ‘Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek’ [Ps. 110:4]... [Christ was] called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek.**” (Heb. 5:5–6, 10)
- The Priestly Order of Melchizedek (7:1–28; cf. Gen. 14, Psalm 110)
 - Melchizedek = “King of Righteousness,” both a personal name and a title
 - A king and a priest
 - Melchizedek a type of shadow of Christ

Superiority of Jesus' Sacrifice and Ministry



Jesus and the Aaronic High Priest (Hebrews 8:1–10:18)



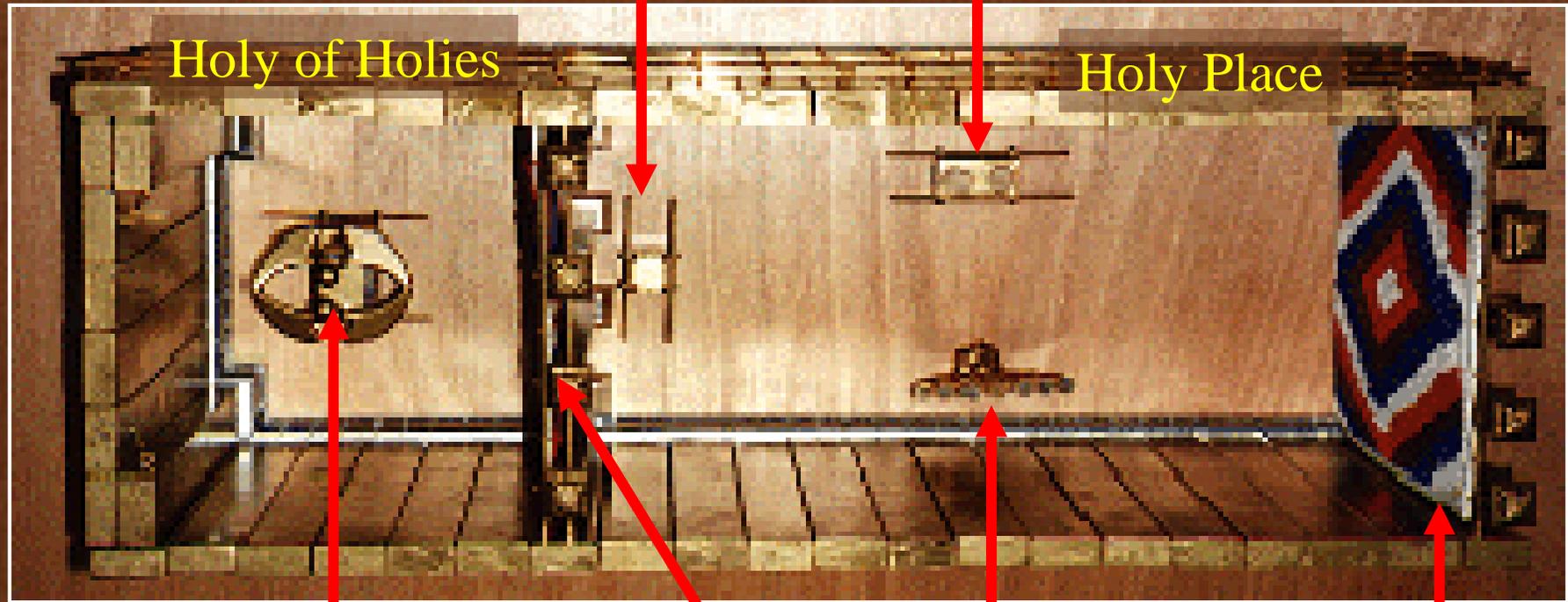
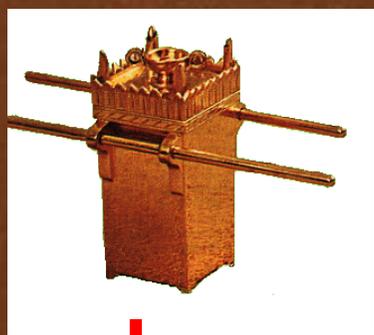
26. The Great High Priest

- **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)**

Mediator of a Better Covenant (Hebrews 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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Second Veil



Menorah

Light and power of
the Holy Ghost

First Veil

Ark of the
Covenant

26. The Great High Priest

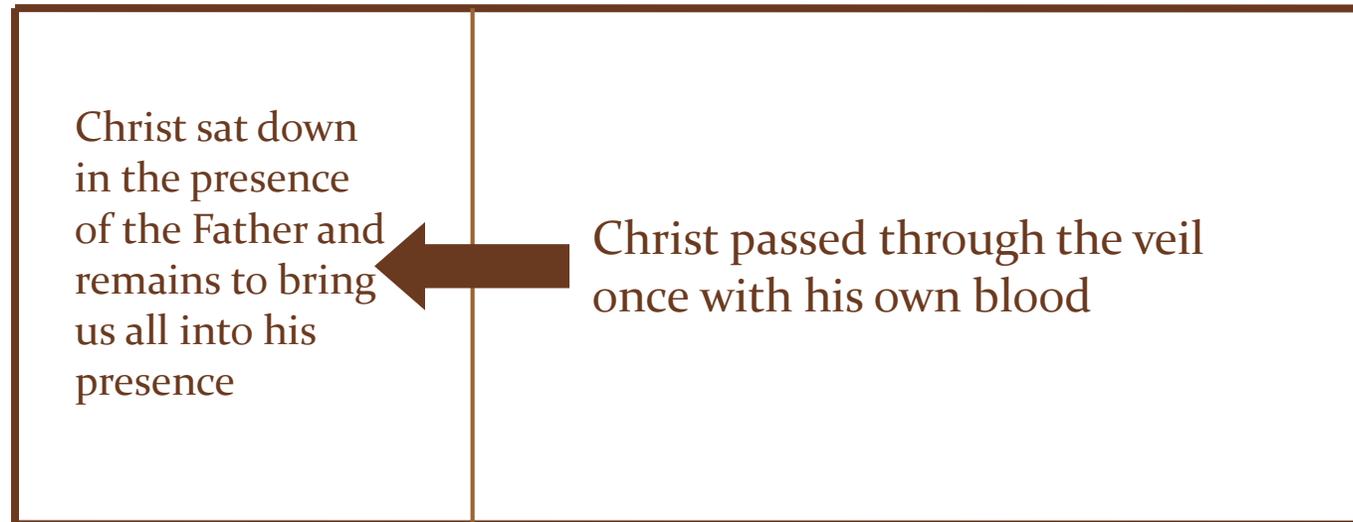
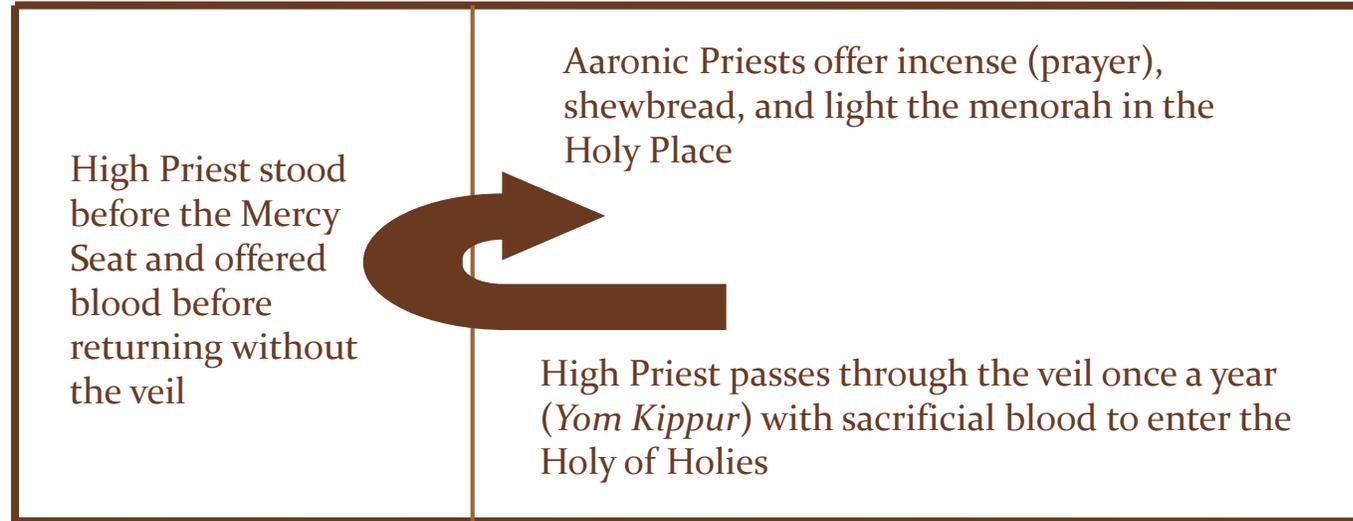
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Yom Kippur and Blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:6-14)

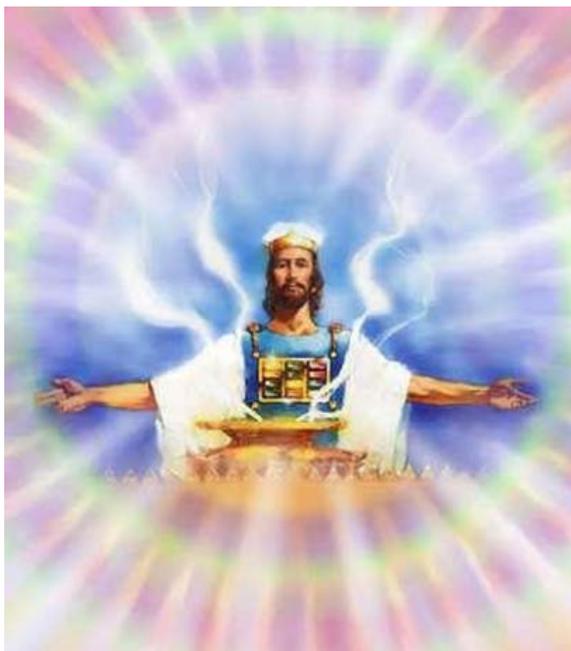


- **Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement**
 - The only time each year that the high priest went into the Holy of Holies (symbolizing the presence of God) and stood before the mercy seat
 - “But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and 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)



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

Christ's Sacrifice Takes Away Sins (Hebrews 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