

# JESUS IS BETTER

An In-Depth Study of Hebrews

## Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Hebrews 1:1-4	Introduction to Hebrews, God's Final Word in His Son
2	Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4	Jesus is Greater Than the Angels
3	Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6	Jesus' Sonship is Greater than Moses' Servanthood
4	Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13	Jesus' Rest is Better than Joshua's Rest
5	Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10	Jesus, Our Great Appointed High Priest
6	Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20	Exhortation to Persevere in Light of God's Promises
7	Hebrews 7:1-28	Jesus, The Greater Melchizedekian High Priest
8	Hebrews 8:1-13	Jesus, The Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
<b>9</b>	<b>Hebrews 9:1-22</b>	<b>Jesus' Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle</b>
10	Hebrews 9:23 - 10:39	Persevere In Light of Jesus' Sacrifice
11	Hebrews 11:1-40	The Faith of the Ancients in Action
12	Hebrews 12:1-29	Running the Race with Perseverance
13	Hebrews 13:1-25	Concluding Words

## Recap from Session 8

### Hebrews 8:1-13

- The pastor begins to talk about the new covenant under which Jesus serves as a priest.
- This new covenant is superior to the old covenant in the same way that the Melchizedekian priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood.
- When God announced the establishment of the new covenant, he is essentially declaring the first covenant to be obsolete. From the pastor's quotation of Jeremiah 31:31ff, we recognise that the first covenant that God is referring to is the covenant made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19).
- In this new covenant, God will put his laws in the hearts of his people and that his people will not need a mediator anymore to help them know God (v11) – they will all know him because he will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.

## Structure of Hebrews

- **Hebrews 1:1-4 – God has Spoken to Us in a Son Who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 1:5 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Greater Sonship**
  - Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4 – Jesus is Greater than the Angels
  - Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6 – Jesus’ Sonship is Greater than Moses’ Servanthood
  - Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Rest is Better than Joshua’s Rest
- ***Transition Passage - Hebrews 4:14-16 – Jesus, the Son of God who is also High Priest***
- **Hebrews 5:1 – 10:39 – Jesus’ Greater Priesthood**
  - Hebrews 5:1 – 6:20 – Exhortation to Persevere in light of Jesus’ Priesthood
  - Hebrews 7:1-28 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest in the order of Melchizedek (this session)
  - Hebrews 8:1-13 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
  - **Hebrews 9:1-22 – Jesus’ Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle (this session)**
  - Hebrews 9:23 – 10:18 – Jesus’ Greater Sacrifice in the True Tabernacle in the New Covenant
  - Hebrews 10:19-39 – Persevere in light of Jesus’ Sacrifice
- **Hebrews 11 – Perseverance by Faith of the Ancients**
- **Hebrews 12:1-3 – Fix our Eyes Upon Jesus**
  - Hebrews 12:4-17 – Endure God’s Discipline as Sons
  - Hebrews 12:18-28 – We Have Come to a Better Mountain
- **Hebrews 13:1-25 – Concluding Exhortations**

## The Earthly and Heavenly Tabernacle

In Hebrews 9, the author elaborates on the ministry of the high priesthood of Jesus. He contrasts the Old Testament worship and sacrifices in the tabernacle with the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the greater tabernacle. He first recounts the elaborate structure of the tabernacle and the Levitical rituals of the priesthood during Moses’ years. However, these cultic rituals are not enough to clear the conscience of those who approached YHWH in those days. (9:9).

However, with Christ as the high priest, he did not serve at an earthly tabernacle. As mentioned in our previous sessions, with the change in priesthood, there must be a change in the tabernacle and sacrifice. By serving in the heavenly tabernacle and offering himself as a sacrifice, he is able to do away with sin. In Hebrews 9, it is the pastor showing to his hearers how much greater this high priest is, and how he is able to save completely those who have faith in him.

## Hebrews 9:1-28

### Worship in the Earthly Tabernacle

**9** Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. <sup>2</sup>A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup>Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup>which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup>Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

<sup>6</sup>When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. <sup>7</sup>But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. <sup>8</sup>The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. <sup>9</sup>This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. <sup>10</sup>They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

### The Blood of Christ

<sup>11</sup>But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, <sup>v</sup> he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. <sup>12</sup>He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup>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, <sup>h</sup> so that we may serve the living God!

<sup>15</sup>For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

<sup>16</sup>In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, <sup>17</sup>because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. <sup>18</sup>This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. <sup>19</sup>When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. <sup>20</sup>He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." <sup>t</sup><sup>21</sup>In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. <sup>22</sup>In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 9:1–22.

## Worship in the Earthly Tabernacle

Discuss: Imagine yourself as an Israelites in those days. What would be your impression of the whole sacrificial system? What would be your impression of Yhwh? (Remember that the Israelites did not have access into the Holy Place)

Now imagine yourself as a Levitical priest. What would be your impression of the sacrificial system? What would be your impression of Yhwh?

9:1-5 – “Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary...”

v2-5 – Description of the tabernacle

Lampstand – Ex 25:31-40, 37:17-24

v4 – Altar of incense (cf. Lev 16:12-13)

Gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that budded, and stone tablets – Ex 16:32-34, Num 17:10-11

9:6-7 – “...only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year...”

Everything in v.6 emphasizes the continuous, repetitive nature of the priests’ ministry and its consequent limitation to “the First Tent.”<sup>2</sup>

“regularly” – Ex 27:20, Ex 30:8, Ex 25:30

9:8-10 – “This is an illustration for the present time...”

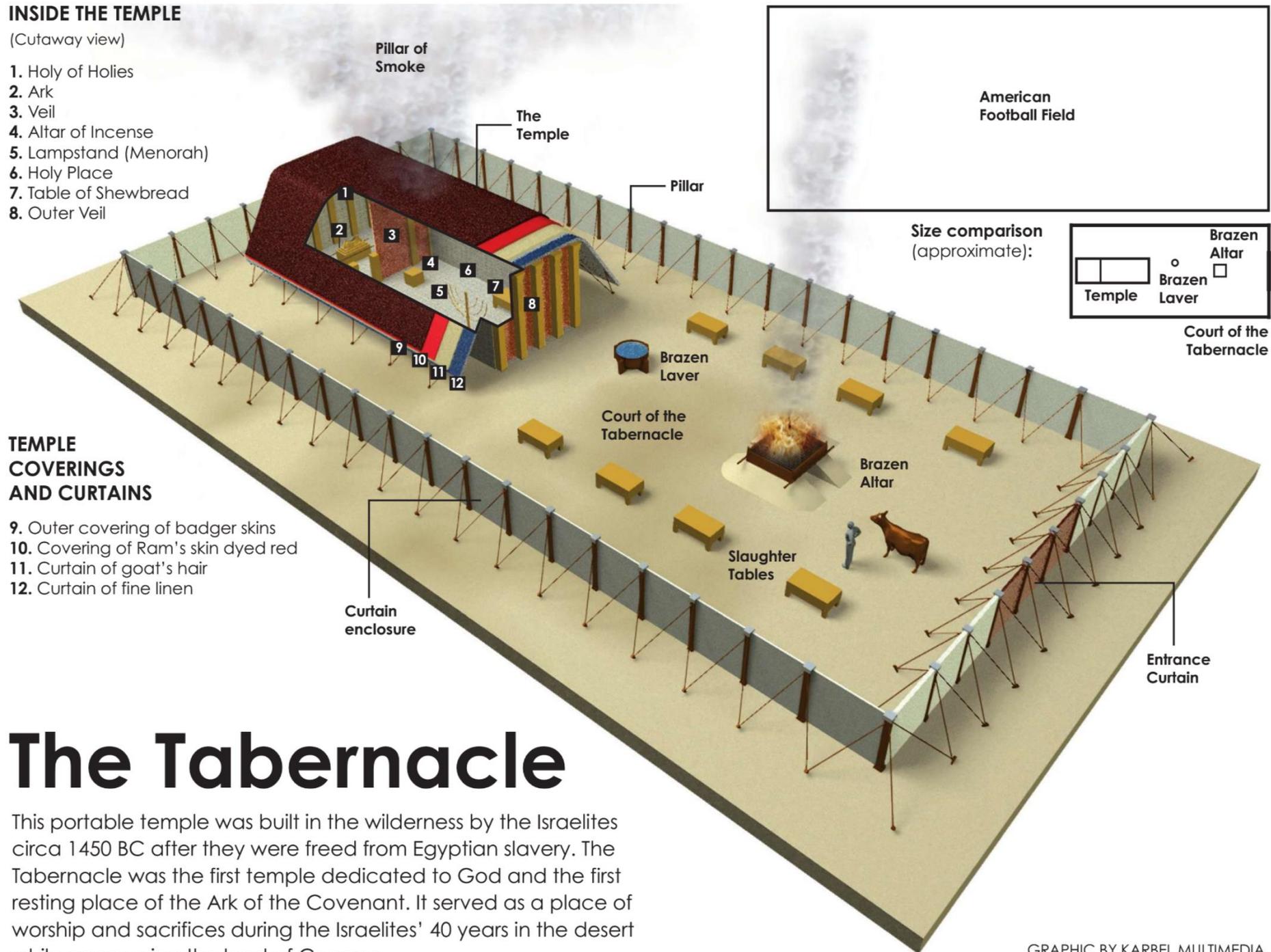
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<sup>2</sup> Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012), 379.

## INSIDE THE TEMPLE

(Cutaway view)

1. Holy of Holies
2. Ark
3. Veil
4. Altar of Incense
5. Lampstand (Menorah)
6. Holy Place
7. Table of Shewbread
8. Outer Veil



## TEMPLE COVERINGS AND CURTAINS

9. Outer covering of badger skins
10. Covering of Ram's skin dyed red
11. Curtain of goat's hair
12. Curtain of fine linen

# The Tabernacle

This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1450 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert while conquering the land of Canaan.

## The Sacrifice of Christ

9:11-12 – “...he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle...”

“...the greater and more perfect tabernacle...”

“...eternal redemption...”

9:13-15 – “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ... cleanse our consciences...”

Lesser to greater argument

It was “through the eternal Spirit” that he lived a “blameless” life, offering himself up in death. This reference to the work of the Spirit in Jesus’ earthly life is in accord with the Gospel tradition. It is no denial that while incarnate he continued to be Son (5:8; 10:5-10), but it is an affirmation of the true humanity he then assumed. Unlike many commentators, the pastor would drive no wedge between the Son and the Holy Spirit. Rather, he would emphasize in every way possible that Christ’s High Priesthood, including his sacrifice, was made effective by the “eternal” power of God rather than by the weakness of mortal, sinful humanity (“flesh”). Thus Christ was able to achieve an “eternal redemption” (v.12).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 399.

“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant...”

9:16-20 – “This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.”

9:21-22 – “...the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

## A New Covenant

The author reminds his readers of how worship was conducted in the earthly tabernacle. It involved elaborate processes to purify each element of the temple, including the priests themselves. Even with that, it was never enough to clear the guilty conscience of the worshipper.

However, Christ came as the Melchizedekian high priest who mediates the new covenant. Instead of going through the earthly tabernacle, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle – into the presence of God himself. As a result of that, “those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.” His one sacrifice took away the sins of many, without the need for repeated sacrifices. We praise God for the work of Christ, without whom we would still need to sacrifice animals regularly. As the pastor mentioned, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” It is with Christ’s shed blood on the cross that we have obtained forgiveness.

The pastor leaves the music of the word “release” ringing in his hearers’ ears. This term sets the stage for 9:23 – 10:18, the third and final movement of the pastor’s symphony. In 10:5-10 he will unveil the secret of how Christ’s death provides such deliverance. Then he will conclude by describing the exalted Christ (10:11-14) as mediating the benefits of this deliverance (10:15-18).

The three movements of the pastor’s symphony in praise of Christ’s self-offering each end with a covenant section: 8:7-13, 9:(15)16-22; 10:15-18. The first covenant section described both God’s condemnation of his people for the breach of the First Covenant (8:7-9) and his promise of a New Covenant (8:10-13) characterized by obedience. The second covenant section, which we have just investigated, addresses

the concern raised by the breach of the Old Covenant. It reveals how Christ has removed the condemnation incurred by that breach. The third and final covenant section will describe the benefits of the New Covenant mediated by Christ.<sup>4</sup>

## Homework

**Read Hebrews 1:1 – 10:39.** As you read these chapters, reflect on the themes that the pastor has covered thus far, and see how each theme follows and flows into one another. We are slowly climbing the mountain of the climax of the pastor’s sermon, and it’ll help us appreciate the climax all the more when we remember what has come before.

## Bibliography

Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eerdmans, 2012.

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<sup>4</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 411.