

# ***The Book of Hebrews***

## ***Part 23: Restoration and Redemption (Heb. 9:6-12)***

### **I. Our Natural State**

Having brought up different parts of the tabernacle—which we found all pointed to Jesus—the author now returns to his overarching point about the High Priest of Israel. We now come to the pinnacle of the covenant, sacrifices, and overall work of the priests in the Day of Atonement.

**6 Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle (the holy place) performing the divine worship, 7 but into the second (the Holy of holies), only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.**

**8 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, 9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, 10 since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.**

**(Hebrews 9:6-10)**

The writer is speaking of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, where the High Priest would offer up sacrifices for the sins of the entire nation. We touched on this earlier in our study when we were first introduced to the idea of the High Priest (Hebrews 2:17 & 3:1). In this passage, the writer is finally unpacking the full meaning of this, declaring that this pinnacle of all Jewish religion was just a “symbol” for the present time.

This is what we found with the items in the tabernacle. All of them were *symbolically* pointing to different aspects of the glorious Gospel of Christ—who he is and what he has done. The author says the entire temple and all that took place there, including the great Day of Atonement, was a “symbol” for the present time.

We are now in that present time. The symbols have made way for reality.

What is that reality? The passage says that these gifts and sacrifices around the symbols could not make the worshiper “perfect in conscience.” Our reality of today is that we can now *presently* be perfect in our conscience. In other words, right at this moment we can have a consciousness of being innocent and pure and holy. In the present moment, we can live in an awareness of forgiveness.

It says the old system with its outward regulations was in place **until a time of reformation**. This is speaking to Jesus's work on the cross. Jesus came and brought a reformation that has done away with the symbols and brought us into what they pointed to.

The Greek word behind "reformation" is *diorthōsis*. Its root word *orthos* is where we get "orthopedic," the medical field dealing with our skeleton and muscles. It means a "straight" and "not crooked."

In Strong's Concordance, one of its first definitions of the word for reformation is the act of **"restoring [something] to its natural and normal condition."** (Strong's G1357).

The reformation Jesus would bring was to restore humanity to its natural and normal condition.

In other words, our natural condition is not sinfulness. Our natural condition is the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27).

The use of this term connects strongly with our understanding of "original blessing." Every human being was created and blessed by God as his beloved child. Salvation then can be described as a restoration project. When a person comes to Christ, they are restored to their true identity.

The evangelical world often thinks of salvation in terms of being "born again," but that is only one analogy used in one chapter of the New Testament to describe salvation. Salvation certainly is like being born again, but in this passage we are going to understand other aspects of Jesus's salvation.

To go further with the orthopedic metaphor—human beings have become "crooked," which is another way to say "wicked." The word wicked comes from the same root word as the term *wicker*. It has to do with something being bent and twisted out of shape. This means something good and straight was there initially, but it came out of alignment.

In Romans 1-2, the apostle Paul explains how the root problem of humanity centered around a misalignment of identity. We forsook the image (identity) of God and therefore lost sight of our own image. This also came with a deep sense of guilt and shame which we see directly in the story of Adam and Eve's fall and their hiding from God (Genesis 3).

Our guilt, fueled by a broken understanding of God, led to wrong actions. As we've discovered in the social sciences (though the scriptures said it first), bad behavior flows from bad beliefs.

Throughout the world, these broken behaviors became ingrained over generations to the point of impacting our bloodlines. Micro-evolution (like the development of unique dogs from one type of wolf) produced and created different forms of wickedness (*wicker-ness!*).

This happened to such a degree that we began to identify these issues as part of our identity.

Thankfully, our conscience was somewhat intact, therefore we retained an echo of the original blessing of our identity. Because we knew something was off, we set up religious systems which included laws meant to guide us back the straight and right path of our original design.

Religion was designed to get us back to the straight path—another way to say “righteousness.” It was also created to find cleansing—forgiveness—from all the guilt and shame we accrued since going against our design. In Romans, Paul describes this as “justification.” The word justification has to do both with forgiveness and freedom from broken behavior.

Justification does not come through outward laws. Rituals and ceremonies could not bring us back into our true and natural state. Paul made the point in several letters to say the Law of Moses could not accomplish this.

However, he also said this does not mean the law was pointless. This is where the orthopedic connection becomes even more relevant...

## **II. The Diagnosis and Surgery of Humanity**

An orthopedic surgeon is called up to bring correction to something in the body. Before that surgeon can operate, a diagnosis must first be made. A person will not want to be put to sleep and cut open unless the problem is clear.

This is a way of describing the purpose of the Old Covenant system. The people thought the law was the solution to their guilt and their sense of being misaligned from their true nature; but this was not the case. Instead, the law exposed—or diagnosed—the problem.

The harder the people tried to fulfill the law, the more they failed. It turned out, the problem was this idea that *I* can fulfill the law and become righteous on my own. That is not how we were designed to live. We were never made to have an independent self. This a deception and this lie of an independent self leads to selfishness. The more someone tries to fulfill some kind of higher code on their own, the more they experience selfishness.

The law was an x-ray exposing this independent, self-focused life. We were made to live by God’s Word over us—not by our own willpower (i.e. *self-effort*). We were not meant to eat fruit that would help us become like God; we were called to rest in his Word that said we were already made in his likeness. We were made for trust and union with God, not independence and self-effort.

Paul expounds on this in Romans after three chapters discussing the law of Moses and the brokenness of humanity. Before transitioning into the good news of a New Covenant in Romans 3:21, he concludes with this statement:

**20 ... because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.**

**(Romans 3:20)**

The author of Hebrews does not use the word “justified” like Paul, but this is an important term getting at the same ideas. It comes from the theological term *justification*. To be “justified” is to be free from guilt and to be re-aligned with our true identity as image-bearers. Again, it is both forgiveness and freedom from sin.

This is what people want through law and religion, yet cannot find it.

The law was only a diagnosis of our problem, preparing us for orthopedic surgery—which was the reformation and justification (salvation) Christ was going to bring.

In other words, Christ was coming to remove guilt and shame, and to restore us to the truth of God’s Word, that we are his beloved image-bearing children in union with him.

This brings us to the next two verses in Hebrew 9.

### **III. The Profound Meaning of Redemption**

**11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come (or “good things that have come”), He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

**(Hebrews 9:11-12)**

The author is explaining that the tabernacle of Moses was made in the pattern of God’s heavenly dwelling place. The priests on earth were doing their religious work in a copy of things above. Jesus did his work as our High Priest in the actual presence of God—in his real dwelling place. The author is further establishing the superiority of what Christ did.

Jesus went into the fullness of God’s presence with the sacrifice of his own blood and through his he *obtained eternal redemption*.

This is another significant word—*lytrōsis*. We just looked at how Jesus brought about a kind of surgical correction to restore humanity to our natural state. Now we will look at what “redemption” means. We will find that this term is just another facet of the diamond of Christ’s finished work.

In ancient times, *lytrōsis* was used when prisoners of war were brought back home through a ransom payment. It was used heavily used for when someone paid for another person in slavery to be released (see *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. 4*).

The word was used in the Septuagint—the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible used by Jesus and his apostles—to describe the Year of Jubilee (see Leviticus 25). This was when slaves, prisoners, and properties were "redeemed." Slaves were freely released from slavery, prisoners were let out of jail, and property was given back to its original owner.

*All of this describes more of what Jesus accomplished with his blood brought before God as our High Priest.*

There is a strong insinuation here that the human race was held captive and enslaved. The property of our "natural state" was good and divine, but it was stolen and held captive to lies and demonic powers. This caused to live out of alignment with our true nature, leading to all kinds of brokenness (including sickness, disease, and death).

This word for redemption was rarely used as payment to an angry god. Unfortunately, this is how many believers understand this term. Many believe Jesus presented his blood as a payment to God to get us out of punishment—as though Jesus paid off the Father. Many believe God somehow needed to punish us because of some medieval sense of justice and therefore Jesus paid the price by being punished for us. This is a doctrine that divides the union of the Trinity in the saving work of Christ.

This understanding of Christ's death is called *Penal Substitution* which we discussed when we first started to look at the life of Melchizedek in Genesis 14. In that session, we learned how Jesus came as a different kind of High Priest to enact a different kind of New Covenant. We found how the evil kings Abraham defeated were symbols of the enemy and the things we have been enslaved to—such as the lie that God is a punisher instead of a Healer.

We will look more at the blood of Christ as we enter deeper into the glorious territory of Hebrews 9. In the meantime, let's remember that God is not of this world. His ways are not our ways. His justice is not like the justice systems of this world.

God's justice is about restoration and redemption. In fact, his way of justice not only restores things, but makes them even better than they were at the beginning.

Through the work of Christ, God came to remove all guilt and to restore us back to his *Word* over us—the eternal truth that we are his image-bearing children. This is why what Jesus accomplished is an *eternal redemption*. This reality is forever settled in heaven and on earth: We are loved and forgiven; he does not remember our sin; we are in fact his glorious children walking in union with him (His identity is ours!).

**Follow-up Encounter:**

*As you prepare to take communion, meditate on the truth that your natural condition is righteousness! Thank God for this reality. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you that your nature is not sinful. You are holy and redeemed and cleansed of all guilt. Celebrate this as you take up the cup and the bread.*