



## NG Study Guide: Hebrews 9:1-28 :: “Jesus’ Greater Sacrifice” [11.26.23]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** In understanding the OT tabernacle and sacrificial system, God’s people can better understand and appreciate the greatness of Jesus’ sacrifice. Those insights should motivate us to prepare for Jesus’ appearance.

**Subject:** The greatness of Jesus’ sacrifice

**Object:** Prepare for Jesus’ appearance

**Context:** Hebrews systematically shows 1<sup>st</sup> Century persecuted Jewish Christians the superiority of Jesus vs. ritual Judaism; and simultaneously shows 21<sup>st</sup> Century believers the superiority of Jesus vs. any claimed substitute. So keep the faith!

#### A. The Earthly Tabernacle and Sacrifice (1-10)

##### 1. The tabernacle reveals God’s love, mercy, holiness, and limited access (1-7)

*Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. <sup>2</sup> For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; <sup>3</sup> and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, <sup>4</sup> which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; <sup>5</sup> and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. <sup>6</sup> Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. <sup>7</sup> But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance.*

God gave specific instructions to Moses to design a tabernacle where God would be worshiped by His people (1-2). There are specific instructions for the design and how God is to be worshiped for not all worship is acceptable to God. The Jews worshipped in the tabernacle beginning around 1450 B.C. The temple was erected by King David’s son Solomon with the same design around 1,000 B.C. (ultimately destroyed by Romans in 70 A.D.). The area around the tabernacle was called the outer court, and there would be the laver, a bronze water basin for ceremonial washing, and the altar for sacrifices.

Inside is called the *sanctuary* (2) or holy place. It measures 45’ x 15’ or 675 sq. ft. and has two compartments. The *first part* (2) has the *lampstand* (2) or menorah made of pure gold with 7 branches and is a symbol of God’s light in the world (John 8:12). The *table and showbread* (2) had twelve loaves of bread representing the twelve tribes of Israel, and God’s provision (John 6). The altar of incense represented the prayers of God’s people ascending to God (Hebrews 7:22, Romans 8:33-34). The only people who entered the tabernacle and temple were Jewish priests (6), all from the tribe of Levi. God’s love, holiness and man’s limited access on God’s terms are revealed.

Inside the tabernacle, was an area called *the Holiest of All* (3) or Holy of Holies. It was separated from the Holy place by a veil (curtain) (3) that was six inches thick. Inside the only furnishing was the ark of the covenant, a 3

foot by 2 foot wooden box covered with gold (4). Inside the ark was a jar of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets containing the Ten Commandments etched by God (4). Upon the ark was the golden lid referred to as the mercy seat covered by golden images of cherubim (angelic beings) (5). There God would manifest His presence as a bright shining cloud. The high priest was the only person who could enter the Holy of Holies, and only one day per year, Yom Kippur, after offering sacrifice for his own sin and the sin of God's people (7). Thus access is extremely limited. In contrast, when Jesus died on the cross the veil was torn from top to bottom revealing that God has given access to Jesus followers (Matthew 27:50-51). In Christ, we are invited to come boldly to God's throne of grace to receive mercy and grace to help in our needs (Hebrews 4:16, 10:19-25).

## **2. The tabernacle had limited effectiveness but pointed to a perfect sacrifice (8-10)**

*<sup>8</sup> the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. <sup>9</sup> It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience <sup>10</sup> concerned only foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.*

The Holy Spirit reveals through the tabernacle that sin separates us from God, that sacrifice for sin is required, and a mediator is needed. The tabernacle reveals that access is limited, and the effectiveness of those sacrifices is limited. The problem is that although sacrifices provided a covering for sin, they had to be repeated, and could not make one right with God (9-10). They were a *symbol* (9) in that they pointed to a later perfect sacrifice and the system would be *reformed* (10) by the new covenant in Christ. The earthly tabernacle was a symbol of the heavenly reality (Hebrews 9:23)

## **B. The Heavenly Tabernacle and Perfect Sacrifice (11-28)**

**1. A better builder: made by God (11)** *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.* Jesus is the High Priest of a greater and more perfect tabernacle made by God, not men instructed by God. It is eternal not temporal, and it is in heaven and not earth (24).

**2. A better sacrifice (12-14)** *Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Jesus enters the *Most Holy Place once for all* (12). Jesus doesn't need to repeat offerings, and His sacrifice is available for all people (Jews and Gentiles). He *offered Himself without spot to God* (14, 1Peter 1:19). Jesus had no imperfection or sin. In the Old Testament the sacrifice is the focus, it is inspected not the offeror. It points to Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Jesus' sacrifice doesn't merely cover sin, but cleans us to renewal of the inner soul and spirit (14).

## **3. A better Mediator and covenant (15-23)**

*And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. <sup>16</sup> For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. <sup>17</sup> For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. <sup>18</sup> Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. <sup>19</sup> For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, <sup>20</sup> saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." <sup>21</sup> Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. <sup>22</sup> And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. <sup>23</sup> Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant (15). A mediator intervenes between two parties to restore peace, and once they ratify a covenant, they are reconciled. In Jesus' case, he is the Mediator between God and man. The means of reconciliation is through His death (15). Jesus' death pays the penalty under the *first covenant* (Mosaic Law) for *transgressions* (sin) to redeem humanity to God (15) so Jesus' followers may receive their eternal inheritance (15). Jesus' death was necessary to make the covenants effective. Just like when a person writes their last will and testament it doesn't become effective until their death (16-17). Similarly, the first covenant (Mosaic Law) was ratified by shedding of the blood of a sacrifice (18). In ancient times, covenants, or sacred agreements were ratified by a sacrifice (e.g. Genesis 15). When Moses delivered the law to the Jews, he sprinkled half the blood of the sacrifice upon the altar, and the other half upon the Jews after they promised to seek to obey. Moses declared, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words" (20, Exodus 24:1-8). With similar words, Jesus ushered in the new covenant, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

*According to the law, without the shedding of blood there is no remission* (22, Leviticus 17:11) or forgiveness of sins. So Jesus had to die for us to live with God, to satisfy the penalty that we deserve that He took upon Himself for us, and to usher in the new covenant. Jesus is not only a perfect Mediator and thus superior to Moses, but the new covenant is superior to the Mosaic. The old is about law, and the new grace. The new brings life, but the former death. The old says, "do" and the new says "done." The old appears to emphasize performance to be right, but the new makes clear that we are right through faith in Christ and what He did at the cross as proven by His resurrection. The new provides the Holy Spirit to empower us to live for Christ.

#### **4. A better appearance (24-28)**

*For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; <sup>25</sup> not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another <sup>26</sup> He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

*<sup>27</sup> And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

##### **a. Jesus presently appears in the presence of the Father for us (24)**

Jesus fulfills the ministry as High Priest *in heaven*, rather than an earthy tabernacle, and *appears in the presence of God for us* (24). He ever lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). So, prepare for this appearance through being a person of prayer.

##### **b. Jesus appeared to put away sin (25-28)**

*He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself* (26). Jesus offered Himself once as the perfect sacrifice for sin to put away sin once and for all who would believe (25-27). His offering does not need to be repeated unlike the old testament sacrifices. Note, *it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment* (27). There is no reincarnation in a Judeo-Christian worldview, no do over. What we do in this life determines what we experience eternally in the life to come. Prepare for this appearance by receiving Jesus through faith.

##### **c. Jesus will appear (2<sup>nd</sup> Coming) (28)**

*To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

Jesus 1<sup>st</sup> Coming removes the barrier of sin at the cross (26), He presently is in heaven interceding for humanity because of the continued effect of sin upon His Creation (24), and He will appear (28). His Second Coming to gather His Church, and vanquish evil, injustice, oppressors, injustice and sin. To establish rightness, and reverse the consequences of sin. Prepare for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming by being disciples who love God supremely, love neighbors as self, and make other disciples who do likewise.

## Study Guide Qs

**Q1. What about the earthly tabernacle and old testament sacrifices helps you to appreciate Jesus?**

**Q2. Imagine offering constant sacrifice for your sins, and wondering if it was accepted by God. How might that feel?**

**Q3. Review the section, “A better Mediator and covenant” (15-23). What did you find interesting, noteworthy, or confusing?**

**Q4. As you contemplate Jesus Second Coming what thoughts or feelings do you have?**

### “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

**1. Watch this brief Bible Project Video overview of Hebrews: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/hebrews/>.**

**2. Here is a link to a helpful free book on prayer: <https://calvarynexus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Prayer-Bruce-Zachary.pdf>.**

### Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

- 1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**
- 2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

### Disciples who make disciples:

- 1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?**
- 2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:  
[Offer to pray with \(or for\) a neighbor where you live, work, study, play or worship.](#)**

### Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### Notes:

**1. Preparation and participation:** Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

**2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?**

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

**3. The “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section, include part of

that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

**4. The “Love your neighbors” section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better.** As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

**5. The “Disciples who make disciples” section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples.** Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.