

The new is better

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[0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 9 verse 11 to 16. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made by hands, not man-made. That is to say, not a part of this creation.

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, having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, or the flesh is unclean, something like that, sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 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, so that we may serve the living God.

So let's pray. Lord, there's so much in these verses that you have spoken. Please don't let us either hear them or speak them without realising something of the power and blessing of these words.

[1 : 55] So help the speaker, help hearers in the building and hearers online to grasp or be grasped by the power of these verses, we pray.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Human beings have deep needs. That's the way we've been made.

We've been made so that we can't be understood as if we were just machines or animals or vegetables.

We can only be understood in relation to the God who made us and in whose world we live. And part of that godness of being human is conscience.

Every human being has a conscience. It may or may not work well, but it is something, as it were, almost in touch with God, which says, this is what God thinks of your life.

[2 : 57] It's not always reliable, but it is there. And I guess everybody in this room knows what it is to say, I feel really bad about something I said or did.

I feel really bad about it. And that is a need. That is something that is within us. Human beings, to one degree or another, and particularly if God is touching their lives, might think, I'm not in touch with the reality as I should be.

I'm in this world, and it's a great world and a glorious world, and there's something about this that I'm missing out on. Distant from reality. I'm here for a purpose.

But I'm out of touch with what that purpose is. And we're made with deep feelings. We're made with hearts. And the heart, as Augustine said, is restless.

Our hearts are restless until they find rest in you. Or as it's sometimes translated, until we find our rest in thee. Which makes it more personal and poetic, doesn't it?

[4 : 08] That's what Augustine of Hippo said. So we observe that humans can grasp and analyse these issues, but the way of resolving them, the way of finding the answer, is spiritual and needs a spiritual answer.

And that's where the book of Hebrews has lots of answers for us, and particularly in the verses. So what I'm going to do for a few minutes is go back to those verses and point out the muscles and bones of them, because it has a structure.

It has sort of bones and muscles, and point out where they are. It has a hinge. From time to time, I'll just disturb the boys and girls, see if they can tell me a few things from this.

Any boys and girls tell us what a hinge is? Have you got any hinges in your body? What's a hinge? Isn't it something on a door?

It is something on a door. In fact, there's a door behind you, which has just been unhinged by my wife. Your elbow is a hinge. It sort of does that sort of thing.

[5 : 20] Okay, this text has got a hinge in it. And then I'm going to do these things, which I think neatly begin with P. The problem, the power, the place, and the promise.

So that's what I want to try and do. The problem, the power, the place, and the promise. It makes it a little bit more memorable. But first of all, I want to say there's some really important key words in this text.

And they're like fireworks. They've all got the capacity to go, wow, like that with these words. Or if you like, they're like bones and muscles, where you think, oh, that's a really strong word.

And is that just a little pimple of a word that is just sticking out there? Or is that part of a backbone? You know, your bones sometimes stick out. But, well, my bones stick out anyway. So there's a little bit of bone there.

And that's the same bit of bone there. So it's not two little pimples. There's a bone underneath there. And I want to just point that out. So, let's look at some of the important words here.

[6 : 21] So it says in verse 11. No, is it? Where are we? When Christ came. So I'm just going to say that word came.

So that's quite a strong word. It says that he wasn't there. And then he came. And things were in a certain way. And then because Jesus came, it changed everything.

There's a historic intervention there. And it's mentioned in the previous verse. It says external regulations applying until the time of the new order. And he says it was a certain way.

And then Jesus came. And there's a new order. Something's changed. So it's only a little word. But there's a lot going on in that word. So you might have, this would never happen to any of the boys and girls here, I'm sure.

My room had been a pigsty until my mum came and told me to tidy it up. Entirely fictional, isn't it?

My room was a pigsty until my mum came and told me to tidy it up.

[7 : 28] So this is saying something was a certain way until Jesus came and things were changed. So the word came there. It's a historical time marker. It used to be like this, but then.

And you get the same sort of thing in Romans. And then I want to point out another important word here in verse 11. Greater. Greater. Do you see that word there?

Greater. We had it in the reading, didn't we? Well, no. We had a similar word in chapter 1, verse 4. He became as much better or superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

So there's a lot in Hebrews about this change for the better. Jesus is better. Jesus is greater. Which is why we sang a song which I got lost in about how great Jesus was.

And we're told in chapter 10 he's a great high priest. Chapter 10, 21, that's right, isn't it? We have a great high priest.

[8 : 28] So that word greater is an important word. And, sorry, excuse me again. In verse 11, we have perfect. A greater and more perfect tabernacle.

And perfect is a very Hebrews word. And I think what it's saying is that it actually does what it says on the tin. So, you buy something and it says on the tin, this will clean all your cups and make them shine.

and you use it and you expect it to make all your cups clean and shining. And the things in the Old Testament said they would clean people, but actually, it didn't really work.

And so, the perfect does what it says on the tin. And it cleans people and brings them near to God. And so, we've got that word perfect. That's an important word.

It's only a little word, but it's an important word. In verse 9, it's translated in my Bible, clear, but it actually says, perfect the conscience of the worshipper.

[9 : 36] And in chapter 10, verse 1, the same sacrifices, repeated endlessly year after year, could not make perfect those who draw near.

So, perfect is an important word. And, the word eternal is in our text. And that's an important word. So, it's in verse 12, according to, it says, eternal.

Verse 12, eternal something? Eternal redemption. Thank you. And it's in verse 14. Eternal something?

Eternal something? Eternal spirit. Thank you. And it's in verse 15, I think. Yep.

Eternal something? Inheritance. Yeah. And we get it right at the end of the eternal covenant. I think what he's saying here in this eternal idea is, he's not just saying something lasts forever.

[10:45] I don't think that's actually what he's saying. He's saying that this is something that is not just sort of passing and superficial, but something that really touches into real reality.

If you like, eternal reality. Things as they deeply, truly are. So, an eternal redemption is not just an exemption that lasts a long time, but it's a redemption that really taps into the real deep needs, the real deep promises, the things of God, the things that are not just on the surface, but deep, eternal redemption,!

An eternal inheritance! What I put, not just touching a few moments slightly, but altering everything in relation to God himself. And then we have the word redemption.

redemption. That was in verse 12, and we have a similar word, ransom. They're very closely linked. It's in verse 15.

It is ransom. Ransom and redemption are the same word, or pretty much, in the original. Boys and girls, if you, if you have a, a slave, and they have redemption, what does it do to the slave, if you redeem a slave?

[12:15] If you had a slave and you redeemed them, do you know, what would happen to them? Give them a nice haircut, maybe? No? I didn't hear.

Yeah. Giving it back its life. Yeah. That's right. Giving back its life, its freedom. So this is, we're talking about redemption here, and that crops up twice.

Redemption and ransom. And it's, it's by payment of a great price. Expenditure of great effort or by payment of a great price. And somewhere in here, oh dear, it's not clicked properly.

Let's go back. Yeah, there's some words about being clean and holy. So, clean. Let's just have a look. There's some clean words. Yeah, in verse 13, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctify them so that they're outwardly clean.

And then in verse 14, the blood of Jesus Christ will clean or cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death. So there's a lot about cleaning and cleansing.

[13:31] I'll tell you a story that will make you go ugh like that. When we, once, when we, when our children are about the same age as you guys, we went to Bramber Castle.

You ever been to Bramber Castle? Bramber Castle? You can jump around on the stones and things like that. And our son, Tim, jumped around on the stones and then he came back and said, ugh.

And somebody had, somebody's dog had done a poo on the stones and he had jumped on them and got covered in dog's poo. And I was so upset that, oh no, we'll have to go home.

And he sat in the car and we took him home and had to sort of give him a bath and everything and it was really horrible. And that, that illustration will stick in your mind, won't it?

But the idea of being disgusting and horrible and polluted and yuck and to get clean. And God uses that idea about sin.

[14:33] He says that that's what sin does to us. It makes us disgusting and yucky and horrible. And what we need is to be cleaned. And so that is something that comes here.

That he cleans us and he cleans us properly. Okay, that was, that was some of the little words, some of the bones that are going on underneath. The text and the hinge.

The hinge is this. The hinge is this. It says, if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkle on those who are outwardly unclean, sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean, how much more will the blood of Christ, et cetera, clean us?

It says, if the blood of bulls and goats does this, how much more will Jesus do that? And it's like a hinge. It's a bit like saying, it's a bit like saying, if your face was clean when you washed it with water, how much more clean it would have been if you had used soap?

So, there's a dirty face. If your face was clean when you washed it with water, how much more clean would it have been if you had used soap? Or, if the car rolled down the hill quickly without the engine on, how much more quickly would it have rolled down the hill if the engine had been switched on?

[16:06] If the blood of bulls and goats does something, how much more does the blood of Christ do something? Okay, that's what we're going to look at. So, that's take a long time to set that up.

Number one, the problem. The problem in this text is the problem of dirt and uncleanness because that's what sin does to us. The Moses system taught people that God was holy and that things, there are things in life which are dirty and make people unclean.

For example, eating pig meat would make you unclean. And Jesus said, yeah, there is such a thing as clean and unclean but actually it's not to do with what you eat. It's not the things that go into your tummy but the things that come out of your heart.

So, things that come out of the heart and Jesus said, evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, meaning inappropriate behaviour, envy, slander, arrogance, folly, these are the things that make people unclean.

So, unclean is a thing, that's the problem. And what the Old Testament did, it cleaned outwardly. But what we're looking for is cleaning inwardly and the text talks about cleaning the conscience, verse 14, from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God.

[17:29] So, the problem is the cleaning that we need inside. And the text particularly talks about the conscience. That's the tender part of our inside where God touches our lives and makes us feel right or not right deep inside.

The centre of the person in relation to God. Do you remember Victor talking about somebody going inside the mosque and they did all this washing?

I don't know whether you remember him talking about this. He'd gone with a friend to the mosque and as they cross the threshold they have to wash so that they're clean. And Victor grabbed his friend and said, hold on a minute.

What about washing the heart? And of course water can't do that but this can. So that's number one the problem. Number two the power.

The power in this text is blood. Verse 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood.

[18:37] And then in verse 13 the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sanctifies to make people outwardly clean. The old system was a blood stained system.

It was like a butcher's shop at the tabernacle. There were animals being slaughtered there was blood as it were all over the place. Not all the sacrifices and offerings had blood but most of them did as it says in verse 22 in fact the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

It talks about the blood of goats and calves and bulls. And we can't get away from this. The Bible has got blood running through it as it were.

The Old Testament is full of blood. And we might feel a bit awkward about that or a bit uncomfortable and I suppose that's quite necessary.

We feel if somebody has a nosebleed we feel oh dear that can't be right because blood is normally inside us isn't it? You don't normally see blood unless something unusual has happened or actually might be something very badly wrong.

[20:04] Blood is associated with violent death. And that's what the Old Testament had.

Blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. And it teaches us that the situation of sin and uncleanness is so dire that it cannot be put right unless there is the shedding of blood.

God could not be satisfied unless a death penalty was paid by somebody. And that is a very challenging assessment of the human condition.

That we cannot be right with God unless blood is shed. But that's what the Bible teaches. So it's not my job to change that.

It's my job to tell everybody that. And I'm telling us that because it's true. And if I were a doctor and you came to me with a terribly diseased limb and I said, no, that's not a problem really.

[21:28] Just go home and take some paracetamol. You would actually want to sue me for negligence because it was a desperate ill and it needed a really desperate remedy.

And sin is a desperate ill and needs a desperate remedy. And if I were to stand here and say, God doesn't really have a problem with sin, that's not really an issue, God loves everybody and thinks they're all great, you should sue me for negligence.

Because that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. And you might say, well, that was Old Testament.

Don't like Old Testament. New Testament is much kinder. Actually, the New Testament is wonderfully kind and wonderfully gracious, but it never gets rid of blood.

As we see in this text, it compares the blood of bulls and goats and says, that was there, it did something in a certain way, outwardly.

[22 : 35] But to do the real thing inwardly, needs blood. And the blood that's needed is the blood of Christ. Nothing less than that will do.

And to aspect our redemption, it says, he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctifies them so that they are outwardly clean. 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, so that we may serve the living God.

How much more this blood, how much more the blood of this Christ will really do what it says. the blood is the blood of the Christ. That was number two, the power, the power is in the blood. Number three, the place.

[23 : 58] And the writer contrasts the place in which the blood operates. He contrasts the tent made with hands. It says, where does it say it? He went through, in verse 11, the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man made, not part of this creation.

He went into the holy place. Now we've got a sort of model of the holy place, which we were looking at. There it is in the tabernacle and we've still got this lovely tabernacle model down here.

If the boys and girls haven't had a look at it, please do. Christ entered the real presence of God. Not the model version, but the real presence of God.

He entered the true most holy place, which we're told is in a sense a copy of the true one. Verse 24, Christ did not enter a man made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one.

He entered heaven itself. Now, where did Christ go? He went into the tabernacle, the real tabernacle. I don't want you to think, I don't think we're supposed to think that in heaven there is a super version of this, with better little plastic animals, bigger, and better fences, bigger.

[25 : 19] I don't think we're meant to think quite like that. I think this is a sort of model of something theological, of a spiritual truth put into the form of plastic and animals and stuff.

We're also told that Christ is at the right hand of God. So, there's two slightly different ways of thinking about the same thing. This is what it's like in heaven. It's a theological, spiritual truth shown to us by the idea of right hand and by the idea of the tabernacle.

The design of the earthly tent is a model of the theology of heaven. But he went into the most holy place. We have a high priest at the right hand of God, at the true tabernacle, the real presence of God.

And through that we, chapter 10 verse 19, can enter the most holy place. Now, there is an objection to this. And the objection works like this.

It says, I came to your church, I sat and looked, and all there was was some guy up the front waving his arms about and a powerpoint on the screen and you sang some things.

[26 : 36] How, where was God in that? I couldn't see anything at all. Now, in some churches, of course, you would go and you would see stuff. You would see a guy in special robes, probably with a much longer beard than I, maybe saying something in a language you didn't understand, and it would all look very mysterious, and he might do robes and lots of coloured stuff, and he might even go behind a screen and do things, you think, wow, something's happening there, because I can see it.

But what I want to say is the fact that you can't see anything, is the proof that it's the real thing. Because if all that was happening when we met was people doing stuff up at the front, that's all it would be.

that's not really a holy place. God doesn't really live on this little stage.

God is in heaven. And if we want a real salvation, we want a real salvation where the action takes place in heaven. And of course, that's where it does take place. The fact that we can't see it is not a weakness of this sort of Christianity, it's the strength of this sort of Christianity.

There's nothing to see here because the real action is up in heaven. If you could see it, it wouldn't be worth much. Our communion with God is in the true place of God's presence, in heaven.

[28 : 04] When we pray here, we enter the holy place. We go where the action really is, where God is. Place, number three. Number four, promise.

Number four, promise. I used to be a school teacher and I taught over in Worthing. In those days, we didn't have whiteboards.

We had blackboards and chalk. Have you ever heard of blackboards and chalk? All right, good. We had blackboards and chalk and in my room I had a really nice blackboard.

It slid up and down. There were two of them, one behind and one in front. You could write things on the one behind and slide the one in front so that it revealed what you'd written down. At the end of the day we used a duster to clean all the chalk off and it was like being in a smog because there was loads of chalk all over the place.

Well, when I was a teacher there was one room which had been specially equipped and it did have a whiteboard and it was the first time I'd ever sort of thought, oh, don't use chalk on this.

[29 : 15] and I had a felt tip pen with me and I wrote on the whiteboard in that room but it was the wrong sort of felt tip pen.

When I came to wipe it off, it wouldn't go. And the teacher in that room came to me afterwards and said, we still haven't got that off, Philip. So I'd written something and nobody could get rid of it. It was really embarrassing. I tried all sorts of things to wipe it off but it wouldn't go. So I guess it's probably still there now.

There's a whiteboard with, you could never get that off, some bloke wrote that up 30 years ago. The things that we've written into our lives that we wish we could get rid of.

We wish we could wipe them out. We wish that the stain of what was written on there could just be taken away. And no matter how hard human beings try, they can't wipe that away.

[30 : 41] and it's stuck inside to one degree or another, our memories, our consciences. What can wash away the stain?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Only by the blood of Jesus. the blood of Christ can wash away the stain.

But here's the thing, it can wash away the stain. It can wipe the slate clean. Though your sins are red as scarlet, they shall be white as wool.

They're red as crimson, they shall be white as snow. what can wash away the stain? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. But it can.

And if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer could clean outwardly, how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered himself by the eternal spirit, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.

[32 : 08] And he says, it is now possible to live a life that is no longer hampered by, oh, how bad I feel about that.

I mean, it doesn't say you never did it, and it doesn't say that you'll forget it as if you hadn't done it, but the stain is washed away, the sting is removed, the guilt is taken away, there's cleansing, and he says there is such cleansing that it is now possible to serve the living God, that he will say, you can serve me, I will accept what you do today as service to me.

Really? Yes. I will accept what you offer to me as service to me. You can serve the living God.

Really, am I allowed to do that? Yes, you are. You take the things that I do, all the stuff that I try to do for you, and I know it's all rather muddled up and mixed up, will you accept that as service?

And he says, I will. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, you can serve the living God. Isn't that amazing? But that's the promise.

And I don't know whether that's what you need, that's certainly exactly what I need. So here we are. The stained conscience, the distance from God, the estrangement, the heart, the longings beyond this world, the problem in this text, the pollution of sin, the power, the agency of blood, once shed, but continually argued, as it were, in heaven.

[33 : 50] The place where this all takes place, he died on earth, but he presents, he offers himself in heaven, as it were, where the action really matters, and the promise. This is sufficient to cleanse us, to bring us near, that we can have access to God, and serve him with his approval and pleasure, that we may serve the living God.

That's where I stop. Let's sing together. All my days I will sing this song of gladness, give my praise to the fountain of delights.

It talks about sins forgiven, and conscience cleansed, and death defeated, and life without end.

Amen.