

Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 8A, Hebrews 9:1-10:18: Christ our Atonement (Part 1), 6-min. Video Overview

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Have you ever tried to read the book of Hebrews and just felt lost? It's one of the most powerful, but also one of the most complex arguments in the entire New Testament. It's all about how Christ's death is the ultimate final solution to a spiritual problem that's thousands of years old. So let's unpack how the author builds this absolutely incredible case, step by step.

All right, so here's our roadmap. We're going to start with the core issue, the problem of access under the old system and how they tried to deal with it through atonement. Then we'll see how Christ is presented as a better sacrifice, one that kicks off a whole new covenant.

And finally, we'll look at the ultimate proof that the work is finished and really dig into why any of this still matters for us today. Okay, let's dive right in. Section one, the problem of access.

The author of Hebrews argues that the entire old system, for all its detail and importance, had a fundamental flaw built right into its design. And that flaw all boils down to this one huge question. How can imperfect, sinful people get anywhere near a perfectly holy God without, you know, being completely wiped out? The entire ancient tabernacle system was designed to manage this very real, very dangerous problem.

The way the tabernacle was set up was literally a map of this problem. You had what you could call graded access. So most Israelites, they could only go into the outer court.

The priests, well, they could go a step further into what was called the holy place. But the holy of holies, the place of God's actual concentrated presence, that was totally off limits. Except for one person, the high priest, and even he could only go in on one single day of the year.

The whole system was defined by barriers, by distance. So how did they even try to solve this problem of sin? Well, that brings us to section two and the most important day on their calendar, the Day of Atonement. The ritual for this day, laid out in Leviticus 16, was incredibly specific.

First, and this is key, the high priest had to sacrifice a bull for his own sin. He wasn't exempt. He'd sprinkle its blood on the mercy seat, which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, seen as God's throne.

Only then could he sacrifice a goat for the sins of the people, sprinkling its blood the same way. Finally, he'd take a second goat, the famous scapegoat, confess all the people's sins

over its head, and then send it out into the wilderness, symbolically carrying all that sin away. Now, this is where it gets really fascinating.

A scholar named Jacob Milgram points out that for ancient Israelites, sin didn't just mess up the person who committed it. It metaphorically stained God's house. The mercy seat itself got polluted.

He says it had a Dorian Gray effect. So the Day of Atonement wasn't just about forgiving people. It was a ritual cleansing of God's sacred space.

It was like an annual deep clean for the sanctuary. And all of that sets the stage perfectly for the author's main event. Section three, a better sacrifice.

This is where Christ's work is shown to be the ultimate, superior once-and-for-all solution. The author builds this case with a series of really powerful contrasts. First up, location.

The old ritual happened in a physical earthly tabernacle, something the author calls a mere copy made by human hands. But Christ, as our new high priest, enters the heavenly sanctuary. Not the copy, but as the author puts it, the real thing.

Okay, next contrast: the cleansing agent. The old way used the blood of goats and bulls. The author basically calls this a ritual detergent for the body, something that could only deal with external ceremonial stuff.

But the new way uses Christ's own blood. And the argument is that this is infinitely more powerful. It can actually get inside and cleanse our conscience from that deep-down guilt.

It's a how much more argument. If animal blood could do that, just imagine what the blood of the Son of God can do. And then there's the big one, frequency.

The day of atonement had to be done again and again, every single year. For the author of Hebrews, that very repetition is the proof that it didn't really truly work, right? I mean, if you have to keep fixing something, it was never really fixed in the first place. But Christ's sacrifice is once for all.

Its finality is the ultimate sign of its eternal effectiveness. But wait, there's another layer to this. It's not just about a better sacrifice.

As we see in section four, Christ's death was about kicking off something entirely new, inaugurating a new covenant. And this is where the author gets really clever with the language. The Greek word used here is *diatheke*, and it has this brilliant double meaning.

It means a covenant, a binding agreement, but it also means a testament, like a last will and testament, which only kicks in after someone dies. Christ's death, the author argues, perfectly fulfills both meanings. It launches a new agreement, and it unlocks its inheritance.

It's an incredible play on words. So what's the ultimate promise of this new covenant? It goes all the way back to the prophet Jeremiah. God declares, I will remember their sins no more.

That's the end game. Not just covering sin for another year, but total final forgiveness where sins are essentially erased from God's memory. Which brings us to the climax of the whole argument.

Section five, the work is finished. How do we know, how can we be sure that this new sacrifice actually worked for good? The proof is surprisingly simple, and it's all about posture. Think about it.

Under the old system, the priests are always standing. Their work is never, ever done. It's an endless cycle of sacrifice.

But Christ, after his one perfect sacrifice, does something no other priest in history could ever do. He sits down. And not just anywhere.

He sits at the right hand of God, the place of ultimate authority and completion. That's it. The sitting is the proof.

A standing priest means there's still work to do. A seated high priest means the job is done. It's finished, complete.

No more sacrifice is needed. Ever. Okay.

I know that's a lot of dents. Ancient theology. So let's bring it all home in our final section.

Why on earth does any of this still matter? How do we get from all that ancient ritual to our reality today? So what does this all boil down to? Well, a few huge things. First, that barrier to God's presence, it's gone. This means believers have a new direct kind of access.

Our focus is no longer on repeating past rituals, but on holding on to a future hope, and it reframes salvation. It's not just a one-time thing in the past. But an ongoing reality that's leading us somewhere.

The author of Hebrews builds this incredible airtight case to prove one central mind-blowing reality. The way to God, which was once blocked by all these barriers and rituals, is now wide open because of what Christ did. And that leaves all of us with a really profound question to wrestle with.

What does that open door actually mean for you and me right here today?