

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 194

Hebrews 9

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In his ninth chapter, the writer of Hebrews continues with his theme of the superiority of Christ over the Levitical sacrifices and priesthood. In chapter 8 he had referred to the “heavenly tent,” where Jesus was seated “at the right hand of majesty” subsequent to offering himself to provide salvation. In Hebrews 9, the focus of this episode, the sacrifice of Christ is described as an atonement superior not only to the sacrificial system broadly conceived, but specifically to the Day of Atonement ritual.

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 194: Hebrews chapter 9. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, you getting cold yet? Is it cold up there?

MH: It is. In fact, I'm doing this episode from my garage, so anybody who watches the livestream knows that it's cold in here. [laughs] So I'm feeling it—I'm feeling the pain, even as we do this.

TS: Do you have your gloves on?

MH: I don't have the gloves on.

TS: I made fun of you (just for our audience's sake) of you wearing gloves in Boston when you were driving. It was cold, but I didn't think it was cold enough for gloves.

MH: Yeah, well, that's what gloves are for. Are gloves for when it's warm?

TS: But you had gloves!

MH: Did somebody say, “Hey, when it's warm, let's make these things called gloves?”

TS: They kind of looked like racing gloves when you had them on when you were driving. It's foreign to me, because it doesn't get that cold here in Texas. Well, it does, but not glove-wearing cold.

MH: Those actually had a hole in them, so that's the one thing I asked my wife for Christmas this year—a good pair of leather gloves. So, just thought I'd throw that in. [laughs]

TS: You might want to ask for a Fantasy win. Just for our listeners, I know they're just on the edge of their seat—that if we both win this week, we will meet each other in the Superbowl next week. So I'm kind of looking forward to that. Good luck to you this week, and maybe we see each other next week in the Superbowl. That'd be fun.

MH: Yeah, that's what I'm hoping for. I don't want to lose to one of these other teams. [laughter] I don't want to lose at all, but especially not to somebody who has a worse record than I do.

TS: I hear that. Well, alright, Mike. Yeah, let's get into some things that really are important, like the Bible.

MH: Yeah, there we go. We'll pull ourselves away here.

So we're in Hebrews 9 in this episode. It starts off kind of... I won't say boring, but just sort of routine. It's a listing of tabernacle furniture. Let's just jump in. I'll read the first five verses. There actually are a couple of interesting things in here, believe it or not. So it begins here.

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.² For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.³ Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place,⁴ having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.⁵ Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

And you might be saying, "Well, that's a relief. I don't want to go back and just talk about all that furniture." We talked about some of it in our Leviticus series, but there are actually a few items of interest here. Firstly, did you notice the location of the altar of incense? Apparently—at least from this rendering—it is *within* the Holy of Holies. That's not where it is in the Exodus accounts and all the accounts of the Most Holy Place—the Holy of Holies. The only thing in there is the Ark of the Covenant, but here... I'll read it again, starting in verse 3:

³Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place,⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.

So the ark, well, we know that's supposed to be there, but having the golden altar of incense there? That has drawn some attention, as you might imagine, by scholars—both Old and New Testament. But Lane, in his *Word Biblical Commentary* actually camps a little bit on this, and it's kind of interesting, so I thought I would read a little bit here to get an item of interest out of the first few verses. He writes:

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The location of the χρυσοῦν ... θυμιατήριον, “golden altar of incense,” within the Most Holy Place is problematical because it was well known that it stood in the Holy Place just before the inner curtain (Exod 30:6; 40:26; for the history of this altar see de Langhe, *Bib* 40 [1959] 476–94). The scribal tradition represented by Codex B [a famous, important manuscript] and certain of its allies recognized this problem and sought to resolve it by textual alteration.

So what he's saying here is that there were some scribes—copyists of the New Testament—that saw this problem and actually changed the text to try to fix it. Scribes would do this thing on occasion, but it's easy for textual critics—people who are reading and working in the original manuscripts—to spot this effort to ammend this problem. Back to Lane:

In the course of Israel's subsequent history the golden altar was placed within the inner sanctuary (1 Kgs 6:20, 22)...

Let me just read that:

²⁰The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar.

²²And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

So there's an apparent change of positioning when you get to the Temple, but the reason this is an issue is because up until this point, the writer of Hebrews has been talking about the tabernacle. So there's an issue here. So back to Lane:

In the course of Israel's subsequent history the golden altar was placed within the inner sanctuary (1 Kgs 6:20, 22), and one source nearly contemporary with Hebrews reflects that liturgical tradition (2 Apocalypse of Baruch; 6:7; cf. Rev 8:3; 9:13)...

There's a cross reference between chapter 6, verse 7 of that pseudepigraphical text and Revelation 8:3, which mentions this golden altar before the throne. You might have wondered about that if you're ever reading through Revelation. The throne of God, of course, in the Temple context, is going to be the ark—the ark is his footstool or his seat, depending on which historical situation you're in. But Revelation has this altar there, as well. Lane is offering that as a cross-reference to this pseudepigraphical tradition that apparently reflects a bit of a change in positioning in 1 Kings 6. But we're talking about the tabernacle here in the context of Hebrews, which is why this draws attention. Back to Lane:

The ceremonial prescriptions for the Day of Atonement, however, plainly indicate that this altar was located in the Holy Place (Lev 16:18; for the ministry at this altar see m Tamid 1:4; 3:1, 6, 9; 6:1), and this is confirmed by sources contemporary with Hebrews [who are commenting on these passages] (Philo, *Moses* 2.94–95, 101–4; *Who is the Heir?* 226; *Jos., J.W.* 5.216–18; *Ant.* 3.139–47, 198; Luke 1:8–11).

So it's pretty clear, if you're talking about the tabernacle, that this altar doesn't belong in the Holy of Holies. But nevertheless, the wording of Hebrews 9 at this point suggests that's where it is. Back to Lane again. I find this interesting.

The description in v 4 corresponds to the Samaritan Pentateuch recension of Exodus...

Remember when we talk Old Testament textual criticism (when we did a whole episode on where we got the Hebrew Bible), most of the time that you talk about transmission of the Hebrew text, you're talking about the Masoretic tradition and the Septuagint—the Hebrew base that is lying underneath it from which the Septuagint was translated. But there was this third one—the Samaritan Pentateuch. It's just the Pentateuch like it sounds—it's a third different textual tradition, and they're all witnessed among the Dead Sea Scrolls. So they all hit the same chronological wall. There's no one older than the other; they all hit the wall at around third century B.C. So in this case, you actually have what's found in the book of Hebrews reflects this Samaritan Pentateuch text. Back to Lane:

The description in v 4 corresponds to the Samaritan Pentateuch recension of Exodus, in which Exod 30:1–10 is inserted between Exod 26:35 and 36. This was one of the factors that led Scobie [a scholar] to deduce that the writer of Hebrews

was representative of Samaritan Christianity ('The Origin and Development of Samaritan Christianity,' *NTS* 19 [1972–73] 412–13).

So there was at least one scholar that looked at this and thought, "Well, maybe the writer of Hebrews was attached to this community." Back to Lane:

The correspondence should be seen rather as evidence of the variety of text-types extant before the standardization of the MT. Although no Greek text reflecting the proto-Samaritan text of Exod 26 has as yet been recovered, it is probable that the writer of Hebrews was following this textual tradition.

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So what he's saying is that's probably too much to argue that the writer of Hebrews was somehow attached to the Samaritan community. He thinks it's better explained by textual plurality—that there were a lot of texts of the Old Testament floating around. And the one that the writer of Hebrews happened to be referencing has this particular wording, which of course does correspond to the Samaritan Pentateuch recension. You can say, well, isn't this a mistake? Well, if all the texts hit the same chronological wall, you can't necessarily say that the ordering of the material in the Samaritan Pentateuch is wrong. You can't really say that for sure. You can't say it's wrong just because it's not the Masoretic text.

This is an interesting example of why I caution people repeatedly to not just give presumptive priority to the Masoretic text. I'm not going to rehearse the content of the episode we did on this. First of all, there is no such thing as *the* Masoretic text. What we think of as the Masoretic text was created in about 100 A.D. in an attempt to get rid of textual plurality. The scribal community (the scribes and the Pharisees—those who were heavily invested in one of these texts) got together in about 100 A.D. and say, "Hey, let's get rid of all this other stuff but a standardized text, and that's what's going to be our text from here on out in perpetuity." And that's when you have the rise of the class of scribes that we know as the Masoretes, hence it was called the Masoretic Text, because it got passed on from family to family to family of professional scribes. But prior to that time (the Dead Sea Scroll era, the second Temple era) you didn't have a standardized text. And so we don't know if we're going with the older material if a detail like this was not actually original to the Torah. We just don't know that. We'd have to be omniscient to know that.

So what we have is just the writer of Hebrews using a particular text, and that's where we're at with the whole thing. So you don't want to jump to conclusions in any direction that require omniscience. And without riffing on this too long, it's a myth to perpetuate this notion. The notion itself is a myth that there's one text, that there was never a copyist's error from the hands of Moses all the way through the era of the Old Testament on into the second Temple period and through it into the New Testament and through that up to our present day. That is

a myth—a demonstrable myth. We have lots of manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible and none of us are omniscient, so that's really how we ought to be thinking about this. I just thought I'd camp on that a little bit, because it's kind of interesting that you actually have that reading there.

Second thing in the first five verses. Let's now look at the reference to the mercy seat. This is more germane to the rest of the content and really what we've been covering prior in previous chapters of Hebrews. It dovetails with the subject matter there much more than the text critical issue.

The mercy seat is alluded to here. In Hebrew, if you remember back to our Leviticus series, the noun was *kapporet* (from *kprpl*) – “to atone.” So the verb “to atone” is usually how it gets translated. If you remember back to our series, we talked about the Akkadian cognate to this—the verb *kippuru*, which does in fact correspond to Hebrew *kipper*. We quoted some things from Levine's Leviticus commentary, for instance. And that verb, *kippuru*, clearly means to wipe off or burnish or cleanse, which is why a number of Old Testament scholars prefer to not translate *kipper* as “atone,” but something like “to purge,” “to cleanse”—this idea of purgation, to wipe away impurity, or wipe away/get rid of contamination.

Now the noun, *kapporet*, was the lid of the ark. Now, typically (if you've heard King James, and I'm sure there are other translations that do this too), they take *kapporet* and translate it “mercy seat.” That's really not what it means. You would ask, “Well how did they get this idea of a seat, and then this mercy seat idea?” It's not a very good translation—it's a bit misleading, but not in a sinister way. It's only later, with the... Recall *Unseen Realm* perhaps, or maybe you've run across this in some other source. It's only later with the giant cherubim in the Temple, that Yahweh is conceived as “enthroned between the cherubim,” making the lid of the ark a seat or, in some passages, his footstool. At least he would be on top of it in a seated posture. You get the giant cherubim that form the seat, which is positioned above the ark, and the ark becomes either the footstool or still the imagined posterior of the deity, would still be above the ark. Now, that's the seated position clearly in the Temple.

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In the tabernacle, you didn't have the giant cherubim, you just had the ark, and so the assumption was made by the King James translators (and lots of people) that without the giant cherubim, Yahweh was still in the seated posture. And so he must be sitting on the ark between the cherubim, because when you get the big giant cherubim, he's sitting there. They form a throne, and then the ark becomes a footstool. Therefore, they extrapolate and say, “Back before, we had the giant cherubim, when we were just in the tabernacle. Yahweh must still be conceived of as sitting.” Hence, the lid of the ark is a seat, and it's the seat where *kipper*—where “atonement” or “purgation”—happens on the Day of Atonement, hence “mercy seat.” And the mercy idea is kind of an abstract idea. It doesn't really reflect what the verb means, and certainly what that means doesn't get taken into the noun.

So there's a bit of a history—a bit of a backdrop—and some guess work here that goes into a translation like mercy seat. Now, to the point, the mercy seat, or the lid of the ark, was a factor on the Day of Atonement. It doesn't factor in other sacrifices, which were at the altar outside the holy place and the Holy of Holies. So normally a sacrifice is going to be outside the Holy of Holies. We know this; we have a basic understanding of the sacrificial system. The Day of Atonement, though, involved this object—the ark with its lid—in a blood ritual so that it was unique there.

If you remember back in the Leviticus series, the Day of Atonement was sort of the “reset button” for the nation. The sins of the people were carried away in combination with the comprehensive purging of sacred space. The whole idea was to make the sacrificial system and the holy objects, not only just in the Holy of Holies, but just the whole system and all the objects... to reset them as though they were brand new. They're made like they were the first time the system was used. Now the two goats in the Day of Atonement ceremony... The goat that *wasn't* killed was the one that carried the sins of the people and was driven outside the camp. The one that *was* killed had its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat (or the lid) and the inner sanctuary there to purge it of contamination. That had nothing to do with the sins of the people. The blood is only placed on these objects to purge it—to decontaminate it—and hit the reset button so that now in the new year, everything returns full circle and we're all good again. Everything's clean, everything's pure—here we go again. That was the idea. Now the Septuagint is a factor here. Hagner has a nice little summary of this. He says:

The Septuagint regularly translates the noun [kiporet, “mercy seat”] with the word *hilastērion*, which comes into the New Testament at the two important passages of Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5.

Frankly, those are the only two places where *hilastērion* is found in the New Testament. Romans 3:25 says this, talking about Christ:

²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation [*hilastērion*] by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Hager adds:

Considerable debate about the meaning of the word [*hilastērion*] took place between C. H. Dodd, who argued that the word meant expiation, a removal of the guilt of sin, and Leon Morris, who argued that it meant propitiation, the

appeasing of the anger of God. The kjv and nasb translate the word as “propitiation,” and the rsv and nab as “expiation.” Since both ideas are probably correct, one can do no better than to translate the word “sacrifice of atonement,” as do the niv and nrsv. The word in Hebrews 9:5, on the other hand, is best translated as “place of atonement” (nab: “place of expiation”)

You know, I don’t really like any of that. [laughs] But I read it because it’s common. You may have come across this discussion. But it really reflects a New Testament perspective. New Testament scholars who are working in Greek and the Septuagint—they’re not going to go back to the Akkadian and, “Hey, what does this term actually mean in its ancient Near Eastern context?”

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So I would say, if you go with the Old Testament meaning of the verb from this Akkadian root, it doesn’t mean either expiation (removal of guilt) because the blood isn’t applied to anybody in the Day of Atonement ritual anyway. And it really doesn’t mean propitiation—like appeasing the anger of God. There’s no anger dealt with in Leviticus 16. These ideas are imported because of terms like expiation and propitiation—scholars trying to figure out what a Greek term means, as opposed to going back and saying, “Look, it means purge. It means to decontaminate.”

So I would say, if you go to the Old Testament meaning of the verb in its own context in the ancient Near East, I think we can approach it a little bit differently, and I’m willing to say, a little bit better. The point of its use, I think, in Romans and here in Hebrews 9:5 would be that Christ’s blood provides access to God’s presence. The relationship is restored. It’s not under threat of ruination as the year goes by so that it needs resetting every year. Rather, the relationship between sinner and God is permanently healed through Christ. In other words, the access to God is permanently provided. We don’t have to worry about the access being contaminated again, just like you did with the Old Testament system. You had to have this reset button event to have things go back to their setting point—back to their original point—and then we essentially start over again.

Remember the blood in the Day of Atonement ceremony is not applied to a sinner. It doesn’t even come from the goat that carries the sin away. The blood is applied to the sanctuary and to the holy place (the most Holy Place, the ark, all that stuff). It’s about purging—decontaminating—the most sacred presence. And when you’re equating Jesus with that through the use of *hilastērion*, which is the Septuagint word for this lid of the ark, I think there’s something really profound here, theologically: that Christ is better *again*—his sacrifice is better *again*, because you don’t need to repeat this every year. Access to the presence of God has been decontaminated, has been opened up, has been securely provided, or made secure, or made inviolate through this one sacrifice, who is Christ—the great high priest who offers himself. So I think the use of this term is really a

good one. It's a nice one. It's a very theologically pregnant one because of this notion of what happens on the Day of Atonement.

Now drifting into Hebrews 9:6-10, what I'm suggesting is that *hilastērion* here points to the superiority of Christ's sacrifice. And that helps us to drift into the next few verses (verses 6-10), where now it shifts from, instead of comments on the furniture—the old tabernacle versus the new tent (I'm drawing that language from Chapter 8 where Christ is seated in the heavenly tent next to the Majesty on high)... Now we drift into specific comments about offerings—their nature and their efficacy. So let's read verses 6-10. The writer says:

⁶These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

There's a conflation there between the collective sacrifices of the sacrificial system because they were for people and not intentional sins. That's not actually what's going on in the day of purging—the Day of Atonement—because the sins aren't applied to anyone. But it *is* a reset button, so everybody starts again at the same starting gate. So in that sense, you could say it relates to people, but it's not a direct “for forgiveness of sins” kind of thing in the sense that it's applied to anyone. But he kind of conflates the whole system here with the high priest, and I think the reason he's doing that is because it's a start-over event. So back to verse 7:

⁷but into the second [section] only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body [or for the flesh—the word there is *sarx* in Greek] imposed until the time of reformation.

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What the writer's doing here is he's setting up another comparison to the offering and priesthood of Christ and he's going to make the comparison in force in verses 11-28. But verses 6-10 are kind of a set up for what's going to follow in verses 11-28. So I want to focus our discussion here and then we'll read through verses 11-28 in light of some comments here. It's interesting (just to start off here with a bit of a random one, but I think one that contextualizes the rest of the

comments we'll make about verses 6-10)... In verse 8, you have this comment... I'll just read it again:

⁸ By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age).

What you actually have here is an inspired side note (an inspired editorial comment) about the writer's apparent view of inspiration and the inspiration of his own writing—in other words, the inspiration of his own teaching. He's saying, "The Holy Spirit is speaking through me to tell you what this stuff meant." Which, if you're into Bibliology—if that's one of your big theological interests—this is an interesting verse, because the writer apparently is conscious that the Spirit of God is giving them (or dispensing, or "using them" is probably a better way to say it) to produce revelation that God approves of—this whole notion of inspiration. So the New Testament writer has this side comment. And commentators will point out that the verb "indicates" here... Go back to verse 8 once again:

⁸ By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened...

"Indicates" there is a present participle, and so the grammatical observation many commentators will make from that is that this interpretation of the sacrificial system that the writer of Hebrews is engaged in (and he's very conscious that the Holy Spirit is guiding him in what he says), that it's ongoing. It's not going to change. This is a transition into this future time. And since Christ's offering was eternal (the writer of Hebrews has already covered that), since it satisfied God (he's already covered that), since Jesus, after he sacrificed himself and rose from the dead and ascended is seated at the seat of rulership and also the seat of eternal, perpetual intercession (he's already covered that), this is now the new reality. This is the new, ongoing, not-going-to-be-changed reality. So the grammatical observation is worth making.

Now the phrase "the way into the holy place" and this notion about... Go back to verse 8:

⁸ ...the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age).

This notion of being in this transitional period... Guthrie takes this phrase again and he comments as follows:

What is specifically said to be signified is that an obstacle bars the way into the holy of holies [this whole other section of the tabernacle] and thus into the presence of God.

Think of the Old Testament system, that not only couldn't the average person get in to the Holy of Holies, but none of the priests could, either. Only the high priest could go there once a year, so this is an obstacle to the direct presence of God. Back to Guthrie:

The way into the sanctuary must here be the inner sanctuary as compared with the outer tabernacle. The words *as long as the outer tent is still standing* seem to mean 'as long as approach is dependent on Levitical-type ceremonies' which barred all but the high priest from access to the presence of God, and even him for all but one day in the year...

The words in parenthesis (*which is symbolic for the present age*) give some indication of the writer's approach to the whole Levitical system. It was a figure (*parabolē*). It was therefore suggestive of deeper truths than it was itself able to fulfill. Moreover, its symbolic purpose seems to be limited to the present age, by which the writer seems to be contrasting it with the future age (cf. 6:5).

Let me read that verse for you.

⁵...**and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come...**

So it has an eschatological flavor. Back to Guthrie

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Moreover, its symbolic purpose seems to be limited to the present age, by which the writer seems to be contrasting it with the future age (cf. 6:5). In the context of thought in this passage the 'present' age was that which prepared for the appearing of Christ (see verses 11f.), after which the symbol was fulfilled and therefore ceased to have any function.

So in verses 6-10, you have the priests, who are allowed to go regularly into the first section. They perform their ritual duties, but only the high priest can go into the second, and only once a year. So you've got a bunch of obstacles to direct access to the presence of God. You have gradations of holiness. Even the high priest can go into the Most Holy Place once a year. You have [laughs] basically one shot at this kind of access. Now that is designed to set up a contrast with

Christ, whose priesthood we've been discussing since 4 or 5 chapters ago. Christ has provided this kind of access for everyone—not just year-round, but forever. So this is setting up another major point of contrast. Now we have *one* priest—one high priest (Jesus) who permanently is stationed in God's presence. He is the permanent mediator, he is the permanent intercessor, he is seated at the right hand of the majesty—all these terms coming from earlier passages. The old sacrifices (to quote Hebrews 9:9) "cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper," but instead they deal with food and drink offerings and washings (to quote the passage, "regulations for the flesh" or for the body). This points to Old Testament ritual being about access or restitution or decontaminating the sanctuary from defilement, and then in a progressively limited way. In other words, with all these limitations, it has no permanent value because it has to be repeated. It's incomplete. It requires again and again and again... Even the access to the Most Holy Place once a year has to be repeated once every year. Whereas with Jesus, none of that's the case.

And not only is access eternal and permanent (24/7, 365, forever and ever and ever)... Not only is that the case to the writer of Hebrews, but what Christ did also covers or satisfies or addresses the conscience of the worshipper, where none of these sacrifices could. They were at best about unintentional sins and decontaminating a *place*—at best. It has nothing to do with internal disposition. So this notion of the conscience of the worshipper, this is referring to internal disposition—cleansing of the conscience (your feelings, your mind, your heart). The Old Testament system didn't have anything to do with that. And the Old Testament system was operative (to quote the last verse of Hebrews 9:6-10)... the old system operated until the time of reformation. It's a term that can be translated "new order" or "new age." It's an unusual expression. It's found nowhere else in the New Testament. Now Guthrie opines that it is akin to expressions like "regeneration." It's the time of reformation: *diorthōseōs*, new order, new age, reformation. If this is reflective of an internal disposition (the inner life) and now, in this new age, the sacrifices provided by Christ directly address (they involve) the heart, the mind, the inner life, then I think Guthrie is on to something here—that is like this talk of regeneration. He cites Matthew 19:28 here, which says:

²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

So he refers there to the new world—this time in the future. And so this notion... When he says this, they're in the gospels and he's still there. It's the period of the incarnation. It's before the crucifixion, obviously, and all the rest of what would happen. The writer of Hebrews is drawing on this idea that that was then and this is now. We are now in this time. It's the "already but not yet." The kingdom of God has already come and it's progressing toward its final culmination—its final

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fulfillment—when all of these things are made permanent in an earthly way. But we're still there. We are now able to have a system, have a sacrifice, have a high priest, have a means of resolution or absolution or whatever terms you want to apply here that apply to the inner life—that apply to our hearts, our consciences. For the writer of Hebrews, this time had come. He associates it with the work of Christ. They're already in this time when we are not only ruling with Christ but we are also members of his kingdom. But for the writer of Hebrews in this chapter, what that means is that we are cleansed from within. We are new creatures. We are new creations. That's where Guthrie's drawing on this notion of regeneration—that idea that we are made new from the inside out. And the Old Testament sacrificial system could not do this. Even on its best day—even on the single day when access to the Most Holy Place was allowed—it couldn't do this. So it's a huge contrast.

Now in what follows in the chapter (verses 11-28), the writer makes application of these ideas the rest of the way through the chapter, talking about the tabernacle, the sanctuary, the sacrifices, all this stuff. Just listen to what he says in verses 11-28. I'm going to read through it and make some comments as we go. Verse 11 starts:

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)...

In other words, the heavenly tent, the heavenly sanctuary, God's house, where Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Majesty.

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places...

Not only is he in the better tent, but he doesn't have to leave. He's not going to leave. It's permanent.

¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Now look at the difference. Back in the Leviticus series, we talked about how so much of the sacrificial language was about purging sacred space—decontaminating it—or decontaminating people so that they wouldn't defile sacred space. And what defiled sacred space? What made a person a threat to sacred space back in Leviticus? Some physical deficiency, some deformity, loss of blood, loss of semen, the menstrual cycles... All these things are associated with the flesh. *None of it* was associated with the inner life, the inner mind, the heart, the conscience. And so the writer of Hebrews... This is easy pickings for him. Now we're talking about being renewed from the inside out. It is by definition inherently superior, because it addresses the heart. It addresses the soul—what Christ did, not just the outer body (the outer flesh).

Now it's interesting... In verse 14, he says that Christ, through the eternal spirit, offered himself without blemish to God to purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It's interesting that he doesn't say that it was done to purify our conscience from *sin*. Now that speaks still of inner transformation. It's actually consistent. Paul's new creation—regeneration—why does it fit? How does it fit? Because only God can do that. Only God can make any of us a new creation from the inside out. It's a deep, stark contrast to works—to trying to resolve an inside problem by behaviors or rituals that we do in our body or with our body. That's why that's the point of contrast. Our conscience is purified apart from dead works. Dead works couldn't pull that off. That's going through the motions, to use a modern phrase. It has nothing to do with the making new of what's inside—the heart, the soul, the conscience, the mind, the spirit, the internal life, the internal you, the real you, the you that's trapped in a body. That is what has to be made new for eternal life, and what Christ does make new for eternal life and your works can't touch that.

40:00

Now all this is why the Old Testament separates this internal disposition—the internal life, the internal transformation, the matters of the heart... That's why the Old Testament separates such things from sacrifices. Hosea 6:6 is a very well-known verse, even if people can't cite the verse reference.

**⁶For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

Steadfast love—it's *hesed* in Hebrew—is this loving loyalty idea. That's what God wants, not sacrifice. And the knowledge of God... this speaks of intimacy, rather than burnt offerings. Those things arise from the life of the mind, the life of the heart—the inner life, not outer ritual. That's why he's contrasting this. Into verse 15. We'll start reading again:

¹⁵Therefore he [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant...

Which was associated with the Spirit. Think about that: therefore he's the mediator of the new covenant. In the last episode, we talked about the new covenant a lot, and we brought up not only the new covenant passage in Jeremiah, but verses like Ezekiel 11:19:

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh...

Ezekiel 36:26

²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you...

To borrow New Testament language, this is the language of regeneration. This is the language of being made a new creature—a new creation. Back to verse 15:

¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant [one that involves an internal transformation, not dead works], so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. [No death of an animal can do that.] ¹⁶ For where a will is involved [Think of a legal term now: "last will and testament"], the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

Now Hagner comments here. He says:

The argument of verses 16–17 is possible because the Greek word *diathēkē* can mean either “covenant” or “will,” depending on the context. Our author now takes the word to mean “will.” Paul made use of the same double meaning of the word in Galatians 3:15–17.

In Hebrews 9, he's been using *diathēkē* to speak of covenant—new covenant—and now he's getting into a legal context, and Hagner wants to point this out. The writer uses the same term here to speak of two ideas: covenant or will. And we know it's will here in verses 16 and 17 because he says things like “it involves the death of the one who made it,” and “a will only takes effect at death.” So we know it's that kind of meaning, but it's the same word. Back to Hagner:

Paul made use of the same double meaning of the word in Galatians 3:15–17. The *will* of a person takes effect only upon the death of the person. Likewise, a *covenant* can be established only by blood, that is, by death—in the case of the first covenant by the death of animals, in the case of the new covenant by the death of God's Son.

Verse 18:

¹⁸Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.”²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

45:00

Think back to our Leviticus series. You needed objects decontaminated to be used in the sacrificial system. You need sacred space—the tent itself, it’s the holy ground... You needed that decontaminated to be able to do what needed to be done in the worship of the Lord and that sort of thing. It was referred to as forgiveness of sins. If you remember the Leviticus series, 99.9% of the time this wasn’t referring to any sort of moral transgression. It was referring to some sort of defilement that you incurred (accidentally, typically) that would defile sacred space. Or it referred to an actual episode of defilement of sacred space. You were doing this really to protect holy ground, holy vessels, and whatnot. And if you decontaminated yourself—if you brought the right sacrifices—then you were okay. It was okay between you and God. You were allowed to participate. You were allowed on holy ground, but only so far, even if you were clean, because you have these gradations of holiness. The average person could only go so far approaching sacred space, and the priest could only go so far into sacred space, and only one of them could go into the Most Holy Place once a year. So you had these different levels. But most of the system was about protecting holy ground—protecting the vessels, making sure you didn’t defile it. And the only way we can make you don’t defile it is if you bring a sacrifice and then you’re decontaminated yourself.

So most of this wasn’t about moral transgression. There were lots of parts of the law... To get back to our series on Leviticus, it dealt with, “Well, if you do this particular sin, you make restitution.” Restitution was the solution. And it would involve some sacrifice that makes it okay between you and God. God knows that you took care of this—you made restitution. And then there were a lot of sins for which there was no sacrifice. It was either the death penalty or exile. It’s quite a different system than what’s being described here in the book of Hebrews.

But his point here is that both the old system (the old covenant) and the new covenant were inaugurated—they were put into effect—by blood sacrifice. But the new covenant’s is better because it was an eternal sacrifice. Why was it eternal? Because it was Jesus. It doesn’t have to be repeated. And bonus: it

covers the inside—the life of the mind, the life of the heart, the life of the soul, the spirit, the inner disposition. You are made new from the inside out. That’s why Jesus is better, because he’s not doing that stuff in the earthy tent. The earthly tent is passing away and really has passed away as a result of the work of Christ. He is now the heavenly tent—the superior tent (to mimic the language of Hebrews earlier), seated at the right hand of Majesty on high. He’s taken up his place in God’s house, i.e., the heavenly temple, and that is now where you belong because you’re family. You’re family because of lots of things. Yes, because he offered himself for sin to make you new from the inside out—to give you a new heart. That’s true. But you also belong there because he became human (this is back to Hebrews 2)—the incarnation. All of this was aimed at humans because Jesus became human. He didn’t become anything else, like an angel or something. This is one of the reasons why the whole system is targeted to humans. You belong there. You are part of the family now. This is why brother (sibling) language is used of Jesus early on in the book of Hebrews. And God will keep his promises because Jesus did what he did, and our gateway to all of this is to believe. You either believe, or you don’t. It’s by faith. Even in Hebrews 9 here, he mentions that this is brought about by faith. So back to verse 23:

²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

We’re brothers—we’re siblings—with Jesus (Hebrews 2).

²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

50:00

Now a few comments on verse 27 and 28.

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Notice that the text doesn't say, "It's appointed for humans to die once, and then they get another chance"—another chance at salvation. The text doesn't say that. We've had questions in Q&A about, "Does this verse somehow speak of a new opportunity to be saved?" Well, only if you put words into it that aren't there.

²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many...

I would say here that this is a pretty plain inclusion of the idea of substitutionary atonement. This is why... We just had a recent... our little thought experiment with Ron Johnson and Carl Sanders. I said a few times, "Look, I'm a big tent guy—I'm a kaleidoscope guy—when it comes to the atonement." And I am. The atonement means many different things, one of which is substitution. The other views of the atonement do contribute something—they're different aspects, different ways of thinking about what the atonement means and what the sacrifice of Christ means. Unfortunately, the propensity has been (both in scholarship and those who imbibe on scholarship, or imbibe on how something is preached)... The propensity has been, "Let's pick another view of atonement so we don't have to have this substitution idea, because that just sounds awful. We don't want to hear about violence. We don't want to hear about an innocent dying for the sins of somebody else. That's just icky. Our culture just doesn't tolerate that." Well, too bad. That's a legitimate part of what the atonement means, and you do have passages like this one and others that use pretty clear substitution language. That's not the *only* thing that atonement means—not the only thing—but it's *part* of what the atonement means. So my advice would be to not try to jettison or excise out of our atonement talk an idea that is clearly there in certain texts, but to include other ideas that can derive from other texts. That's why I'm a kaleidoscope guy when it comes to the atonement.

Now I should say something about the word "many." That he was offered once to bear the sins of *many*. Obviously, this gets into the whole limited atonement Calvinistic kind of talk and whatnot. I think Hagner has a nice little segue—a little sidebar on this. I'm going to read it to you. He says this:

The word "many" in 9:28 should not be taken literally as limiting the scope of Christ's atoning death, as though some were not meant to be included in its benefit. This is unmistakably clear from this statement in 2:9: "so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone [hyper pantos]." The word "many" probably is to be explained by its occurrence in Isaiah 53:12, "he bore the sin of many," a passage understood in the early church as referring to Christ. Depending on the context, "many" is a Semitic expression that can mean "all." Thus, for example, "many" in Mark 10:45 very probably should be understood as meaning "all" (cf. 2 Cor 5:14–15; 1 Tm 2:6).

⁴⁵ **For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45**

¹⁴ **For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**

⁶ **who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.**

So basically, what Hagner’s saying here is that the many can refer to all, and internally in the book of Hebrews... Hebrews 9:28 is there and Hebrews 2:9 is there: “By the grace of God he might taste death for *everyone*.” It’s very clear. So what he’s saying is that this is probably another way of expressing the same idea, even though the word is different, and we shouldn’t create a contradiction between Mark 10:45, II Corinthians 5:14-15, and I Timothy 2:6. Hagner writes:

55:00

The point is strikingly clear when the “many” of Romans 5:15 and 19 is compared with the parallel statement referring to “all” in Romans 5:18.

And so he’s arguing that that’s the way that we should read this in Hebrews. I agree with him. Hebrews 2:9 is there in the text, talking about death—same subject matter. So that’s really how we should be thinking about this. Now I want to wrap up with another thing that Hagner says. I think it’s a good way to end our episode. He summarizes Hebrews 9 this way:

The reference to the appointed death of humans brings with it the thought of judgment. The prospect of the judgment that awaits all in turn sharpens the universal need of salvation. The final verse of the chapter offers welcome comfort. It is precisely because Christ in his single sacrifice was able to bear the sins of “many” (a Semitic expression connoting “all”) that he can appear bringing salvation. He no longer needs to bear sin. That has finally been accomplished for all time on the cross. But he will come “a second time” to bring salvation in its fullness and perfection to those who eagerly wait for him (cf. Phil 3:20; 2 Tm 4:8). That will be the time for the harvesting of the fruit already won by Christ. This thought reconfirms the finality and sufficiency of Christ’s work on Calvary.

So the chapter ends with a fairly simple point. Christ offered himself—he died—and he will appear again for those who believe. The contrast, of course, is that humans just generally are appointed to die. That’s just the inevitability of human existence. And then they’re going to be judged. But if they were believers, judgment isn’t what would be awaiting them when Christ returns. They’d be

saved when Christ reappears the second time. In other words, they won't suffer the second death described in Revelation. So Hebrews 9 (just drawing out more points in the comparison)... I just like the way Hagner puts that:

He no longer needs to bear sin. That has finally been accomplished for all time on the cross. But he will come "a second time" to bring salvation in its fullness and perfection to those who eagerly wait for him.

TS: OK, Mike, we're getting close to the end of Hebrews. That means we will be voting again. So everybody get ready for that next month. And then, Mike, next week, we're going to take a break from Hebrews again and do a special Christmas show. Can you tell us what we're going to be talking about?

MH: Yeah, I've decided we are going to do an episode on, "Is Christmas pagan?" for lack of a better way of putting it. Is Christmas pagan? How should we be thinking about Christmas with all the various controversies about what people do to celebrate Christmas and the December 25th day, and all that stuff. So we'll devote an episode to that.

TS: And we'll have a special guest, Dr. Burton, to help break that down for us. Is that correct?

MH: Yep. Judd Burton will be along with us and we're going to sort of tag team in that episode. Hopefully it will be useful and instructive.

TS: OK, I'm looking forward to that episode. I need to know if I need to take down my wreaths and stop doing anything that I shouldn't be doing.

MH: [laughs] Maybe you don't want to just tell us everything you do, Trey. Knowing you, that probably wouldn't be a good idea, so let's just leave that there.

TS: OK, sounds good. Alright Mike, well, just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.