

Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews

Chapter 9: The Earthly Tabernacle versus the Entrance of Christ into the Heavenly One

(also available on-line at ichthys.com)

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I. Introduction

II. Translation

III. Summary and Paraphrase

IV. Verse by Verse Commentary

Verses One through Five

Verses Six through Ten

Verses Eleven through Twelve

Verses Thirteen through Fourteen

Verses Fifteen through Seventeen

Verses Eighteen through Twenty-Two

Verses Twenty-Three through Twenty-Six

Verses Twenty-Seven through Twenty-Eight

Introduction:

Chapter nine is all about contrasting the earthly tabernacle, its paraphernalia and rituals, with the reality of Jesus Christ and His ascension and entrance into the real, heavenly abode of God the Father. In other words, this chapter demonstrates how God has replaced the temporary physical allegory of the tabernacle and its functions with the eternal spiritual reality of Jesus Christ, the One who accomplished the only sacrifice which matters, the only one which could save us from our sins, namely, His spiritual death in the darkness on the cross wherein He died for all of our sins. What is real and helpful has now replaced what was only meant to teach us about His coming deliverance of us until such time as Jesus did save us through His death on our behalf. And since that "death on behalf of the One making the [new] covenant" is now an accomplished fact, ignoring, diminishing and disrespecting the blood of Christ while continuing to spill the blood of animals was a great scandal on the part of the Jerusalem believers.

Chapter nine therefore expands upon the principles Paul laid down in chapter eight regarding our true High Priest who has rescued us from the lake of fire by sacrificing Himself for our sins. In doing so, Paul will not only make a brief examination of the tabernacle and some of its rituals by way of contrasting these with the infinitely more important realities they merely represent; he will also have occasion to teach us many wonderful principles about our Savior, His work of salvation, and the plan of God generally. And while of necessity Paul mentions some of these wonderful doctrines only in passing – restrained by time and space and writing to an audience which ought to understand them in depth in any case – we have the luxury of being able to linger over these marvelous truths at some length.

II. Translation

(1) So then, in contrast to [the New Covenant], the Old (lit., "first") Covenant contained regulations for [liturgical] service and the holy [sanctuary, that is, the one] on earth (i.e., as opposed to the heavenly one which Christ has entered: Heb.8:1-2; 9:11-12; 9:24-25). (2) For the tabernacle [as instituted by the] Old (lit., "first") Covenant was fitted out [for ritual service as follows]: in the part which is called "the Holy Place" was the menorah, and the table, and the bread of [His] presence; (3) and behind the veil was the [part of the] tabernacle which is called [the] "Holy of Holies" (i.e., "the most holy place"), (4) containing the golden altar, and the ark of the Covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which was the golden jar with the [famous sample of] manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the Covenant; (5) above [which ark] were the cherubim of glory which overshadow the mercy seat. But we do not have time to go into detail about all this now.

(6) With these [earthly] things having been established in this way, the [Levitical] priests continually enter into the first [part of the] tabernacle (i.e., the "holy place") in the course of their [liturgical] duties, (7) but only the high priest enters the second [part] (i.e., the "holy of holies") once a year, [and] not without blood which he offers on behalf of himself and the sins of ignorance [committed] by the people. (8) Through this ritual, the Holy Spirit is making it clear that the way into [this most] holy place had not yet opened up [for us] while the first tabernacle (i.e., the earthly one instituted by the first/Old covenant) still had a legitimate use. (9) This has a direct application to our present time, wherein, although [such] gifts and sacrifices are [still] being offered, they are [nevertheless] unable to cleanse the conscience of the one offering them completely (i.e., no sense of forgiveness because they are mere rituals). (10) [For these practices of the Law] had to do [not with spiritual matters but] only with foods and drinks, various washings (lit., "baptisms"), being ordinances of the flesh (as opposed to of the Spirit), valid [only] until the time came to institute a new order (i.e., the time of the Spirit, the Church Age).

(11) But Christ has already arrived [in heaven] as High Priest of the good things to come, [having passed] through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, that is, the one which is not of this creation. (12) Nor was it through the blood of goats and bullocks but through His own blood (i.e., His spiritual death) that He entered once and for all into the [heavenly] holy of holies, having wrought eternal redemption.

(13) For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, (14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we may serve the living God?

(15) And it is for this reason that He is the Mediator of a New Covenant, so that those who have been called might receive their eternal inheritance on the basis of the death He suffered to redeem us from the transgressions [committed] under the first/Old Covenant. (16) For where there is [the disposition of] a covenant or will, of necessity the death of the one making the covenant or will must have taken place. (17) For a covenant or will becomes valid [only] on the basis of "deaths" (lit., plur.).

(18) For this reason, not even the first or Old covenant was initiated without blood. (19) For after the commandments contained in the Law were recited to the people by Moses, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, along with water, scarlet wool and hyssop, and then he sprinkled the book [of the Law] itself and all the people, (20) saying, "This is the blood of the

covenant which God has enjoined upon you". (21) Then likewise he sprinkled with blood the tabernacle and all the equipment of the liturgical service. (22) And nearly everything under the Law is cleansed by blood, and without the pouring out of blood there is no [ritual] forgiveness.

(23) For this reason (i.e., the inability of the blood of animals to cleanse us from sin) it was necessary for the heavenly exemplars of these earthly representations to be cleansed with better sacrifices than these [earthly ones]. (24) For Christ did not enter into a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. Rather, He entered into heaven itself, so as to present Himself before God [the Father] on our behalf. (25) Nor did He do so in order to offer Himself many times as the high priest enters the [holy of] holies every year with blood which is not his own, (26) for in that case He would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But as the case actually stands, once and for all at the [very] conjunction of the ages [Christ] came visibly [to earth] in order to remove sin through the sacrifice of Himself.

(27) And inasmuch as it is ordained for mankind to die once (i.e., the first, "physical" death), and after this [face] judgment, (28) so Christ having been offered up once to bear the sins of many (i.e., removing us from judgment) will appear without [any need to bear] sin a second time unto those who are awaiting salvation (i.e., to take us to Himself in resurrection).

Hebrews 9:1-28

III. Summary and Paraphrase

The tabernacle and its rites were shadows representing Christ's actual sacrifice, and the high priest's entrance into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement was a picture of Christ's entrance into the Father's presence after His victory on the cross. The blood which saves us is not animal blood but the blood of Christ, His spiritual death for us in being judged for our sins.

The Law prescribed the rituals associated with the tabernacle which was also given the specific equipment you all know well, both for the first part, the holy place, and also for the second part, the holy of holies. Other priests entered into the first part every day to carry out the prescribed rituals, but only the high priest entered into the second part and only on the Day of Atonement in order to make atonement for the sins of the whole people and for his own as well – and never without the blood of a sacrifice. This is the Spirit's way of showing us that the way into the presence of the Father had not yet been opened up – as it could not be by mere symbolic sacrifices of the sort that are associated with the tabernacle and the present temple as well. That is because the rituals were – and are – incapable of cleansing anyone's heart or conscience since they are merely symbols and do not actually satisfy God the Father's justice in regard to sins. These sacrifices were only shadows, rites, rituals, which looked forward to the time when God would provide the only efficacious Sacrifice for Sin, His own dear Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus, the true High Priest, never entered the earthly holy of holies in the temple – that would have been pointless. He entered the **actual** Holy of Holies in heaven when He ascended, the very throne room of God the Father. There His work on the cross was approved by the Father, not the spilling of any literal blood but the actual atonement for our sins for which He died and paid the entire penalty with His spiritual death once and

for all in the darkness on the cross. If animal blood was effective for ritual purification, how much more do you not think that the actual spiritual death of our Lord, the blood of Christ, the One whose offering was enabled by the Holy Spirit, will not produce the actual cleansing of our hearts and consciences from those other dead works of the Law to which you have reverted? Faith in Christ and faithful following of Him is thus the only true way to serve the Living God.

It is exactly because of this victory, the spiritual death of Christ for our sins which the first covenant could only reveal but not cleanse, that Jesus has become our Mediator producing actual peace between us and the Father – for all of us, that is, who have been called to the promise of an eternal inheritance, one far better than anything which the Law merely symbolized. No covenant or testament comes into effect without the death of the testator and is only considered valid thereafter. That is why animal blood was ever-present in the rituals of the Law, namely because it represented the death of Christ to come which would empower the promises behind it. This is why it is called "the blood of the Covenant", why everything was sprinkled with blood by Moses, why everything having to do with the Law is cleansed by blood – and why without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin, ritual forgiveness only under the Law, but foreshadowing the actual and efficacious forgiveness that the blood of Christ would provide.

For this reason, while the earthly tabernacle and temple had to be purified with animal blood which was merely symbolic, the genuine heavenly abode of the Father required a sacrifice which was superior in every way. After all, it was not into the earthly temple that Christ ascended, a mere replica of heavenly things, but into the actual presence of the Father on high – for us. And Christ did this once and for all, having no need to do so every year as the earthly high priest does – He would then have had to suffer from the beginning of time until the end, if His sacrifice were merely a ritual and not an efficacious one. But now, at the very conjunction of the ages, the pivotal point in the entire plan of God on which all depends, Christ has accomplished eternal redemption from sin for us all through His great sacrifice on the cross in dying for every human sin. All human beings face physical death and then judgment before God thereafter. In an analogous way, Christ faced spiritual death for us all and will appear again to judge the world on our behalf, we who are patiently awaiting His return and deliverance. So place your hopes for safety and help in Him, and not in compromising with the world.

IV. Verse by Verse Commentary

Verses One through Five

(1) So then, in contrast to [the New Covenant], the Old (lit., "first") Covenant contained regulations for [liturgical] service and the holy [sanctuary, that is, the one] on earth (i.e., as opposed to the heavenly one which Christ has entered: Heb.8:1-2; 9:11-12; 9:24-25). (2) For the tabernacle [as instituted by the] Old (lit., "first") Covenant was fitted out [for ritual service as follows]: in the part which is called "the Holy Place" was the menorah, and the table, and the bread of [His] presence; (3) and behind the veil was the [part of the]

tabernacle which is called [the] "Holy of Holies" (i.e., "the most holy place"), (4) containing the golden altar, and the ark of the Covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which was the golden jar with the [famous sample of] manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the Covenant; (5) above [which ark] were the cherubim of glory which overshadow the mercy seat. But we do not have time to go into detail about all this now. Hebrews 9:1-5

The Holy Sanctuary on Earth: The reference here is to the entire tabernacle/temple, that is, both parts, the larger "holy place" behind the first veil, and the "holy of holies" containing the ark of the covenant behind the second veil. Paul's brief treatment of the tabernacle/temple in the verses that follow are for the express purpose of demonstrating that they are only models of the their heavenly counterparts (which form the antitypes to these types). The phrase "on earth" occurs in the Greek in the predicate position (literally: "the holy, earthly"), a rather unusual construction in Pauline diction where his normal practice would be to place the adjective "earthly" directly in front of the substantive substitute (i.e., "holy", standing for "holy [thing/place/sanctuary] understood). The effect of this unique position is to emphasize the adjective "earthly" in order to contrast the Mosaic tabernacle/temple more vividly with its "real" heavenly opposite: "in contrast to [the New Covenant], the Old Covenant contained . . . the holy [sanctuary] but I'm talking about the replica on earth rather than the genuine one in heaven". Thus with this reference to the earthly tabernacle, coupled with the "regulations for [liturgical] service", Paul sums up the entire collective functioning of the Law, the very rituals and venue to carry them out which the Jerusalem believers were abusing through their continuation with them.

The Holy Place: We have discussed previously (in the last chapter and in the Coming Tribulation series¹), the items contained in the tabernacle temple and their symbolism. The first part of the tabernacle/temple, the larger part behind the first veil, contained the menorah (representing Christ, the Light of the world), the table which held the "shew bread" (representing Christ the Bread of life), and the altar of incense (representing Christ in resurrection having completed His mission, the sweet aroma which propitiates the Father's justice making salvation possible). All three pieces of holy "furniture" were gold (the menorah) or gold plated, representing Christ's divinity, with the underlying, acacia wood (in the case of the table and the altar) representing His perfect, sinless humanity. In terms of the altar of incense, Paul describes it in this context as being "connected to" the holy of holies. That is an understandable way to describe it, because the altar was placed directly in front of the inner veil and for that reason was felt to be part of the inner sanctum itself (even though technically standing on the other side of the curtain).

The ark of the covenant, likewise overlaid with gold (to represent Christ's deity) on a base of acacia wood (to represent Christ's humanity) was also a type of Christ. The mercy seat which rested atop the ark received the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (representing Christ's bearing of the sins of the world), and the cherubs looking down upon this ritual pouring out of blood represented the Father's satisfaction with this righteous sacrifice (i.e.,

¹ See Hebrews Chapter 8, under "Minister of the Holy Things"; and Coming Tribulation 2B, under "The Earthly Tabernacle and Temple as a Type of the Heavenly Temple".

"propitiation").² There is no furniture representing the Father since He was present "in a cloud" over the ark (Ex.29:43; Lev.16:2).

"(21) You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. (22) And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel."

Exodus 25:21-22 NKJV

There are, of course, four cherubs (e.g., Ezek.1:5ff.; cf. Rev.4:6ff.)³, but to allow access to the top of the mercy seat, only two were represented upon it. That is why Solomon, in his construction of the temple, added two large olive wood cherubs on the rear wall of the holy of holies (1Ki.6:23-28), that is, to represent the entire college of cherubim. As the passage quoted directly above indicates, Moses was directed by God to place "the testimony" in the ark itself, under the mercy seat. This is a reference to the two tablets with the "ten words" or ten commandments, written by "the finger of God". that is, by the Lord Himself (Ex.31:8; cf. Ex.32:15-16; 34:1; Deut.4:13; 5:22). The ten commandments, as we have seen, provide the perfect standard for human behavior in this world, representing our proper comportment towards God (#1-3), towards His delegated human authority (#5), and towards all other human beings (#6-10).⁴ The fourth commandment, as we have also already discussed in some detail, the commandment which enjoined our holiness in regard to our lives in this world, has been transformed under the New Covenant into a command to rest in the Lord at all times. Conforming to the ten commandments then and now, was the way to "be holy as I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44; 11:45; 19:2; 20:7; cf. 1Pet.1:15-17), the God-given means of separating oneself from the sin and evil of this world. No human being, of course, could ever come too close to following these commandments perfectly (e.g., it was his failure to measure up to the tenth commandment that convicted Paul of his essential sinfulness: Rom.7:7-12). Pouring out the blood on the mercy seat over the ark representing Jesus Christ, the ark containing the commandments that we have all violated in one way or another, was a very vivid way of demonstrating the need for salvation and God's provision of it through the blood of His very own dear Son.

Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

² See Bible Basics 4A: Christology, section II.6, "Propitiation"; and Hebrews Chapter 2, under "Expiate the Sins".

³ For the cherubs (cherubim), see SR 1, section III.i, "Cherub"; SR 4, section III.3.b.1, "Cherubs"; SR 5, section II.4, under "The Four Ages of Human History"; Coming Tribulation 2B, under "The Four Living Creatures"; and BB 2A: Angelology, section II.9.3.1, "Cherubs".

⁴ See SR 5, under "Day #4"; and Bible Basics 3B: Hamartiology, section II.9, "The Ten Commandments".

1st Kings 8:9 NKJV

We have no reason to question the validity of the statement above. By the time Solomon placed the ark into the newly built temple, only the tablets remained within. And we recall that the ark had, in the previous generations, undergone exile in the land of the Philistines for some time after its capture at the Israelites' defeat at Ebenezer-Aphek (1Sam.4:11). In our context, Paul mentions the other items which were contained in the ark at one time prior Solomon's enshrinement of it in the temple, no doubt because they speak to the sinfulness of the people in the same way that the tablets of the ten commandments do.

Paul reminds his readers that, in addition to the tables of the Law (Deut.31:24-26; 1Ki.8:21), the ark at one time also contained a golden jar of manna (Ex.16:33-34) and Aaron's rod that budded and produced almonds (Num.17:1-11). Each of these items speaks of God's provision and man's rejection of that provision. In spite of being provided with delicious fare without having to work for it, the people of Israel grumbled against the Lord about "this manna" (Num.11:6; cf. Ex.16:11-12; cf. Ps.78:17-22). And in spite of being provided with perfect leadership through Aaron and Moses the Israelites challenged Moses and Aaron's right to lead (cf. Num.16:41), so that God provided this miraculous sign of the budding staff as a testimony against the rebelliousness of the people. And just as the Israelites grumbled for food and were unappreciative of God's miraculous provision of it, the present Jerusalem believers were neglecting the Bread of Life Himself for the sake of tradition and worldly concerns. And just as the Israelites rejected the God-given leadership of Moses and Aaron, nearly bringing about their own destruction as a result (Num.16:41-60), so the present Jerusalem believers were rejecting the Lord's own apostles and leaders by turning back to the rituals of the Law being performed by a priesthood now defunct whose members were not even saved.

In the tablets of the ten commandments, the very words of God, written by the very finger of God, there could be no clearer representation of the Word of God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, whom the present Jerusalem believers were "subjecting to open shame" through their reckless return to symbols already fulfilled, suggesting thereby that the cross was somehow insufficient (Heb.6:6). The blood of the sacrifice, representing the true means of propitiation, the blood of Christ, His death for us in the darkness on the cross for all of our sins (rather than literal blood), thus covered in graphic fashion symbols of human sinfulness in rejecting God's material provision (the manna), His protection of His people through spiritual leadership (Aaron's rod), and His authority in the written Word of God (the tablets). Christ is the Bread of Life; Christ is our King; and Christ is the incarnate Word of God. Sin is rejecting Him – but God the Father has taken that sin problem out of the way through Jesus' death on our behalf. And that is exactly what the pouring out of the blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement graphically illustrated – for all who were willing to pay attention.

We who believe in Jesus Christ are now responsible to live our lives in a godly way, following our Savior. But by rejecting God's authority in all three of these same areas (preferring worldly security, traditional leadership, and a false interpretation of the Old Testament in rejection of the New), these Jerusalem believers were, by their own actions, negating the sacrifice which saved them – which saves us all – from all human violations of His will, sins committed "under the

first/Old Covenant" (Heb.9:6). Perseverance in this very bad course could only end badly (i.e., in either apostasy or the sin unto death), and Paul is doing his best in the Spirit to turn this congregation around.

Verses Six through Ten

(6) With these [earthly] things having been established in this way, the [Levitical] priests continually enter into the first [part of the] tabernacle (i.e., the "holy place") in the course of their [liturgical] duties, (7) but only the high priest enters the second [part] (i.e., the "holy of holies") once a year, [and] not without blood which he offers on behalf of himself and the sins of ignorance [committed] by the people. (8) Through this ritual, the Holy Spirit is making it clear that the way into [this most] holy place had not yet opened up [for us] while the first tabernacle (i.e., the earthly one instituted by the first/Old covenant) still had a legitimate use. (9) This has a direct application to our present time, wherein, although [such] gifts and sacrifices are [still] being offered, they are [nevertheless] unable to cleanse the conscience of the one offering them completely (i.e., no sense of forgiveness because they are mere rituals). (10) [For these practices of the Law] had to do [not with spiritual matters but] only with foods and drinks, various washings (lit., "baptisms"), being ordinances of the flesh (as opposed to of the Spirit), valid [only] until the time came to institute a new order (i.e., the time of the Spirit, the Church Age).

Hebrews 9:6-10

Duties: The outer part of the tabernacle/temple, the "holy place" beyond the first curtain, was entered on a daily basis for the purposes of 1) servicing the menorah (which had to be kept burning continually at night: Ex.27:20-21; 30:8; 1Sam.3:3); 2) replacing the bread of presence (i.e., the "shewbread": Ex.25:30; 1Sam.21:6), and offering incense on the golden altar of incense at set times (e.g., Ex.30:6-8; Lev.4:1-7; cf. Lk.1:). All current, serving Levitical priests were eligible to perform these functions, and, beginning with David's reforms, did so according to established divisions chosen by lot (1Chron.24:3-19; 2Chron.8:14).

(5) There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain *priest* named Zacharias, *of the division of Abijah*. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (6) And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (7) But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. (8) So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, (9) *according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot* fell to burn incense when he went into *the temple* of the Lord.

Luke 1:5-9 NKJV

Once a Year: This refers to the Day of Atonement (Lev.16:1-34; 23:26-32; Num.29:7-11). Only the high priest was authorized to enter the holy of holies beyond the inner veil (Lev.16:2; Heb.9:7), and only once a year, in order to offer sacrifice "on behalf of himself and the sins of ignorance [committed] by the people". All three of the major festival clusters under the Law

speak of Christ and His Church (Ex.23:14; 23:17; 34:23-24; Deut.16:16).⁵ Passover, along with the associated Feast of Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits (Ex.12:1-14; Lev.23:5; Num.9:1-14; 28:16; Deut.16:1-7), is a clear representation of our Lord's sacrifice for us on the cross, the Lamb of God (Jn.1:29; 1:36; Rev.5:6 *et passim* in Revelation) spilling His blood for us while we partake in Him by "eating His flesh", a picture of faith (Jn.6:53). The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Ex.23:16; 34:22; Lev.23:15-21; Num.28:26-31; Deut.16:9-12; 16:16), the main harvest festival (the bringing in of the wheat crop), symbolizes the Church Age, the bountiful harvesting of an unprecedented number of believers for the filling up of Christ's Church. The Day of Atonement (Lev.16:1-34; 23:26-32; Num.29:7-11), the "once a year" occasion in our context in the midst of the Feast of Trumpets, occurs in the Jewish ceremonial calendar at the point which symbolizes the Great Tribulation and is thus connected with the end of the Jewish Age (being followed, at the conclusion of the feast of Trumpets) by the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles (*Sukkot*: Ex.23:16; 34:22; Lev.23:33-43; Num.29:12-34; Deut.16:13-16), which represents the Millennium, the Messiah's kingdom established on earth, and the regathering of all Israel into the land of promise.

The symbolism of the Day of Atonement represents Christ's efficacious sacrifice on our behalf and, specifically, His ascension to heaven and propitiation by His blood of the Father's wrath toward our sins. It was thus meant to be *the* day of introspection (Lev.16:31), a supremely holy day upon which, if at no other time in the year, the people of God would take stock of their spiritual status. Paul's mention of it here is first and foremost for the purpose of comparing the ascension, session and glorification of Jesus Christ based upon His actual sacrifice for the sins of the world with this ritual of the Law which merely symbolized those magnificent events upon which the entire plan of God is founded. But the reminder of the Day of Atonement also invites the Jerusalem believers to take stock of their present spiritual condition and not let the purpose of that Day become reduced to pointless ritual – a policy we all ought to consider adopting from time to time.

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified.
2nd Corinthians 13:5 NKJV

Sins of Ignorance:

(6) With these [earthly] things having been established in this way, the [Levitical] priests continually enter into the first [part of the] tabernacle (i.e., the "holy place") in the course of their [liturgical] duties, (7) but only the high priest enters the second [part] (i.e., the "holy of holies") once a year, [and] not without blood which he offers on behalf of himself and the sins of ignorance [committed] by the people.
Hebrews 9:6-7

The Hebrew term Paul uses here, "sins of ignorance" (Gr., *agnoemata*; lit. "unknown acts"), is never actually used in the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament in regard to the Day

⁵ See SR 5, section II.8.c, "The Jewish Ceremonial Calendar".

of Atonement. That is understandable since the Hebrew word (*sheghagah*) to which the Greek "sins of ignorance"/*agnoemata* corresponds also does not occur in any of the contexts describing that day.

"So [on the Day of Atonement the high priest] shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their **sins**."

Leviticus 16:16a NKJV

The term in bold above in Hebrew is not *sheghagah* but *chatta'ath*, the most common word for sin employed in the Old Testament, generally translated in the Septuagint version as it is also in this context by the Greek word *hamartia* (cf. hamartiology), the most common word for sin in the New Testament (and the standard equivalent for *chatta'ath* in quotations from the Old). Nothing in the above quote suggests that **only** sins of ignorance are atoned for on that day. Further, the Old Testament does indeed also indicate that sins of arrogant temerity are not to be forgiven, at least not the civil punishment due them, on account of the offense given to the Lord's authority:

But anyone who sins defiantly (lit., "with a high hand"), whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the Lord and must be cut off from the people of Israel.

Numbers 15:30 NIV

Under the Law, then, there are sins of inadvertence (Lev.5:18; Num.15:28); there are sins of defiance (Num.15:30; cf. Deut.1:43; 17:13). But the Old Testament passages which speak of the Day of Atonement suggest to us that this particular sacrifice suffices for cleansing from **all** sin (Lev.23:28; Num.29:11) – ritual cleansing, that is, not actual forgiveness (which only the blood of Christ would be able to accomplish in due time; cf. Rom.3:25).

"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and **all their transgressions**, concerning **all their sins**, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man."

Leviticus 16:21 NKJV

"For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean **from all your sins** before the Lord."

Leviticus 16:30 NKJV

"This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, **for all their sins**, once a year." And he did as the Lord commanded Moses."

Leviticus 16:34 NKJV

Why, then, does Paul use a word referring exclusively to sins of ignorance? The answer seems to be in order to put his readers in a state of expectation. If sins of ignorance are forgiven, what about others? For there is clearly a category of sin that represents complete rebellion from the Lord, sins committed "with a high hand", known also to us from our New Testament studies as

"the sin unto death" (Jn.5:16; cf. Ex.23:21).⁶ Focusing on the blanket forgiveness of inadvertent sins invites Paul's readers to consider that perhaps their present conduct may fall into that other extreme category.⁷

(4) For, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, and who have experienced the heavenly gift and become partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and who have experienced that the Word of God is good, and [who have experienced] miracles foreshadowing the age to come, (6) it is impossible to restore them to [true] repentance after having fallen away [into sin] as long as they keep crucifying the Son of God afresh and exposing Him to open shame.

Hebrews 6:4-6

For if we continue to sin willfully (i.e., arrogantly) after having received full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains any sacrifice applicable to [such] sins, but [only] the terrifying expectation of judgment and fiery retribution waiting to devour those who oppose [the Lord].

Hebrews 10:26-27

Now as all spiritually mature believers know – and as these believers should have known as well – Jesus Christ died for *all* of our sins, and we are forgiven *all* of our sins when we confess them to the Lord (1Jn.1:9; cf. Ps.32:5; Matt.6:12; Lk.11:4). But of course God does not forgive us things we don't confess and have no intention of stopping. Hardening our hearts against the Spirit working with our consciences in any such cases only pushes us farther and farther from the Lord, and that was the situation many of these Jerusalem believers were in. God was "tapping His foot", so to speak, "knocking on the door" (Rev.3:19-20), just "waiting to be gracious" to them (Is.30:18), but that required them to heed Paul's words and repent of their abominable reversion. Left unchecked, the end of all such turning back to sin and to the world – out of whatever motivations – is too horrible to contemplate.

(21) For it would have been better for them not to have accepted the Righteous Way in the first place, rather than – once having accepted this holy command [for faith in Christ which was] committed to them – to turn their backs on it now. (22) And so in their case this proverb is true: "The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow, though washed, to her muddy sty".

2nd Peter 2:21-22

If anyone sees his brother engaged in a pattern of sinfulness which does not lead to death (i.e., is a deviation rather than a complete turning away), let him ask [forgiveness on his

⁶ See BB 3B: Hamartiology, section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

⁷ *N.b.*, the regulations for the millennial temple in Jerusalem require sacrifice on the seventh day of the seventh month (not the first, presently "Trumpets" or the tenth, presently "The Day of Atonement"), for "everyone who has sinned unintentionally or in ignorance" (Ezek.45:20).

brother's behalf], and life will be given to him (i.e., forgiveness and deliverance will result), that is, in those cases where those sinning are not [sinning] unto death. There is sin which leads to death – I am not telling you to pray in that case.

1st John 5:16

The Way not yet Opened: The Christian life is a pilgrimage. We who have chosen for Jesus Christ have set our hearts on the things above (Col.3:1-2), looking forward to a much better world than the one we are presently sojourning through (Heb.11:10).

(5) Happy is everyone whose strength is in You. Their hearts are set on the highways [of pilgrimage to Zion]. (6) As they pass through the [dry] valley of Bachah (i.e., the wilderness of life), they make it a place of springs. Even the early rains enwrap it with [their] blessings. (7) They go from strength to strength, until they appear before God in Zion.

Psalms 84:5-7

And in this sacred journey we are not following our own lead or our own desires. We are following Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."

Matthew 16:24

There are many religions in this world, many false avenues devoid of the truth, all of which end up in the same place, a place no one not deceived by the evil one would ever want to even risk ending up: the lake of fire (Rev.20:15). That is only just in the case of all who reject the will of God and substitute their own will in its place – just like Satan did.

They have chosen their own ways, and they delight in their abominations.

Isaiah 66:3b NIV

(14) With eyes full of adultery and on the lookout for sin without restraint, they entrap those insufficiently grounded (in the truth). They are accursed children whose hearts are well-trained for greed. (15) Having left the straight way behind, they have wandered astray and followed the way of Balaam, son of Beor, who loved the pay that comes from unrighteous behavior.

2nd Peter 2:14-15

But for us who are indeed determined to win the victory of faith (1Jn.5:4; cf. Rom.8:37), there is only "one way", the way of following Jesus Christ.

"I am the Way: the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

In our context, Paul subtly reminds his readers of this fundamental point. Salvation only comes through Jesus Christ, and that is what the Holy Spirit was always indicating through the need for continuing sacrifice, year after year.

Through this ritual, the Holy Spirit is making it clear that the way into [this most] holy place had not yet opened up [for us] while the first tabernacle (i.e., the earthly one instituted by the first/Old covenant) still had a legitimate use.
Hebrews 9:8

During the long period when the ritual cleansing of the Day of Atonement was still valid, by definition the "way" had not yet been opened into the presence of the Father. Salvation had not yet been accomplished. But now redemption has been accomplished by Jesus Christ our Lord! And that being the case, the "way" into heaven having been opened up by the sacrifice, ascent and glorification of our Lord, conversely then and beyond all argument the continuation of those former rituals was absolutely no longer legitimate. It had to be one way or the other, and all believers knew then as we know now that Jesus Christ has indeed successfully paid the price for all of our sins. Carrying on with the ritual sacrifices of the Law after the fact was denying by virtue of one's actions the true sacrifice of the cross . . . as if "the Way" into the presence of the Father were still closed and awaiting the coming of the Messiah. This was a dangerous posture for the believers in Jerusalem to put themselves into, and the sequel of the coming destruction of the city and the temple demonstrates that their time for repentance was not unlimited.

The Present Time:

(9) This has a direct application to our present time, wherein, although [such] gifts and sacrifices are [still] being offered, they are [nevertheless] unable to cleanse the conscience of the one offering them completely (i.e., no sense of forgiveness because they are mere rituals). (10) [For these practices of the Law] had to do [not with spiritual matters but] only with foods and drinks, various washings (lit., "baptisms"), being ordinances of the flesh (as opposed to of the Spirit), valid [only] until the time came to institute a new order (i.e., the time of the Spirit, the Church Age).
Hebrews 9:9-10

In these two verses, Paul develops his contrast between the continuation of the now irrelevant ritual sacrifices of the Law and the actual and efficacious sacrifice of our Lord on the cross described in the paragraph that follows (Heb.9:11-14). The main difference is the same one he has been focusing on from the beginning of this epistle: the earthly rituals with which these wayward believers continue to be so enamored are merely symbols of the far greater reality they represented. As such, in spite of their continuation, no forgiveness, no sense of deliverance and no actual salvation – no "cleansing of the conscience" was possible through these rites. Actual salvation required the cross, the ineffable sacrifice these rituals could only represent.⁸

⁸ KJV's "the time *then* present" has proved confusing (although most versions have it right; cf. ESV: "which is symbolic for the present age"). The use of the perfect participle of *enistemi* is a Pauline idiom meant to graphically represent things presently in effect *and*

Conscience:

This has a direct application to our present time, wherein, although [such] gifts and sacrifices are [still] being offered, they are [nevertheless] unable to cleanse the conscience of the one offering them completely (i.e., no sense of forgiveness because they are mere rituals).

Hebrews 9:9

As should be obvious from reading the above, the word "conscience" as used by Paul here does not mesh entirely with our modern, English usage and understanding of the word. When people talk about "conscience" nowadays, they are mostly talking about feelings of guilt. That is highly problematic in a biblical context, because, as we have seen previously in this series, stirring up guilt-feelings is one of the devil's favorite weapons. By stoking false guilt (i.e., making us feel bad about things long past and long ago confessed and forgiven), the evil one has often been able to knock believers off their stride and stymie their spiritual growth. All human beings do indeed possess a conscience (in the biblical sense), and we believers are ever calibrating and refining ours in the Spirit through learning and believing and applying the truth of the Word of God – or at least we should be. We have discussed the God-given conscience elsewhere.⁹ Suffice it say here that "cleansing the conscience" in our context means, in essence, "giving the person complete confidence that all their sins have been paid for and forgiven". This, of course, animal sacrifices could never do, because such sacrifices merely *represented* the precious blood of Christ, His payment for all sin in the darkness on the cross.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

Hebrews 10:4 NKJV

And the proof of this insufficiency adduced by Paul is the fact of the continuation of said animal sacrifices. This is inescapable logic: if animal blood really did result in forgiveness of sins, then why did such sacrifices need to be repeated over and over again? In fact, the logic is so pure and irrefutable, it begs the question as to why the Jerusalem believers had not come to that same obvious conclusion already without Paul's help. And the answer, of course, has nothing to do with information or logic, but rather with sinful retrogression from their previous, solid spiritual standing out of false motivations, i.e., a desire to end their pariah status on the one hand and avoid persecution on the other. Paul's clarity of logic was designed to cut through any self-imposed blindness to see this issue as it really was, removing all wishful thinking by alerting

continuing. At 2nd Thessalonians 2:2, for example, the same participle is used to describe something that is not just "present" but personally palpable, bringing in with full force the etymology of the word with its metaphor of "surrounding" being felt much more strongly in the Greek than is obvious from English translations (other examples: 1Cor.7:26 where the "present crisis" is one which continues even unto the present day; see also Gal.1:4; 2Tim.3:1).

⁹ See SR 4, section II.6, "The conscience as a restrainer of satanic influence"; and BB 3B: Hamartiology, section I.3, "The Conscience".

them to the danger of their poor choice.

Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.
2nd Peter 3:17 NIV

Baptisms et al.:

[For these practices of the Law] had to do [not with spiritual matters but] only with foods and drinks, various washings (lit., "baptisms"), being ordinances of the flesh (as opposed to of the Spirit), valid [only] until the time came to institute a new order (i.e., the time of the Spirit, the Church Age).

Hebrews 9:10

"Foods and drinks [and] various washings (lit., baptisms)" sums up that part of the Law which regulated foods from which to abstain along with the times and circumstances of various rules and regulations concerned with festivals, specific priestly rights and duties, and the provisions for cleansing from uncleanness. In other words, with this short list Paul encapsulates everything the Law required of observant Jews which constituted *legal* or *ritual* "holiness".

"For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Leviticus 11:34 NKJV

This sort of holiness was only symbolic, of course, and had already been replaced by the greater realities that have to do with true holiness based upon our relationship with Christ and His sacrifice for us on the cross, as our Lord Himself had made clear.

(14) Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. (15) Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them." (17) After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. (18) "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? (19) For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) (20) He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. (21) For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come – sexual immorality, theft, murder, (22) adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (23) All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

Mark 7:14-23 NIV

Paul's inclusion of "washings" here (literally, "baptisms"), is also highly significant.¹⁰ Ritual purification through washing with water was very prominent under the rituals of the Law. Indeed, the laver between the tabernacle and the altar was designed for that specific purpose (Ex.30:18-21), and Pharisaical tradition had expanded these required practices well beyond what the Law enjoined:

(3) For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. (4) When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.
Mark 7:3-4 NKJV

Washing, like sprinkling with blood, represents cleansing, but the blood brings to mind the sacrifice which empowers the cleansing, while the water indicates the removal of filth through willingness to be washed, something only response to the truth can accomplish. Water, therefore, is a frequent symbol of the Word of God (Is.55:1; Jn.3:5; 3:8; 4:10; 4:13-14; 6:35; 7:37-39; 1Cor.10:4; Eph.5:26; Heb.10:22; 1Jn.5:8; Rev.7:17; 21:6; 22:1; 22:17; cf. Ex 17:5-6; Num. 20:8; Ps.42:1-2; 63:1; 84:5-7; Is.41:17; 44:3; Jer.2:13), and is thus often associated with the Spirit through whose ministry alone we can understand the truth.¹¹

(5) Jesus responded, "Truly, truly I tell you, that unless a person is born from *water* and *Spirit*, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born from the flesh is flesh, and that which is born from the Spirit is spirit."
John 3:5-6

(6) This is the One who came through water, blood and Spirit – not by means of water only but by means of water and blood – and it is the Spirit who testifies [to the truth of this], because the Spirit is the truth; (7) because there are three who bear witness, (8) the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three have the same purpose."
1st John 5:6-8

John's water-baptism was not prescribed in the Law (cf. Jn.1:25). Scripture describes it as "a baptism of repentance" (Mk.1:4; Lk.3:3; Acts 19:4) "for the entire people of Israel" (Acts 13:24). And John himself had said that while he was baptizing with water, the Messiah who would come after him would "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Mk.3:11; Lk.3:16). It is this contrast – between the Holy Spirit and mere ritual washings – that Paul means to bring out by emphasizing "baptisms" here. For in the Church of Jesus Christ, the literal water has been left behind, having been replaced by the Holy Spirit through whom we who believe have been made

¹⁰ We have already covered the subject of baptisms as part of the fundamental teachings of Christian doctrine and Paul's addressing of this subject in this epistle in Hebrews Chapter Six, under "Part 2: Baptisms and Laying on of Hands".

¹¹ See BB 4B: Soteriology, section II.6.e, "Faith Epistemology"; and BB 5: Pneumatology, section II.B.3.a.3, "Spiritual Growth Epistemology".

one with each other and with our Savior Jesus Christ when we respond to the "water of the Word" which He makes real to us (1Cor.6-16).

(4) There is one body and *one Spirit*, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;

(5) one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*.

Ephesians 4:4-5 NKJV (cf. 1Pet.3:18-22)

Preferring the ritual baptisms of the Law to the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the poorest possible bargain these believers could have made, choosing the flesh over the Spirit (Gal.3:2-3).

[For these practices of the Law] had to do [not with spiritual matters but] only with foods and drinks, various washings (lit., "baptisms"), being ordinances *of the flesh* (as opposed to of *the Spirit*), valid [only] until the time came to institute a new order (i.e., the time of *the Spirit*, the Church Age).

Hebrews 9:10

The New Order: The Greek phrase here, *kairou diorthoseos* (καιρου διορθωσης), "the time of reformation", as the KJV renders it, is indeed a difficult one to translate. The word often translated "time" here is not the one more familiar to us from English derivatives (i.e., *chronos*, cf. "chronology"), where strictly sequential time is in view, but is instead the Greek word which sees time in terms of particular and/or critical instances or "occasions". The second word, KJV's "reformation", is from the root *orthos* meaning straight (cf. "orthodox", "orthopedic") coupled with the preposition *dia* often meaning "through" (cf. "diameter"), but here having an intensive force. The second word itself is a noun as well but a verbal one (the common sense imparted by the suffix *-sis*). That being the case, "straightening out" or "setting right" (suggested by the most authoritative Greek lexicon, LSJ) is an acceptable rendering, supported not just by the etymology but by Greek usage. Thus "time of reformation", the rendering of many of the English versions (e.g, KJV, NKJV, ESV, NASB, LSB, RSV, etc.), is problematic, because they suggest fixing something previously broken, or the "restoration" or bringing back of something to its previous state.

"Reformation" is not at all implied by the actual Greek wording here. A "total straightening" or "completion" or "fulfillment" or "setting right" of something never actually completed or fulfilled in the first place is more to the point. That is important to note, because "the new order" that Paul is speaking of was *never* in place *before* the coming of the Messiah, before His death on our behalf, before His resurrection, His ascension, His session and glorification at the Father's right hand. All these things are absolutely "new" – and wonderful beyond present understanding – rather than being a correction or reestablishment of the previous situation. Everything that came before the cross merely looked forward to and symbolized the present, amazing realities our Lord's victory has wrought. Suggesting that the present unveiling of the mystery of Christ is in any way a return to the old is incorrect – and dangerous, inasmuch as that is very much along the lines of exactly what the Jerusalem congregation of Paul's day was suggesting in their own backsliding way, preferring "the old wine" of legalism to the powerful "new wine" of the Holy Spirit whom we are blessed to have indwelling us following our Lord Jesus' glorification (Jn.7:39).

(36) He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. (37) And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. (38) No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (39) And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.' "

Luke 5:36-39 NIV

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."
Revelation 21:5a NIV

Verses Eleven through Twelve

(11) But Christ has already arrived [in heaven] as High Priest of the good things to come, [having passed] through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, that is, the one which is not of this creation. (12) Nor was it through the blood of goats and bullocks but through His own blood (i.e., His spiritual death) that He entered once and for all into the [heavenly] holy of holies, having wrought eternal redemption.
Hebrews 9:11-12

Good Things to Come: The actual Greek text here has the present participle of the verb *mello*, ("to be about to happen"), not the aorist participle of *gignomai* which in that tense would mean "to have happened" (cf. ESV: "the good things that have come"). The alternative text preserved in some manuscripts represents a clear attempt by later copiests to indicate that we already have "the good things" relating to Jesus Christ as our true High Priest. While that is true, it does not mean that original text was wrong or in need of correction (after all, there are many other good things yet future as well). The confusion comes from failing to realize that this is an epistolary tense usage where Paul is expressing things from the point of time of Christ's coming into the world in order to bring these things about (rather than from the time perspective of those reading the letter). We have actual salvation **now** because of Christ's sacrifice, belonging to Him forever; we will experience the full reality of that salvation **then** at His return when this corruption takes on incorruption (1Cor.15:42-54).

(3) May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised, who has in His great mercy caused us to be reborn to a hope which lives through Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead, (4) and to an inheritance which will never be destroyed, defiled, or dimmed, but which is being guarded in heaven for us, (5) who are ourselves also being kept safe by God's power and our faith in Him to an **ultimate deliverance** (*soteria*: salvation) ready to be unveiled at the end of time. (6) In anticipation of this **ultimate deliverance**, your joy overflows, though at present it may be your lot to suffer for a time through various trials (7) to the end that your faith may be shown to be genuine. This validation of your faith is far more valuable than gold, for gold, though it too is assayed by fire, ultimately perishes. But your faith, when proven genuine in the crucible of life, will result in praise, glory and honor for you **at the glorious return** of Jesus Christ. (8) Though you have never laid eyes on Him, yet you love Him. And though you cannot see

Him at this present time, yet you have faith in Him. For this reason you rejoice with an inexpressible joy that bespeaks the glorious future to come, (9) when you shall carry off in victory the ultimate prize – the [eternal] **deliverance** of your lives (*soteria*: salvation) – which is the very purpose and objective of this faith of yours.

1st Peter 1:3-9

In principle we possess all those "good things to come" now; when our Lord returns, we will possess them fully, completely and experientially – for all eternity. **That** is the "new order" Paul spoke about in the previous verse, namely, the fulfilment of salvation through our Lord's sacrifice and all the receiving of all of the "good things" which we believers possess in principle now in Christ, and which in turn are promises and pledges of the glorious eternal realities in which all believers have a share. The "good things to come" are all related to the regime of the Spirit which has replaced the rule of the Law, whereby we are free to respond to our new High Priest and glorify Him through that response to these truths, setting aside that which has now been made obsolete.

But now we have been freed from the Law by having died to that ["first husband"] by which we were being constrained, so that we may [now] serve [the Lord] in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written [code] (i.e., the Law).

Romans 7:6

Time would fail us if we attempted here even to list let alone explain all of the "good things to come" we as believers in Jesus Christ have even now as beneficiaries of the New Covenant. To mention but a few, under the New Covenant as opposed to the Old we are actually forgiven our sins (as opposed to looking forward to that at some future time: e.g., Rom.3:25-26); we are actually priests of God ourselves as those who belong to the true High Priest (as opposed to having to rely on other human beings: e.g., Rev.5:9-10); we actually have the Spirit residing in us – and the Son of God Himself as well (as opposed to being separated from God by the veil of sin: e.g., Jn.14:17; 2Cor.3:14; Col.1:27); and we are looking forward in confidence to the resurrection and our eternal reward in New Jerusalem now validated by the reality of our Lord's sacrifice and His visible rising from the dead (as opposed to setting our hope on rituals now fulfilled: e.g., 1Jn.3:2). Why would anyone want to trade these ineffable glories for the pottage of the obsolete Law?

Not of this Creation:

But Christ has already arrived [in heaven] as High Priest of the good things to come, [having passed] through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, that is, the one which is not of this creation.

Hebrews 9:11

The Greek word *ktisis*, translated here as "creation", means in biblical terms something somewhat different from the way in which we employ the word in English, even in conversations about the Bible. When Paul says that our Lord entered the heavenly tabernacle and says that it is the one "not of this creation", he clearly means the "real" one in the Third Heaven in the presence

of the Father as opposed to the material "type" of that "antitype", the physical tabernacle pitched here on earth (which was only ever meant to represent the heavenly one). So much is clear. But the phrasing traditionally used – and employed here as well as there is no better way to put it – might seem to some to imply that the Third Heaven, the present abode of the Father and "home base" for the elect angels and departed saints (since the ascension of Christ), is somehow not the product of divine creation. That is not the case.

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John 1:1-3 NKJV

"This creation" in our context refers only to the material universe: earth and the space in which it exists; but the phrase does *not* refer to either the spiritual place "above" the physical universe, namely, the Third Heaven, nor to the spiritual place "below" it: namely Hades, the subterranean complex containing "Abraham's bosom" (the pre-cross paradise, presently unoccupied as all departed believers are now in the third heaven), Tartarus or the Abyss, Torments (the interim abode of departed unbelievers), and the Lake of Fire (presently unoccupied). Neither the super-material Third Heaven nor Hades could exist without God having created them. They are, certainly, substantially different places than the rest of the physical universe. They are both undetectable and unreachable by physical means. For these reasons, styling the Third Heaven as "not of this creation" makes perfect sense and presents no difficulties of interpretation whatsoever, just as long as one understands that God exists and always has existed apart from time and space. These things, the physical universe and all it contains, are His creations, but so is the spiritual dimension of creation which science cannot perceive – of which Hades and the Third Heaven are a part (not to mention the angels and our human spirits which are also invisible to any scientific or material means of detection).¹²

His Own Blood:

Nor was it through the blood of goats and bullocks but through His own blood (i.e., His spiritual death) that He entered once and for all into the [heavenly] holy of holies, having wrought eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:12

Levitical priests offered the blood of burnt offering sacrifices as a means of ritual cleansing but not, as Paul has already demonstrated (v.9) and will reaffirm below (v.14) of actual remission of sin (which would in that case have actually cleansed the conscience as well). The blood of animals represented their "life" which they had lost.

"But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

Genesis 9:4 NKJV (cf. Lev.17:11; 17:14; Deut.12:23)

¹² See Satanic Rebellion, part 1, section II.3, "The Three Heavens"; and Coming Tribulation, part 1, under "The keys to death and Hades".

The blood *represents* the life of the animal and thus, in sacrifice, the death of the animal. From the place above the mercy seat between the cherubim on the ark of the covenant, God the Father, appearing in a cloud above it (Lev.16:2), "looked down" on the blood of sacrifice (Ex.25:22; 30:6), and was pleased (propitiated) by what He saw. This ritual, as we have seen above, "made atonement" for the sins of the Israelites (Lev.16:16), the Father accepting the blood as a means of ritual forgiveness. All such blood sacrifices, as believers understand, represented the true, efficacious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who saved us "not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood (i.e., His spiritual death: Heb.9:12 NKJV)".

Just as the true Holy of Holies is very much different from the earthly tabernacle meant only to represent it, so also "the blood of Christ" is fundamentally and exquisitely different from the blood of animals which merely portrayed the actual, blessed sacrifice of the Son of God which saves us. Confusion on this most important point has been the cause of much heresy in the history of the church-visible. Jesus Christ is a human being (in addition to being God). He did *not* bleed to death (as the gospel of John in particular makes clear and very deliberately so: Jn.19:31-37; cf. 1Jn.5:6-8). "The blood of Christ" is the spiritual reality which animal blood represented. Animals lost their lives in a very graphic way, and the blood was the proof of that since "the life is in the blood" (Gen.9:4). But our Lord *voluntarily* accepted the suffering of spiritual death in dying for our sins (Lk.22:42; 2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.2:24). Following His spiritual death ("It is accomplished": Jn.19:30), our Lord then gave up His physical life unto death to fulfill all prophecy and thus make the resurrection possible.

(17) "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.
(18) No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down,
and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."
John 10:17-18 NKJV

As we have had occasion to see often in the past as well, the giving up of our Lord's physical life, His exhaling of His human spirit which occasioned his physical death, is also *not* the blood of Christ. For before our Lord did this, He proclaimed salvation an accomplished fact:

(28) After [all] this (i.e., His physical suffering and His spiritual death for the sins of the world), when Jesus knew that everything had now been accomplished in order for the [prophecy of salvation found in] scripture to be fulfilled, He said, "I am thirsty ". (29) Now a jar of wine-vinegar lay there, so they placed a sponge full of the wine-vinegar on a hyssop [stalk] and brought it to His mouth. (30) So when He had taken the wine-vinegar, Jesus said, "It (i.e., salvation) has [now] been accomplished!" (Ps.22:31), and having thrown back His head, He gave up His spirit.
John 19:28-30

Salvation was accomplished by our Lord through bearing our sins in His body on the tree (1Pet.2:24; cf. 2Cor.5:21), through being judged for every single human sin in the three hours of darkness on Calvary while He hung on the cross (Lk.23:44). Animal blood demonstrates the animal's death; and the physical death of animals represents this *spiritual* death of our Lord, that is, paying the awful price of judgment for each and every one of our sins. *That* is "the blood of

Christ".¹³

He made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [to be] sin (i.e., a sin offering) for us, so that we might have God's righteousness in Him.

2nd Corinthians 5:21

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wound you are healed.

1st Peter 2:24

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins *by his blood*.

Revelation 1:5b NIV

Finally, perhaps the most salient point about this offering of blood – not literal blood but the suffering of death for our sins accomplished by our Lord in the darkness on the cross – is the fact that the Father *accepted it* (Ps.110:1).

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:17 NKJV

"Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles."

Matthew 12:18 NKJV

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

Matthew 17:5 NKJV

Redemption:

Nor was it through the blood of goats and bullocks but through His own blood (i.e., His spiritual death) that He entered once and for all into the [heavenly] holy of holies, having wrought eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:12

The word translated "wrought" above is the Greek verb *heurisko* which properly means "to find" (cf. the state motto of California, *Eureka!*, "I've found it!", being the perfect tense of the same

¹³ See especially in BB 4A: Christology, section II.4, "The Blood of Christ"; section II.5, "The Spiritual Death of Christ"; and in Hebrews Chapter Five, "Kenosis and the Blood of Christ".

verb). It is characteristic of Paul to use this verb in the more occasional Classical sense of "substantive accomplishment" in order to produce a more vivid impression than other common verbs occasion (cf. 2Tim.1:18; Heb.4:16; 12:17). That is certainly appropriate in this case, because absolutely nothing is more dramatic or important from our point of view than the deliverance from certain destruction from which we believers have been delivered by the blood of Christ which paid the full price for all of our sins.

"This is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins concerning many people."
Matthew 26:28

In the darkness on the cross, Jesus Christ paid for our salvation by redeeming us, that is, by buying us out of slavery to sin through the precious price of His spiritual death on our behalf.

Christ bought us free (i.e., "redeemed " us) from the Law's curse, having become a curse on our behalf. For it is written: "Cursed is everyone [who is] hanged upon a tree " (Deut.21:23).
Galatians 3:13

In whom (i.e., Christ) we possess our ransoming [from sin] (i.e., "redemption"), the forgiveness of our sins.
Colossians 1:14

In whom (i.e., Christ) we possess our ransoming [from sin] (i.e., "redemption") through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions according to the riches of His grace.
Ephesians 1:7

In the analogy, before being saved, before Christ died for us, we were all slaves, enslaved to the power of sin and unable to free ourselves from slavery on account of having no possible means to buy our own freedom.¹⁴ For us to be delivered from the servitude in which we found ourselves, someone had to pay the price of our emancipation. That price, the only "coin" that could ransom us, the only payment acceptable to the righteousness of God the Father, is "the blood of Christ" (cf. Rom.3:24; Gal.4:5; 1Cor.6:20; 7:23; Heb.9:15; Rev.5:9), that is, the spiritual death of His Son which paid the penalty for our sins, accomplishing propitiation and leading to the redemption of all willing to accept it.¹⁵

"I have wiped away your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like vapor. Return to Me, for I have *redeemed* you (i.e., from your sins)!"
Isaiah 44:22

¹⁴ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.7, "Redemption"; and BB 3B: Hamartiology, section III.2.3, "The Means of Atonement".

¹⁵ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.6, "Propitiation"; and Hebrews Chapter Two, Verse Seventeen, under "Expiate the Sins".

So while there is much about redemption in the Law (meant to symbolize redemption from sin; e.g., Lev.27), it cannot be stressed strongly enough that we believers have **actual** redemption from sin and death **not** through the literal blood of animals but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ being judged in our place for our sins, namely, "the blood of Christ", a metaphor for His work in dying for our sins derived from that symbolic sacrifice of animals.¹⁶

(18) For you know that it was not with perishable things [like] silver or gold that you were **ransomed** from the futile manner of life passed down to you by your ancestors, (19) but [you were redeemed] with precious **blood**, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish, [that is, by the blood] of Christ.
1st Peter 1:18-19

To the One who loves us and has **released** us from our sins by His **blood** – and He has made us a kingdom, priests of His God and Father – to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever! Amen!
Revelation 1:5b-6

And they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and have **purchased** with your **blood** for our God [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them into a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will rule upon the earth!"
Revelation 5:9-10 (cf. Rev.14:3-4)

Verses Thirteen through Fourteen

(13) For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, (14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we may serve the living God?
Hebrews 9:13-14

Holy: As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been made one with Him (e.g., Jn.14:20; 15:1ff.; Rom.16:7; 2Cor.5:17; Eph.2:6; 2:10; Heb.3:14; 1Pet.5:14). As a result of this positional "union with Christ", scripture calls believers "saints" or "holy ones", since we have been "sanctified" or made "holy" by virtue of being "in Him" who is the "Holy One of God" (Jn.6:69; cf. Mk.1:24; Lk.4:34). Instead of being merely ritually unclean, we were all formerly profane, that is, separated from God and His holiness by our sins (Ps.143:2; Rom.5:8; Eph.2:1-3; 2:12; Col.2:13; cf. Eph.4:22). But now, having been made holy in Jesus Christ, having been sanctified by our faith in Him and His work for us on the cross (1Cor.1:2; 6:11), we are no longer separated and no longer "far away" but we have been "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph.2:12-13).¹⁷

¹⁶ See Satanic Rebellion, part 1, section II.3, "The Three Heavens"; and Coming Tribulation, part 1, under "The keys to death and Hades".

¹⁷ See BB 3B: Hamartiology, section V.2, "The Principle and Process of Sanctification".

The holiness described here in our context, however, is ritual sanctification/holiness, not actual sanctification/holiness. That is to say, under the Law, what was clean and unclean was not actually of a spiritual nature but only meant to reflect spiritual realities and to teach them. In that regard, the notion of clean and unclean, of holy and profane, as it pertains to the Law is exactly on a par with all of the other aspects of the Law of Moses, meant to teach, to represent, to demonstrate greater spiritual realities . . . and definitely not to replace them. Anyone from the past looking upon Israel and her customs would recognize immediately that this was a different sort of nation. And indeed she was, the one which God had chosen to be a light to the world (Is.42:6; cf. Is.49:6; 51:4; 60:3), with the mission of reflecting God's truth through the witness of life she was meant to give. Being sprinkled with literal blood for ritual forgiveness was a part of that witness which came through the Law. Blood, as we have seen, represented the death of a substitute, and being sprinkled with said substitute's blood represented the transfer of the payment for sin's penalty to the one so sprinkled. All this taught the lesson of the Messiah who would come to be our Substitute to die for us, for our sins, cleansing them through His own precious blood, His spiritual death for us on the cross.

(18) For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.
1st Peter 1:18-19 CSB

Through the Spirit:

. . . how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we may serve the living God?
Hebrews 9:14

Just as the Holy Spirit played a significant role in our Lord's water-baptism, a ritual which in His case represented His atoning for the sins of the world (i.e., symbolically going down into the water where sins had been "washed away" in order to pay for them, then rising up in symbolic resurrection afterwards: Matt.3:13-17; Mk.1:9-11; Lk.3:21-22; Jn.1:29-34), so we learn from our context verse that the Spirit was instrumental as well in facilitating Jesus' spiritual death on the cross which is also called a "baptism" in scripture (Lk.12:49-50; cf. Mk.10:38-39).

As our Lord emerged from His water-baptism, the Spirit visibly alighted on Him, even though He had been given the Spirit "without measure" from birth (Is.11:2; Jn.3:34; cf. Lk.1:14). This symbolized the return of the Spirit "after the suffering" (Is.53:11) of spiritual death which had necessitated the Spirit's withdrawal – since holy God can have no contact with sin – and further explains how and why our Lord was forsaken (Matt.27:46; Mk.15:34), namely, He was forsaken for our sakes, in order to be able to bear our sins. Thus our context verse tells us as much as finite human beings can know about the way in which Jesus Christ, a genuine human being from the time of His incarnation as well as God, could bear our sins: that required the special ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture does not come any closer than this to explaining the mechanics of a process that in many respects is beyond our ken. What we can say is that the Spirit made it possible for the Father to judge sin in Jesus' body (2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.2:24), and for Christ's human body to be judged in spite of His divinity. This required facilitation and restraint (both key characteristics of the Spirit's other known ministries), facilitation in making the sacrifice and the judgment possible, and restraint in preventing the complications of Christ's deity, perfect humanity and union between the two, from making the sacrifice and judgment impossible.

To use a rather rough analogy, just as steel cannot be forged without an anvil to support it, so the Spirit was analogous to the "anvil" on which our Lord's human body was hammered to purge away the sins of the world. For Jesus to stay physically alive long enough to be punished for every human sin ever committed required supernatural intervention, the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit.

. . . . Christ, who offered Himself *through the eternal Spirit*
Hebrews 9:14b

Just as it was only through the Spirit that our Lord Jesus could become a human being as well as God, becoming the human Son of the Father by means of the Spirit's actions (Matt.1:20; Lk.1:35), so also at the cross only through the Spirit was it possible for our sins to be judged by the Father in Christ's human body in spite of Jesus' deity.

We believers today all have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, and that will not change as long as we live. Remembering and appreciating our Lord's sacrifice as this verse prompts us to do should also motivate us to respond to the Spirit's guidance in doing what our Lord asks us to do for Him in this life, namely, put Him and His Church first in all things – something which by and large the majority of the Jerusalem believers were refusing to do.

Cleansing the Conscience: Paul's argument here is crystal clear and incapable of refutation. If ritual holiness/sanctification could be attained through the physical sprinkling of animal blood, then to an unimaginably greater degree of surety we who have put our faith in Jesus Christ and His blood – His spiritual death on the cross whereby He paid the penalty for all of our sins – can be absolutely confident of God's forgiveness. For while the ritual forgiveness produced by the sacrifices under the Law looked forward to God's eventual solving of the problem of sin under which mankind labored since Adam and Eve fell from grace, Jesus Christ actually and completely took sin out of the way, removing that otherwise impenetrable barrier between holy God and sinful man through paying the penalty for all human sins.¹⁸

(21) But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, being testified to by the Law and the prophets, (22) namely, the righteousness of God [that comes] through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Because there is no distinction (i.e., between Jews and gentiles). (23) For all sin and fall short of God's glory, (24) [but we are all] justified without cost by His grace through the redemption (lit., "ransoming"

¹⁸ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.8, "Justification"; and section II.9, "Reconciliation".

from sin) which is in Christ Jesus. (25) God made Him a means of atonement [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice at this present time, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:21-26 [index]

(14) For [Jesus] Himself is our peace, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the enmity, (15) by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements with His [own] body, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by making [this] peace, (16) and might reconcile both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the enmity [between God and mankind]. (17) For when He had come (i.e., the 1st advent), He proclaimed the gospel of peace to you who were far away [from God], and peace to those who were near. (18) For it is through Him that we both have our access to the Father by means of one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:14-18

[God] has erased the charge against us along with its bill of particulars (i.e., the record of our personal sins). This stood against us, but He removed it [as an obstacle] between us by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:14

That is what reconciliation is, peace with God through His removal of the barrier of sin between us in Jesus Christ and our acceptance of that blessed reunion. But to return to the regime of sacrifice which merely foreshadowed our blessed restoration of peace between the Father and ourselves – as many in Jerusalem were doing – was to reject His efforts of reconciliation and Jesus Christ, and thus turn from peace back to enmity, a most terrible prospect (Heb.12:25-29).¹⁹

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

2nd Corinthians 5:20 NKJV

Dead Works:

(13) For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, (14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from *dead works* so that we may serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:13-14

There are legitimately "good works", and scripture commends these.

¹⁹ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.9, "Reconciliation".

. . . [Jesus Christ] who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for **good works**.
Titus 2:14 NKJV

. . . having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your **good works** which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.
1st Peter 2:12 NKJV

But our context is speaking of "dead works", and it is important for us to understand the biblical distinction. The noun "work(s)" as found in English versions of the New Testament is most commonly the Greek word *ergon* (cf. English "erg", "ergonomics"). That is also true of the English word "deed(s)". This can refer to anything a person "does" – or says or thinks, namely, anything that issues forth from our free will, from the image of God we have been given, whether these actions be sinful or godly or in between.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us **do good to all**, especially to those who are of the household of faith.
Galatians 6:10 NKJV

As this verse suggests, genuine Christian production, "good works", entails everything we do in the power of the Holy Spirit that is truly for the benefit of the Church of Jesus Christ (Eph.2:10; Tit.2:14; 3:8; Heb.10:24; 1Pet.2:12). Anything else we do – or say or think – which is done without God's spiritual empowerment is not "good". And anything which we do or say or think under the influence of the sinful nature is dead, meaning "connected to the realm of death", spiritual death, that is. These are the "deeds" on the basis of which unbelievers will receive their judgment/evaluation at the Great White Throne of Jesus Christ at the end of time (Rev.20:12-13). Believers are forgiven all of our sins when we put our faith in Jesus Christ (e.g., 1Cor.6:11; Eph.1:7; Col.1:14; 2Pet.1:9); and we are forgiven everything we do after the point of salvation when we confess to the Lord (e.g., Ps.32:5; Matt.6:12; 1Jn.1:9). But there is also a special category of "dead works" in view here, one which Paul surely has in mind in his criticism of the Jerusalem congregation, that category of deed or works which this author's mentor termed "human good", namely, legalistic acts of self-righteousness which are done ostensibly for God but in truth are abominable to Him.²⁰ This is the type of "good" the Pharisees were famous for.

(1) "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. (2) Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."
Matthew 6:1-2 NKJV

Therefore, true spiritual production is often quite different from what many assume. Someone

²⁰ Col. R.B. Thieme, Jr., *Divine Good vs. Human Good* (Houston 1970).

who goes to church (for the wrong reasons, namely, any reason which is not focused on spiritual growth and mutual encouragement in Christ: Heb.10:24-25), who gives a lot of money (for the wrong reasons, e.g., to be well thought of at church), who witnesses aggressively (for the wrong reasons, e.g., to "count coup" and brag over those they have "saved") is not producing anything "good" at all. Not in God's eyes, that is. However, a Christian who seeks the truth from a Bible teaching ministry, who learns from it and believes what he/she is taught, and who applies that truth to his/her life *is* producing something God considers "good". Spiritual growth *is* godly production, and it is "good". A person who prays for others in the Spirit, who contributes what he or she has to ministries that truly help others grow, be it a small amount of money, a prayer, a word of encouragement, or a recommendation to others, *is* producing "good works". And passing the tests that God gives us is also the production of good works, production of the next level, much more fully rewarded than basic spiritual growth (leading to winning the crown of life in addition to the crown of righteousness). And coming into ministry, the right one which the Lord has for each of us individually, then carrying it out diligently and effectively is what leads to the ultimate reward, the crown of glory.²¹ What counts with the Lord is not what men choose to do and call "good" (in the manner of the Pharisees; cf. Matt.6:1-8; 6:16-18), but it is what He considers "good" that will matter on "the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (Rom.2:16 NKJV; cf. 1Cor.4:5; Heb.4:13). It will not be what others in this world think of our efforts that counts when our Lord evaluates our time on this earth, but what we have actually done with the "talent" He has given us (Matt.25:14-30).

(11) For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, (13) each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. (14) If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. (15) If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
1st Corinthians 3:11-15 NKJV

As this passage demonstrates, not everything supposedly done for Jesus Christ by believers will be considered "good" by the Lord. But believers will not be condemned for the production of deficient works. These "human good" works will all be burned up, blessedly, and we will be rewarded for the truly "good works" we may have done in this life.

Unbelievers, on the other hand, will be judged entirely on the basis of their "works", all of their free will actions, regardless of the category, whether sinful, or commendable (in the eyes of men), and everything else in between.

(12) And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before [the throne], and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. (13) The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who

²¹ See Coming Tribulation part 6: Last Things, section I.7, "The Judgment and Reward of the Church".

were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.
Revelation 20:12-13 NKJV

One purpose for this last judgment will be the revealing of the true motivations behind every act of every recalcitrant unbeliever, including what lies behind any "works" which many in this world would call "good", acts of charity, mercy and the like. For even in the case of those who did indeed do things which we believers might esteem (the heroic actions of servicemen in battle or first responders in time of crisis), the Lord will make it very clear that no amount of such "works" could ever suffice for salvation, absent cleansing by the blood of Christ.

(18) The one who believes in Him is not being judged, but the one who does not believe has already been judged on the grounds that he has not put his faith in the Name (i.e., the Person) of God's only Son. (19) And this is the [basis for] judgment: the Light (i.e., Jesus Christ) has come into the world, yet men loved the darkness more than the Light because *their deeds* (*erga*) were evil.
John 3:18-19

Things in this world are not always as they may appear at first inspection. Man looks at the outward appearance of things, but the Lord knows what is actually going on in every heart (1Sam.16:7). Rejecting God, His authority, His solution to the problem of sin and death, rejecting Jesus Christ, makes it impossible for any true "good" in God's eyes to come from such a heart, regardless of how we finite human beings may be inclined to evaluate even some moral and self-sacrificing person's actions.

I will expose your *righteousness and your works* (i.e., for what they truly are), and they will not benefit you.
Isaiah 57:12 NIV

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our *righteousnesses* are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.
Isaiah 64:6 NKJV

(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) *not of works*, lest anyone should boast. (10) For we are His *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus for *good works*, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV

As the final passage here demonstrates very clearly, not all works are "good". The distinction has to do with the origin of the works and the motivation for them. We believers are "God's workmanship" and we have been born again, born from above for the purpose of producing truly godly "good works" in the power of the Holy Spirit. Understand. We were not born again, born from above because of any works that we have done. Far from it. For nothing a sinful human being could ever do apart from God could ever be considered "good", and certainly not good enough to be saved.

(4) But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, (5) **not by works of righteousness which we have done**, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.
Titus 3:4-5 NKJV

So while the whole world, it seems, is attempting to "work its way" into heaven, that is exactly the sort of "human good" which the Bible in this context verse of ours, Hebrews 9:14, calls "**dead works**". Godless human beings, unbelievers, often imagine that they are "doing things **for** God" - as if the Creator and Sustainer of the universe needed our help in any way (Acts 17:25)! This human good approach has things precisely backwards. Believers are commended for the truly good works we are given to do in the Spirit and commanded to do them – for "faith without works is dead" (Jas.2:14-26). But the good works James had in mind in that quotation, clearly demonstrated by the examples he gives of Abraham and Rahab **trusting** God and acting on the basis of that belief in Him, are **works emanating from faith**. But instead of trusting the Lord, the Jerusalem believers were submitting to the pressures of conformity as if their earthly lives depended on it (which, admittedly, may have been the case), instead of remembering that our eternal lives are so much more important in every way.

(30) What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; (31) but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. (32) Why? Because they did not seek it **by faith**, but as it were, by **the works of the law**. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.
Romans 9:30-32 NKJV (cf. Gal.2:16; 3:10)

All acts of charity, otherwise ostensibly good in every way, if they are not done by believers operating in the Holy Spirit, are human good, "dead works". All acts of heroism and self-sacrifice, if they are not empowered by the Spirit indwelling believers are of no ultimate account in God's eyes. And most significantly in our context, even things which at other times God considered "good" – such as participating in the rites and rituals of the temple at Jerusalem – since they were now not being done in the power of God's Spirit and to the glory of Jesus Christ, were not "good" at all. They were, in fact, evil.

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."
Matthew 16:27 NKJV

(5) But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (6) who "will render to each one according to his deeds" (Ps.62:12).
Romans 2:5-6 NKJV

". . . and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."
Revelation 2:23b NKJV

Verses Fifteen through Seventeen

(15) And it is for this reason that He is the Mediator of a New Covenant, so that those who have been called might receive their eternal inheritance on the basis of the death He suffered to redeem us from the transgressions [committed] under the first/Old Covenant.

(16) For where there is [the disposition of] a covenant or will, of necessity the death of the one making the covenant or will must have taken place. (17) For a covenant or will becomes valid [only] on the basis of "deaths" (lit., plur.).

Hebrews 9:15-17

Mediator: We have already covered in some detail the intercessory ministry of our Lord Jesus as our High Priest, the One who intercedes on our behalf before the Father in heaven above (Job 9:33-34; Rom.8:34; Heb.7:25; 9:24; 1Jn.2:1).²² The mediation meant here, however, is our Lord's substituting of Himself as our sacrifice on the cross, bearing our sins in our place, so that instead of facing the lake of fire we might have eternal life through His payment of the ransom necessary to obtain our release from sin and death.

(5) For as God is One, so there is [only] One *Mediator* between God and Man, Christ Jesus in His humanity, (6a) who gave Himself as a *ransom* for all [mankind] . . .

1st Timothy 2:5-6a

This deliverance is summed up in our context verse as "The New Covenant" which, as we have also seen, is God's gracious agreement to provide said Substitute for mankind on an entirely grace basis, demanding nothing more from us sinful human beings than that we accept His gracious Gift by putting our trust in Jesus Christ.²³

Therefore, the promise [of salvation] comes through faith, so that it may rest on the basis of grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the Law but also to those who are of the *faith* of Abraham who is the father of us all.

Romans 4:16

This unbreakable promise of salvation we believers unalterably possess on account of what our Savior did for us by dying in our place, standing in the breach for us between God's justice and our certain condemnation absent the great sacrifice He mediated on our behalf, His spiritual death on the cross whereby He suffered the entire punishment for all of our sins – and for the sins of the entire world.

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the

²² See Hebrews Chapter 7, under "Intercession"; also BB 4A: Christology, section I.2.d, "Christ's taking on of true humanity was necessary for Him to become our Mediator".

²³ See Hebrews Chapter 1, section I.d, "Covenants"; Hebrews Chapter 7 under "The New Covenant versus the Old Covenant"; and Hebrews Chapter 8 under "The Old Covenant versus the New".

whole world.
1st John 2:2 NKJV

Eternal Inheritance: This inheritance of ours as believers is given to us, as our verse states clearly, "on the basis of the death He suffered". Everything we look forward to as those who belong to Jesus Christ, His Church, is based on the cross. We long for the eternal life to come, for our bodily resurrection in glory, for our reunion with all those who have gone before, the entire complement of believers who form His Body, for our eternal rewards for which we are (or should be) striving daily, for our place in New Jerusalem, and for the glorious fellowship with the Father and the Son which we will enjoy individually and collectively, world without end. All of these wondrous promises destined to be fulfilled anon, are only possible because of our Lord's sacrifice for us, bequeathed to us forever, "on the basis of the death He suffered" on our behalf.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although He was rich (i.e., divine), He made Himself poor (i.e., human and under the restraints of *kenosis*), in order that you might become rich (i.e., have eternal life) through His impoverishment (i.e., humble life and death on the cross for us all).
2nd Corinthians 8:9

We believers are His heirs based upon our union with Him who is "Heir of all things".²⁴ And that, we remember, is what a "covenant" is, namely, a "last will and testament" whereby the heir receives the benefits of the testator, in this case, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Everything we have, our deliverance from sin and death on the one hand and all the glories to come in the future on the other, are absolutely based upon what our Lord Jesus did for us on the cross, dying for our sins, and empowering the New Covenant "in My blood" (Lk.22:20; 1Cor.11:25), whereby we receive all the benefits of the One who died for us.

(16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.
Romans 8:16-17 NKJV

Transgression under the Old Covenant: Giving creatures free will meant that some would use that image of God to rebel against Him. This is exactly what Satan and his followers did as we all know very well. Refuting the devil and restoring completion and harmony to God's creation required the creation of another species of creature also possessing the image of God and the ability to respond to Him. But mankind, tempted by Satan, fell into sin. Quite unexpectedly – from the devil's point of view – this had been the plan of God all along, namely, to replace the unwilling with the willing, and in double measure at that.²⁵ To give human beings an opportunity to be restored to God's grace, however, required that the barrier of sin and resultant enmity which stood between God's righteousness and God's love be removed, and that in turn required a

²⁴ See Hebrews Chapter 1 under "Appointed Heir of All Things".

²⁵ These matters are discussed in detail in the Satanic Rebellion series.

sacrifice, the greatest Sacrifice of all, the spiritual death of the Father's one and only dear Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

(6) For not only did Christ die for us while we were helpless – He even did so at the critical time, [dying] on our behalf, ungodly though we were. (7) For scarcely will someone die on behalf of a righteous person; and perhaps someone might also risk death on behalf of a good person. (8) But God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8

It is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His spiritual death on our behalf, that satisfies the justice of God, removing the barrier of sin that otherwise would ever have separated God from sinful man, and thus accomplishes the redemption talked about in our passage, redeeming us "from the transgressions [committed] under the first/Old Covenant". That is to say, Christ died for all of the sins of all human beings at all times, past, present and future, including everything covered by the Law.

(25) God made Him a means of atonement [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice in the present, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:25-26

Without this release from our sins accomplished by the cross, we could not be born again, born from above, we could not become children of God, and we could have no hope of resurrection, of eternal life, of the eternal inheritance that is our present hope. But we are reborn by grace through faith (Eph.2:8-9; 1Pet.1:23). We are God's very own children (1Jn.3:1). We do have hope – absolute confidence – in the resurrection to come and our eternal life with Jesus Christ and each other as His Bride forever – all because Jesus redeemed us, bought us free from sin and death and judgment by paying for all of our sins in the darkness on the cross.

(20) The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, (21) so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:20-21 NIV

Paul puts this as he does in our context, i.e., "transgressions under the Law", not to limit the atonement of the cross but to drive home the point that Christ's sacrifice has by definition removed the necessity for or validity of continuing with the animal sacrifices of the Law. Sin was sin before the Law was given, even if it was not always accounted as such (Rom.4:15; 5:13), and the same is true today following the Law's abrogation (Gal.5:19-23). Our redemption and subsequent installment as sons and daughters, heirs of the Father along with Jesus Christ, required our Savior's payment for all of mankind's sins, a payment like no other.

(18) For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1st Peter 1:18-19 NIV

Valid on Deaths: Paul returns here to the point that a covenant is a will, and that wills are only ever executed after the death of the testator. Without such a death, obviously, the will is not to be put into effect. In the analogy here, Christ' death – His spiritual death in paying for the sins of the world – has discharged *all* of the obligations under the Old Covenant. The Law has thus been fulfilled, and that includes any and all obligations it entailed. As a result, a New Covenant has been put into place, one that would not have been "valid" without this death. Important to note here is that Paul actually writes "deaths" plural, not singular, and in so doing deliberately quotes and recalls Isaiah 53:

(4) For He bore our sicknesses and He carried our weaknesses. And yet we considered Him as [the One who had been] punished, smitten and afflicted by God. (5) But [in fact] He was made subject to torment on account of our transgressions, and He was crushed because of our collective guilt (lit., “guilts”). The punishment [required] for making peace [with God] on our behalf [fell] upon Him. Because of His wounding, we have been healed. (6) We have all gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord caused the guilt of us all to strike Him. (7) Though He was oppressed and afflicted, like a lamb led to slaughter He did not open His mouth, and like a ewe before her shearers He did not open His mouth. (8) By repressive judgment He was taken away, and who gave any thought to His posterity? For He was cut off from the land of the living. He was punished for the transgression of my people. (9) And they assigned Him a grave with the wicked (pl.) and with a rich [man] *in His deaths* (*sic*). Not for any violence that He had done. Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. (10) For it was the Lord's good pleasure (i.e., “will”) to crush Him, to subject Him to torment. But though you make His life a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will lengthen His days, and the good pleasure (i.e., “will”) of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (11) [Released] from the trouble [inflicted] upon His life, He will [again] see [the light of life] and be satisfied (i.e., in resurrection). My righteous Servant will provide righteousness for the great [of heart] (i.e., believers) through the[ir] acknowledgment of Him, and He Himself will carry their guilt (lit., “guilts”). (12) Therefore I will allot to Him [the plunder] among [His] many [brothers], and He will apportion plunder to the mighty [among them]. Because He lay bare His life unto death, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that He bore the sin of the many, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:4-12

This passage puts the lie to any suggestion that the necessity for a Savior to die for us was entirely unknown before the first advent. In verse nine, we see that Isaiah also spoke of the Savior's "deaths", invoking the plural to call attention to the intensity of Christ's sacrifice (as well as to the truth of our Lord suffering spiritual death before giving up His spirit unto physical death), and that is what Paul is recalling here as well. In truth, of course, multiplying "death" to infinity could not really approximate what Jesus did for us in suffering the penalty for all human

sin. On this side of eternity, we cannot know the magnitude of His sacrifice for us – but we can appreciate it in the Spirit and be grateful with all of our hearts. For only through His death, His "deaths", could the Old Covenant be fulfilled and the New Covenant inaugurated.

(1) So now that we have been justified by faith, let us take hold of the peace [we have] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom we have also obtained our access into this grace in which we stand, and let us boast in the hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

Since in Paul's day the New Covenant had already thus been validated (and had long ago been explained in Isaiah 53), Paul's reminding the Jerusalem congregation of it, namely of the fact of the genuine sacrifice of the Messiah being the true meaning behind the rites and rituals of the Law, merely leaves his readers further lacking in any excuses for their continuing unacceptable conduct in continuing to sacrifice even so.

Verses Eighteen through Twenty-Two

(18) For this reason, not even the first or Old covenant was initiated without blood. (19) For after the commandments contained in the Law were recited to the people by Moses, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, along with water, scarlet wool and hyssop, and then he sprinkled the book [of the Law] itself and all the people, (20) saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you". (21) Then likewise he sprinkled with blood the tabernacle and all the equipment of the liturgical service. (22) And nearly everything under the Law is cleansed by blood, and without the pouring out of blood there is no [ritual] forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:18-22

For This Reason: "This reason" refers to the point Paul has just made about the death of the testator being necessary before a will or testament or covenant became valid. Because of that requirement before a testament/covenant could come into effect, namely, proof of the testator's death, the use of blood was a hallmark of the Old Covenant. As Paul reminds us, blood was used in the initial establishment of the Law (Ex.24:4-8), and blood is a feature of the majority of the sacrifices which the Law enjoins. Animal blood, that is. But the blood of animals slain in sacrifice is, as we have seen, a potent symbol of the far more costly sacrifice our Savior would make on our behalf when He paid the fiery price for every single sin of every human being. Animal sacrifice is extremely graphic, with the life of the animal slaughtered poured out in a vivid display of loss of life (cf. Gen.9:4-6; Lev.17:11; Deut.12:23). Physical life, that is, with the animal's physical death representing our Lord's spiritual death in atoning for all sin (Jn.1:29; 1:36; 1Pet.1:18; Rev.1:5-6; 5:6-12; cf. Gen.22:7-14). No more vivid analogy than the bloody death of sacrificial slaughter is imaginable, but even so this representation falls far short of truly conveying the ineffable price our dear Savior paid to save us from the lake of fire. Paul emphasizes this point to shake his readers awake, prodding them to realize finally that the rituals they refuse to give up are merely representative of the far greater reality they are willfully choosing to forget.

"This is My blood of the [New] Covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins concerning many people."

Matthew 26:28

(1) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who, though outcasts dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, (2) were yet selected in the foreknowledge of God the Father, by means of the Holy Spirit's consecration, *for the obedience in and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you!

1st Peter 1:1-2

Hyssop: In the actual relating of this original ceremony in the book of Exodus (Ex.24:4-8), there is no mention of water, nor of scarlet wool, nor of hyssop. Scarlet wool and hyssop do occur in the preparation of the red heifer whose ashes are used to produce the water of purification (Num.19:1-22). All three elements, along with cedar wood, are also found in the regulations for cleansing from leprosy (Lev.14:4-7). The Spirit has gifted Paul with this additional knowledge to show us that purification was clearly the purpose behind the sprinkling of blood on the book of the Law, on the people, and on all of the paraphernalia of the tabernacle, demonstrating in no uncertain terms both the effectiveness of the blood in accomplishing this purification and the necessity for it. This reminder of the necessity and effectiveness of ritual purification brings home all the more vividly the necessity and effectiveness of the true sacrifice that leads to actual and not merely ritual purification, namely, the sacrifice of our Lord on our behalf.

(13) For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, (14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we may serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:13-14

We may take the water as representing the Spirit whose ministry of the water of the Word offers salvation for all willing to receive it (Rev.22:17). We may take the scarlet (i.e., the color of blood) wool (i.e., as of a lamb) as representing the Son of God whose sacrifice as the Lamb of God has paid for that salvation (Rev.5:6). And we may take the hyssop as representing the Father who implements that salvation for all who are willing to receive His great Gift (Jas.1:17-18). Hyssop had a longish stalk and a fan like bloom so that it was a handy object to use as a sort of natural "paint brush" to apply and/or sprinkle the blood (cf. Ex.12:22). Taken together we see the entire Trinity involved in the process of salvation through the symbolic threefold application of the blood – which blood represents the cross, the sacrifice of our dear Savior, the Lamb of God, upon which and upon whom everything depends.

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:12 NKJV

Forgiveness:

(22) And nearly everything under the Law is cleansed by blood, and without the pouring out of blood there is no [ritual] forgiveness.
Hebrews 9:22

As the square brackets above indicate, the word "ritual" is not in the Hebrew text, but that is indeed what Paul means here. Only Christ's sacrifice was capable of providing actual forgiveness for sin, forgiveness that removes all impediments for entering into life eternal on the part of us who believe in Him.

(2) Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their *faith*, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." (3) And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" (4) But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? (5) For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?" (6) But that you may know that *the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins* – then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." (7) And he arose and departed to his house.
Matthew 9:2-7 NKJV

As we have noted many times now, the Law looked forward to the actual sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His spiritual death which is represented by the blood of animal sacrifices. That shedding of blood was required for ritual forgiveness under the Law, but had no actual effect in removing the guilt of sin (e.g., Lev.4:27-31). It represented a "transaction on credit", so to speak (Rom.3:25), with the actual "bill" for our redemption to be paid in the future by the Messiah whom the Father would send to die for the sins of the world (Is.52:13 - 53:12).

(6) You have taken no pleasure in sacrifices and offerings, [but instead] You have pierced My ears (i.e., "given Me a body and marked Me as a voluntary Servant"; cf. Ex.21:5-6; Deut.15:16-17). You have not asked for burnt offerings or sin offerings. (7) [But] then I said, behold, I have come [into the world (i.e., as the true sacrifice)]. In the scroll of the Book it has been written about Me. (8) It is My good pleasure to do what pleases You, My God. For your Law is in My inmost parts.
Psalm 40:6-8 (cf. Heb.10:5-10)

There are no Levitical sacrifice provisions for actual forgiveness. Even the Greek word for forgiveness used here in our context of Hebrews 9:22 (*aphesis*) is never employed in that sense in the LXX's translation of the Torah.²⁶

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.
Hebrews 10:4 KJV

Actual forgiveness was impossible without the shedding of the blood of Christ (His spiritual

²⁶ Although the corresponding verb sometimes is (cf. Lev.4:20); these forms correspond to the Hebrew root *salach*, meaning "to pardon".

death for all sins on the cross in Calvary's darkness). The Levitical sacrifices merely provided restoration of ritual holiness with the Lord for the community of faith under the Law, but actual forgiveness would have to wait until the Savior of the world came and died in our place (Rom.3:25). But there was *no* provision under the Law for forgiveness, even of a ritual sort, for the willful rejection of the actual blood of Christ, His New Covenant with us, said rejection being perpetrated by returning to the animal sacrifices which taught that He had not yet come and died for our sins.

(26) For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there *no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*, (27) but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.
Hebrews 10:26-27 NKJV

Verses Twenty-Three through Twenty-Six

(23) For this reason (i.e., the inability of the blood of animals to cleanse us from sin) it was necessary for the heavenly exemplars of these earthly representations to be cleansed with better sacrifices than these [earthly ones]. (24) For Christ did not enter into a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. Rather, He entered into heaven itself, so as to present Himself before God [the Father] on our behalf. (25) Nor did He do so in order to offer Himself many times as the high priest enters the [holy of] holies every year with blood which is not his own, (26) for in that case He would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But as the case actually stands, once and for all at the [very] conjunction of the ages [Christ] came visibly [to earth] in order to remove sin through the sacrifice of Himself.
Hebrews 9:23-26

Better Sacrifices: Here we see why it was that Paul had revisited in the previous verses the issue of blood in the Levitical sacrifices, namely, to draw a sharp contrast between them and *the* sacrifice which makes salvation possible: the blood of Christ. Paul again strikes home here with his "better" theme (characteristic of this epistle as we have seen²⁷), reminding these recalcitrant believers that all the new things they have in Christ are so much superior to the old things that have been replaced. The New Covenant is so much better than the Old because it is based upon "better sacrifices", and in fact better to such a superlative degree that except for the fact that the old, ritual covenants were designed by God to teach about the genuine and efficacious sacrifice of our dear Savior, it would seem almost sacrilegious to make such a comparison. As it is, this is just one more reminder for the Jerusalem congregation that by going back to what is old and obsolete, they are abandoning that which is "better" in every conceivable way, and, by definition, settling for something much worse.

Only a Copy: As wonderful as the tabernacle/temple and its accouterment were (still inspiring interest and imitation today), they were only copies of the heavenly realities. That was a key

²⁷ See Hebrews Chapter 7 under "Better Hope"; and Hebrews chapter 8 under "Better Covenant".

point to keep in mind then and is so today as well. As awesome as this creation which God has given us is, it is only temporary and not in any way to be compared to the present heavenly realities nor to all the wonders to come in the new heavens and on the new earth and in the New Jerusalem. We are indeed here in this world and we cannot afford to pretend that it doesn't exist or that we have no need to interact with it. We believers like all others have relationships, jobs, homesteads, financial pressures, and health concerns. We have to handle all these things in a good and godly way as God gives us the means and help to do so, but *without* forgetting that all these things are secondary to the true issues of this life: growing spiritually, passing tests and progressing in our faith, and helping others to do the same. The latter knowledge is what keeps us grounded here in the devil's world, remembering what is honoring to our Lord, and what results in rewards that are eternal and not subject to all the perils and pressures which attack us now on these "five fronts" day by day in this life. This life is "only a copy", so to speak, of the one to come, and the one to come is beyond glorious.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Romans 8:18 NKJV

(17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (18) while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2nd Corinthians 4:17-18 NKJV

To Present Himself before God [the Father] on our behalf: The session of our Lord Jesus Christ, the event which formalized His official acceptance by the Father of His saving work on the cross and which followed His resurrection and ascension to the third heaven, took place immediately after His departure from earth at the end of the forty days following His resurrection (Acts 1:3):

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Acts 1:9 NKJV

Of David. A psalm. The Lord said to My Lord, "Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Psalms 110:1

Our Lord's victory at the cross established His authority beyond question, a supreme authority which was confirmed in His session at the Father's right hand (Matt.28:18; Jn.14:2-3; Eph.1:20-23; Phil.2:9-11; Col.1:13-20; 2:15; Heb.2:14-15 Rev.1:18). Christ has been seated (Acts 2:32-36; 5:30-31; Rom.8:34; Heb.1:3; 12:2), prisoners have been freed (Ps.146:7; Is.14:17; 42:7; 49:9; 61:1; Matt.12:29; 1Pet.3:22), and gifts have been given (Ps.68:18; Jn.16:7; Eph.4:8). And from His honored position at the Father's right hand, our Savior is making intercession for us, "on our behalf" (1Tim.2:5-6; 1Jn.2:1).

Who is he that condemns [us]? Christ Jesus is the One who died [condemned in our place], and the One, moreover, who was raised from the dead [for us], who is [seated] at the right hand of God, who is also making petitions *on our behalf*.

Romans 8:34

(19) We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered *on our behalf*. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 6:19-20 NKJV

Christ's presentation of Himself thus was and is for our benefit. He did so, as our context tells us, "on our behalf", having suffered and died to save us, now appearing in the presence of the Father for us, having opened for us the way into heaven (cf. Jn.14:6), He is now interceding on our behalf, and will continue to do so until His glorious return (Job 9:33-34; Rom.8:34; 1Tim.2:5-6; Heb.7:25; 9:24; 1Jn.2:1).

Once and For All: The cross was "once and for all" in contrast with the continual sin offerings under the Law, rituals which needed to be continued because they did not remove "consciousness of sin" (Heb.10:2), since they did not actually remove sin's penalty but merely acknowledged its debt until such time as a Savior came to pay in full (Rom.3:25). The Levitical priests continually offered "blood not their own", and literal blood at that, the symbol which God ordained to represent life, whose shedding therefore represented loss of life in turn; God did this for the very purpose of foreshadowing the one "once-and-for-all" sacrifice which was actually able to propitiate the justice of God and bring about salvation for all those willing to receive that ineffable Gift.

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Leviticus 17:11 NIV

The very continuation of the levitical blood sacrifices in and of itself demonstrated that they did never and could never produce fulfillment – otherwise they would at some point have ceased to be offered (Heb.10:2); just as the once-and-for-all nature of the cross by the very fact that it did only happen once and will never be repeated – since the sacrifice of our Lord has sufficed to atone for every single human sin – proves that it has indeed produced the fulfilment of the plan of God for salvation in Jesus Christ for all who are willing to embrace the will of God the Father in Him.

For Christ is the fulfillment (lit., "*end*") of the Law, resulting in righteousness *for everyone who believes* [in Him].

Romans 10:4

Exchanging God's genuine sacrifice which brings fulfillment for now abolished rituals which never could do so was the poorest of bargains (of which many in the Jerusalem church were

guilty of making).

Conjunction of the Ages: The nature, parameters, and exact construction of the plan of God is an involved subject too expansive to cover in detail here.²⁸ The seven millennial days which constitute the blueprint for that plan are centered on Jesus Christ.²⁹ Christ's earthly life is the center-piece of God's chronological design of human history, "the fullness of times" (Gal.4:4), and "the conjunction of the ages" (our context: Heb.9:26b; cf. Heb.1:2). It is a 33 year interlude in the progression of the seven millennial days, which, aside from the final seven years of the Tribulation (cf. Dan.9:20-27), marks the termination of the Jewish Age (Mk.1:15), and the commencement of the Church Age (Matt.21:43; Mk.12:9; Lk.20:16). Succinctly put, the life of Christ is the central pillar of the entire plan of God, and the cross/resurrection/ascension/session of Christ is its precise pivot point. Everything in God's plan revolves around Jesus Christ because He *is* the plan of God, the Word of God incarnate, the Logos (which means "plan" and "concept" as well as "word" in Greek), the one through whom and on whose account God created the world.

(16) Everything in the heavens and on the earth was created by Him (Jesus Christ), things invisible as well as those visible – whether thrones, authorities, rulers or powers, everything was created through Him *and for Him*. (17) And He Himself is before everything, and everything subsists in Him.
Colossians 1:16-17

Exchanging the reality of the One upon whom everything depends for a set of obsolete rituals meant to look forward to Him – and certainly not replace Him – can only result in spiritual shipwreck.³⁰ How much better to walk with Jesus in light and truth!

"And behold, I am with you all the days until *the end of the age* (Gr., *synteleia tou aionos*; cf. Heb.9:26: *synteleia ton aionon*)."
Matthew 28:20b

Visibly: Contrary to some Gnostic lies, this is an important reminder to any and all who were (or are) reading this epistle that our Lord was genuinely human and that our salvation required Him

²⁸ The Satanic Rebellion series is dedicated to covering this topic; see especially SR 5: The Seven Millennial Days of Human History: Judgment, Restoration, and Replacement.

²⁹ I.e., He is the purveyor of the "grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus *before time began*, but has *now been revealed* by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ" (2Tim.1:9-10).

³⁰ It is likely that with this terminology the reference "the conjunction of the ages", with ages being the Greek word *aion*, is meant by Paul deliberately to be anti-gnostic; see Hebrews Chapter 1, section I.b, "Gnosticism"; for similar anti-gnostic uses of the word "ages", cf. 1Cor.2:7; 10:11; Eph.2:7; 3:9; Heb.9:26; Jude 1:25 etc.; *n.b.*, the corresponding Hebrew word for "age", *'olam*, is most likely derived from *'alam* meaning "hidden, secret, mysterious, unknown" (Ps.10:1; cf. Is.45:15).

to become a true human being in addition to His deity in order to be able to bear our sins in that body so that we might be saved.

(6) You have taken no pleasure in sacrifices and offerings, [but instead] You have pierced My ears (i.e., "given Me a body and marked Me as a voluntary Servant"; cf. Ex.21:5-6; Deut.15:16-17). You have not asked for burnt offerings or sin offerings. (7) [But] then I said, behold, I have come [into the world (i.e., as the true sacrifice)]. In the scroll of the Book it has been written about Me. (8) It is My good pleasure to do what pleases You, My God. For your Law is in My inmost parts.
Psalm 40:6-8 (cf. Heb.10:5-10)

Remove Sin: Through His blood, His spiritual death on the cross, His bearing in His body on that tree of all of the sins of the world (1Pet.2:24), being made sin for us (2Cor.5:21), and paying the entire price God's justice demanded for all the sins the human race have ever committed or ever will in the seven thousand years of human history, Jesus Christ produced *atonement*. That is what "removing sins" means, and that was the only way to accomplish this blessed removal in fact (as opposed to the mere ritual representation of it under the Law), namely, "through the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb.9:26).

(25) God made Him a means of *atonement* [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice in the present, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.
Romans 3:25-26

God is just in justifying those who believe in Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ has provided complete atonement for the sins of the entire world.

In some respects, the English word "atonement" though traditional is yet an unfortunate choice for translating the Hebrew and Greek roots *kaphar* (כָּפַר) and *hilas-* (ἵλασ-) respectively. Etymologically, atonement is an English coinage wherein the prepositional phrase "at one" has been made into a noun by appending the suffix "-ment": "at-one-ment". Thus the basic idea given by the word itself is directed more towards the reconciliation of God and Man than the solving of the sin problem (i.e., although estranged, we are made "one" with God through Jesus Christ). The essential idea behind the Hebrew root *kaphar* is rather one of wiping out, cleansing, and purifying what is sinful (and so making forgiveness possible: cf. Ex.29:36; Lev.23:27; Dan.9:24). This is most evident in the central ritual of Yom Kippur, "The Day of Atonement" (as we have seen³¹), the pouring out of blood on the "mercy seat", the golden cover on top of the ark of the covenant. Since the holy of holies represents the third heaven, and the mercy seat is a type of the throne of God, it is virtually impossible to overlook the symbolism of the blood, representing the work of Christ on the cross, placed before the throne of God by the high priest who represents

³¹ See Hebrews Chapter 8, under "The True Tabernacle", section 3, "The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies".

Him who is our true High Priest.

The symbolism of the blood poured out upon the cover of the ark, which in turn contained the tablets of the Law (and other representations of human sinfulness: Heb.9:4), is clearly meant to portray God the Father's satisfaction with the work of His Son in dying for the sin of the world (Heb.9:23-28). The blood "wipes out" or "cleanses" or "purifies" the sin upon which it is poured out (Heb.9:22). The fact that atonement in the biblical sense refers to the covering, cleansing, or purifying of sin is also clear from the New Testament where the Greek root *hilas-*, while, in typical Greek fashion, more conceptual, is yet focused upon the same essential idea of the expiation, cleansing, or purification of sin (Rom.3:25; cf. Heb.2:17; 9:5; 1Jn.2:2; 4:10), along with the forgiveness that flows therefrom (compare Jer.31:34 with Heb.8:12). Biblically speaking, therefore, atonement is best understood as first and foremost God's work in Christ on our behalf directed towards sin making restoration of fellowship with Him for sinful mankind possible by eliminating that sin as an obstacle or barrier to salvation.

(23) For all sin and fall short of God's glory, (24) [but we are all] justified without cost by His grace through the redemption (lit., "ransoming" from sin) which is in Christ Jesus. (25) God made Him a means of atonement [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice at this present time, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:23-26

The passage above contains everything we need to know about atonement: 1) we all require it for there was never a human being without sin – except for Jesus Christ; 2) it is attained through the precious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the only way sin ever could have been "covered"; 3) because of the atonement Christ's death for us provides, salvation is available to all: God is free to provide it in grace and still be operating within the confines of His perfect justice because Jesus' blood has paid the entire price for all sins which God's justice demanded; 4) as also intimated by this passage, the atonement is universal: just as it sufficed for every single sin committed before the cross, so we must conclude that this is also the case after the cross. Indeed, that is what scripture everywhere proclaims: the atonement is universal, Christ's sacrifice has "removed *all* sin" as an impediment to being saved for every single person:

On the next day, [John] saw Jesus coming towards him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, the One who takes away *the sin of the world*".

John 1:29

"But if anyone hears My words and does not hold on to them, I do not condemn him. For I did not come to condemn the world but *to save the world*."

John 12:47

For it is the love of Christ that constrains us, having brought us to this conclusion: *One died for [us] all*; so then we all have died [in Him]. And He died *on behalf of all* so that

those who are [now] alive might no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised [from the dead].

2nd Corinthians 5:14-15

For that God was [and is] in Christ making overtures of reconciliation between *the world* and Himself – not taking their transgressions into account – and has entrusted us with this message (lit., "word") of reconciliation.

2nd Corinthians 5:19

[God] who wants *all men to be saved* and come to accept the truth. For as God is One, so there is [only] One Mediator between God and Man, Christ Jesus in His humanity, who gave Himself as a ransom *for all* [mankind] . . .

1st Timothy 2:4-6a

But now we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of the death He suffered, even Him who became "a little lower than the angels" [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God He might taste death *on behalf of us all*.

Hebrews 2:9

And He Himself is the *atonement* for our sins, and not just for ours, but also for *the entire world*.

1st John 2:2

The results of the atonement accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ are 1) *propitiation*: God the Father is satisfied with the "sweet savor" of Christ's burnt offering (His justice is satisfied concerning sin); 2) *redemption*: since all sin has been paid for, the door of the prison house of sin has swung open for all (through His spiritual death, Christ has purchased our release; we only need to walk out into the light to be saved); 3) *justification*: believers are now considered righteous through our faith, justified by the justifying work of the cross whereby God's justice has been assuaged so that He is just in considering us righteous not on the basis of works but on the basis of our faith in accepting the One who paid the price for all of our sins; 4) *reconciliation*: since our sins have been paid for in a manner acceptable to the Father, the death of His own dear Son on our behalf, and since we have been thus freed from our sins, ransomed by His blood and subsequently justified, considered from then on righteous by the Father because of our belief in His Son, His perfect person and efficacious work for us on the cross, through accepting the Savior's work we have been restored to fellowship with the Father through the Son by the reconciling work of Jesus Christ whereby we have peace with Him in place of the prior enmity brought on by sin.

(14) For [Jesus] Himself is our peace, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the enmity, (15) by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements with His [own] body, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by making [this] peace, (16) and might reconcile both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the enmity [between God and mankind]. (17) For when He had come (i.e., the 1st advent), He

proclaimed the gospel of peace to you who were far away [from God], and peace to those who were near. (18) For it is through Him that we both have our access to the Father by means of one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:14-18

Verses Twenty-Seven through Twenty-Eight

(27) And inasmuch as it is ordained for mankind to die once (i.e., the first, "physical" death), and after this [face] judgment, (28) so Christ having been offered up once to bear the sins of many (i.e., removing us from judgment) will appear without [any need to bear] sin a second time unto those who are awaiting salvation (i.e., to take us to Himself in resurrection).

Hebrews 9:27-28

Ordained Once to Die: Thanks to Adam's transgression, physical death is the common heritage of the entire human race.

So just as through one man sin came into the world and, through sin, death, and thus (i.e., Adam physically passing on his sin nature resulting in universal spiritual death) death spread to all mankind – for [obviously] everyone sins, . . .

Romans 5:12

As this verse teaches, Adam's sin resulted in death (spiritual death: Gen.2:17) which resulted in the passing on of sin to his progeny (the sin nature in the flesh transferred by physical procreation: Rom.7:18-20; Gal.5:16-17; Col.3:9-10) . . . which in turn resulted in the entire human race being subject to physical death (as well as committing sins as an expression of the sin nature we all have). And because of universal physical death, and because of universal sinfulness (evident in the passage above, aka "total depravity" in the Calvinist scheme; cf. 1Jn.1:8-10), no human being has any purchase on eternity, only an appointment with judgment, absent God the Father's gracious intervention through Jesus Christ. Blessedly, however, the Father *did* send His one and only Son and Jesus Christ *did* die on behalf of us all, resulting in salvation for all who believe in Him and thus appropriate through faith the forgiveness which abides in Him alone (Jn.3:16-18).

(1) So now, there [awaits] *no judgment of condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the Law of sin and death. (3) For what the Law could not accomplish (i.e., solving the sin problem) because it was weak on account of [its dependence on sinful human] flesh, God [did accomplish]: having sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the purpose of [expiating] sin, [God] rendered summary judgment on [all] sin in [Christ's] flesh, (4) so that the [perfect] righteousness which the Law demands might be fulfilled in us – we who walk not according to the [sinful] flesh, but according to the Spirit (i.e., believers).

Romans 8:1-4

In terms of the judgment after death in our context passage, therefore, that is different depending

upon the status of the human being in question, whether saved or unsaved. As the passage above tells us, for those who believe in Jesus Christ, there is no longer any judgment of condemnation hanging over our heads – and that is excellent news, that is the "good news" of the gospel of Jesus Christ! We have "passed from death into life" (Jn.5:24; 1Jn.3:14). And just as death no longer has any hold on our resurrected Lord and Savior, so also we are "alive to God in Jesus Christ" (Rom.6:9-10). We believers have been "justified by faith" (Rom.3:28; 5:1; Gal.2:16; 3:24), rendered righteous in God's eyes through placing our trust in the One who gave Himself over unto death to face judgment in our place (Rom.4:22-25).

(10) But you, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you also belittle your brother? For we will all stand before God's tribunal (11) as it is written: "As I live", says the Lord, "every knee will bow to Me, and every tongue will praise God" (Is.45:23). (12) So then each of us will give an account concerning himself to God.

Romans 14:10-12

For we must all stand before Christ's tribunal, so that each of us may receive recompense for what he has accomplished through this body, whether it be good or worthless.

2nd Corinthians 5:10

Believers do incur a judgment after death – the judgment seat of Christ. This judgment is not one of condemnation (as Rom.8:1-3 assured us), but of evaluation, so that we may be rewarded according to what we have "accomplished through this body, whether it be good or worthless".³²

(10) According to the grace of God given to me like a wise architect I have laid down a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each one take care how he builds upon it. (11) For no one can lay another foundation except the One that has been laid down: Jesus Christ. (12) And if someone builds upon his foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones, [or] with wood, hay, and stubble, (13) [in either case] his work will be made manifest [as to its true quality], for the Day [of judgment] will make it clear [for what it truly is], because it will be revealed (lit., uncovered) with fire. And the fire will evaluate (lit., "assay") the work of each person as to what its [true] quality is. (14) If anyone's work which he has built [on his foundation of faith in Christ] remains (i.e., is not burnt away by the fiery evaluation), he will receive a reward [for it]. (15) If anyone's work is burnt up, he will suffer the loss [of any potential reward for it], but he himself will be saved – but in this way [just described] as through fire [which evaluated his false works as worthless and burnt them up].

1st Corinthians 3:10-15

When our Lord evaluates His Bride, everything we have thought, said or done which is acceptable will be rewarded; everything that is otherwise will be burned up – but *we* will *not* be "burned up", regardless of how poor our performance on this earth for our Lord was. As long as we maintain our faith in Jesus Christ until the end, we are saved, because all believers are saved (Jn.3:18). But this blessed truth, rather than lending itself to apathy, ought to inspire us to

³² See CT 6, section I.7, "The Judgment and Reward of the Church".

commit whatever time we have remaining to the Lord to earn the best reward possible – through spiritual growth, progress passing tests, and production helping others – that our Lord might be pleased with us.

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you (i.e., at the judgment seat of Christ).
Hebrews 13:17 NIV

For unbelievers, however, the judgment to be faced after death is indeed one of condemnation. Rejecting God the Father's great Gift in this life leaves a person without any possible place or defense once this brief life is over. Refusing to stand on the work of Jesus Christ leaves the unbeliever nothing else but to stand on his or her own works – and all the works in the world, no matter how good in human eyes, could never avail to atone for a single sin no matter how insignificant.

(28) "Do not be amazed at this [statement], that an hour will come in which all those in their tombs will hear His voice. (29) For they shall come forth – those who have done what is good to a resurrection of life (i.e., those who have faithfully followed Jesus Christ), but those who have done what is worthless to a resurrection of judgment."
John 5:28-29

And books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life. And the dead (unbelievers) were judged on the basis of the things written in the books, according to what they had done.
Revelation 20:12b

The world tends to ignore the most pressing reality of life, namely, that of our own imminent mortality. What comes after this life should be foremost in the minds of believers, because the resurrection, our eternal rewards, and our eternity with our dear Lord in New Jerusalem forever is what we have set our hope on (Rom.8:23-24; Tit.2:13; Heb.6:16-20), *not* the trivial and ephemeral things of this transitory life in the devil's world. The believers in Jerusalem should have had that attitude as well, focusing on the eternal life to come and rejecting the siren song of false security and dead tradition, trading their blessed hope for a mess of pottage. In doing so, at best they might expect remonstrance from their Savior as their worthless works burn up before His judgment seat; at worst, if faith dies off through apostasy³³, then there is "no longer any sacrifice" which can save, only the bleak expectation after this life is over of "the second death" for all who, through lack of faith in Jesus Christ, have their names blotted out of the Lamb's book of life (Rev.2:11; 20:6; 20:14-15).

Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.
Revelation 20:15 NIV

³³ See BB 3B: Hamartiology, section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

Bear the Sins of the Many: Just as human beings only die physically once – and after that face the judgment appropriate to their status as believers or unbelievers – so also our Lord Jesus Christ was "offered up [only] once" in order to "bear the sins of the many". One "act" of disobedience (Adam's fall) led to universal condemnation because of sin; one "act" of righteousness (Christ's spiritual death) led to unlimited atonement for all sin.

(12) So just as through one man (i.e., Adam whose antitype is Christ) sin came into the world and, through sin, death, and thus (i.e., Adam physically passing on his sin nature resulting in universal spiritual death) death spread to all mankind – for [obviously] everyone sins (i.e., universal sinning proves universal spiritual death), . . . (13) For [even] before the Law [was handed down], there was [indeed] sin in the world, but, when there was no Law, sin was not being taken into account [by us as it was after the Law]. (14) Nevertheless, sin did reign [over mankind during the period] from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in a manner similar to Adam (i.e., by violating a clearly stated divine prohibition), who is a type of the One [destined] to come (i.e., Christ, the Last Adam). (15) But the offense [of the former] is not at all like the favor [of the Latter]. For though it is true that the human race is perishing on account of the offense of that one man [Adam], how much more has the grace of God and His gracious Gift of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to this same human race! (16) Indeed, the Gift is not at all like [the universal death that came] through [that] one person who sinned. For [in the former case] the [divine] judgment [that resulted] from one [person led] to [universal] condemnation, but the [divine] favor [based upon the sacrifice of the One has led] to the accomplishment of [universal] justification in response to many offenses. (17) For though it is true that on account of the offense of the one death reigned through that one (i.e., by Adam passing down his sin to his progeny), how much more will those who receive this abundance of grace, even this Gift of righteousness [through justification] rule in [eternal] life through [the sacrifice of] the One, Jesus Christ! (18) So then, just as through the offense of [that first] one [the progression of sin and death has fallen] upon all men resulting in [their] condemnation, so through the accomplishment of justification by the One, [God's countervailing progression of grace has led] to justifying the lives of all men [who believe in Christ]. (19) For just as through the disobedience of the [first] man the human race found itself sinful, so through the obedience of the One the human race will find itself [accounted as] righteous (i.e., justified), [through faith in Him].
Romans 5:12-19

And this Gift is available to all human beings without exception. Christ died for everyone. The atonement is unlimited (e.g., Jn.1:29; 12:47; 2Cor.5:14-15; 5:19; 1Tim.2:4-6; Heb.2:9; 1Jn.2:2).

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior *of the world*.

1st John 4:14

The disobedience of Adam led to the commission of countless sins by all of his descendants "even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam" (Rom.5:14 NKJV); the obedience of Jesus Christ resulted in the expiation of every single sin

mankind has ever committed or will, so that "the many will be made righteous" (Rom.5:19 NKJV) through their acceptance of His work on the cross on our behalf. Christ died for all, but only many will be saved, not all, because salvation requires acceptance of the Father's great Gift of Jesus Christ to us through faith.

(8) For you have been saved by [God's] grace *through faith* [in Christ]; and this did not come from you – it is God's gift. (9) Nor did it come from what you have done, lest anyone should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

To appropriate the blessing of Christ's one time, once and for all sacrifice of Himself for our sins requires faith *and*, as this passage warns us, *an absence* of reliance upon one's own works. If a person is relying on what they have done for salvation, then by definition they are not really relying on Jesus Christ. Rather, they are expecting "credit" from God for "the good" they have done "for Him". That is the trap of works-salvation which Israel in particular (and many denominations since) have fallen into since the cross, stumbling over the stumbling stone so as to miss salvation on account of being unwilling to accept God's Gift apart from supposed merits of their own.

(1) What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? (2) For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (3) For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (4) Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. (5) But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

Romans 4:1-5 NKJV

This is the trap the Jerusalem congregation was falling back into as well. Having begun with grace, they were steering towards spiritual shipwreck through being on the verge of ending with works.

(2) This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Galatians 3:2-3 NKJV

They were on the verge of forgetting that they had been cleansed from all of their sins by the blood of Christ (2Pet.1:9), the very sins they were now illegitimately sacrificing for anew,.

A Second Time: To satisfy God's justice, Jesus Christ had to die for the sins of all if any were going to be saved, so that the offer of salvation would be valid for all, even for those who refuse to avail themselves of it. Having won the victory of the cross, our Lord has now been resurrected, has ascended to the third heaven, has been seated at the Father's right hand, and has received back "the [same] glory I possessed in your presence before the world existed" (Jn.17:5). With all of the prophecies and requirements of the first advent now complete, we are now only

awaiting His second advent.

(12) But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, (13) and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool.

Hebrews 10:12-13 NIV

We who have received with joy the genuine Sacrifice of the cross during our Savior's first coming can have confidence that He is going to return and take us up for Himself in resurrection at His second coming (Rom.8:11). We who have been bought with His blood from our sins and subsequent eternal judgment should, therefore, be looking forward to His return and *not* going backward into the past to embrace rituals which accomplished nothing except to foreshadow what Jesus Christ has now already done. That return and that resurrection is our "blessed hope" (Tit.2:13). But those who choose temporal security and worldly false fellowship over allegiance to Jesus Christ risk being shut out when He does return.

(1) "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. (2) Five of them were foolish and five were wise. (3) The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. (4) The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. (5) The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. (6) At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' (7) Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. (8) The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' (9) 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' (10) But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. (11) Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' (12) But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, *I don't know you.*' (13) Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

Matthew 25:1-13 NIV

This was the danger the Jerusalem congregation was facing, absent a penitent response to Paul's gracious letter. This is the danger that we who are doing our best to walk closely with our Lord Jesus Christ are sure to avoid – and reap instead many wonderful eternal benefits besides as those who have not been shut out but are abiding in the presence of our dear Savior forever and ever.

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

Matthew 25:33 NKJV