

The Hebrews Initiative:
The “One” Gospel
Hebrews 9:11-15

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Text Introduction: We are in a series that we are calling the Hebrews Initiative. It is an important journey. Originally written to a group of fairly new believers in Jesus who were experiencing difficulty in a difficult world, this anonymous writer is calling them to a life of endurance. He has used language like “not shrinking back from faith” and “hold fast to the confession” to encourage them to persevere in their Christian calling and walk with Jesus. He would say, “This is not the time to back up; instead, this is the time to press forward.”

His call to endurance hinges upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. The writer’s description of what Christ has done for us has been steeped in the rich heritage of the Old Testament or Old Covenant. He has compared Jesus to the angels, Moses, Joshua, the law, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices that the priests of the Old Testament system made, and now the covenant. Now, in chapters 9-10, the last two chapters before the crescendo-like chapter of faith in chapter 11 and the closing exhortations of chapters 12 and 13, the writer of Hebrews throws all of these things at us again in summary-like fashion.

Let us hear the word of the Lord again today as we once again think about the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Text: Now the first covenant also had regulations for ministry and an earthly sanctuary. ² For a tabernacle was set up, and in the first room, which is called the holy place, were the lampstand, the table, and the presentation loaves. ³ Behind the second curtain, the tabernacle was called the most holy place. ⁴ It contained the gold altar of incense and the ark of the covenant, covered with gold on all sides, in which there was a gold jar containing the manna, Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. ⁵ The cherubim of glory were above it overshadowing the mercy seat. It is not possible to speak about these things in detail right now.

⁶ With these things set up this way, the priests enter the first room repeatedly, performing their ministry. ⁷ But the high priest alone enters the second room, and he does that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. ⁸ The Holy Spirit was making it clear that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed while the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹ This is a symbol for the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the worshiper’s conscience. ¹⁰ They are physical regulations and only deal with food, drink, and various washings imposed until the time of restoration.

¹¹ But the Messiah has appeared, high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), ¹² He entered the most holy place once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God?

¹⁵ Therefore, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Introduction: Alila stood on the beach holding her tiny infant son close to her heart. Tears welled in her eyes as she began slowly walking toward the river's edge. She stepped into the water, silently making her way out until she was waist deep, the water gently lapping at the sleeping baby's feet. She stood there for a long time holding the child tightly as she stared out across the river. Then in one quick movement she threw the six month old baby to his watery death.

Native missionary M. V. Varghese often witnesses among the crowds who gather at the Ganges. It was he who came upon Alila that day kneeling in the sand crying uncontrollably and beating her breast. With compassion he knelt down next to her and asked her what was wrong.

Through the sobs she told him, "The problems in my home are too many and my sins are heavy on my heart, so I offered the best I have to the goddess Ganges, my first born son."

Brother Varghese's heart ached for the desperate woman. As she wept he gently began to tell her about the love of Jesus and that through Him her sins could be forgiven.

She looked at him strangely. I have never heard that before, she replied through her tears. "Why couldn't you have come thirty minutes earlier? If you did, my child would not have had to die."

Each year millions of people come to the holy Indian city of Hardwar to bathe in the River Ganges. These multitudes come believing this Hindu ritual will wash their sins away.¹ A recent article said that 110 million people a year come to bathe in the Ganges River.

Such extreme measures to deal with sin may not happen that often here in America, but people try all sorts of things to build a relationship with God.

Our text today is reminding us that it does not have to be this way.

Throughout Hebrew 9 and 10, we get a recurring word—"once." (Sometimes, it is one or once for all or some other obvious reference to something happening one time.) I want to highlight this word this morning as the pathway to show us some very obvious things about the Gospel and our lives.

- **One Lord**--"Now the Messiah has appeared..." Jesus is the one who has fulfilled this role as Messiah and as such, He is the one Lord. The Jews were taught the shema, "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one." They knew the first commandment, "Do not have other gods besides Me."

The Gospel begins by our understanding that Jesus is God. He became flesh and dwelt among us. He is the one true God. There was ONE who appeared.

¹ Story appeared in Christianity Today.

- **One Sacrifice**—“He entered the holy of holies once for all.” (9:12) Notice also 9:25-26, 28a, 10:10-12, and 10:14. The crux of this issue is the once and for all sacrifice made by Jesus.
- **One Death**—Hebrews 9:27—There are two realities here—the certainty of death and therefore the conclusion that we must get death right. We do not get a second chance at death.
- **One Judgment**—Hebrews 9:27—Likewise, we get one opportunity at judgment.
- **One Return**—This foreshadows the one return of Jesus. This is a new idea for Hebrews, but not a new idea for the New Testament.
- **One Way**—The one Lord, one sacrifice, one death, one judgment, and one return scream out that there is one way!

Last week I introduced this idea about the torn veil or curtain. I want to come back to this idea this morning as I close. There was a miracle that occurred simultaneous to Jesus’ death. Matthew’s Gospel gives it to us in Matthew 27:51—“The veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” The veil in the temple was a barrier. There were two in fact. The first veil kept non-Jews from entering the inner courts. The second veil kept all, except the most High Priest, and this only once a year, into the Holiest of Holy Places.

There is a barrier between every human and God caused by our sin, but this new covenant knocks down that barrier. Let’s go back to our visual of that curtain or veil in the old Temple. Sin is our barrier, but at the tearing of Christ’s flesh on the cross, the Temple Veil miraculously tore apart as well, thus symbolizing the removal of the barrier.

So What?

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way He has opened for us through the curtain (that is, His flesh), ²¹ and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. ²³ Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, ²⁵ not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

- Let us come to Christ.
- Let us have clean consciences.
- Let us have a clear confession.
- Let us have a common concern for one another.
- Let us continue to come together.

In the days of World War II, there comes a story of a little boy walking the streets of London. His home destroyed and his family killed by the bombs. Hungry, now orphaned, he wanders through all of the death and rubble of war. He comes upon a bakery. He presses his nose against the glass looking in at all of the goodies. A soldier seeing him, goes in and buys the little boy 6 freshly baked doughnuts. Receiving the bag, the little boy says, "Mister, are you God?"

Lucado writes: "We wander amid the rubble and destruction of a fallen world, standing outside the window, separated from a Holy God and His eternal life. But because the Son of God went inside—as the high priest once went inside the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement—and did business once and for all with the Father, who demanded death as the only payment for sin, we can stand before Him and say, "You are God."