

JESUS IS THE WAY



**NOW OPEN
THE HOLY PLACES
OF GOD**

ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE. FOR THE GATE IS WIDE AND THE WAY IS EASY THAT LEADS TO
DESTRUCTION, AND THOSE WHO ENTER BY IT ARE MANY. FOR THE GATE IS NARROW AND THE WAY
IS HARD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND THOSE WHO FIND IT ARE FEW.
(MATTHEW 7:13-14 ESV)

1. Scene #1: We are given an overview of the specific descriptions and instructions that God gave Moses for divine worship in the first covenant for the sake of illustration, 9:1-5.

- (Hebrews 9:1–5 LSB) Now even the first covenant had **requirements of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary**. 2 For there was a tabernacle prepared: the first part, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread, which is called the holy place. 3 And behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, 4 having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. **Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.**

This overview of the requirements for divine worship and the earthly sanctuary are illustrative for our purposes. They prepared the hearts and minds of those who were obedient as they faithfully waited for a high priest of the good things to come.

(Hebrews 9:11 LSB) But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation.

- A. God gave Moses specific instructions concerning how and where to worship him.
- B. These are the requirements for divine worship in the first covenant that God made with the Israelites.
- C. The tabernacle mentioned here is the tent that God instructed Moses to assemble, not the temple that Solomon built.
- D. This earthly sanctuary was divided into two sections—The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.
- E. In following God's specific instructions for divine worship the ancient Jews demonstrated that they had faith in God.
- F. The details given for this illustrative overview are sufficient for us to focus on its purpose.

2. Scene #2: The overview continues and the Holy Spirit points out the extent and intention of the symbolism of these things, 9:6-10.

- (Hebrews 9:6–7 LSB) Now when these things have been so prepared, **the priests are continually entering the first part of the tabernacle performing the divine worship, 7 but into the second**, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself **and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance**.

The stated descriptions that are given for the two rooms of the tabernacle ...

- A. The first room:** Work, work and more work. The priests continually perform the prescribed acts of divine worship in the first part of the tabernacle—the Holy Place (9:6).
- B. The second room:** But in the second part of the tabernacle—the Most Holy Place—there is worship by only one person on only one day of the year (9:7).

On that day the high priest enters with blood to offer for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.

EXCURSUS: A BRIEF STUDY OF THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE COMMITTED IN IGNORANCE (9:7B) ...

Fact # 1: A person stands guilty before God and faces punishment for all of his or her sins whether intentional and unintentional.

- (Leviticus 5:17–19 LSB) Now if a person sins and does any one of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, but he was unaware, **still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment**. 18 He is then to bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. **So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not know it, and it will be forgiven him. 19 It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before Yahweh.**
- (Leviticus 16:16 LSB) So he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions **in regard to all their sins**; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Fact #2: It is possible for a person to sin intentionally but not know what they are doing.

- (Luke 23:34 ESV) And Jesus said, “Father, **forgive them, for they know not what they do.**” And they cast lots to divide his garments.
- (Acts 7:60 LSB) Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “**Lord, do not hold this sin against them!**” And having said this, he fell asleep.
- (1 Corinthians 2:8 LSB) **Which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**
- (1 Timothy 1:13 LSB) Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. **Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.**

Fact #3: We sin in ways of which we are not aware.

- (Psalm 19:12–14 NLT) **How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults.** 13 Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don’t let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. 14 **May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.**
- (Psalm 40:12 LSB) For evils beyond number have surrounded me; **My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see; They are more numerous than the hairs of my head, And my heart has failed me.**
- (Psalm 90:8 LSB) You have set our iniquities before You, **Our secret sins in the light of Your presence.**
- (Psalm 139:23–24 LSB) **Search me, O God, and know my heart;** Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 **And see if there be any hurtful way in me,** And lead me in the everlasting way.

Fact #4: We sometimes sin in ignorance but we are culpable because we do not prepare our minds to not be ignorant and so we fall back into conformity to our old ways.

Culpable: meriting condemnation; deserving of blame; considered responsible.

- a. Willful ignorance: The person who chooses to not obey and prepare his mind for action chooses to remain in conformity to his old life of ignorance.

- (1 Peter 1:13–14 ESV) Therefore, **preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded,** set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 **As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.**
- (Romans 12:2 LSB) **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,** so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.

- b. Our lack of preparedness leads to living the old life which is conformity to this world which is sin of which we are culpable.

Former ignorance ... sinful ignorance—the lack of knowledge or education; especially that leads to reprehensible behavior; esp. of divine things; of moral blindness.

- (Ephesians 4:17–18 LSB) Therefore this I say, and testify in the Lord, **that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk,** in the **futility** of their mind, 18 being **darkened** in their mind, alienated from the life of God **because of the ignorance that is in them,** because of the hardness of their heart.

Fact #5: Ignorance is no excuse.

- (Romans 1:18–20 ESV) For **the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.** 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse.**

—END EXCURSUS—

The Holy Spirit clarifies what the symbolism means for the present time ...

- (Hebrews 9:8–10 LSB) The Holy Spirit is indicating this, that the way into the holy places has not yet been manifested while that first part of the tabernacle is still **standing,** 9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which **cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,** 10 since they

relate only to food and drink and various washings, requirements for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

C. The divine worship of the old covenant had its place but has been rendered obsolete now that the new covenant has been manifested (*clearly revealed*).

D. Jesus is the hard way to God that few find.

Those who cling to the old covenant because they believe it still has merit (standing) do not see Christ for who he is and so do not comprehend the meaning of his entrance into the holy places of God.

(John 14:6 ESV) Jesus said to him, **"I am the way,** and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

(Matthew 7:13–14 ESV) Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide **and the way is easy** that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and **the way is hard** that leads to life, **and those who find it are few.**

- i. This person is blind to the work of Christ because he refuses to accept his inability to merit God's favor in regard to his salvation.
- ii. To accept his inability to help would be to confess his total depravity before a holy God and his pride will not allow that.
- iii. The way is hard and few find it because the way of salvation is totally contrary to the working of the fallen, human mind and spirit.
- iv. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.

(Ephesians 2:8 ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

- E. Neither the old covenant nor any other system of religion has anything to offer that can cleanse the conscience of the worshiper.
- F. The divine worship of the old covenant—the gifts and sacrifices—can only bring the worshiper to a place of temporary reconciliation while waiting for the fulfillment in Messiah.
- G. The requirements of the old covenant could only prepare a person to believe in the hope to come.
- H. The Old Testament saints never had the guilt of sin fully removed from their consciences.

3. **Scene #3: Christ appeared and entered the holy places through his blood, 9:11-14.**

- (Hebrews 9:11–14 LSB) **But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle,** not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, **He entered the holy places once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.** 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

- A. Christ appeared as our High Priest of the good things to come and everything changed.
- B. Christ entered the holy places through his blood once for all into the presence of God.
- C. This act of service as our High Priest obtained eternal redemption for us.
- D. By his entrance we also gained entrance to the presence of God.
- E. The blood of goats and bulls could provide only ceremonial cleansing of the body.
 - (Hebrews 9:13 NLT) Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer **could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity.**
- F. How much more does the blood of Christ cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
 - i. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse a person's conscience from the nagging, hounding feeling deep within his soul that he must do something if he is to merit right standing before God.
 - ii. Some commentators translate the expression as "cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death."
 - iii. Clinging to good works leads to death.
 - iv. Only the person with their conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ can serve the living God.