

Hebrews

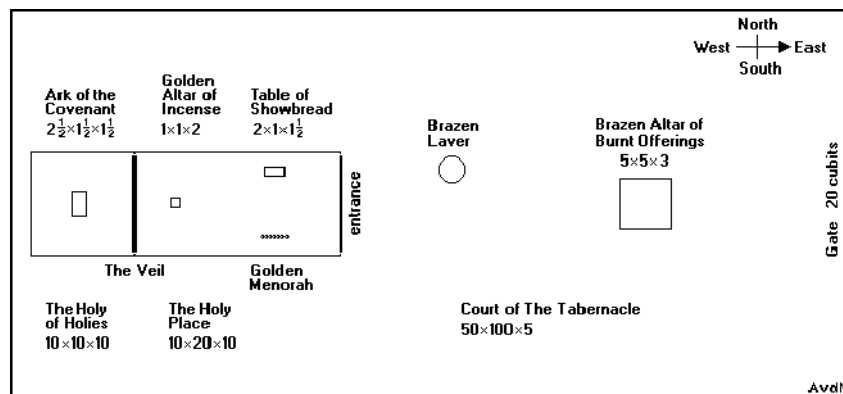
Chapter Nine

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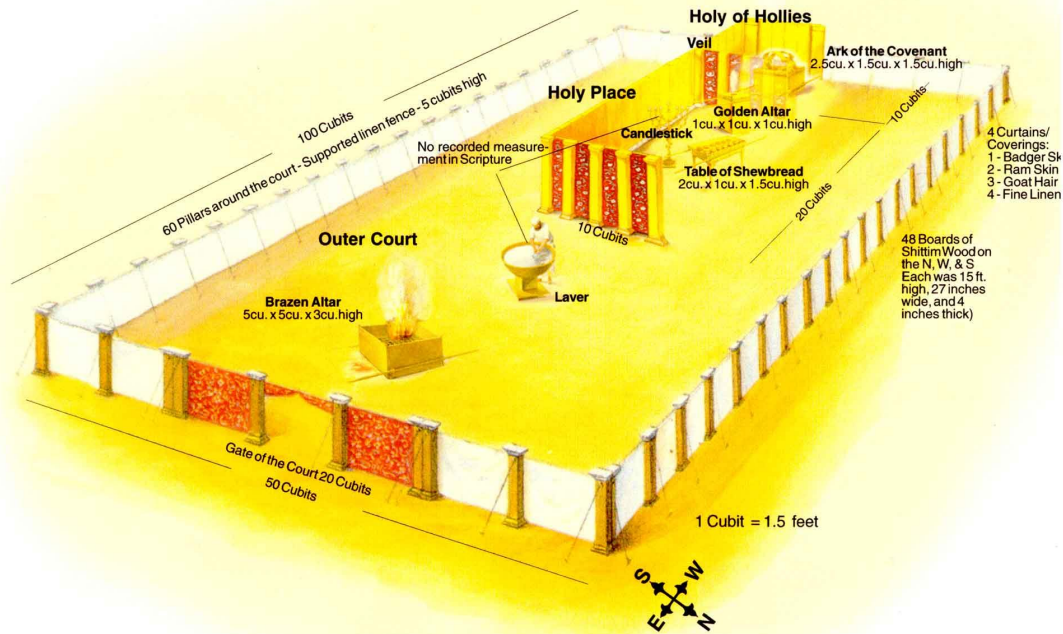
The author proceeds to show the superiority of the new covenant by discussing how the old covenant functioned. He is warning Jewish believers against returning to the now obsolete religion of Judaism. He chooses to use the long-vanished tabernacle rather than the Temple for its function would have been dear to the heart of the Jews since they only went to the Temple once a year and the worship center for most of them was the tabernacle. The establishment of the tabernacle immediately follows the description of the old covenant in Exodus 24. It is then natural for the author to use the tabernacle to show the ineffectiveness of the old covenant.

Heb 9:1-5 Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. ²For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. ³And behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, ⁴having 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 tables of the covenant. ⁵And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

The old covenant originated by divine initiative and the new covenant is its fulfillment rather than its contradiction. Saying that the sanctuary (holy place) was “earthly” does not mean that it was worldly but that it belonged to this world in contrast to the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus ministers. The tabernacle was built in the wilderness at Mount Sinai in 1512 BC by the instructions of God to Moses (Exodus 40) after the giving of the covenant. Its dimensions were 43.8 feet long, 14.6 feet in height, and 17.5 feet in width if we use a cubit of 17.5 inches (Exodus 26:1-30; 34-37). The Most Holy compartment seems to have been cubical 10 cubits wide and long with the Holy compartment being twice as long as wide. The outer court was 150 feet by 75 feet surrounded by a fence with one gate:



The Structure and Dimensions of the Tabernacle



In the Holy compartment was the lampstand (the seven-branched lampstand in Exodus 25:3; 37:17). Solomon's temple had 10 lampstands (1 Kings 7:49) but not the tabernacle. Also in this area were the table and the sacred bread containing twelve loafs, one for each tribe. Aaron was to replace the loafs every Sabbath day and the older ones were to be eaten by the priests in the Holy Place only although David and his men ate of them once (1 Sam 21:1-6). Ordinarily no lay person could eat them because they were holy (Lev 24:9).

Behind the second veil was the Holy of Holies place where God would meet once a year on the Day of Atonement with the high priest after he had offered sacrifices for his sins. In this second area was the Ark of the Covenant covered in gold and inside it was a jar of manna, Aaron's budded rod (Num 17:1-11), and the covenant tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments. The Ark was the primary article in Solomon's temple and it disappeared after the destruction of the first temple by the Chaldeans in 587 BC. Gold cherubims facing each other were carved on top of the Ark, the covering of which was called the mercy seat or the place of atonement. The blood of the bull and the goat were poured on the seat for atonement of the sins of the priests and the people. The cherubims did not fall under the command of making an image for they were not in violation of the commandment. We see several representations to Jesus:

- There was only one entrance and we know that Jesus refers to Himself as the door (John 10:7). The laver was for the priests to wash daily so they could enter the Holy Place. The Word of God cleanses us (John 15:3).
- The table of showbread represents Jesus as the bread of life (John 6:48).
- The only source of light was the candlestick and Jesus is the light of men (John 1:4).
- The veil was the entrance to the Holy of Holies and Jesus gives us access to God (Heb 10:20). Remember that the veil was torn from the top to the bottom at the resurrection (Matt 27:51). What did the priests do then? They sewed it back themselves showing that their worship was manmade!
- In this verse, the word “dwelt” is the same word as “tabernacle” so Jesus tabernacle I the world: *John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The author states that the golden altar of incense was inside the Holy of Holies but it was prescribed to be outside of that second veil (Exodus 30:6). The author probably has in mind how intimately this altar was connected to the presence of the Lord, which was only in the inner sanctuary as in the Temple (1 Kings 6:22). In the Temple the Ark only contained the sacred tablets (1 Kings 8:9) but the Tabernacle could have had a different arrangement. The exact form of the cherubim is not known but they overshadowed the lid of the ark. On the lid, called the mercy seat or the place of atonement, blood was poured as a sin offering to atone for the sins of the people. The offering was to signify the taking away the wrath of God (propitiate) from the people. The author seems willing to continue with a detailed description of all that was in the tabernacle and what was done there but his main point is to show the inadequacy of the old covenant so he chooses not to continue with this description.

Heb 9:6-10 Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship, ⁷but 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. ⁸The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, ⁹which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, ¹⁰since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

Now the author moves to the rituals involved in the tabernacle. Although his main point has to do with the high priest he begins with the duties of the lower priests who perform daily duties in the outer area of the tent such as burning incense (Exodus 30:7-8), placing the loaves of bread (Lev 24:8-9), and trimming the lamps (Exodus 27:20-21). He begins verse seven with the word

“but” to mark the contrast between the duties of the lower priests and the high priest. The reference to the duties of the high priest is to the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). He enters this Holy Place two times to apply blood but only on this one day each year (Lev 16:12, 14-15). His sin offering were for his sins (his first entrance with the blood of the bullock) and the sins of the people (his second entrance with the blood of the goat) that were done in ignorance. After this second pouring of blood the high priest confessed the national sins over the head of a second goat that was then driven into a “solitary land”. Sins done willfully are a different story:

Num 15:29-31 You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them. ³⁰But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be on him.' "

The Holy Spirit uses the tabernacle pattern to teach spiritual truths. That only the high priest had access to the Holy of Holies signifies that no ordinary man could have access to God. It is probable that the author means the entire tabernacle when he states that such held only while the outer tabernacle was standing. The “outer tabernacle” means the temporary physical construction by men that is only a symbol for the present time, meaning the time of the old covenant. The word “outer” refers to that construct outside of heaven. In the new covenant time God does not dwell in temples made by human hands:

Acts 7:48 "However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says:

1Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

2Cor 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Before Christ there was no access to God for the ordinary person. But for those in Christ there is free access to God because of His work. The conscience is that which guides people in making decisions about their actions, words, and thoughts. People should act according to the dictates of their conscience and the Christian’s conscience should be educated according to the will of God. People will always do what they want to do the most at the time they decide to act. Since Christians still have a sin nature that is at war with their desire to please God, they should always take time to consider which part of their conscience is guiding their actions. The Bible gives us a lot of information about the conscience such as: Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 1:5, 19; 3:9; 1 Peter 3:16, 21; 1 Cor 8:7; Titus 1:15, and 2 Tim 1:3. Even after being born again, a Christian’s conscience can

restrain him from obedience to God because of three problems: 1) our knowledge of our past sins can cripple us from service to God, 2) our knowledge of our sin nature that remains can also keep us from perfect communion with God, 3) our ongoing contact with a sinful world can still cause temptations to restrain us. But the power of the blood of Jesus and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification can purify our thoughts and actions and bless us with proper communion with God. We need to realize that we are priests to God (Rev 1:5-6; 1 Peter 2:9) and serve in His presence continually. The old covenant rituals were external and could not free the conscience from sin whereas the new covenant brings about a new heart, meaning a new conscience as proclaimed by Ezekiel 36:26 *Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* The author amplifies his meaning about the externality of the old covenant by mentioning food, drink, and washings. There were strict food laws as stated in Lev 11 and other food, drink, and washings are mentioned in Leviticus and Numbers but, as stated by the author, these were only bodily regulations awaiting the new order.

Heb 9:11-14 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; ¹²and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³For 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, ¹⁴how 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?

Now the author moves specifically to the work of the Lord and its superiority over the old covenant. Christ appeared as the high priest a few years before the author wrote his epistle and almost 2000 years ago from our perspective as well as what is yet to come in its fulfillment for all of us. The “good things” are all of the blessings earned by Christ for His people with the new covenant. The past tense (appeared) points to the work of Christ in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Greek word translated “tabernacle” is “skene” and literally means “dwelling place”. Thus the greater and more perfect tabernacle is where God dwells in heaven with the tabernacle built by Moses according to the directions given by God being a type of that perfect dwelling place. When all of God’s people are dwelling together with Him then we will all be dwelling with Him as John told us:

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,

In an earlier section John used the expression “spread His tabernacle over them” to also refer to God dwelling with His people:

Rev 7:15 "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them.

In verse twelve the author tells us that Jesus did not enter that perfect dwelling place of God by virtue of any of the sacrifices according to the old covenant but by the shedding of His perfect blood that obtained eternal redemption for all of His people. The author says calves whereas Aaron was to offer a young bull. However a young bull may be called a calf. He states that Jesus entered once for all whereas the Aaronic priests had to enter many times because each sacrifice was of only temporary value. The sacrifice of Jesus was of eternal value and so needed to be done only once. In verse 13 he says that the sacrificial deaths of animals achieved a temporary and external purpose only. The ashes of a heifer refer to the ceremony of purification of Num 19:14 when someone either touched a dead person or was in the same room as a dead person. The Levitical system only had external merit and did nothing to replace the sinful heart of anyone.

In verse 14 he compares the purely external system of the old covenant with the results of the new covenant. By the "blood of Christ" he is referring to the sacrificial death of Christ that paid the penalty required of sin before God. Saying that He was offered as "without blemish" means that He was perfect before God and, of course, only God can be perfect before God so this statement is a reference to the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The major suffering of Jesus was not physical but spiritual as He suffered the wrath of God for all the sins of those chosen to be God's people from all ages. Jesus took this wrath, died physically, was resurrected, and ascended to heaven showing that His task was indeed finished (John 19:30).

The author also states that the Holy Spirit was involved in this entire work of Jesus Christ from His birth, living without sin, death on the Cross, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father. "Dead works" undoubtedly refers to the works of man in attempting to develop a righteous state before God since most of this epistle is a treatise against such attempts by people to obey the Law. Only by accepting by faith this work of Christ can a person have a clean conscience. See the discussion on page four for more on the conscience. As long as a person has only a sinful heart then no amount of external cleansing can renew that heart and Jesus told us that such a heart is the root of all evil in the world:

Matt 15:18-20 "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰"These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

Heb 9:15-22 And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal

inheritance. ¹⁶For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. ¹⁷For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. ¹⁸Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. ²²And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

“For this reason” reveals that the preceding is the reason that Jesus Christ is the mediator of this new covenant. A mediator is someone who comes between two people to work out the differences between them. The differences between any person and God are infinite! God is perfect and man is a sinner before His court of righteousness. Only God can be such a mediator and so Jesus Christ is the perfect mediator for this enormous task of redemption. The sole purpose of the old covenant was to show that mankind cannot achieve the perfection required by God and so the sins of everyone are perfectly revealed by their transgressions revealed by the old covenant. “Those who have been called” renews the fact that the divine initiative is needed to bring salvation to anyone. Paul fully explains this effectual calling as recorded in Rom 8:14-30. The great news is that that all of God’s called people have received the promise of an **eternal** inheritance. The best that the old covenant could do was to temporarily and externally cleanse a person but the new covenant brings about a clean conscience as one knows that all of his sin has been paid for and he has received the righteousness of Jesus Christ and thus will dwell with God forever. Jeremiah foresaw this new era by his statement in Jer 31:34 that God would remember their sin no more. The perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ did not cover our sins but removed them completely from our account before God. Paul wrote of this wonderful event in *Col 2:13-14 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

If you are united with Jesus Christ in faith do not let anyone call you a sinner: *Col 2:16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day--*

Jesus spoke of the inauguration of the new covenant as recorded in Mark 14:24 and Paul wrote of it in 1 Cor 11:25. The author uses a usual Greek word that is translated “covenant” for it can also mean a testament as in a last will of someone. A testament does not come into play until the testator dies and one cannot argue with that person about the terms of the will. So the covenant is final meaning that only those named as recipients in it will receive the results that it dictates by

the will of the testator. The author uses legal terms to emphasize what he just said so that it is clear that only after the one who made the testament dies will the dictates of the testament be in effect. In verse 18 he says that the first covenant was a testament in the meaning that blood had to be shed for its effect to be realized although in the old covenant it was not the death of the maker of the covenant. The death of Jesus made all the blessings found in Him to be available to His chosen people, those named in the testament.

In verse 19 the author includes some actions of Moses that are not reported in Exodus 24 and we do not know the origin of his information other than we assume that this epistle is “God breathed” like any other inspired Word of God. In Exodus 24 there is no mention of the use of the water, scarlet wool, hyssop, or the sprinkling of the book by Moses although such was used in other rites. Moses explained to the people what all was involved in the covenant including what they were to do in obeying God and he threw half the blood from an offering on the people. The other half of the blood had been poured on the altar.

In verse 20 the author changes the words of the LXX that states “Behold, the blood of the covenant” and he includes “which God commanded you” to put the statement in the context of a testament/covenant since the instrument is not negotiated. In verse 21, “in the same way” does not mean at the same time for the tabernacle had not been constructed when the covenant was made. The inference is that the tabernacle was cleansed before it was utilized since it had been made by sinful hands but such is not reported in the Bible. Josephus does report that Aaron and his garments were sprinkled with blood prior to the rituals in the tabernacle.

Note that verse 22 begins with “according to the Law” so he is still referring to the cleansing processes of the old covenant. His comment “one may also say” shows that he understands that under the old covenant there were exceptions. For example, if a person was too poor to afford even a little bird for an offering he may substitute a cereal offering (Lev 5:11-13). Some purifications could also be affected with water (Lev15:10), some objects were purified with fire (Num 31:22-23), on one occasion gold was used to make atonement for the warriors (Num 31:50), and on another occasion incense was used for the atonement (Num 16:46). However such exceptions were rare. The second covenant is not according to the law but the old covenant was divinely initiated and so was representative of what must be done permanently.

Heb 9:23-28 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

²⁴For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. ²⁶Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by

the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

The tabernacle, the objects in the tabernacle, the priests, and the rituals are all copies of the things in heaven. God told how all the types were to be cleansed and such procedures had to be followed exactly. But all the earthly things were copies of reality in heaven and what does the author mean about them needing cleansing with better sacrifices? Since the author is very specific that there was only one sacrifice made by Jesus, the plural form used is probably stating that there would be an infinite number of earthly sacrifices required to have the result of the sacrifice made by Jesus. Many scholars have attempted explanations about the cleansing of heaven but the best explanation probably is that the Bible tells us of spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12), the “rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2:8), the “powers” like “height” and “depth” (Rom 8:38-39), and angels and demons. Paul tells us that Christ’s atoning work also affected things on earth and in heaven:

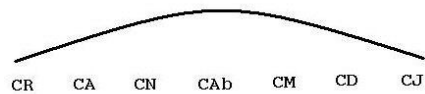
*Col 1:19-20 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, ²⁰and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, **whether things on earth or things in heaven.***

Thus it seems that His work cleansed evil beyond earth also. There are many aspects of God’s work in the world that we can categorize as the “already and not yet” and this cleansing fits into that category. Satan and his demons are defeated but battles will still rage until the End. Evil hearts still produce much evil in the world and will do so until the End. Christians will continue to suffer in many ways until the End. All Christians praise God for His victory and look forward to the total fulfillment of the victory. Another way to look at this cleansing of heaven is that the purpose of the sacrifice of Jesus is the cleansing of the conscience of man so that, before God, he is without sin and with the righteousness of Jesus. Thus when this new man comes before God in prayer he is not bringing into God’s presence any sin. Such cleansing also affected all chosen people of all ages who have already been in heaven. This explanation is preferred by F. F. Bruce as explained by him in his book on Hebrews listed in the bibliography. The lampstand spoke of God’s revealing light that could not be received by man until Jesus came as the light (John 1:9). The table of showbread related the intimate fellowship of God with man but such was not possible until the work of Jesus (John 17:24). The incense spoke of the privilege of access to God through prayer but that was not possible for sinners (John 9:31).

In verse 24 he tells us that the work of Christ could not be done in the earthly tabernacle for that is just a copy of the real dwelling of God. Instead Jesus Christ entered the heavenly dwelling place of God signifying that His task was accomplished and the Father was well pleased to offer peace to all the chosen people through that work of Jesus. It is there that Jesus Christ represents

us before the judgment seat of God and guarantees our presence with Him forever. In verse 25 he states the obvious point in that Jesus, as God, needed to only make the one sacrifice to atone for the sins of all the chosen people of all ages. The earthly high priests made sacrifices of blood that was not their own once a year at the Day of Atonement.

In verse 26 he amplifies the previous statement. If He had been only an earthly high priest he would have had to make sacrifices often and always since the foundation of the world to atone for the sins of all the people of all times who were chosen to be made sinless before God. The “consummation of the ages” refers to the end of the old covenant time and the new Messianic age in which the world has been living for over 2000 years. All the previous covenants in the old ages are fulfilled and completed with the new covenant with Jesus:



The sacrifice of Jesus was necessary and sufficient to put away the sins of the people of God forever. Verse 27 makes the important point that there is no second chance for people and so no such thing as reincarnation. There is an obvious finality to death that all people will face. But death is more serious because it is followed by ultimate justice before the Judge. Once death comes to a person he will then face judgment and, if the righteousness of Jesus Christ is not in their account, they will face an eternity of punishment for their sins.

Verse 28 is a wonderful promise for those who are in Christ since He averted the wrath of God from them: *John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* His one sacrifice was so that He could bear the sins of many people as also stated in *Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* For those who are in Christ the second coming will not be in reference to their sins since He bore the penalty of sin for all of them. Christians eagerly await this Second Coming for it will be totally a time of rejoicing as our salvation will be complete. Salvation is another one of those concepts that are “already but not yet” since it has three phases: justification, sanctification, and glorification. Our justification is complete. Our sanctification is continuing and our glorification will be complete at His Second Coming. Praise the LORD!