

09. Hebrews 9:1-28

Cherubim



Mercy Seat



Ark of the
Covenant



- i. The insufficiency of the old ministry, covenant and institutions and their replacement.

Hebrews 8

- a. The ministry of our priest is superior, because he is minister 'in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up'. He is the mediator of a superior covenant, based on superior promises. The old cult-ministry is only an imitation of the real, heavenly one (8:1-6).
- b. The old covenant is imperfect and has been made obsolete. God promised a new covenant (8:7-13).

Hebrews 9

- c. The institutions of the old cult are unable to achieve their goal. They cannot achieve salvation (9:1-10).

Hebrews 8

I. a. Ministry on earth

I. b. Covenant obsolete

I. c. The institutions of the old cult are unable to achieve their goal. They cannot effect salvation ([Hebrews 9:1-10](#)).

2. The new institutions, covenant, and ministry are efficacious and definitive

c^I. Christ our high priest offered himself and this was effective in taking him once for all into the presence of God, achieving for us an eternal redemption ([Hebrews 9:11-14](#)).

b^I. Christ is the mediator of the new covenant whereby through his offering of his life (blood) we receive the eternal heritage that was promised ([Hebrews 9:15-23](#)).

a^I. The uniqueness of the offering of Christ who has entered heaven ([Hebrews 9:24-28](#)).

c. The institutions of the old cult are unable to achieve their goal. They cannot effect salvation (9:1-10).

Hebrews 9:1-5

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was constructed, the first one, in which were the lamp stand (Menorah, Exodus 26:35), the table, and the bread of the Presence (Exodus 25:23-20; 26:35; see Leviticus 24:6); this is called the **Holy Place** (Ἅγία - the 'hêkal'). Behind the second curtain was a tent called the **Holy of Holies** (Ἅγία Ἁγίων - the 'debîr'). In it stood the golden altar of incense (Exodus 30:6; 40:26) and the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:10-15; 37:1-5), overlaid on all sides with gold, in which there were a golden urn holding the manna (see Exodus 16:33-34), and Aaron's rod that budded (see Numbers 17:16-24), and the tablets of the covenant (see Deuteronomy 10:2); above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot speak now in detail.

Most Holy Place with the ark of the covenant
10 cubits square (15 ft. square)

Curtain

Holy Place, with the golden table
for the bread of the Presence,
golden lampstand, and
altar of incense.

length: 20 cubits (30 ft.)

width: 10 cubits (15 ft.)

50 cubits

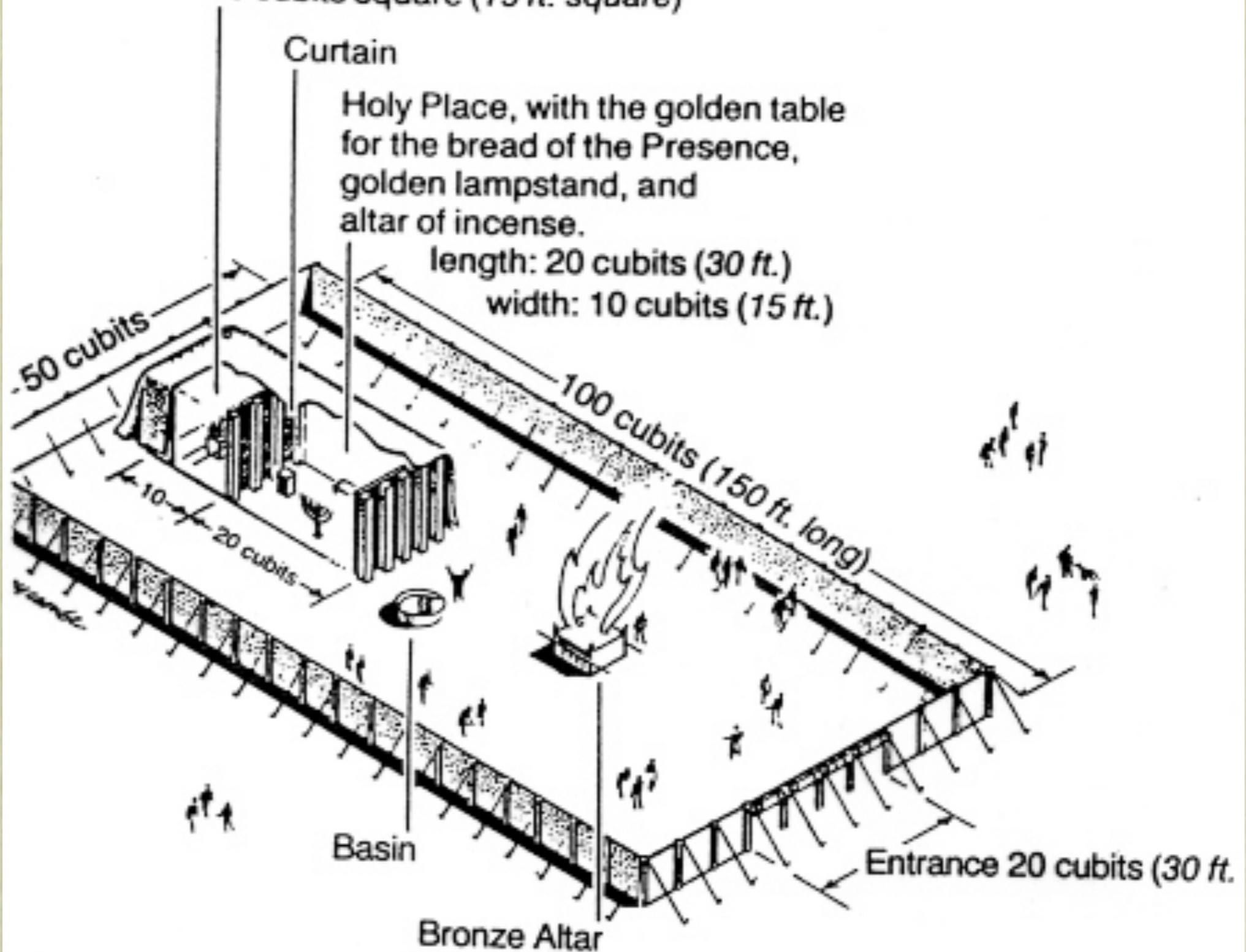
100 cubits (150 ft. long)

10
20 cubits

Basin

Entrance 20 cubits (30 ft.)

Bronze Altar



Hebrews 9:5

above the Ark of the Covenant were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.

Cherubim



Mercy Seat



Ark of the
Covenant



We recall God's promise: 'There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant, I will deliver to you all my commands' (Exodus 25:22).

Hebrews 9:6

Such preparations having been made, the priests go continually into the first tent to carry out their ritual duties

‘They offer to the Lord every morning and every evening burnt offerings and fragrant incense, set out the rows of bread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lamp stand so that its lamps may burn every evening’ (2 Chronicles 13:11).

Hebrews 9:7

but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people.

Hebrews 9:8-10

By this the **Holy Spirit** indicates that the way into the **sanctuary** has not yet been disclosed as long as the first tent is still standing. This is a symbol of the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time comes to set things right.

He is speaking of the '**sanctuary** and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, had set up' (8:2), the sanctuary entered by our high priest, Christ, who 'did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered **heaven itself**' (9:24).

It is clear that entry into this sanctuary, the sanctuary of heaven, the sanctuary in which we can enjoy perfect and continuous communion with God, is not effected by the priestly ministry carried out in the earthy sanctuaries under the regulations of the first covenant. Some communion with God is effected in the Holy of Holies through the ministry of the high priest in the second tent, but it is only once a year, and it deals only with unintentional sins. In 'this present time', while the 'first tent' stands, and while the way into the presence of God has to pass through it, we cannot experience perfect communion of mind and heart with God. There had to come a time when God would set everything right.

It is not enough for our body to be purified of external defilements by external washings. Our 'conscience' needs to be cleansed. New regulations were needed to govern a new cult. We needed a new high priest who would take us right through into the presence of God. This has now happened in Christ, and it is to this that our author now turns.

2. The new institutions, covenant, and ministry are efficacious and definitive.

c¹. Christ our high priest offered himself and this was effective in taking him once for all into the full presence of God, achieving for us an eternal redemption (9:11-14).

b¹. Christ is the mediator of the new covenant whereby through his offering of his life (blood) we receive the eternal heritage that was promised (9:15-23).

a¹. The uniqueness of the offering of Christ who has entered heaven (9:24-28).

c1. Christ our high priest offered himself and this was effective in taking him once for all into the full presence of God, achieving for us an eternal redemption (9:11-14).

Hebrews 9:11-12 **Centrepiece**

But when **Christ** came as a **high priest** of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect **tent** (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption (λύτρωσις).

With superb organisational skill, our author has structured his oration so that the words '**Christ high priest**' are in the exact centre. God has 'set things right' (9:10). The good things that were promised '**have come**'. We have our perfect high priest, Christ. He has entered into the presence of God '**once for all**'. He has obtained for us an '**eternal redemption**': we can enjoy perfect divine communion forever.

Hebrews 9:11-12

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

As high priest he could not enter the sanctuary 'without blood' (9:7), but Christ did not enter 'with the blood of goats and calves'. All that could do was to rid the body of any defilement that would exclude a person from entering the presence of God. Christ entered 'through his own blood', through offering his life, offering himself without blemish to God. Because of his perfect communion in love with God, a communion effected through the eternal Spirit he was able to purify not just our bodies but our inner selves in our relationship with God.

Hebrews 9:11

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

Scholars are divided in their understanding of what the author intends by this tent. Some argue that he is speaking of 'heaven', the transcendent realm of God's eternal presence. This fits with the verb 'having come' and the use of 'through' in its local sense.

Others are persuaded that the position of this statement at the exact centre of his argument and the parallel established between 'through the tent' and 'through his own blood' point to the 'through' being used not in a local but in an instrumental sense. They argue that the 'tent' is the glorified body of the exalted Christ.

Hebrews 9:13-14

For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit **offered himself** without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

Christ offered his body, his human life, as a gift in obedient love to his Father. He poured out his blood for us, and this self-offering was the way to the eternal sanctuary. In the resurrection, his body was transformed in divine glory, and so he was able to enter into the sanctuary of heaven.

Hebrews 9:13-14

For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit **offered himself** without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

The body that was fitted for Jesus, enabling him to enter the world, was a 'body of flesh and blood' like ours (2:14). The body that was fitted for him, enabling him to enter the sanctuary of heaven is the once-sacrificed and now glorious body, which is better, more perfect, not of this creation, not made by human hands (compare John 2:19-21). Through this body (this 'tent') Christ is able to enjoy the perfection of human communion with God.

obtaining eternal redemption (λύτρωσις)

In an earlier statement our author claimed: ‘Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of **eternal salvation** (σωτηρία) for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek’ (5:8-10).

Here he speaks of Jesus perfect priestly offering as being the offering of himself (his life, his blood), and as obtaining for us ‘**eternal redemption** (λύτρωσις)’.

obtaining eternal redemption (λύτρωσις)

The language is traditional, going back to the action of God redeeming his people from slavery in Egypt:

I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will **redeem** you' (Exodus 6:6).

Hosea uses the same word for redeeming from death: 'Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I **redeem** them from Death?' (Hosea 13:14).

The psalmist speaks of redemption from sin and from one's enemies: 'It is he who will **redeem** Israel from all its iniquities' (Psalm 130:8).

'Let the **redeemed** of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south' (Psalm 107:2-3).

It is also language that we find throughout the New Testament: ‘The Son of Man to give his life a **ransom** (λύτρον) for many’ (Matthew 20:28).

Paul writes: ‘He it is who gave himself for us that he might **redeem** (λυτρωσάμενος) us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds’ (Titus 2:14).

‘He gave himself a **ransom** (ἀντίλυτρον) for all’ (1 Timothy 2:6).

And Peter: ‘You know that you were **ransomed** (λυτρωσάμενος) from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors’ (1 Peter 1:18).

b¹. Christ is the mediator of the new covenant whereby through his offering of his life (blood) we receive the eternal heritage that was promised.

Hebrews 9:15-17

For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised **eternal inheritance**, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. Where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

This is the ‘new covenant’ promised by God (8:8), the ‘better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises’, and Jesus is its mediator (8:6). Through his gift of himself – a gift expressed in his death (the pouring out of his blood) – he has made it possible for us to do what the priests of the first covenant could not do: we can receive our ‘**eternal inheritance** (κληρονομία)’.

The author begins to explore the reasons for Jesus' death. He does so in cultic terms. When the people accepted God's offer of a covenant, they slew animals in sacrifice. In effect they were saying: let what is happening to this animal happen to us if we do not keep our part of the covenant. The fact is that 'under the first covenant' there were 'transgressions'. This means that those who transgressed should die, and there was no cultic escape from this sentence, except for unwitting defilements which they might happen to incur, and for 'sins committed unintentionally by the people' (9:7). There were, as we have seen, ways of dealing with these.

When it comes to deliberate breaking of the covenant, however, there was no cultic remedy. Our author is claiming that Jesus, by offering himself, and by pouring out his blood, not for his own sins (for he was sinless) but for ours, 'redeems us' from the death which is our due.

Hebrews 9:18-21

Hence not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been told to all the people by Moses in accordance with the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people, saying, “**This** is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you” (Exodus 24:8). And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.

The author recalls the ritual described in Exodus 24:3-8. Many of the details in verse nineteen are not mentioned in the Sinai accounts. They have been included here from other rituals in order to cover the whole of the cultic system. He introduces the word ‘**this**’ in verse twenty. Some suggest a link with the last supper account in which Jesus declares: ‘**This** is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for the casting away of sins’ (Matthew 26:28).

Hebrews 9:22

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (ἄφεσις - no casting off defilement).

The author speaks of

purifying a defilement that clings to the sinner (1:3);

taking a person into the sphere of the sacred and thus

protecting against evil (2:11);

bringing a sinner into contact with divine mercy (2:17);

saving a person (5:9);

renewing a sinner by bringing about a change of mind and heart (6:6);

releasing from slavery (9:12,15);

removing something that traps one in sin (10:11).

He also uses a number of different images for sin. Besides the most common image of missing the mark (ἁμαρτία), he speaks of

- disobedience (2:2);
- rebellion (1:9);
- drifting (2:11);
- being enslaved (2:15);
- having a hardened heart (3:8);
- being deceived (3:13);
- being embittered (3:16);
- not treating with reverence what is sacred (9:13).

Hebrews 9:23

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves need better sacrifices than these.

When he speaks here of the heavenly things needing to be purified, he seems to be speaking metaphorically of the ‘consciences’ of those who are inheritors of eternal salvation. This is the cleansing that ultimately matters - a cleansing of the heart and mind; and is achieved only by what God has done in Jesus.

a¹. The uniqueness of the offering of Christ who has entered heaven (Hebrews 9:24-28).

Hebrews 9:24

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

The author highlights the priestly mediating role of Christ by stating, once again, that our high priest is in the presence of God ‘on our behalf’ (see 2:18; 4:15; 7:25).

PRIEST

SANCTUARY

Presence to God

**Action
towards
US**

**Action
towards
GOD**

WORD

MEDIATION

**SACRI
FICE**

God's Way

US

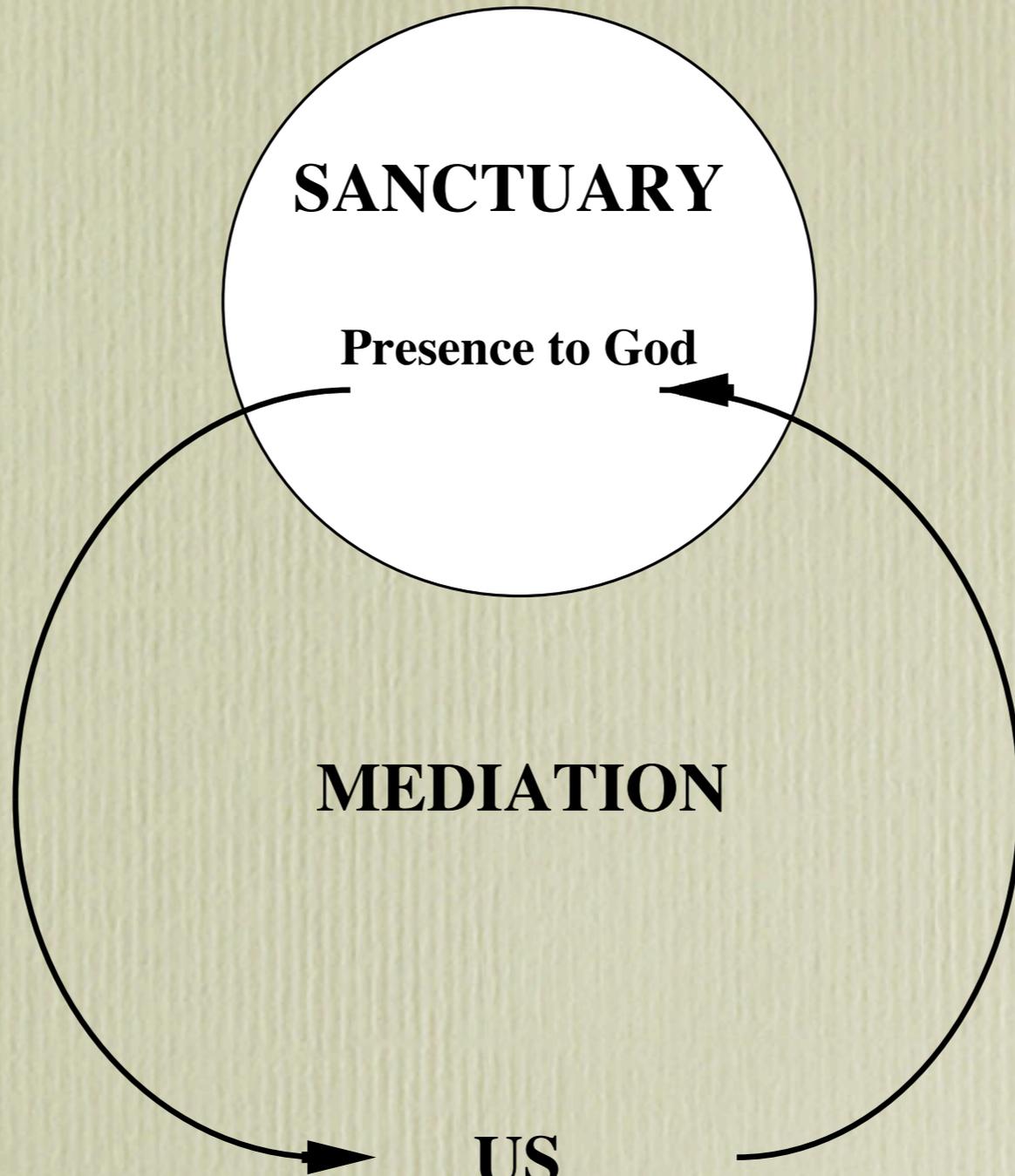
Self-offering

Will

Prayer

Blessing

forgiveness



Hebrews 9:25-26

Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all **at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

Once again he stresses that the self-giving of Christ in death is the decisive event of ‘these last days’ (1:1). Paul speaks in similar terms of ‘the fullness of time’ (Galatians 4:4) and of ‘the end of the ages’ (1Corinthians 10:11; see also 1Peter 1:20).

Hebrews 9:27-28

And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many [Isaiah 53:12], will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Having just said that Christ offered himself in sacrifice ‘to remove sin’ (9:26), our author directs our attention to the future, for though we are already enjoying the beginnings of the fruits of salvation, full salvation, perfect communion with God will happen only when Christ appears **a second time** and takes us with him into the sanctuary of heaven.

Hebrews 9:27-28

And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of the multitude (hoi polloi - the masses), will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

In speaking of Christ's offering he uses an expression which echoes the following from the fourth song of the Servant of the Lord: 'I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of the multitude, and made intercession for the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12).

When he speaks of Jesus appearing again to bring us the fullness of salvation, his focus is on the eagerness with which we are awaiting this blessed encounter. This is a theme found in Paul: ‘Through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness’ (Galatians 5:5). ‘You wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Corinthians 1:7). ‘The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience’ (Romans 8:19,23,25). Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 3:13-14).

Talk of salvation brings us to the final point of this central section of the oration.