

Hebrews 9:11-12

speaks in this future sense, the word translated “reformation” is best understood as describing a time when all things return to their proper place, when that which is broken is mended and made right. This, it would seem to me, pictures the world to come when sin and sorrow are banished and righteousness prevails forever. Indeed, in the world to come there will be no need for imposing Torah regulations, for all who dwell in Immanuel’s Land will be holy as He is holy.

Thus, while there is no Temple today and no functioning Levitical priesthood, the regulations set forth for the Temple service and the priests remain intact and will be reinstated when the millennial Temple is restored. But when the millennial reign is over and the world to come is ushered in, there is no more need for a Temple, and thus all Torah regulations relative to the Temple and the priestly service therein will never again be needed. As John records:

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (Rev 21:22-27)

11-12 But when Messiah appeared as a high priest of the good things to come,¹ He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and 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.

We have already discussed the phrase “good things to come” and have opted for the interpretation that our author has in mind the final consummation in the world to come (see above). But what are “the good things to come?” They are all that God has prepared for those who love Him, for those who have been redeemed by His Son. This is life eternal,

¹ On the variant between *γενομένων* and *μελλόντων*, “good things which have come” vs. “good things yet to come,” see above, p. 32, n.1.

life in the very presence of God, life with joy unspeakable. In short, “the good things to come” describes being able fully to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

The first thing to note in regard to these verses is that v. 11 opens with the Greek particle *δέ* (*de*) which answers to *μέν* (*men*) of v. 1, and signals the *apodosis* of which the opening line of v. 1 formed the *prodoxis*. This sets up a comparison: the earthly tabernacle (v. 1) with the heavenly tabernacle of our verse, and this is our author’s point. The very place in which the priesthoods do their work shows the marked distinction between them. The chapter opens announcing “the earthly sanctuary” and then compares this with the “tabernacle... not of this creation.”

As we read these verses, the first question that comes to mind is this: when was it that Messiah began to perform the duties of a high priest? Surely in His ascension to the Father, anticipated in His high priestly prayer of John 17, He entered through the heavenly tabernacle with, as it were, His own blood to offer upon the mercy seat. He ascended on high in order to intercede for us by pleading the merits of His own death on behalf of His people, and this intercession marks Him as the High Priest in the heavenly tabernacle.

But we should be careful not to suggest that His priestly duties began at His ascension, for in offering Himself upon the cross as the sacrificial payment for the sins of the elect, He likewise functioned as the priest who alone had the authority to approach the altar and to offer sacrifice there. Thus, as mentioned above, the altar in this scenario was upon the earth—at Golgatha, and the “mercy seat” where the “blood must be applied,” is in the heavenly sanctuary. Moreover, the application of the blood—that act of intercession, is accomplished through prayer, Messiah appearing in the very presence of the Father on behalf of those who are His.

The contrast between Yeshua’s work as priest and that of the Levitical high priest is thus first to be found in the Tabernacle itself. In all of its glory, the earthly Mishkan was far below that of the heavenly. Indeed, the earthly was a copy of the heavenly, given so that mortal man might know what otherwise could never be known. The heavenly is greater in every way: expanse, longevity, glory, splendor, and especially the specific and manifest presence of God.

But its chief greatness lies in its perfection as emphasized in the phrase “the more perfect tabernacle.” The text goes on to explain that this perfection is in the manner of its construction: the earthly was made by skilled hands of craftsmen; the heavenly by the very hand of God Himself. Thus, while the earthly was a beautiful structure, the

heavenly is constructed on the order and beauty of creation itself, the place of eternity in both directions.

Yet it is "not of this creation." A great many suggestions have been given as to how one ought to understand this description of the "heavenly tabernacle," and what follows is a survey of a few of these suggestions.

1. Our author refers to the body of Yeshua when he speaks of the heavenly tabernacle. Owen writes, "the human nature of Christ is the only true tabernacle wherein God would dwell personally and substantially" and that "we are to look for the gracious presence of God in Christ only." Justification for this view is found in other references to Yeshua's body as a "temple" (Jn 2:19-22; cf. Mk. 14:58; 15:29). Yeshua's body is also referred to as the veil that was torn, Heb. 10:20.¹
2. Our author refers to the Church as the heavenly tabernacle. Lapidé takes this view: "I conclude that this tabernacle is the Church of Christ gathered here on earth, pilgrim and militant, which Christ himself founded, of which he said in ch. 8:2 that it is a tabernacle set up by the Lord and not by man; for this is identical with the description here, "a tabernacle not made with hands, not of this creation," in other words, not the product of human skill and fashioning, as was the first tabernacle fashioned by Bezalel. For the tabernacle fittingly represents the Church... in which Christ in dying on the cross offered himself to the Father, as a victim for the sins of men; and just as the high priest used to go from and through the holy place into the holy of holies, so Christ (and we with Christ) passed from his Church militant here on earth to the Church heavenly and triumphant."²
F. F. Bruce takes a similar approach when he speaks of the hearts and souls of people as the heavenly tabernacle.³

1 Owen, *Hebrews*, 4.266ff.

2 Quoted from Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 286, who quotes Cornelius à Lapidé, *Commentarii in Scripturam Sacram*, Tom. IX, Paris, 1864.

3 F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 199-200.

3. The heavenly tabernacle to which our author refers is the Virgin Mary. As one might expect, this comes from a Roman Catholic scholar of the 16th century.
4. That the heavenly tabernacle to which our author refers is the place of God's specific presence, and that in Yeshua's ascension He passed through the outer tabernacle, entering the "Most holy place" when He arrived in heaven.¹
5. That the heavenly tabernacle our author refers to is an actual, physical tabernacle which exists in heaven and which apparently existed before the creation of the universe as we know it. As such, it is not of this creation, nor is it made with hands (i.e., created by man's efforts). This is the tabernacle which God showed to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

There is nothing contrary to the idea that a physical structure exists in heaven where Yeshua now dwells at the right hand of the Father, but it seems to me that the Mishkan constructed upon the earth was so designed as to reveal the truth of the saving work of Yeshua, and such a revelation is not needed in heaven. Further, what was shown on Mt. Sinai to Moses was a "pattern" (תבנית, *tavnit*; τύπος, *tupos*) which does not necessarily require a corresponding structure. An architecture's drawing can envision a physical structure but does not require one.

The view that the incarnate body of our Messiah is the heavenly tabernacle to which our author refers seems to raise a tautology, for He enters into the heavenly tabernacle, as it were, with His own blood.

Two of the other views have serious flaws: the idea that the Church is the tabernacle grows out of replacement theology, and none but the Roman Catholic Church would have offered the suggestion that Mary is the tabernacle.

Given these thoughts, I would opt for #4, that the specific presence of God is the tabernacle, even as Jacob referred to the "house of God" and the "gate of heaven" (Gen 28:17) when he realized that he had wrestled face to face with God. Furthermore, later on in this chapter we have our author explicitly stating that Yeshua, as our High Priest, appears "in the presence of God for us" (9:24). Thus, it seems fully adequate to envision the heavenly tabernacle as the specific presence of God into which only those fully righteous may enter.

1 John Brown, *Hebrews*, pp. 394f.

... and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood—
 The superiority of Yeshua as high priest in contrast to the Levitical priest is primarily this: that the Aaronic high priest was set in place by God in order to prefigure or foreshadow Yeshua as the heavenly high priest. Since the Aaronic high priest was himself a foreshadow of the final and ultimate high priest, the means by which the Aaronic high priest conducted his sacred service were likewise foreshadows and not the substance itself.

Thus, our author makes a specific contrast between the blood of goats and calves (οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων) and Yeshua's own blood (διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος). The combination of "goats and calves" in our text seems clearly to point to Yom Kippur, where the "bull of the sin offering" (פָּר הַחַטָּאת) is translated by the Lxx with the same Greek word in our text translated "calves" (τὸν μόσχον τὸν περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας). Thus, in order to be consistent with the context in which our author is centering his attention upon Yom Kippur and the priestly service carried out on that day, we should translate the phrase "the blood of goats and bulls," for on Yom Kippur a bull is sacrificed as a sin offering for the priest himself, and the goats are taken, one to be released (the "scapegoat") and one to be slaughtered and its blood carried into the most holy place and sprinkled upon the mercy seat of the Ark of the covenant.

What is it that Yeshua obtained "through His own blood"? It was not that He gained entrance into the "heavenly tabernacle" on the basis of His having died and risen, for He always had access to the heavenly realm in His own right. Rather, as our text makes plain, through "His own blood...He obtained eternal redemption." Thus, the obvious contrast between the blood of bulls and goats and the shed blood of Yeshua is that while animal sacrifice foreshadowed or pointed forward to the true and ultimate sacrifice of the Messiah, such sacrifices could never provide eternal redemption—they could never make full and final payment for sin (cf. 10:4). Since the payment for sin is death (Ezek 18:20; Rom 6:23), only the death of the Messiah on behalf of sinners could constitute satisfactory currency to pay the sin's debt owed by those He would save. This is because any sin constitutes an infinite transgression against God Who is infinitely holy. As a consequence, only an infinite life could yield an infinite death and thereby be sufficient payment for an infinite transgression. And, the only human who could offer such an infinite death is Yeshua, for He is the only man Who has a life without beginning or end. Our author has already alluded to this fact when he noted that the requirement to be a priest after the order of

Melchizedek was that one must have an indestructible life (7:16).

We, of course, must remember that the reference to “blood” in this and similar contexts stands for a death in which the life is taken, that is, not death by natural causes. The original penalty for sin was given to Adam when God commanded them not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God stated: “in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Gen 2:17). And, as Paul reminds us (Rom 5), the penalty of death given to Adam and Chavah for their transgression was passed on from them to every subsequent generation confirming that all of Adam’s progeny likewise participated in their sin by being born sinners and were therefore liable for the penalty prescribed for sin, that is, death.

Now, for the sake of argument, one could reason that if there were a human being who was born without sin, and who lived a sinless life, he or she might be able to give their life to pay for one sin of another person (though even this would be an insufficient payment). But only someone with an infinite life could pay by His own death for all of the sins of an innumerable host of people. Herein lies the incomparable worth of Yeshua’s life when compared to the life of the goats and bulls, for only Yeshua has the infinite life required to make payment for a person’s infinite transgressions against an infinitely holy God. And God cannot be God and have it any other way, for it is His infinite holiness which demands an equal economy in payment for sin.

Herein lies the deepest mystery of all—the incarnation of our Messiah. For how can One Who is infinite in all of His attributes become flesh and blood? How can the Almighty, the Eternal One, enter into time and what is more, submit to the finitude of time? For the incarnate One took upon Himself no mere appearance of humanity but He became flesh and blood as we are, yet without sin. And this makes the mystery even greater and beyond our reach to comprehend. For the infinite One, the eternal One, not only entered into our human existence, living in the confines of time and space, but He also partook of death, that which is in every way contrary to the divine nature. Yet we must not seek to unravel this mystery, for inevitably those who do, err on one side or the other. Either they diminish the true humanity of Yeshua in an attempt to establish His deity or they deny His divine nature in hopes of affirming His humanity. We must, therefore, by faith hold this mystery as that which is at once our hope, our faith, and our security, while at the same time beyond our human comprehension to fully explain. As Paul wrote:

By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. (1Tim 3:16)

He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption – The “holy place” here is equivalent with the “most holy place.” The same expression is used in v. 8 to denote the inner sanctuary, that which the high priest enters only one time in the year.

The holy place into which Yeshua entered is, of course, the holy of holies, the place of the Father’s specific and special presence in the heavenlies. Further, He entered “once for all” (ἐφάπαξ, *ephapox*). This does not mean “once on behalf of all” but rather “once for all time,” as the Greek word *ephapox* makes clear. Even as the high priest in the earthly tabernacle entered only once a year, where the cycle of a year with its five Torah festivals reveals the whole plan of redemption, so Yeshua ascended once, having given Himself as the sin offering while upon the earth, and then ascending to the Father to secure the merits of His death for all whom He would save.

Moreover, the “once for all time” also highlights the fact that the redemption Yeshua secured for His people is not limited by time but is eternal. Thus, the death Yeshua gave for the sins of His people must be payment for all their sins, not just some. What is more, Yeshua’s death is actual payment, not potential, for our text makes it clear that He “obtained (εὐράμενος < εὐρίσκω) eternal redemption.” The word translated “obtained” can mean “to find” but it can also bear the sense of “to acquire, secure, or possess.” The same word is found in 4:16 in which our author teaches that through our mediator Yeshua, we may “receive mercy and find (=obtain) grace to help in time of need.” Thus, Yeshua, in His priestly office, has obtained, acquired, or secured eternal redemption for all who are His people.

What does the word “redemption” mean? The Greek term in our text, λύτρωσιν (*lutrōsin*) is found only two other places in the Apostolic Scriptures: Lk 1:68 and 2:38, being used by Zacharias and Anna to describe the Messiah’s work in saving His people.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people... (Luke 1:68)

At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38)

The word *lutrōsin* is found a number of times in the Lxx¹ and its use there undoubtedly formed the basis for its use in the Apostolic Scriptures. In nearly all of the occurrences in the Lxx it is the word chosen to translate the Hebrew word ג'וללָה (g'ullah), the noun cognate to the verb ג'אלָה (ga'al), meaning "to repurchase, to buy back, to pay the price for a slave's freedom." The noun (the word we have in our text) is the price itself, that which is required to free someone from the obligation of servitude. Interestingly, three times in the Lxx the Greek word *lutrōsin* is chosen to translate the Hebrew word-group of פַּדְדָה (pādāh), "to set free, to pay the price for freedom."²

Here, once again, we see that God has revealed His plan of salvation in economic terms. Carrying upon ourselves the infinite debt of sin and chained as slaves to sin as our master, we have no means in and of ourselves by which we could obtain redemption—to free ourselves from slavery and pay the debt owed to a three-times holy God. What is more, the Scriptures as a whole, and our text in specific, makes it clear that Yeshua did not simply make redemption possible. He *obtained eternal redemption* which means He made redemption an inevitability for all who are chosen unto salvation.

Here we begin to see the glory of Yeshua's high priestly work, for as our author will expound in greater detail in the upcoming chapters, Yeshua entered once for all time and by His entrance obtained eternal redemption for His people. This is in contrast to the work of the earthly high priest, who year after year, repeated the Yom Kippur ritual, thus making it apparent that eternal redemption was never gained by this yearly service. Rather, it pointed to the One Who alone could obtain eternal redemption for all who would be His.

1 Lev 25:29, 48; Num 18:16; Judges 1:15; Is 63:4.

2 Ps 48:9; 110:9; 129:7.