

Feb 15/26 - Hebrews 9:11-26 "A Way into His Presence"

The desire in this study is to help us hear the language of Jesus' death as the preacher to the Hebrews intended, within the story of covenant and temple, so that we might trust Christ's finished work, draw near with confidence, and live in the freedom of restored fellowship with God.

Read Hebrews 9:11-24

1. (11-12) What contrasts does the writer make between the old covenant priesthood and Jesus' priestly work?

Invite your group participants to stay close to the language of the text itself. Encourage them to notice contrasts such as greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, once for all, and eternal redemption. Help the group observe differences in location (earthly copy vs heavenly reality), frequency (repeated vs once-for-all), and means (animal blood vs Christ's own blood). Gently underline that Hebrews is not dismissing the old system, but showing how it always pointed beyond itself to Jesus.

2. Verses 13-14 ask a "how much more" question. What is the lesser work being described, and what is the greater work Jesus accomplishes?

Invite participants to articulate what the text says the old sacrifices actually achieved — ritual cleansing, outward purity, access to worship. Then invite them to reflect on what Christ's sacrifice does beyond this: purifying the conscience from dead works. Help the group see that the temple system could deal with external impurity, but not the internal reality of guilt, shame, and sin — which is precisely where Jesus' work goes deeper.

3. Hebrews repeatedly uses covenant language. Based on verses 15-20, what does "covenant" seem to mean in this passage?

Invite your group to slow down and let the text define covenant on its own terms. Encourage them to notice how covenant is tied to death, blood, and inheritance, rather than modern ideas of contracts or agreements. If helpful, remind the group that in Scripture covenants were enacted through embodied, costly actions — which helps make sense of why blood and death are central in this passage.

4. Why does the writer insist that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (v.22)? What story makes that statement intelligible?

Invite participants to resist reacting defensively or trying to soften the language, and instead ask why this statement would have made sense to the original hearers. Help the group place this verse within the story of covenant and temple, not a courtroom drama. Guide them to see that blood language communicates the seriousness of covenant breach and the costly grace by

which God himself restores broken relationship. The story of Abrahams Covenant with God in Genesis 15 can do the heavy lifting for only God walks through the pieces saying Abraham if you break this covenant or I break this covenant the result will be the same I will be bled out, I will be brought down to death. If the covenant is broken it will be on me to restore...

5. How does Hebrews 9 portray the purpose of sacrifice — punishment, covering, cleansing, or something else?

Invite your group to pay attention to the verbs used in the passage: cleanse, purify, secure, put away sin. Encourage them to describe what sacrifice is accomplishing according to Hebrews itself. If needed, gently steer the conversation away from purely punitive categories and toward the idea that sacrifice makes space for God's holy presence to dwell among an unholly people — restoring fellowship rather than satisfying rage.

6. In verses 24–26, where is Jesus now, and what is he doing? (see also Hebrews 7:25)

Invite participants to notice the present-tense language: Christ has entered the true sanctuary and now appears in the presence of God on our behalf. Encourage reflection on what it means that Jesus' priestly work is not only past but ongoing, and how this reshapes prayer, assurance, and returning to God when conscious of sin or failure.

7. The sermon ends with the invitation “Come near.” What keeps people from drawing near to God — and what actually opens the way according to Hebrews 9?

Invite the group to name, honestly and gently, the internal barriers that keep people at a distance from God — shame, condemnation, fear of repetition, weariness with themselves. Then invite them back to the text to identify what truly opens the way: not our effort or improvement, but Christ's finished, sufficient work as our great high priest.

Closing Prayer

Invite your group to sit in a moment of quiet, then lead them in prayer using language like this:

*Jesus, our great High Priest,
we come near not trusting our work, but yours.
Where we carry guilt, cleanse our conscience.
Where we carry shame, remind us we are covered.
Where we fear drawing close, assure us the way is open.
Help us to live today in the freedom you have secured —
for your glory and for our joy. Amen*