

I thought about weird things when I was a youth. If I were to cause a car transport semitrailer loaded with fancy Mercedes Benz' to crash – would my insurance cover it? I seemed to be financially exposed.

Or consider the story of *Felicity Ace*, a roll on / off ship for cars.¹ It was headed for Davisville, RI from Germany loaded with 3,965 luxury cars, when on February 10th, 2022, a fire started. It was about 200 miles out of the Azores. The crew could not contain the blaze believing it to be a battery fire from an Porsche EV, which requires specialized equipment. The crew abandoned the ship with no loss of life. Later, a salvage company tried to tow it, but on March 1st, it capsized and sank. It is estimated that the loss was \$400 million in cargo along with the \$30 million ship.



- Porsche – 1,117
- Audi – 1,944
- Volkswagen – 561
- Bentley – 189
- Lamborghini – 85
- 15 custom cars worth \$500,000 each!

As expected, insurance claims and lawsuits are ongoing. Who is going to pay?! Who *can* pay for the loss?!

Hold that thought.

We are going through **the book of Hebrews** this fall. It is 'a strange and difficult book'² for several reasons.

Hebrews can be 'strange and difficult' because ...

1. Five different cultures (Roman, Hebrew, Hellenists, Hellenistic Christians, and our culture.

¹ [Felicity Ace - Wikipedia](#), accessed 10-3-25, 2 p.m.

² N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 710.

2. It is a sermon to a very specific audience.
3. Its uses symbols from Judaism to make two arguments:
 - Don't go back to Judaism.
 - Judaism is fulfilled in Jesus.

Today's **OT symbol** and **argument** that the preacher uses is that Jesus is better than the OT Covenant & Sacrifices.

Something Better

The Book of Hebrews – Better than the OT Covenant & Sacrifices



Let's review.

Minute Review

- Jesus is better than the angels, 1:4-2:18. The angels are mere servants.
- Jesus is better than Moses & Joshua, 3:1-4:14. Moses and Joshua were *faithful* servants. And last Sunday we saw that ...
- Jesus is better than the High Priest, 4:14-7:28.

Today's **argument** is that: **Jesus' sacrifice on the cross replaces the earthly sanctuary, the covenant, and sacrifices. The old order has been replaced by the new and perfect order.**³

- Today is **the climax** of the preacher's theological arguments.
- **Next Sunday**, we begin to hear his encouragement and practical applications.
- **The takeaway** from today's message is **Jesus paid a debt I could not pay. He is the mediator and ransom of our eternal inheritance.**

He starts with the Tabernacle of Moses' day.

1. A Better Sanctuary, 8:1-5.

'The main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ² and who serves in the sanctuary, the *true* tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being (He 8:1-2 NIV).'

- We need to understand that these *ancient Hellenistic Christians* '**envisioned heaven in terms of the tabernacle/temple structure**, as does the book of Revelation.'⁴

³ France, *Expositor's*, 104.

⁴ France, *Expositor's*, 105.

- In *their mind*, **heaven must have a Temple**. It is the *true* Temple.

The earthly Temple is ... 'A sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven (He 8:4 NIV).'

- He **does not criticize** its weaknesses but says it is a shadow of the real. The fact that it is **manmade means** that it is imperfect, **like all human institutions**.
- BTW - *this church is a human institution*. If you look for faults, you will find them. But, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit God's kingdom advances.

Next, he moves onto God's covenant with Israel.

2. A Better Covenant, 8:6-13.

'But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises (He 8:6 NIV).'

- *As Jews, they are the recipients of God's promise on Mount Sinai and Abraham*. 'I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people (Le 26:12 NIV).'
- **God keeps** his promises (6:18), and the **Holy Spirit** *still* speaks today (3:7).
- But **there is a 'superior' promise**, a 'new covenant' that is '**established on better promises**.'

'By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear (He 8:13 NIV).'

- 'The **(OT) covenant** was a good thing, instituted by God ... but it *must now give* way to something better ... (It deserves) an honorable retirement.'⁵

For **2,000 years they have worshiped** God, so *he turns* to the prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34). He quotes Jeremiah directly: 'The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant ... ⁹It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors ... ¹⁰I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people ... ¹²For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more (He 8:8-12 NIV).

- The prophet **foresaw a new covenant**, *written* on the consciences of the human heart, **and the forgiveness of sins**.
- Our preacher then unpacks **Jeremiah's prophecy exegetically** for them and will quote it again near the end of today's segment.

⁵ France, *Expositor's*, 108.

Next, he looks at sacrificial system itself – it's as if we have taken a tour of the Temple and are now in the holy place.

3. Illustration of Gifts & Sacrifices, 9:1-10.

As an **illustration**, our preacher uses the OT gifts and sacrifices.

- He **describes** into the lampstand.
- The Most Holy Place.
- The Ark of the Covenant.
- The yearly sacrifice for sins – *which required the shedding* of blood (v. 7).

But these are only 'An illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper (He 9:9 NIV).'

- The OT **systems of gifts and sacrifices** '*were the Holy Spirit's way of preparing us for something better to come* and ... **were ... adequate** to meet the needs of the worshipers.'⁶
- **The sacrifices** *could not clear* them of the guilt and sin because 'They are only... external regulations applying until the time of the new order (He 9:10 NIV).'

After our brief tour of the Temple the preacher gets excited about Jesus as a better sacrifice.

4. A Better Sacrifice, 9:11-14.

'But when Christ came as high priest ... ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption (He 9:11-12 NIV).'

Here is the **heart of his argument**: the blood of the animals only made them *ceremonially clean*. 'How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God (He 9:14 NIV)!'

- **Jesus' blood and his death** was more valuable and useful!
- He obtained our 'eternal redemption,' and
- 'Cleanses our consciences!'
- **Jesus paid a debt I could not pay. He is the mediator and ransom of our eternal inheritance.**

He is the perfect mediator between God and man

⁶ France, *Expositor's*, 111.

5. A Perfect Mediator, 9:15-22.

‘For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (He 9:15 NIV).’

- He uses the illustration of a will. Before a will is executed, the person who made the will must be dead.
- In the **past**, the death of the animal substituted for a person’s punishment, debt, or death.

He remembers the **covenant that Moses sealed** by *sprinkling the people* with the blood of calves. ‘He sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. ²² In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (He 9:21-22 NIV).’

- Here is the principle: **covenants require the shedding of blood. Jesus offered himself as a ransom, a sacrifice, to set us free from the chains of sin.**

Our preacher offers **two reasons why Jesus is the perfect mediator**.

Jesus is the Perfect Mediator because ...

1. Once for All, 9:23-28. ‘For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands ... ²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ ... But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (He 9:24-26 NIV).’

2. Perfect Self-Sacrifice, 10:1-10. ‘The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never ... make perfect those who draw near to worship ... (but) we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (He 10:1, 10 NIV).’

- Jesus is our perfect mediator. ‘For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (He 10:14 NIV).’
- **Jesus paid a debt I could not pay. He is the mediator and ransom of our eternal inheritance.**

Preacher’s love to summarize and repeat the most important point.

6. Forgiveness, 10:11-18!

He repeats **Jeremiah’s prophecy**: ‘The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: ¹⁶ “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” ¹⁷ Then he (Jeremiah) adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” ¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary (He 9:15-18 NIV).’

With Jesus there is no need for future sacrifices.

Jesus offered himself as our ransom, he paid a price we could not pay.

He is the **mediator** to our eternal inheritance (9:15).

Conclusion.

I wanted to **take a minute and chew** over two verses I skipped: 'Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him (He 9:27-28 NIV).'

- I quote this passage at nearly **all the funerals** because it is so true. We will all die and then face judgment. Meaning **there is time factor** to our faith. We must be set free before we die or Jesus' returns.

This is the **only mention** of the second coming in the book of Hebrews, and our preacher takes it for 'granted as part of Christian truth.'⁷

Jesus **second coming** is to 'bring our salvation.'

- His **first coming** was to bear our sin.
- His **second coming** is to bear our completed salvation. **Sin has been delt with!**

The **high priest's robes** had bells on them. **The bells** would signal the entrance and exit of the high priest (Ex 28:33-35 NIV). When the high priest emerged from the holy of holies after sacrificing a sin offering, it 'was a welcome sign that he and the sacrifice which he presented had been accepted by God.'⁸

- Think of when **Jesus emerged from the tomb** after offering himself as our sacrifice – it was a time of celebration. Jesus is alive! **The bells of heaven rang out**.
- But think of **the celebration** when Jesus emerges from the *heavenly holy of holies* to bring us our completed salvation.
- **Jesus paid a debt I could not pay. He is the mediator and ransom of our eternal inheritance.**

Today, the Holy Spirit is offering us 'something better.' Here is the key verse: 'God had planned something better for us (He 11:40 NIV).'

⁷ France, *Expositor's*, 125.

⁸ F.F. Bruce, *NICNT Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans, 1990), 232.

We are going to have the worship team lead us in one more song. During that time, I encourage you to come and pray with someone about something better.

- Perhaps you want to have your sins forgiven. Come with a heavy heart for prayer and return to your seats with great joy.
- Perhaps you want to have less pain – Jesus offers you healing today.
- Perhaps you want less doubt and more certainty about your faith – better confidence.
- Perhaps you want hope.
- Perhaps you are relying on certain good rituals – you need to rely on Jesus.

God has something better planned for you today. Now is your chance to come and pray with someone for something better.