

# **THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE/TEMPLE AS INTERPRETIVE GUIDE**

## **PART ONE**

### **INTERPRETING HEBREWS 9:11-12 IN LIGHT OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Few passages have provoked more discussion than those concerning the heavenly tabernacle of Hebrews and the heavenly temple of Revelation. These passages impact soteriology, eschatology, hermeneutics, and other concerns.

There are three terms pertinent to our discussion of the heavenly tabernacle/temple. They are ναος ("temple"), σκηνη ("tabernacle"), and αγιον (and its cognates; "holy," as in the phrase "holy place" or "holy of holies"). The first doesn't occur in Hebrews, but is characteristic of Revelation, where it occurs more frequently than in any other New Testament book (16 of its 45 uses). The term σκηνη occurs ten of its total of twenty uses in the New Testament in Hebrews and three times in Revelation. Finally, αγιον occurs only in Hebrews (eleven times) in reference to the tabernacle as the holy place or holy of holies, whether earthly or heavenly.

This part of the study concentrates on the heavenly tabernacle as used in Hebrews. The second part will deal with the terms for the tabernacle/temple as they occur in Revelation, and will compare the findings from the two books. It will also draw implications and conclusions.

Various matters witness to the cruciality of Hebrews 9:11-12. It challenges interpretation and translation. Contextually, it is the counterpart to a lengthy discussion of the "worldly" tabernacle, and is the basic statement that all the following verses (9:13-28) elaborate. The passage of 9:11-14 may well be the central passage of the entire epistle. Among its unique characteristics is the fact that no where else does the word "Christ" stand alone at the beginning of a sentence or a whole section. The content of vv. 13-14 "largely restates" vv. 11-12. There is some progression, for vv. 11-12 describe the significance of Christ's sacrifice in itself while vv. 13-14 give the consequences for believers. There is a partial chiasmus in the passage as well (to be discussed below). The passage comes after a discussion of the earthly tabernacle and its parts (vv. 1-10). Various features of this passage are dealt with elsewhere in Hebrews: Christ's sacrifice in 9:24; 10:1, 19ff.; the heavenly tabernacle in 8:1-2; and "blood" repeatedly in the context. In the background of the text is the Day of Atonement which serves as a type of the work of Christ.

An adequate interpretation of the text is based in the Greek text. The UBS-4 reads:

Χριστος δε παραγενομενος αρχιερευς των γενομενων αγαθων δια της μειζονος και τελειοτερας σκηνης ου χειροποιητου, τουτ εστιν ου ταυτης της κτισεως, (12) ουδε δι αιματος τραγων και μοσχων δια δε του ιδιου αιματος εισηλθεν εφαπαξ εις τα αγια αιωνιαν λυτρωσιν ευραμενος.

The translations bear witness to the interpretive decisions inherent in every attempt to translate this passage. The NIV reads the two verses as follows (note the added verb "went through" in v. 11).

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation . (12) He 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, having obtained eternal redemption.

The NRSV reads the passage as follows.

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), (12) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

In interpreting Hebrews 9:11-12 and its context, the following issues call for resolution. (1) What is the meaning of the phrase, "of the good things having come" (των γενομενων αγαθων, v. 11)? This involves a textual problem. The alternate reads "of the good things about to come" (των μελλοντων αγαθων). (2) How should the first δια be understood, as instrumental (i.e., ablative of means) like the other two in v. 12 (hence, "*by means of* the greater and more perfect tabernacle") or as a local genitive (hence, "*through* the greater and more perfect tabernacle")? This choice involves the question: Is "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" the means of Christ's entering the holy of holies or is it the place through which he passed? [or, Does the phrase modify the fact that he came as high priest?] (3) What is the nature of the "the greater and more perfect tabernacle"? In part, this question means: What and where is this tabernacle? The answers involve the meaning of certain phrases such as "not man-made, not of this creation." (4) Does the της σκηνης ("the tabernacle," v. 11) differ from the τα αγια ("the holy of holies," v. 12)? In other words, Does the heavenly tabernacle have two chambers (the holy place and the holy of holies) like its earthly counterpart? or, Does it have only one, i.e., the holy of holies? This question is tied to the answer of (3) and is critical to soteriology and eschatology. (5) How should the aorist participle ευραμενος be understood--as expressing antecedent action ("having obtained"), simultaneous (identical) action ("obtaining"), or subsequent action ("and obtained") in

relation to the main verb clause: "he entered once for all into the holy of holies"? The resolution of this question determines whether Christ obtained eternal redemption before, during, or after entering the most holy place. (6) How does a biblical worldview affect the resolution of these questions? That is, How does the author's concept of reality impact the meaning of this passage? (7) How do various concepts in the context impact the meaning of this verse? That is, What is the meaning of "through the eternal spirit," "heavenly things" (v. 23), "heaven itself" (v. 24), the meaning of blood poured out in sacrifice, and related terms? (8) Finally, such attendant issues as the aspects of Old Testament priesthood (killing the sacrifice, offering blood in the holy of holies, and intercession) and the priesthood of Melchizedek impact the interpretation of the passage.

I wish to pursue the meaning of this passage by moving through five steps. They are: (A) interpretation of the features of Hebrews 9:11-12; (B) discovery of the author's view of reality, i.e., his worldview; (C) integration of the writer's worldview with his hermeneutic and its impact on the interpretation of 9:11-12; (D) correlation of the meaning in Hebrews with that discovered in Revelation; and (E) citation of the implications and conclusions of the study for related issues, such as eschatology (the millennium, the future of the wicked, the temple of Ezekiel), soteriology, and contemporary hermeneutics.

Why should anyone address this passage again? In general one can say that there is an ongoing lack of precision regarding the interpretation of this passage, especially as it concerns the nature of the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's relation to it. There is even outright confusion about the place and nature of Christ's atonement. Also there is teaching derived from this text that borders on heresy. Finally, continued discussion of the nature of the millennium focuses in part on the nature of the temple in Revelation. Is it possible that the matter of worldview would offer a way to reconcile disparate views?

In his extended discussion of this passage, Hughes shows that aberrant views of the sacrifice of Christ based in a literal reading of Hebrews have been widespread. In one way or another these views maintain that Christ's sacrificial work is ongoing in the heavenly tabernacle. For example, some Roman Catholics insist that Christ's sacrifice is ongoing and continually offered in the Mass or eucharist. They find support in 8:3 for affirming that Christ offers his blood as a continual sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary. They translate *ανακαλιον* as "it is necessary" rather than "it was necessary." In Anglican circles some insist that priestly work begins only after the death of the victim, hence Christ's work as high priest begins only after he entered heaven and continues on because he has an indestructible life (7:16 is cited). The cross is criticized as the ultimate Christian altar. In the seventeenth century, the Socinians propounded the view that 9:12-14 meant that Christ's sacrifice was made in the heavenly sanctuary alone. In the eighteenth century, J. A. Bengel propounded the view that Christ's blood was totally poured out at the cross, collected at the resurrection, became imperishable and incorruptible (based on 12:24), and was carried by him into the heavenly sanctuary--hence the words, "he entered the holy of holies once for all by means of his own blood" (9:11-12). This blood remains eternally the blood that Christ shed on the cross. At times even Chrysostom, J. Calvin, H. Alford, F. Delitzsch, and others in their comments on

Hebrews, fail to be precise and unambiguous sufficiently about the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. B. F. Westcott asserts that the blood signifies life not death, so that when the animal sacrifice was offered and its blood poured out, the animal died but its life was released. Thus when Christ died, his life was released to be presented in his blood in the inner sanctuary in order to make atonement (following the pattern of the earthly tabernacle). W. Milligan followed Westcott by suggesting that Christ's blood, in order to continue to speak (12:24), must continue to be alive. It may not be physically alive but "ideally" alive, he affirmed.

Hughes points out the shortcomings of all these views. He cites John Owen and A. B. Davidson as among those who did not lapse into such an understanding of the heavenly aspect to Christ's work.

From a more contemporary perspective, Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses cite this passage as linked to a literal fulfillment of prophecy in the 1800's. William Miller, the founder of Adventism, declared that Christ would return in 1843. He based this on the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 and the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24-27, with 457 B.C. as the starting point for counting the days as years. When Christ failed to return in that year, the new calculation settled on October 22, 1844. When Christ again did not appear, the "Great Disappointment" led the Millerites to find another explanation. While plowing his field, Hiram Edson received a vision whereby he learned that it was the nature of the coming and not the date that was wrong. Instead of coming to this earth, Jesus went out of the holy place in heaven to enter for the first time the most holy place to purge the sanctuary. Christ had not completed all his earthly work on the cross but had to complete the great atonement in heaven. He first had to cleanse the outer sanctuary where sinners appealed to him for mercy and salvation. Then in 1844 on the Day of Atonement he entered the inner sanctuary and began to make the atonement that would at last blot out peoples' sins. When this work is finished he will return to earth. To this Adventism, Ellen White added Sabbath-keeping borrowed from the Seventh-day Baptists and the movement became Seventh-day Adventism. The other significant offspring of the Millerite movement was the Jehovah's Witnesses led by Charles Russell and later by Joseph Rutherford.

A recent article reiterates just how crucial a literal hermeneutic of this passage is for Seventh-day Adventism. Fortin shows that Ellen White believed that a correct, literal understanding of the heavenly sanctuary is the basis, the foundation, of Adventist faith. Literalism is the essential key. She believed that Moses saw a "real sanctuary," a "miniature sanctuary in heaven," which provided the pattern which Moses followed. "Based on her literal reading of Scripture" a "real sanctuary in heaven is of unquestionable importance," Fortin writes. Thus the heavenly sanctuary has two sections, being divided according to time and place. Christ performs his ministry in two phases and in two places in the heavenly sanctuary: in the holy place he makes intercession; into the most holy place he has brought our sins by means of his blood which has been deposited there. Sin presently stands on record in the heavenly sanctuary until the final atonement occurs at the judgment described in Revelation 20:12. Then sin is finally removed and placed on the scapegoat Satan who bears the final penalty and punishment

and is blotted from existence. White's conviction that the heavenly sanctuary was a literal one with two parts was reinforced by her having her own vision of it.

In more mainstream evangelical thinking, the meaning of the temple in Revelation, particularly in 11:1-2, is strategic to eschatology. Whether the temple is literal (i.e., physical) or symbolical (figurative of the church, etc.) continues to be used as a test of a premillennial or an amillennial approach to the book as a whole.

Finally, grammarians have advocated that the participle εὑραμενος in 9:12 should be understood as subsequent in its effect rather than antecedent or contemporaneous. This view is based on the claim that "the perfective aspect of the aorist, since it grammaticalizes an event as a complete process, would be suitable not only for antecedent and coincidental reference but for subsequent reference as well." In this and other cases of subsequent action, the participle follows the finite verb in the word order. This grammatical point means that instead of reading the Greek as "he entered once for all into the holy of holies, having found eternal redemption," or as ". . . finding eternal redemption," the words should be rendered: ". . . [then] finding eternal redemption." On the surface this last rendering necessitates the interpretation that the obtaining of eternal redemption followed his entrance into the holy of holies in heaven, not before.

The place of worldview in the author's understanding and writing is often discussed, at least as it relates to Platonic and/or Philonic thinking. While many appropriately reject these as major influences, the defining of a biblical worldview would seem to be a fertile ground for greater understanding of the passage. Worldview is at the very heart of how an author interprets and writes.

## **INTERPRETING THE FEATURES OF 9:11-12**

In seeking the interpretation of 9:11-12 it will be necessary, of course, to consider the meaning of other words and phrases used elsewhere in the epistle. The immediate context (vv. 1-10) describes the regulations for worship (vv. 6-10) and the "earthly sanctuary" with its furniture (vv. 1-5) belonging to the first covenant. In contrast to this, the author proceeds to describe the work of Christ and the "better and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not a part of this creation" (vv. 11-14). The author is starkly contrasting the "earthly sanctuary" with a heavenly one.

The author affirms that "when Christ came as high priest he . . . entered once for all into the holy of holies." This is the basic or core sentence. Everything else in the two verses limits or modifies these words and falls into a very deliberate pattern of clauses. The word "came" (the aorist participle παραγενομενος) refers to Christ's appearance as high priest, his entry into heaven, not to his incarnation. Yet what does the sentence mean?

The first (1) issue cited above concerns the first limitation to the author's words, namely that Christ came as high priest "of the good things that are already here" (so the

NIV). The Greek is simply three words: τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν. The participle γενομένων represents the choice of the editors of the UBS and Aland texts (they give their choice a B rating) instead of the variant μελλόντων (which would mean, "coming"; hence the phrase would read, "of the good things coming"). According to Ellingworth, there is a growing tendency to adopt γενομένων as the harder reading and to explain μελλόντων as derived from 10:1 ("the law is a shadow of the good things that are coming," τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν). The former reading would point to the first advent of Christ, the latter reading to the second advent. Yet the sense of both may be quite similar, for μελλόντων probably has the sense of "good things predicted for the coming age now here," which works for 10:1 and elsewhere (2:5; 6:5; 11:20; 13:14; in 8:5; 11:8 it has the sense of "about to"; in 1:14; 10:27 it has the sense of "shall" or "will"). Thus both terms signify that the new era has arrived. We will return to this phrase for it is part of the author's vocabulary pointing to his worldview.

The second (2) issue concerns the meaning of the *διὰ* used several times. Most commentators on 9:11-12 draw attention to the fact that the remaining phrases of the passage contain four phrases forming a chiasmus, with three of them introduced by the preposition *διὰ*. The construction would be: "He entered the holy of holies . . .

- v. 11b: a *διὰ* τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειότερας σκηνῆς
- b οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ' ἐστὶν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτισθεως
- v. 12a: b οὐδε δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων
- a *διὰ* δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος

The rhetorical structure links together the heavenly sanctuary with the blood of Christ (lines 1 and 4), and the dismissing of the earthly structure as being of this creation with the blood of animals (lines 2 and 3). Yet the grammatical structure links lines 1, 3, and 4 together by the repeated use of *διὰ*, while line 2 lacks such a preposition. Line 2 is subordinate to line 1 explaining the "better and more perfect tabernacle." In a sense, then, it too comes under the use of the first *διὰ*.

It is this structure that suggests that Christ's blood is the means of entering the heavenly sanctuary. What the heavenly sanctuary is has occasioned much discussion and is the focus of this study. If the sanctuary is the same entity in verse 11 (σκηνῆς) and in verse 12 (τὰ ἁγία), then the heavenly sanctuary is both the means (along with Christ's blood) and the destiny of the "entering."

Many suggest that the three uses of *διὰ* in 9:11-12 are not all instrumental. They identify the first as local and the last two as instrumental (as well as that in v. 14). Hence Christ "entered *through*" the more perfect tabernacle, and "entered *by means of*" his own blood, not "*by means of*" animal blood, into the sanctuary. This view avoids having the sanctuary as both the *means* and the *destiny* of the entering, but continues the problem of what the sanctuary is. It also raises the question of how the sanctuary can now be said to be both the *place* through which entering is done and the *destiny* of the entering. He entered "through" it and "into" it. Also, differentiating the meaning of *διὰ* breaks down

the parallelism of the uses of διὰ and necessitates gliding from a local use to an instrumental use (which may be what happens also in 10:20: "through the veil, that is [by means of] his flesh."

This brings us to the third (3) and fourth (4) issues above. Differentiating the meaning of διὰ suggests that the heavenly sanctuary has two compartments, the holy place and the holy of holies, or that the "more perfect sanctuary" is an outer heavenly realm through which Christ passed on his way into the immediate presence of God. Support for this view is found in 9:1-10 where the concern is first with place (vv. 1-7a) and then with instrumentality (7b). In addition, Lane and others claim that the author of Hebrews appeals to Exodus 25:40 to find that "a spatially conceived sanctuary" existed in heaven after which the earthly tabernacle was patterned.

This view, supported by many (John Brown, Hering, Spicq, Helmut Koester, and others), is based in part, at least, on the supposition that the author followed most of his Jewish contemporaries in regarding heaven as divided into several parts, whether three or seven. Commentators appeal to 4:14 (Christ "passed through the heavens") and 7:26 (Christ "is exalted above the heavens"). Delitzsch views the τὰ ἅγια as the eternal heaven of God himself, and the ἡ σκηνὴ as the heaven created for the blessed through which Christ passed. Ellingworth, after weighing the pros and cons of both suggestions, that the words refer to a divided sanctuary or to a divided heavens, decides against both. A cosmology concerned with layers of the heavens goes against the author's concern for events beyond this creation, and he shows no interest in the levitical high priest going through the outer chamber to reach the inner.

The idea of one sanctuary finds support from 8:2 where Christ is said to "serve in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle." Here the words are literally, "the holies and the true tabernacle." The second terms are meant to refer to the same thing as the former term; thus the καὶ is epexegetic. It seems quite clear that the words of 9:11-12 refer to the same heavenly sanctuary having only one compartment, the holy of holies

However, this still leaves the incongruence that Christ both entered "through" and "into" the heavenly sanctuary. If there is but one sanctuary in the heavenly tabernacle, how can Christ both "enter through" it (v. 11) and also "enter" it (v. 12)?

One way to resolve this is to propose, with Lane and the NIV, that one supply another verb with the first διὰ phrase to make it local. Thus verse 11 is translated: "But when Christ appeared as high priest . . . *he passed* (or, *passing*) through the greater and more perfect sanctuary . . . he did not enter . . ." Yet one wonders if we should bring such a new word into the text if another solution is possible. This view also makes the first διὰ local in contrast to the last two which are instrumental.

Ellingworth suggests another idea. The author gives "a simple if not systematically precise picture: Christ by virtue of his sacrifice, advances in his exaltation through a heavenly tabernacle into the immediate presence of God--the 'right hand' of Ps. 110:1 . . ." The right hand of God is reserved by the author for Christ as high priest. The

"underlying nonsymbolic meaning" is that "because of his sacrificial death, Christ enjoys continuing access to God, and opens up this access to those who approach God through him."

This emphasis on the symbolic meaning versus the non-symbolic or deeper meaning suggests a way toward resolving the difficulty. To explore this approach, it is necessary to discuss the author's worldview and its impact on his hermeneutic (below). It may well be that we can wed the idea of the symbolism involved and the exegetical decision to view all three uses of  $\delta\iota\alpha$  as instrumental.

Yet Ellingworth's view makes the first  $\delta\iota\alpha$  local and ends up bifurcating heaven into the heavenly tabernacle and the immediate presence of God. In effect this still leaves the incongruence of having the author write: "Christ entered through the sanctuary . . . into the sanctuary (which is the presence of God)." In addition, 10:23-24 seems to make "the heavenly things," the "holy of holies" (implicit by contrast with the "sanctuary made by hands"), "heaven itself," and "the presence of God" all one and the same. When we add to this the observation that 8:2 equates "tabernacle" and "holies," then all these terms are basically synonymous. Thus there could not be two chambers or sections to heaven and/or the heavenly tabernacle. There is no entity called the "tabernacle" distinct from the "holies."

The other major view of the first  $\delta\iota\alpha$  takes it as instrumental so that all three uses of  $\delta\iota\alpha$  are instrumental. Yet this view has a similar incongruence: "He entered by means of the sanctuary . . . into the sanctuary." How can this be solved?

The many who make all three uses of  $\delta\iota\alpha$  instrumental resolve the incongruence by redefining the meaning of the "greater and more perfect sanctuary" in verse 11, in order to distinguish it from the "holy of holies" in verse 12. This concerns again the fourth (4) issue cited above, whether the heavenly tabernacle has one or two sections. What would be the "sanctuary" which provides the means of entering the "sanctuary" (The confusion brought by framing the question this way is intentional)?

The *means* by which Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary must be "not of this creation" (9:11). The suggestions include the body of Christ or his human nature (the common patristic interpretation, and more recently the view of Bengel, Owen, Calvin, etc. This view appeals to 2:14; 10:19; and texts outside of Hebrews such as John 2:21; 2 Cor. 5:4; 2 Pet. 1:13f.); the body of Christ as the Christian community (so Lapide, Westcott); the souls or hearts of God's people (so Gregory of Nazianzus; F. F. Bruce); Christ's resurrection body (so Vanhoye); the Virgin Mary (the Roman Catholic Catharinus); the eucharist (so Swetnam); "the lower spaces of the heavens" (the part that we cannot see); etc. Yet all these views bifurcate the heavenly sanctuary into two sections, and, as pointed out above, this seems incorrect.

The fifth (5) issue cited above concerns the last clause of 9:12. The verse concludes with the clause,  $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omega\sigma\iota\nu\ \epsilon\upsilon\rho\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , "obtaining redemption"). The aorist participle is understood by most as antecedent, so that "obtaining redemption" occurred

before Christ "entered the holy of holies" rather than at the same time as he entered it or even subsequent to his entering it. Taking the participle as antecedent (as most aorist participles function) avoids the difficulty of having Christ obtaining redemption after he entered the heavenly sanctuary, which would mean that he did not secure it on earth on the cross.

No doubt influenced by his view of finding two chambers in 9:11-12, Lane, with others, takes the aorist participle as subsequent or coincident and remarks: "Christ penetrated 'behind the curtain' (6:19-20) in order to consummate the work of salvation in the presence of God (9:24-26) . . . "

Yet is this interpretation necessary? Is it possible that a subsequent participle may not necessarily mean that Christ's redemptive work took place after the cross in a sanctuary? Could it be that a consideration of worldview and the author's concept of reality would nullify this effect of a subsequent participle, or at least make it irrelevant?

Perhaps a change of punctuation is possible. Ellingworth cites the possibility of linking the sanctuary of verse 11 with the "good things which come." Thus the reading would be: "Christ appeared as high priest of the good things which come by the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, and not by the blood of goats and calves either . . ." Yet is the sanctuary the means by which good things have come?

Another alternative links the first  $\delta\iota\alpha$  phrase with the initial participle, "having appeared." Then the reading is: "But Christ by means of a greater and more perfect sanctuary appeared as high priest of good things which have come . . ." The sanctuary is the means by which Christ as high priest appeared. Yet is the sanctuary the means by which Christ appeared as high priest? This linkage poses the additional problem that the sanctuary, described as not natural nor man-made, is tied to 9:12 by  $\text{o}\upsilon\delta\epsilon$ . Hence all four phrases of 9:11b-12a go with the verb "he entered."

It seems that a resolution of the interpretation of 9:11-12 must adequately address the terms; remove the incongruence of citing the "sanctuary" in both parts of the passage (whether the first mention of it be understood as the means or the location of entering the second mention of it); pay adequate attention to the place of the symbolism and figurative language; keep heaven or the heavenly tabernacle as an undivided entity; and understand the participle in verse 12 ("securing eternal redemption") as subsequent action.

## **DISCOVERING THE WORLDVIEW OF HEBREWS**

The second step in resolving the interpretation of Hebrews 9:11-12 concerns worldview. In the previous step, we sought to discover the meaning of certain elements in these verses. Yet our pursuit of meaning left us with some unresolved difficulties concerning the meaning of the "tabernacle" in verse 11 and "the holy of holies" in verse 12. It is clear that figurative or symbolical language is involved, but to what extent is it employed? What is the meaning of it? How does it resolve the difficulties of 9:11-12?

The key to the hermeneutics of Hebrews lies in the author's worldview. The role of worldview in forming an author's thoughts is a given. Worldview encompasses reality, truth, and morality. Everything one believes and does, including how one interprets, is formed by worldview. As for all the authors of Scripture, the author of Hebrews derives his worldview from Jesus and the Old Testament. It centers around the concept of the kingdom.

The resolution of the interpretation of 9:11-12 and the rest of Hebrews is found in the author's concept of reality, formed by his worldview. The author employs a worldview that views reality as both seen and unseen, as earthly and heavenly, as historical and transtemporal, as existential and essential. These two levels of reality are co-existent. They are tied together by a process of actualization whereby essential reality is being actualized more and more in existential reality. For the sake of convenience I call this a model or paradigm of reality.

This paradigm is related to the author's concept of the kingdom as both here but not here (spatial concepts), or as both already but not yet (temporal concepts). More and more the kingdom is being actualized in daily experience and/or history.

The author views essential reality as more important and desired, more "real" than existential reality. Essential reality is the source of the existential reality, and faith puts us in touch with the former, ultimate reality (11:1). This does not mean that the author disparages existential reality, for it is the result of God's good creative activity and fulfills his purpose. Yet it is to be surpassed by the actualization of essential reality, just as history will be succeeded by the kingdom, both temporal and eternal.

Examples of this worldview anchored in the paradigm of reality occur throughout the epistle. Space allows for only two or three examples. In 2:5-10, the author affirms that the words from Psalm 8--that God has put all things under the feet of human beings, and crowned them with glory and honor--have not yet been realized (v. 8b). Yet we do see Jesus who by his death is already crowned with glory and honor (v. 9). Thus Jesus is the one who begins to actualize in the present world the essential, transtemporal reality of human nobility.

In chapters 3-4, the author discusses the meaning of "rest." For the Jews under Moses, Joshua, and David this meant physical, temporal rest from enemies. Yet David saw also that there was a transtemporal or essential reality, a heavenly sense, to "rest" that goes back to the unending nature of God's resting on the seventh day as observed from Genesis 2. The believers are exhorted to enter into this greater reality of rest, i.e., to actualize it in their existence by maintaining faith in Jesus.

Finally, the author asserts that believers have come (already) to several features, including Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, myriads of angels, the church of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, God the judge of all, the spirits of the perfected just, Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and a blood of sprinkling which

speaks better things than the blood of Abel. These all belong to essential reality. They belong to the unshakeable kingdom which believers are in process of receiving (12:28). Yet believers have not arrived in this reality in their experience, for he says that they do not have here an abiding city. Rather, they seek the coming city (13:14), just as Abraham sought a better land and city (11:10, 16). They find perfection with the saints of old (11:39-40).

These and other examples illustrate the paradigm of reality as a worldview. It fits Scripture elsewhere as well.

## **THE IMPACT OF WORLDVIEW ON THE HERMENEUTIC OF HEBREWS**

The third and final step in arriving at a clearer understanding of 9:11-12 requires that the author's hermeneutic be fitted to his worldview. It answers the question: How does he get meaning out of his Old Testament and other sources? If worldview encompasses everything, all reality, then worldview determines his hermeneutic. The paradigm of reality as applied to hermeneutics leads him to find in the text a historical, surface meaning (which corresponds to existential reality) and a transtemporal, underlying meaning or principle (which corresponds to the essential reality). When the author discovers and applies to his readers the transtemporal or essential meaning, he is actualizing its reality in the lives of his readers. The essential meaning is often a level of meaning of which the human author is unaware but one which the divine Author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, placed there (cf. 1 Per. 1:10-12). It is consonant with the human author's intention. Because of his commitment to the deeper meaning, the author of Hebrews virtually ignores the human authors of Old Testament Scripture and repeatedly emphasizes the divine Author.

In part the examples cited above show how the author finds an essential or transtemporal meaning beyond the surface, historical meaning of his Bible. Without the former the full meaning goes unknown. Perhaps the clearest example of how his worldview impacts his interpretation is how he interprets Melchizedek. By reading the promise of Psalm 110:1 and following the lead of Christ himself in his interpretation of Psalm 110:1 (Matt. 22:41-46), the author finds that the person of Melchizedek is a type prophetic of Christ and his priesthood (Psalm 110:4). The surface meaning of Genesis 14:18-20 reveals a strange encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek. Yet David saw more, an essential meaning prophesying his own offspring who would also be his lord and be a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek. The author of Hebrews enlarges on David. He finds that even the silence of Scripture, the fact that nothing is said of the death or birth or successors of Melchizedek, is revelatory of matters belonging to the essential, divine (not the human) nature of Christ. Being made like the Son of God he remains a priest forever (7:3). In his existential reality, Jesus was of Judah, not Levi (7:11-14), and died. Yet in his essential reality Jesus is in the order of Melchizedek and has an "indestructible life" (7:16) and a permanent priesthood (7:24).

If this is a legitimate way of representing how the author of Hebrews reads, interprets, his Old Testament, then it should suggest to us that this is also how the author at times writes to his readers. That is, If the author finds an essential meaning in his Old Testament that lies below the surface, may not he himself replicate this dual nature of the text by writing this way? If so, it would mean that at times the author writes in a figurative, symbolical manner to project or convey a deeper or essential meaning. In its actual forms, the essential reality is beyond full comprehension and expression. A list of contrasting terms shows how extensively the author writes about these two realities.

More specifically, in passages such as 9:11-12, the author uses figurative, symbolical language to convey a deeper, essential meaning that transcends the temporal tabernacle. All the language regarding the priesthood of Christ, the heavenly tabernacle and/or sanctuary, the offerings which seem to be presented there, the altar found there, etc., comprise symbolical language. There are no concrete forms of these things. They are symbols meant to convey eternal or essential truths, meanings, and realities which have no earthly reality in the same form. The essential reality corresponds to our existential reality to some extent, but exceeds it. For us to treat them as entities known to us in our physical, earthly reality is to misinterpret the author.

Does Scripture give guidance regarding the terminology to use to distinguish the heavenly reality of the "tabernacle" from the earthly? There is similarity in the language which Paul uses regarding the nature of the resurrected body, as described in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul differentiates between "earthly bodies" and "heavenly bodies." He describes the resurrection body as a "spiritual body" which will replace the "natural body" (1 Cor. 15:40-49). The "earthly tent" (σκηνή) is to be destroyed and replaced by a "building from God," "an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands," a "heavenly dwelling" (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Believers are now "at home in the body" but they "prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (5:6-10). While there is continuity of the earthly with the heavenly, there is also, and probably greater, discontinuity.

Human language and the forms referred to are "theomorphisms" (in distinction to "anthropomorphisms"). That is, the true forms exist in heaven above as truths or realities and our earthly language and forms reflect these. The "tabernacle," "priesthood," "sacrifice," etc., are the existential, earthly, historical representations of heavenly realities that are eternal, spiritual, unseen, etc. The heavenly gives rise to the earthly.

In 9:11-12, many of the words comprise symbolical language. Words identifying Christ as "high priest," and the phrases, "through the greater and more perfect sanctuary" and "he entered once for all into the Holy of Holies" are all symbolical.

The words of the author, "that is, not of this creation," are meant to signal that the words are symbolical. They are not to be taken in their normal, concrete sense but represent something else. What is it that the words represent?

## **The Meaning of the Heavenly Tabernacle**

So what is the heavenly tabernacle or sanctuary of 9:11-12? The author almost goes out of his way to tell his readers that he is dealing with a "sanctuary" or "holy of holies" unlike anything in the present creation. It is a realm of reality unlike earth's but has given rise to, and is reflected in, the Old Testament concepts or objects of the tabernacle and its sacrificial ritual, especially as expressed on the day of atonement.

On the existential level, the words refer to the cross of Christ where he died as an atonement for sin. On the essential level, the symbols point to realities known to God concerning his nature, how he is to be approached, and how he is able to commune with others including human beings. The essential realities concern God's very nature as love and holy, which relate to his immanence (his relationship with others or within) and transcendence (his rule). Of the Godhead the Son of God is the very one who eternally weds God's relationship and rule. The heavenly and the earthly tabernacles symbolize both God's transcendence (he is unapproachable; somehow access is to be gained) and his immanence (he desires relationship; he is accessible by a proper way). Because of the earthly reality of sin, the heavenly realities address the need to remove sin eternally and effectively from God's creation. Because Christ's sacrificial work parallels the priestly function surrounding the tabernacle/temple of the Old Testament, the author sets forth Christ's death in this familiar terminology. Yet to speak more accurately, because of the essential meaning of the heavenly tabernacle, the tabernacle on earth parallels and points to Christ's priestly work. This perspective suggests that all of general and special revelation prior to Christ point to Christ, in all the genres, either by direct prophetic words or by symbols, types, allegories, or other ways (see below on 8:5).

There are basically three aspects regarding the work of Christ as high priest that are put in symbolical language. He is described as a high priest carrying out the function of such an office, including the offering of sacrifice in a sanctuary (1:3; 2:17; 3:1-2; 4:14-15; 5:5, 6, 7, 10; 6:20; 7:11-17, 20-28; 8:1-4, 6; 9:11-12, 14, 24-25-26, 28; 10:12, 14, 21; 13:12). He is described as the offering or sacrifice offered (2:9; 5:8; 7:27; 8:3; 9:14, 15, 23, 25-26, 28; 10:12, 14; 13:12). Finally, an emphasis is placed on his blood as signifying his death (9:12, 14; 10:19; 12:24; 13:12, 20).

The approach of this paradigm means that priesthood in the sanctuary (tabernacle or holy of holies), sitting down at the right hand of God, the throne, and being in and appearing in the presence of God are all one and the same thing, although the symbolical language stresses different aspects. They all mean the presence of God. This conclusion results from comparing several passages. In 1:3 the author says that after making purification of sins, Jesus sat down at God's right hand (cf. 1:13). In 8:2, the author says that Christ "sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, a minister of the holy of holies and the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." Although there is a sequence of events, both the sitting down and ministering in the holy of holies take place at the same "time" from heaven's perspective and symbolically describe one historical event and its consequence--the securing of redemption once for all. It is not a reference to the ascension and the subsequent glorification of Christ. Further support for this oneness of idea represented by several symbols occurs in 9:24 and 26 where the author

says that Christ "entered not into a man-made sanctuary, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"; and that "now once upon the consummation of the ages he has appeared for putting away sin through his sacrifice."

The one appearance in the presence of God means that there is but one place for the offering for sin. Where and when is this?

According to 10:10, 12, "we are sanctified once for all through the offering of the body of Christ," and Christ, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Again, he writes: "By one offering he has perfected for ever those being sanctified" (10:14). Forgiveness having been secured, there is "no longer a sacrifice for sins" (10:18). These references argue that one sacrifice secures forgiveness. Since Christ made one such sacrifice when he died on earth, it is the only sacrifice. Finally, since the place of Christ's one sacrifice that saves forever is the cross, the cross signifying his death is that place. Christ's sacrifice does not also occur as a subsequent event in the heavenly tabernacle or holy of holies.

While Christ was dying on earth, which is the existential, historical reality, there were eternal, essential realities also being accomplished in God's presence. Only one work in time can be once for all, but it has eternal dimensions.

Yet some see 8:5 as a serious obstacle to the symbolical meaning of the heavenly tabernacle. The words that Moses was to make the earthly tabernacle "according to the pattern (τυπον) shown you in the mountain" indicates that there is something in heaven after which the earthly was or is modeled. As Hughes observes, there had to be some degree of correspondence between the two, since the earthly is said to be a copy and shadow of the heavenly (8:2). The earthly "was designed to display, in a typical manner, deep truths concerning the need of man and the grace of God." Yet the continuity or correspondence must be eternal (it existed before and after the making of the type). In the words of Calvin, the instruction of 8:5 means that there is "a real and spiritual meaning in everything."

Yet what was this pattern? Hughes evaluates several ideas. Bruce, Delitzsch, and others suggest that it was a visible entity of something, a model or representation. 2 Baruch 4:2-7 suggests that Moses was shown the heavenly Jerusalem. Some appeal to Philo and Platonism as being basic here. Yet Hughes argues that there is a "world of difference" between Philo and the author of Hebrews. One does not have to appeal to Philo to find the source of the author's thought. The author does not engage in abstractions or metaphysical speculation. While his language may have affinity to Platonic idealism, his thought does not. For Hughes, Moses neither saw a model nor had an ecstatic viewing of the heavenly sanctuary. Instead, eternal truth was communicated but it cannot be reduced to scale because "the transcendental can never be contained within the finite and fallen categories of our world. . . . There are mysteries here which exceed our powers of understanding." The heavenly reality "transcends all that we know and experience."

The paradigm of reality described above points to the same conclusion. There are realities in the heavens which we lack the capacity to perceive and understand. The findings of modern science may help here to conceive how this may be. Science has already identified six dimensions in addition to our four. Heaven consists of additional dimensions of time (note the assumption of eternal "time" referred to throughout this passage: 9:12, 14; etc.; and the idea that Christ is said to have both "sat down at the right hand of God" yet is "*now* to be seen in the presence of God for us . . . *now* once at the consummation of the ages he has appeared for removing sins through his sacrifice," 9:24, 26). There are also additional dimensions of space assumed. Throne, heaven, heavenly tabernacle are all occupying, it seems, the same or additional dimensions of space. Lacking capacity to perceive these with our senses means that we cannot really articulate what the heavenly reality is. Faith puts us in touch with such reality (11:1). We can say what the heavenly reality is not (not of this creation, not limited by time and space dimensions), but we cannot say what it is beyond the ambiguities of language our author himself employs. It may well be that modern science gives us increased capacity to imagine but until the perfect comes we "see" and "know" only darkly (1 Cor. 13:8-12). At the least, the heavenly reality is comprised of great truths of realities which are portrayed by the symbols of the earthly tabernacle. The paradigm of reality compels us to look for such and provides a vehicle to discover them.

We must assume that there are meanings to Christ's sacrifice that have not been fully revealed, that language is incapable of expressing fully what his death means. Yet the difficulty we have in interpreting such symbolic passages as 9:11-12 often results from a failure to recognize adequately the genre or literary form and the worldview of the author regarding reality. This is similar to the quagmire of misinterpretation resulting from a failure to recognize that Revelation is apocalypse in form and not epistolary or narrative. When incongruences arise by interpreting on the earthly, symbolical level, we should try interpreting on the nonsymbolical level and leave the symbols behind. This is discovering the essential meaning.

This approach means that a reversal is present. The concrete forms are accommodations to our existential, historical reality. The antitype is "the true, ideal tabernacle . . . eternal, spiritual, ideal," in the words of Westcott. The earthly tabernacle is the symbolical one, while the one unseen, couched in "tabernacle" language, is the real or true one (8:2), just as existential reality symbolizes true reality.

"Christ death as a sacrifice" is the earthly, existential counterpart to the heavenly tabernacle, and is symbolized by the terms "heavenly tabernacle" and "holies" in 9:11-12. Christ's sacrificial death corresponds to the tabernacle in that it displays the love of God (reflecting his immanence) and also his holiness (reflecting his transcendence). As had always been the case prior to the entrance of sin, Christ provided the means to wed eternally, once for all, the relationship and rule of God that came to be severed because of sin.

### **Support for the Symbolical Meaning**

There are several arguments that support this symbolical approach to reading, to interpreting, Hebrews. First and foremost, it seems that the author is drawing his concept of the heavenly tabernacle from the experience of Isaiah. In a vision, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on "a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the place" (6:1). The posts of the thresholds, the house (v. 4), and the altar (v. 6) are also mentioned. It seems best to view this as a heavenly tabernacle, after which the earthly temple was patterned. If so, then the tabernacle in Hebrews is symbolical.

Second, there are several hints which the author of Hebrews gives that he is using symbols or figures. For example, in our text (9:11-12) the author says that the tabernacle that Jesus used or went through is "not man-made, that is, not a part of this creation."

Third, the author reads his Old Testament this way. In 9:8 he affirms that in the Old Testament there was another, spiritual level of meaning to the existence of the holy place (it was a barrier to prevent access to God). In 10:11-12, the author asserts that the standing of the levitical priests signified that their work was never final, but Christ's is. There are many more indications, including typology, that he is reading the Old Testament on another level.

Fourth, when the author refers to heavenly realities he shows a proclivity to use vague terminology and avoids concrete or physical objects. For example, he calls these realities "heavenly things" in such phrases as "a copy and shadow of the heavenly [things]" (8:5); "the examples of the [things] in the heavens" and "the heavenly [things] themselves" (9:23); "he seeks a better, that is, a heavenly [country]" (11:16); and in 12:22-24 several things are identified including the "heavenly Jerusalem." Elsewhere these are designated as "things" in phrases such as "[things] pertaining to God" (2:17), "having become high priest of good [things] which are" (9:11), "antitypes of the true [things]" (9:24), "faith is the reality of [things] hoped for, the conviction of things (πραγματων) not seen" (11:1), "what is seen has not come about from [things] which are visible" (11:3), Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau "concerning [things] coming" (11:20), "God has foreseen something (τι) better for us" (11:40), "the sprinkled blood that speaks a better [thing] than the blood of Abel" (12:24), and "in order that the [things] that cannot be shaken might remain" (12:27). This "heavenly terminology" should encourage us to look for heavenly realities, for a nonsymbolic meaning, when our interpretation of concrete language causes incongruent interpretations.

Fifth, when the author identifies what the heavenly realities are he articulates a large number of spiritual, abiding truths, rather than objects of the physical realm. This essential reality is "bringing many sons to glory" (2:10), "to destroy the one having the power of death" and "to free" those enslaved by the fear of death (2:14-15) "to make atonement" (2:17), to be "his household" (3:6), to "share in Christ" (3:14), to "enter God's rest" (4:11), to be able to "approach the throne of grace with boldness to obtain mercy and grace" (4:16), to have one who has "become the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (5:9), "to inherit the promises" (6:12; 10:36; 11:39), to have a "firm and secure hope" that reaches within the very presence of God where Jesus is (6:19-20), to have perfection (7:11, 19; 10:1, 14; 11:40), to "draw near to God" (7:19), to have "Jesus

as the guarantee of a better covenant" (7:22) and to participate in the new covenant (8:7-13), to be able to be saved "completely" (7:25), to have one who "always lives to intercede for us" (7:25), to have one who sacrificed for our sins "once for all" (7:27; 8:3; 9:12, 26, 28), "to obtain redemption" (9:12), to have a "cleansed conscience" in order to "serve the living God" (9:14), to have one to appear "in the presence of God for us" (9:24), to have "sins done away" and "taken away" (9:26, 28), to have one "to bring salvation to those waiting for him" (9:28), "to feel no longer guilty for sins" (10:2), to "be made holy" (10:10; 13:12), to have "forgiveness of sins" (10:17-18), "to have confidence to enter the presence of God" (10:19), "to be able to draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith . . ." (10:22), to "have a better and lasting possession" (10:34), to have the "city prepared" for us (11:16; 13:14), "to share in his holiness" (12:10), "to have come to Mount Zion" (and seven other realities) (12:22-24), to "receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken" (12:28), to have God's ongoing presence (13:5-6), to have an "altar" (the cross) from which to eat (13:10), to "offer to God a sacrifice of praise and good works" (13:15-16), to be "equipped with everything good for doing his will" and to have him working "in us what is pleasing to him" (13:21). All of these constitute the realities of heaven, that is, essential or everlasting realities. None can be understood as a physical, earthly, created reality.

Sixth, the author asserts that part of the tabernacle is symbolical. In 10:20 he identifies the veil as "Christ's flesh." If the veil is symbolical, a symbolical meaning for the rest of the heavenly tabernacle, including the altar (cf. 13:10), the ark, etc., is likely.

Seventh, the author asserts that believers enter the very holy of holies where Jesus has gone (10:19), and they do this whenever they pray on earth. Comparing all the terms of this passage (10:19-23) with those of 4:14-16, where believers are exhorted to come to "the throne of grace," it is clear that both describe prayer as entering the "holy of holies" (9:12), "heaven," the very "presence of God" (9:24). Indeed, our hope as an anchor enters into the inner sanctuary behind the curtain where Jesus our "forerunner" has entered (6:19-20). By faith we experience this heavenly reality (11:1). Hence, the exercise of prayer calls for a symbolical meaning for the heavenly tabernacle. Indeed, prayer is the actualization of heaven (with all its synonyms) on earth.

Eighth, the fact that virtually no other New Testament writer uses language regarding the priesthood of Christ argues for its presence here in a symbolical form. That is, other writers not given to the use of symbolical language as a whole would have used such terminology if it were meant to be taken on a surface level of meaning.

### **Benefits of the Worldview Approach**

What are the benefits of this worldview approach and its concept of reality? First, it clarifies crucial aspects of soteriology. It means that the one and only place where atonement was made is the cross ("by his own blood"), that it was done there once for all, and that it has lasting efficacy. Thus the heavenly tabernacle, the holy of holies, and in a sense, heaven itself, represent truths which find their accomplishment on the cross. We can also affirm that Christ entered heaven itself, the presence of God, when on the earth

he made his sacrifice for sins on the cross. It was on the cross that Jesus became a high priest making his sacrifice, and it was on the cross that Jesus' giving of himself in death was the sacrifice sufficient for all sins. There is no later presentation of his blood in a heavenly sanctuary because no such place exists. Various passages, such as 2:9-10, 14-15, 17; 5:9; 7:27; 9:26, 28, all link Christ's sacrificial, crowning work with his suffering death, and that once for all, and not with a subsequent appearance in a sanctuary. There is only one once-for-all sacrifice. If the cross qualifies as one such place where Jesus sacrificed himself, it is the only such place.

Second, this approach enables us to understand better our participation in the drama of redemption. The symbolical language is used to describe what in our existential or particular history we are able to do essentially--how we are enabled to actualize essential reality. Although we are on earth, we are to come boldly to the throne of grace (4:16), to enter the heavenly sanctuary, "the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus" (10:19), and are able to "come with a true heart in full confidence of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (10:22). The symbolical language means that we in Christ have access to the presence of God--to go where Christ has gone, where he has done his work (6:19-20). By our union with Christ, our essential reality, we have died with him and enter into the presence of God.

Third, this approach enables us to avoid many problems that accompany a "scientific" approach which pursues a precision of details, logical coherence, a removal of ambiguity, etc. A surface approach raises serious questions that challenge us to provide adequate answers. (1) How can the "heavenly tabernacle" be also equated with "heaven itself" (9:24)? (2) Why are there two chambers in the heavenly tabernacle? (3) Christ is said to have "suffered outside the gate" (13:12) and we are exhorted to go to him "outside the camp" (13:13). The next verse is meant to explain this: "For we do not have here an abiding city but we seek the coming [one]." How is he able to be on earth "outside the camp" if he is in, or has passed through, the heavenly sanctuary? Certainly the gate, camp, and city are symbolical if they are to be reconciled with the statements that Christ is exalted to God's right hand (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), which itself is a figurative expression. (4) Why would the author say that "the heavenly things themselves are cleansed by better sacrifices than these" (i.e., the earthly rites involving sacrifices) (9:23)? Is heaven in need of cleansing? Are plural sacrifices or rituals involved? Many commentators affirm such. They suggest that cleansing of heaven is necessary because God's wrath had brought darkness, or because peoples' sins made it defiled (a view which some label "nonsense"); or because of Satan's rebellion; or, it was in need of consecration not cleansing (on the basis of the words of 9:19-22). Others argue that heaven is the heavenly sanctuary and identify it with the people of God in need of cleansing; or, they identify it as Christ's representative humanity; or, they identify it with the consciences of people in need of cleansing. Lane insists on a solidarity that the writer perceives between ultimate reality in heaven and its reflection on earth, so that peoples' sins contaminate everything on earth and in heaven. Yet Hughes and Ellingwood show the fallacy of this and the other views.

The point is that these questions need not be answered, at least in detail and on a level of the normal meaning of words. All these passages affirm simply that Christ died, and that his death was a sacrifice for sins like that which the high priest made on the day of atonement when he took blood to sprinkle in the holy of holies. The essential meaning of Christ's death is that he forever satisfied both God's love and holiness, as expressed in his relationship and rule. These ideas correspond to features of the tabernacle which represents them.

The comments of both Hughes and Ellingwood point in this same, symbolical direction. There is no need to look for "precise and detailed parallels and correspondences" between the ritual on earth and that in heaven. The author employs symbolical language to describe the essential meaning of Christ's sacrifice and the details are not to be pushed. Just as a type cannot be pressed for precision and completeness in all its particulars, so symbolical language is imprecise, limited, and earth-bound. By the very nature of the case, the heavenly reality belongs to a realm beyond ours. All of our language and forms give a poor portrayal of the heavenly.

### **The Resolution Achieved in Hebrews 9:11-12**

How does the paradigm of reality as a hermeneutic help to solve satisfactorily the problems of 9:11-12? The existential meaning is that Christ died sacrificially for sin. The essential meaning, given in symbols, is that the holiness and love of God, issuing in his transcendence and immanence, are equally satisfied or wedded together. Christ's death begins the actualizing of the essential reality until it is fully realized by believers in the new heavens and new earth.

Regarding the uses of  $\delta\iota\alpha$  in 9:11-12 (and in 10:20), we can let all the uses of  $\delta\iota\alpha$  stand as instrumental, including that of 9:11. If we take the sanctuary as corresponding to the sacrificial work on the cross, then the first mention of the tabernacle makes his sacrificial death the instrument, the means, of wedding relationship and rule; and the second mention of the sanctuary makes his sacrificial death the place of his wedding relationship and rule. The "entering" is merely symbolical of his dying. His shedding his own blood, not animal blood, is also the means of dying a sacrificial death. Thus the first line of the chiasmus forms a parallel with the fourth line: "by means of his sacrificial death . . . by means of his own blood he entered (i.e., he died)". Removing the symbolical language, the author asserts: Christ died as a sacrifice to satisfy essential realities; he used his own blood not animal blood and, in dying, he obtained redemption.

Why mention the heavenly sanctuary twice in 9:11? Perhaps 9:13-14 provides a clue. This author intends to explain (note  $\gamma\alpha\rho$ ) verses 11-12. Clearly he shows the meaning of Christ's blood first in relation to God ("he offered himself unblemished to God"), then in relation to people ("it shall cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God"). So in 9:11-12 the author first shows the effect of Christ's death regarding God (by means of his sacrificial death he wedded immanence and transcendence), then regarding people (by means of his sacrificial death he died and obtained their redemption).

In addition, this approach allows the last word, the aorist participle, to express subsequent action. The redemption takes place subsequent to his sacrificial death (or perhaps identical with it). That is, before redemption could be accomplished he had to die. This interpretation virtually disallows an antecedent idea for the participle ("he died a sacrificial death, after having obtained redemption"). Another possibility is that the participle is telic: "He died in order to obtain redemption."

So when the phrases of 9:11-12 are "translated" into their existential meaning, and the earthly symbols removed, the parallelism is complete:

"Christ, having become a mediator to bring about essential realities,  
by means of a greater and more complete sacrifice,  
one not by means man-made or natural,  
one not by means of the death of animals,  
but by means of his own blood,  
died as a sacrifice for sin, and so obtained eternal redemption."

This approach means that the first preposition can be taken as instrumental parallel with the other two. If the tabernacle is a symbol of the essential reality of which the existential reality is that "Christ offered himself as a sacrifice," then his sacrifice is the both the instrument and the realm in which the redemption is obtained. This approach also results in making the first and fourth phrases truly parallel ("sacrifice" parallels "blood"). Thus all of Christ's redemptive work was done on earth by him in his sacrificial death on the cross.

The essential meaning, with the symbols removed, would be something akin to the following:

"Christ, mediating between God and people to achieve heavenly realities,  
by means of a greater, more complete wedding of God's immanence (to  
satisfy his love) and transcendence (to satisfy his holiness),  
one not by means man-made or natural,  
one not by means of the death of animals,  
but by means of his own death,  
achieved the wedding of God's immanence and transcendence, and so obtained  
eternal redemption."

The author characterizes Christ's sacrificial death as "not of this creation" or "not natural" (9:11). This is done because it involves one who is God yet also man (1:2-3; etc.) who does his work on earth in order to accomplish a heavenly service or worship (8:4-6; etc.).

By transforming the symbolism into essential reality, this approach focuses attention where it ought to be placed--on the last three words: "obtained eternal redemption." These are the only words in the passage that express the essential reality--what Christ's death eternally means--to which the existential symbols point. The middle

voice reinforces the personal effort of Christ: "He by himself obtained redemption." Although couched in a participial construction, these words, with "once for all," are the emphasis of 9:11-12 and of the whole passage. It is the main thought, as the following  $\gamma\alpha\rho$  of 9:13 witnesses. The clause probably narrowly defines what is meant by "the good things that have come" in 9:11.

Now someone may observe that, according to 8:4 where it is directly affirmed that Christ could not be a priest on earth (because "there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law"), Christ could not be acting as priest on the cross. Yet this is a problem for anyone else who believes that Christ's sacrifice was accomplished solely on earth and not in heaven. These appeal to 8:3, "Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it *was necessary* for this one also to have something to offer," and supply the missing verb as "was necessary" instead of "is necessary." The past time verb inserted to describe Christ's work then contrasts the use of the present infinitive used to describe the purpose of every high priest's appointment ("to keep on offering"). Yet perhaps 8:3 should be seen as a universal principle (hence reading it as "is necessary."). Because symbolical language is being used the problem is avoided. Jesus clearly did not serve as an actual historical high priest but symbolically did so. Essentially, not historically, he is high priest. This means that the order of Melchizedek is a symbolical title meant to convey the heavenly or essential reality belonging to Christ that corresponds to merely human priests on earth.

How does this approach to understanding Hebrews help to clarify the meaning of Jesus' relationship to Melchizedek and his priesthood (question 8 above)? The whole concept that Jesus is a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek is one of essential reality. Although he lived historically, and died, Melchizedek (viewed in his essential reality) is "one having been made like the Son of God" and "remains a priest forever" (7:3). In his existential reality Jesus was of Judah, not Levi (a point made by the author in 7:11-14), and died. Yet in his essential reality Jesus is in the order of Melchizedek and has an "indestructible life" (7:16). Because he lives forever he has a permanent priesthood (7:24).

When did Jesus become a high priest in the order of Melchizedek? The answer seems to be that it was only on the cross, not before. He was not a priest until he made a sacrifice for sins. While some cite 5:7-10 as pointing to his entering priesthood at his incarnation, the passage does not say this. Instead, it says that Christ as a Son learned obedience by his suffering. Ultimately the suffering of the cross and its Gethsemane are in view. Also, since the "word of the oath" came temporally "after the law" (7:28) and the law ended at his death, then his high priesthood formed by the oath could come only at his death.

This approach clarifies other difficult passages associated with 9:11-12. The veil of the heavenly tabernacle, like the tabernacle itself, is symbolical. In 10:19-22, the author virtually asserts that the veil is equal to the flesh or body of Christ: "We have confidence to enter the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened up for us through the veil, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over

the house of God, let us draw near to God . . ." Christ, being the incarnation of deity in a human body, offered this body in sacrifice on the cross. This act was the purpose of his becoming incarnate (2:14, 17: "to become a high priest . . . to make reconciliation"). His body offered in sacrifice is symbolically our "meeting place" where we meet God. It is the basis of our entrance into God's presence. It is symbolical language communicating that Christ's sacrifice, when his body was broken and blood shed, is like the tearing of the veil in the temple (a barrier to people's access to God) so that we are enabled to approach God. Transcendence is wedded with immanence. Moffatt, quoted favorably by Hughes, says that the writer "allegorizes the veil here as the flesh of Christ." As we are to find allegory here, so we should find it throughout, wherever the tabernacle, its priesthood and its ritual, and Melchizedek are mentioned.

This approach also suggests that the phrase, "through eternal spirit" (9:14), refers (on parallel to 9:11) to the "spiritual nature of the sacrifice. It is the spirit prompting the sacrifice and giving it efficacy." Among a host of other views, this one seems best in accord with the nature of the symbolism of this passage.

## **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON HEBREWS 9:11-12**

The preceding study suggests that the "heavenly tabernacle" of Hebrews 9:11-12 is symbolical, representing eternal truths involving God's immanence (his relationship) and his transcendence (his rule over all). The tabernacle is not a literal or concrete object situated in heaven. The tabernacle is synonymous with other designations, including the throne, the holy of holies, heaven (all of which suggest transcendence) and the presence of God (which suggests, with the tabernacle, his immanence.) The tabernacle is a fitting symbol of Christ's sacrificial death. In him and by his death, he wedded God's immanence and transcendence in an eternal way, removing not only the temporal severing of these because of sin, but reaffirming an ontological reality through his incarnation. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8).

One other book of the New Testament gives significant place to a temple/tabernacle. The book of Revelation is the concern of part two of this study. Then the implications and conclusions from both Hebrews and Revelation will be brought together. These will concern hermeneutics, soteriology, eschatology, and sanctification.

# **THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE/TEMPLE AS INTERPRETIVE GUIDE**

## **PART TWO**

### **INTERPRETING THE TEMPLE IN THE REVELATION IN LIGHT OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

At the outset I identified four steps by which I would deal with the interpretation of 9:11-12. The fourth point concerns the implications of this study.

It seems that if the author can use the figure or the symbol of the tabernacle, priesthood, and its ritual to teach essential truths, then other biblical writers may do so. This suggests that the nature of the temple of Ezekiel 40-48, and its ritual, is to be understood in a manner similar to how Hebrews treats the tabernacle. If so, then the author of Hebrews finds reinforcement in Ezekiel for his approach. He expands on Christ with such terminology.

This approach also helps us to understand terminology related to heaven and hell. For example, the "many dwelling places" of John 14:2 and 14:23 are not concrete or existential, physical places but figures of speech representing eternal realities that perhaps defy adequate expression. They reflect an essential realm currently invisible and much different from ours. Likewise hell and its torments represents a true, essential reality, but one unlike any we know. It is not a reality bound by time and place (space). The significance of worldview for reading Hebrews is true also for reading the rest of Scripture.

Implication for soteriology and Seventh-day Adventism

#### **CONCLUSION**

If the Old Testament could hint (note 8:5--Moses was to make the tabernacle after the pattern shown him on the mount) at a heavenly counterpart to the "worldly" (9:1) priestly ritual, persons, and institutions, why cannot the author continue this form of writing? He identifies the former realities as types, antitypes, and examples, but uses the same structures to teach essential truths or realities. Such a style would have significant

impact on a Jewish mind that already was inclined to look for a deeper level of meaning in familiar concepts and objects. The precedents lie in Jesus' parables, enigmatic sayings, and metaphors derived from the Old Testament (e.g., "I am the vine"); Paul's use of types and allegories (1 Cor. 9, 10; Gal. 4); and such non-biblical writers as Philo (and his platonic use of the Old Testament). Our author reads his Old Testament in this way, and turns around and continues this style, although always insisting that the new revelation in Christ is final, better, and perfect.

It seems clear that some misunderstanding of 9:11-12 is due in part to a failure to consider the biblical worldview that includes different kinds of reality and its impact on Scripture. This leads to a failure to distinguish what is figurative, symbolical, or surface meaning from what is deeper or underlying.

In conclusion, it seems that what Hebrews does regarding the spiritual nature of the heavenly tabernacle, etc., is similar to Paul's allegorizing of the Old Testament story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac as recorded in Galatians 4:21-31. There Paul finds a spiritual meaning for these Old Testament persons, institutions, and events. It is a meaning that pertains to essential reality. In a sense we can say that Hebrews often writes in an "allegorical" manner. This is to be distinguished from wholesale allegorizing or spiritualizing of the text.

The author of Hebrews found a spiritual meaning in his reading of the Old Testament. He adopts such a manner of writing for his own communication of deep spiritual truths.