



Day One Devotional.

By Josh Harrison

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¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God...

Wow! We're jumping into the book of Hebrews at the highest point. The author of Hebrews has just finished laying out the most compelling case that, through Jesus, God has done something wholly unexpected and unprecedented. You see, for over 1,000 years, God's people, Israel, had been living in proximity to the presence of God. Ever since the wanderings in the wilderness, their lives had been oriented around a Tabernacle/Temple that hosted the *particular* presence of God (I say, "particular," because we know that God is always present everywhere, but there are times and places in which God is uniquely present). This "earthly sanctuary" (to borrow language from Hebrews 9) was constructed around the Most Holy Place (the Holy of holies) which was something of the epicenter or focal point of the *shekinah*, the Hebrew word for the "Presence." So profound and tangible (and dangerous) was the presence of God in the Holy of holies, that only one person, the high priest, was allowed to enter, and even he could only enter once each year, on the Day of Atonement, and only after undergoing a thorough cleansing ceremony *and* offering a sacrifice for his own sins. On that day, the high priest would sacrifice a goat Most Holy Place, and the blood of that sacrifice would provide a means of *atonement* for the sins of the people of Israel. That word, "atonement," is a unique one in that it is the combination of three English roots "at," "one," and "-ment." In other words, atonement is the process of making things that were once separated one again. This is what the sacrifice offered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement did for the people of Israel. It purified them from the sins they had committed and enabled them to live in proximity to the presence of God, that is, a few rooms removed from the Most Holy Place.

Now, look at what the writer of Hebrews, under the clear inspiration of the Holy Spirit has claimed: that Jesus is both the High Priest and the atoning sacrifice. In Hebrews 9, we learn that Jesus is a high priest unlike the others in that he entered the presence of God

not by cleansing himself and offering the blood of atonement sacrifice but by being clean and offering his own blood. And because he comes on his own merit and by sacrificing himself, his blood did what the blood of bulls and goats never could: it created a permanent and ultimate means of atonement for anyone who belongs to him. No further sacrifices are needed. He now stands permanently in the presence of God and invites us to do the same. Let's not miss this. He invites us to walk boldly, every day, *into* (not near to) the Most Holy Place, the epicenter of the *shekinah*, the place where God is particularly present. Because he is our High Priest and our sacrifice, we have unfettered access to God. We can approach the Unapproachable.

This is the rationale and the setup for this Seek Week. Over the course of this week, we will dig into and practice the exhortations that follow in Hebrews 10: "let us draw near to God," "let us hold unswervingly to hope," and "let us consider how we may spur one another on in love and good deeds." But let's make sure that we hold these exhortations in light of this truth. They only make sense and are possible because of who Jesus is and what he has done. Why draw near? Because we can! Because he invites us into his presence through his own blood! Why hold onto hope? Because if it's true, if *he* loves us that much, then we can't possibly lose! Why spur one another on? Because reminding one another that God loves us so much that he made a way, at great personal cost, for us to be with him is the most loving thing we can do!

It's going to be a great Seek Week because it's all true! He is our High Priest and our atoning sacrifice. We can enter the very presence of God (not just live in close proximity to) through him. And just think about what that means for the week ahead and for the rest of our lives!

