

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Hebrews 10:11-14,19-25

Verses 19-22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, which he inaugurated for us, a new and living way through the curtain, that is, his mortal body and since we have a great priest in the house of God, let us draw near with true hearts in full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled clean from a guilty conscience and bodies washed with pure water.

This long sentence has qualifications before and after the main statement, which is, **to draw near**. It begins with **therefore**, not based on what has been established in preceding sentence, but a statement based on what immediately follows: **since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place**. **Brothers** is there in the original but not sisters. Women and girls are understood but may not be the official recipients, rather a group of presbyters (13:22,24). **Confidence** *παρρησία* is the gift of the gospel, equivalent to faith. It can mean outspokenness and free speech. As the pioneer of salvation, Jesus has found a way into the heavenly realms (9:11,12). The writer of Hebrews, envisaged, as Jewish did, that the Lord lived in a temple in heaven, after which the one on earth was modelled (9:24). However, the writer does not always view this literally for he can call believers, Christ's house (3:6). While the old covenant was in place, its laws and its temple sacrifice, penetration into the heavenly temple had not occurred. **Confidence to enter** is parallel to: **let us draw near...in full assurance of faith**. **Confidence to enter** applies to Christians who reflect on what will happen to them at their death (3:6; 10:35)

This was achieved for us by Christ, as I have said. **Confidence** about the future and the hope Christians have is founded on **the blood of Jesus** (9:14,15). The blood of animals was sprinkled on the altar whilst the rest was either consumed by fire or eaten by laity, as in peace/fellowship offerings, and except for holocaust offerings, part of every sacrifice was eaten by priests. But the blood of Jesus was taken into the heavenly sanctuary, not as an offering to God but as a completed sacrifice accomplishing a breakthrough from earth into the presence of God (9:12,24). **The blood of Jesus** represents the complete redemption and the movement into the presence of God, the completion of his will to save humanity through his Son.

Inaugurated is the better translation of *ενεκαίνισεν* for it has the sense of new or renew, for it is followed by the phrase, **a new and living way**. This choice of verb indicates that the earthly Jesus, through his crucifixion, for the first time, established an opening, into **the Most Holy Place**. In the Jerusalem temple, the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place, was separated from the holy place by a **curtain**. In Matt 27:50,51, Christ's death split the earthly **curtain**. The writer of Hebrews emphasises that the ascended Lord enters through **the curtain** with all his redeeming work completed (or perfected) as a high priest would do annually on earth (6:20). However, Christ's position in the highest and holiest place is permanent, corresponding to the sufficiency of his sacrificial blood (7:24).

Christ is the **new and living way** into the Father's heavenly dwelling. Animals were alive just before their slaughter at the altar, so they could not be considered a living way. Thus, in Hebrews, Christ is alive in heaven, based on his resurrection on earth, for his life is now indestructible (7:17; 24). The way into the eternal sanctuary is not a mystical or esoteric route, not one established by rules, rituals and regulations. The way is through Jesus' **mortal body** or **flesh**. This may seem to contradict the statement that he is a living way but Christians often refer to the cross without mentioning the resurrection. In some sense, Christ is always the crucified one and he reigns in heaven with God as one who is dead but alive.

Jesus is called here **a great priest**, which must be seen as equivalent to high priest (5:10; 6:20). **The house of God** is the heavenly temple. As the great priest, he lives to intercede for the salvation of his brothers and sisters (7:25). I have mentioned **the drawing near** as the confidence to enter life with

God through Christ. Hope, courage, confidence and **full assurance**, all go together in Hebrews to indicate certainty of what Christ has accomplished for those he calls his brothers and sisters. If the goal of being in the heavenly presence of God were based on human efforts, there would be serious doubt, indeed but **assurance is full** πληροφορία because they come determinedly forward **with hearts sprinkled clean from a guilty conscience and bodies washed with pure water**. Because people continue to sin, nothing can clear the past (9:9; 10:2). There were many Jewish regulations about washings for purification as well as the sprinkling of blood but here in Hebrews, Christ is put forward as God's one and effective act to remove the guilt of sin (2:17). The writer takes great pains to indicate the ineffectiveness of the old covenant to clear the worshipper's conscience (9:9,10). Nor can anyone can escape God's examination of human lives through his word (4:12). All would appear to be lost for humanity were it not for something new, **a new and living way**, who is Christ. It is his blood that cleanses the conscience, removing guilt before God and the evil of past behaviours and deeds (9:14). According to 9:15, Christ is a ransom that sets people free from sins.

Verses 23-25

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.