



JESUS

Up Close and Personal

A Study of Hebrews | The Pastors' Bible Study 2013-2014

Hebrews 13:1-13

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Hebrews 13:1-13

Service Well-Pleasing to God

¹ Let mutual love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." ⁶ So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not be afraid.
What can anyone do to me?"

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. ¹³ Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.

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These thirteen verses contain some of the more practical advice of Hebrews – hospitality, remembering those who are in prison, the sanctity of marriage, love of money, and the tendency to be carried away by strange teachings. Which, if any, are issues that our society needs to address? What about the church? What about you as an individual believer?

The beginning of this chapter counterposes two directives. First, we are to continue in brotherly and sisterly love. Secondly, we must not neglect hospitality to strangers. Which one of these directives is easiest for you? Why? There is an interesting word use here: "brotherly (and sisterly) love" is the translation of the Greek word *philadelphia* (love of brother), and "hospitality to the stranger" is found in the word *philoxenia* (love of the stranger). The root word for stranger, or Xeno, is found in a number of English words – can you think of any? Hint: fear of strangers

Verse 5 links our freedom from the love of money with the promises of God. "I will never leave you or forsake you." Why? Do you find that this promise is helpful in stemming the greed in our own hearts?

Verses 10–13 describe the tradition on Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, of the priests sprinkling blood on the altar, of burning the carcasses outside of the camp, and also sending out a goat on which the priest has symbolically placed the corporate sin of the people. Some of the Old Testament traditions include:

Bull as Personal Sin-Offering The High Priest makes a confession over the bull on behalf of himself and his household. He then slaughters the bull as a chatat (sin-offering) and received its blood in a bowl.

Lottery of the goats At the Eastern (Nikanor) gate, the Kohen Gadol drew lots from a lottery box over two goats. One was selected “for the Lord,” and one “for Azazel,” or “scapegoat.”

Sprinkling of Bull's Blood in the Holy of Holies The Kohen Gadol (High Priest) took the bowl with the bull's blood and entered the Most Holy Place again. He sprinkled the bull's blood with his finger eight times, before the Ark in the days of the First Temple, where it would have been in the days of the Second.

Goat for the Lord as Sin-Offering for the priests. The Kohen Gadol went to the eastern end of the Israelite courtyard near the Nikanor Gate, laid his hands (semikha) on the goat “for the Lord,” and pronounced confession on behalf of the Kohanim (priests).

Sprinkling of Goat's Blood in the Holy of Holies The Kohen Gadol took the bowl with the goat's blood and entered the Kadosh Hakadashim, the Temple's Holy of Holies again. He sprinkled the goat's blood with his finger eight times the same way he had sprinkled the bull's blood.

Sprinkling of blood in the Holy Standing in the Holy of Holies, the Kohen Gadol took the bull's blood from the stand and sprinkled it with his finger eight times.

Goat for Azazel (Scapegoat) Near the Nikanor Gate (in front of the Temple), he leaned his hands on the goat “for Azazel” and confessed the sins of the entire people of Israel. The people prostrated themselves when he pronounced the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). While he made a general confession, individuals in the crowd at the Temple would confess privately. The Kohen Gadol then sent the goat off “to the wilderness.” In practice, to prevent its return to human habitation, the goat was led to a cliff outside Jerusalem and pushed off its edge.

Preparation of sacrificial animals While the goat “for Azazel” was being led to the cliff, the Kohen Gadol removed the insides of the bull, and intertwined the bodies of the bull and goat. Other people took the bodies to the Beit HaDeshen (place of the ashes). They were burned there after it was confirmed that the goat “for Azazel” had reached the wilderness.

Usually, the priests and people could eat most of what was offered to the Lord as a sacrifice. On the Day of Atonement, all the carcasses were burned. All there was to eat on the Day of Atonement was, instead, God's mercy and forgiveness! This was true one day a year, but Jesus came to make it possible every day. He did this by taking on the role of the Azazel, the Scapegoat, so that our sins would be forever paid by His sacrifice. Praise be to God!