

Hebrews Study Session 14 - Chapter 9:11-28

Last week when we looked at the first ten verses of this chapter, the focus was on the tabernacle, or tent of meeting, as used under the old covenant. We took some time to describe the layout of the tabernacle and the use of the items in it. By looking at this, we saw what worship was like under the Levitical law.

This week, the author is going to move forward by showing us what has changed under the new covenant and why. This section is one of the most profound and clear passages in the New Testament as to what Christ has done for us. While the old covenant limited access to God, the new covenant opens up direct access to God and thus the worship under the new covenant is superior to that of the past.

There are three arguments the writer of Hebrews used to make his case and they can be broken down this way: 1) better blood, 2) better tabernacle, & 3) better offering.

In truth, everything we've studied for the past 13 sessions is introduction to what we are going to examine in this session and the next one. This is some of the most important material in the New Testament, yet because it is so technical, few understand it well enough to use the rich truths it contains and apply it to their daily lives.

[Read Hebrews 9:11-22]

1. The blood of Jesus was superior to the blood of animals.

VV. 11-12 are an introduction to what is coming which is a contrast to the previous ten verses we studied last week. Remember the "time of reformation" mentioned at the end of v.10 last week? This passage is describing exactly what that time of reforming looks like and the impact it has on believers.

The "good things to come" in v.11 represents a comprehensive summing up of the blessings won by Christ for His people. This phrase is next to impossible to translate into English succinctly as it is in the aorist tense (action done in past but has continuing force in the present and future) but this is a special case of that verb tense called "ingressive" in that the action may have happened in the past but the focus of the verb is on the future impact - more than the past action. Literally, this should be translated "*good things have begun to come into existence*". In other words, what Christ did brought good things but also there are more good things are continuing to be realized. What the Hebrew Christians saw as "good things" from salvation was only the beginning.

Q: Where did Christ enter to present His offering to God? (*v.11 - the greater and more perfect tabernacle*)

Q: What makes this tabernacle greater and more perfect? (*v.11 - it was not made by human hands - thus it is not belonging to this world*)

Q: Whose blood did Christ use to gain entry into the heavenly tabernacle? (*v.12 - His own*)

Q: What is redemption? How would you define it? *(The process of setting free by the payment of a ransom price. In this case, the death of Jesus was the ransom price paid.)*

Q: What is unique about this redemption? *(v.12 - it is eternal in nature)*

Q: How does this differ from the forgiveness offered under the old covenant? *(That one was yearly and based on the blood of animals. This one was eternal - lasting forever - once and done)*

Q: How many times does a Christian need to be redeemed? *(once - it is a once and done deal)*

Q: If a believer sins, does he/she need to be redeemed again? Why or why not? *(no, because the price was paid by Christ. It was never dependent upon their actions or behavior in the first place. Once a person has been redeemed, all their sins were forgiven - past, present and future.)*

[Read Ephesians 1:7]

Q: According to this verse, what happens when one is redeemed? *(all their sins are forgiven)*

The author, when referring to the new covenant, likes to use the phrase “once for all”. It means it was done one time and was completed as to never need to be done again. Unlike the high priest under the Levitical law who had to enter the Holy of holies every year on the Day of Atonement, Christ entered it once with His own blood as the sacrifice. Notice the flow of the verse. Just as the high priest entered the Holy of holies, the inner chamber of the tabernacle, one day per year, Christ also entered the genuine heavenly Holy of holies, in the actual presence of God Himself but only needed to do it once as His blood paid for eternal redemption.

Note on the word “blood” - When the author uses the word “blood” (and it’s common throughout the entire Scripture) it’s not usually emphasizing the actual liquid we call blood. The word “blood” is used as a metaphor to describe the end of the sacrificial offering where the blood is used in the purification of sins. So when you encounter the word “blood” in Hebrews (especially) think of it in a wider sense - the sense of what the blood was being used for and its end result.

While animal sacrifices had the power to effect external purification from ritual defilements, they did not have the power to cleanse the conscience of a person. The ritual of animal sacrifice only covered ritual defilements and not matters of the heart. The author makes mention of the “ashes of a heifer”. In Numbers 19:1-10, the Law describes a process of taking a red heifer and burning it completely and then mixing its ashes with water. When a person accidentally encountered a dead person, they were ceremonially unclean. By being sprinkled with this ash/water mixture, that person was ceremonially cleansed from the contact with a dead animal or person. Again the author does not disparage the old system. He does not dismiss it as totally useless but its effectiveness was only within the narrow range of the limits of the old covenant which stipulated external benefits only.

This is contrasted in v.14 by the blood of Christ which was offered without blemish. Without blemish was the condition an animal had to be in to be offered to God as a sacrifice. It meant there were no defects in the animal. This was the term used in the Old Testament for an

animal acceptable for sacrifice to God. Thus Christ, possessed no defects which would disqualify Him as offering Himself up as a sacrifice on our part.

Q: What did the blood of Christ do for believers? *(It cleanses the conscience of the believer. While the old covenant focused on externals the new covenant focuses on the internal or heart condition of man)*

Look at the phrase “eternal Spirit” in v.14. This is not only the only place this phrase occurs in Scripture, it is the only place this phrase appears anywhere in any literature. It again brings out the eternal nature of Christ’s saving work.\

Q: Why can believers under the new covenant be expected to serve God more fully and faithfully than those under the old covenant? *(We have had our consciences cleansed fully and forever.)*

Think of a conscience in this way. It is the part of man that encounters God’s holiness. When it is defiled, it seeks to disqualify the person from serving God. Even under the old covenant, the blood of animals could only remove the external defilement making serving God a difficult ordeal. But under the new covenant, the blood of animals has been superseded by the blood of Christ and it cleanses our conscience of all defilement forever. Thus, we can serve God from a right standing. Not only can we serve God, His desire is that we do so now that we’ve been cleansed inwardly. Our consciences have been set free so service to our Savior is natural.

Q: In v.15 what is the purpose of Christ’s work for us? *(we gain the promise of an eternal inheritance)*

In order to make that inheritance possible, Jesus had to identify with the transgressors and then take upon Himself the curse sanctions of the old covenant whenever its stipulations were ignored or violated. He died as a representative death as the cursed one. Christ’s death then consummated the old covenant and inaugurated the new covenant. By His own death He paid the price set forth by the curses in the old covenant so that in essence He could pay off the ransom for us and by doing so, He launched the new covenant in its place.

Q: According to vv.16-22, why did Christ have to die? *(He had to die in order to ratify and put in force the new covenant - that’s the really short answer)*

A note about covenants: They were legally binding only after the parties had bisected the sacrificial animals and walked between the parts. If all one did was talk about a covenant, it was just talk. However, once the animals were cut in half and arranged and then the parties walked through the pieces, the covenant went into effect and took force. Thus all covenants were based on blood because their bodies were needed.

Q: Why was blood required for sin to be forgiven? *(It was part of the Law. As sin always brought separation from God, it also brought forth death. Thus, to atone for sin, something or someone had to die.)*

[Read Romans 6:23]

Q: When the original Law was ratified, what two things did Moses do? (*v.19 - Moses spoke all the words of the covenant to the people then he performed ceremonial, ritual actions prescribed by God in the Law*)

Q: Why do you think the author is bringing up the historical setting of when the first covenant was put into force? (*He is going to make the point that in the same way that certain things were done to put the original covenant in place - mainly the death of animals - there is going to need to be, by necessity, another death to initiate the new covenant.*)

In v.21 - the tabernacle had not yet been built when the Law was given at Sinai. But upon it's completion, the author makes the point that even it was consecrated with blood. Everything in the tabernacle was sprinkled with blood just as the people had been when the Law was originally given.

Q: Why do you think that the author uses the phrase “one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood...”? (*Under the Law there were a few exceptions to the rule that blood was needed to cleanse a person from their sin. Here are a few examples: Lev. 15:10 gives an exception for a person who was too poor to offer an animal, they could offer grain, Lev. 5:11-13 tells us that some things were purified with water, Num. 31:22-23 tells us that some metal objects were purified by fire, in one occasion in Num. 31:50 gold was used to atone for warriors. Incense was used one time in Num. 16:46. However, these were all EXCEPTIONS to the rule. The overwhelming percentage of sacrifices for sin (well over 99%) were made by blood.*)

Q: Without blood being shed, what doesn't happen? (*sin is not forgiven*)

Q: I want you to look back over all of Hebrews 9 and look for everything that blood is said to do? (*v.7 - provides access to God, v.14 - cleanses the conscience, v.18 - inaugurates covenants, v.19 - consecrates the people, v.21 - cleanses those things used in worship, v.22 - purges and purifies almost everything under the old covenant.*)

Q: Why is the blood of Christ superior to the blood of animals? (*give time to get through all the answers - it was perfect, it cleanses the conscience from dead works (of the Law), allows entry into the tabernacle in heaven, etc.*)

2. The tabernacle Jesus entered was superior to the tabernacle the human high priests entered

[Read Hebrews 9:23-24]

Q: What are the “copies of things in the heavens” referring to? (*the earthly tabernacle and its furnishings*)

Q: What were these earthly things cleansed with? (*the blood of animal sacrifices*)

Q: Where did Christ enter? (*the genuine tabernacle in heaven - in the actual presence of God*)

Notice the opening phrase of v.23 - "it was necessary" - in other words, there was no other way for Christ to enter into the heavenly tabernacle than with His own blood. While the offering of animals allowed entry into the earthly tabernacle (once per year), it was going to take a better sacrifice, one above and beyond what could be done under the old covenant, in order to obtain entry into the heavenly tabernacle - God's presence.

Q: Why did the things in heaven need purifying? (*give time for Randy to bang his head on table...*)

[Read Leviticus 16:15-16] - This is referring to the high priests duties on the Day of Atonement and why he did what he did.

[Note: This is a different explanation than given during the study.]

Like so much of Hebrews, scholars differ wildly on the interpretation of this verse and what it means. However, it's a forest-tree situation. Take a step back at the general context of the verse and surrounding verses and a solid and sane interpretation presents itself. (I'm not going to elaborate on the differing views. Just know that they exist and they all range in acceptability from "OK" to "What were they thinking?").

In vv. 19-22, the author has been making the point of the importance of the use of sacrificial blood in consecrating the objects and places of worship. As soon as the people heard the words of the Lord in the original covenant, Moses sprinkled them with blood to consecrate them for service to the Lord. While it is certainly true that everyone present at that ceremony was sinful, the thrust of that section is dealing with the establishment of a testament (will) and covenant. The blood was necessary to inaugurate put the testament or covenant into effect. Thus, it wasn't the purging of sin that was so much in view in these verses as the consecration of the people, the items used for worship and the place of worship that is in mind.

Now carry that over to v.23 and the cleansing of things in heaven. The cleansing mentioned isn't from sin (as there is no sin in heaven) but rather it is a cleansing for the purpose of consecration - to be used at the tabernacle of the people of God. Heaven is where God's actual presence is located. Since the exaltation of Jesus and His assumption of the role of high priest in the order of Melchizedek, there will be humans who will be following Christ into heaven and into God's presence. The blood of Christ consecrate the heavenly tabernacle for its use in that role.

Take this to the next step. Whenever something is to be set aside and used for God's purposes (consecration) something has to die. Before His crucifixion, Jesus was approached by some Greeks and He explained to them that unless a grain of wheat dies, it will not produce a large harvest of wheat later. (John 12:24-26). When we consecrate ourselves for the work of the Lord (keeping in mind we are already saved and totally forgiven of all our sins - thus acceptable for such service) we put to death our fleshly desires and attitudes in order to all Christ to do His work through us. In Luke 9:23-24 Jesus explains this with the phrase "take up his own cross". What is a cross? It is the symbol of execution, of death. When believers seek to serve God and follow Christ, they put themselves (their ambitions, methods, goals) to death - thus in the same way that type of death leads to us being consecrated for the Lord's work.

Look at the very end of v.24 - “for us”. Remember that under the old system, the high priest had to offer a sacrifice for himself before offering the sacrifice for the nation. Christ, since He was without blemish, did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself. All He accomplished was for us.

Q: Think back, when did Christ enter heaven as our high priest? *(after the resurrection at the ascension/exaltation)*

Q: What has Christ’s offering of Himself opened up to us? *(the heavenly tabernacle - the entrance to the very presence of God)*

Q: What did we say was the purpose of the arrangement of the earthly tabernacle last week? *(It was a system of barriers to prevent contact or access to God.)*

Q: So what’s new in the new covenant? *(Access to God is not only permitted, it is the natural state of our existence. We live in the presence of God at all times)*

Q: With that truth in mind, what changes do you need to make to your thinking/ attitudes? *(response vary)*

Q: What are some ways that the heavenly tabernacle is superior to the earthly one? *(God dwells in the heavenly one. It is eternal, etc.)*

Here’s one of the big take-aways from this passage. The old system of defilement then purification has been set aside. (The cycle of sin/feel guilty/beg for forgiveness/feel relieved/sin again/etc.) Since Christ’s blood is infinitely more power than that of animals, His blood has achieved decisive and final forgiveness of sin and removal of every impediment to the enjoyment of God. There is nothing keeping your love for God from growing to match His love for you. Another truth is that the medium of life-giving power is the blood of Christ. It reminds me of the old hymn “There’s Power in the Blood”

3. The offering Jesus presented was superior to the offering presented by the high priests.

[Read Hebrews 9:25-28]

Q: What is the reason given for the sacrifice of Jesus being superior to the sacrifices under the old covenant? *(It never needed to be repeated.)*

Under the old covenant, the high priest entered into the Holy of holies with blood that wasn’t his own. It was an unreasoning, ignorant animal. Yet, Christ gave Himself sacrificially fully understanding the cost and impact that this action would bring about.

The “now” in v. 26 is not speaking of matters of time but rather matters of fact. The author is introducing a real situation, the matter of fact, Christ’s work was decisive - it was once for all. Manifestation means to become visible or to appear. The very purpose for Christ to appear, to come to earth in the first place was to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The

word “put away” literally means to “cancel or annul”. It’s a technical legal word. What it means is that sin has been rendered completely inoperative in the life of a believer.

There are times in Scripture where sin is personified. In Genesis 4 when talking to Cain, God told him that sin was crouching in wait for him. There is also the mention of the power of sin in Romans 7. It’s like sin has a desire to distract humans from God and by satisfying their self-centered lusts, lead them away from God to destruction. Well, thanks to Christ and His sacrifice of Himself, sin cannot and will not fulfill it’s wicked desires in the life of believers. It has been rendered useless and inoperative - its power cancelled.

Q: What impact should this have on us as believers? *(wait for answers - not only do we not need to sin, we can dwell in the presence of God confidently, serving Him from a clean conscience.)*

V.27 is an illustration the author used to describe what happened to Christ.

Q: What do you think the point of the illustration is in context of this passage? *(That just as a man cannot die more than one time, Christ’s sacrifice of Himself is unrepeatable. It cannot be duplicated or re-done ever again.)*

Q: So what is the difference between the sacrifice of Christ of Himself and the old covenant sacrifices? *(They had to be repeated annually and Christ’s sacrifice could never be repeated - it was a once for all event.)*

Another point of history here. On the Day of Atonement, after the high priest exited the tabernacle after completing all his duties, the multitudes of people gathered around him and great excitement and enthusiasm because the sin, at least for that year, had been atoned. Now v.28 is a new covenant picture of this event. There is a day coming when Christ will exit the heavenly tabernacle and return to His people on earth. There will be great joy for those who have been awaiting His appearance.

Q: Why do you think that the author mentions that this second coming of Christ will be without reference to sin? *(Christ has already completed the task of fully atoning for the sins of mankind. Now He is coming to consummate their salvation.)*

Think of this. By Christ’s first coming, He consummated the old covenant and inaugurated the new covenant. By Christ’s second coming He will consummate the new covenant and inaugurate eternity directly in God’s presence.

Q: Are there any questions about the text?

This section of Scripture has a many applications for us today.

1) Our culture tends to view morality as relative and personal. People create their own moral standards and not being true to oneself is the highest form of hypocrisy to many of these people. Since they live by their own standards, they see no need for forgiveness - no action needs to be taken to be absolved from imaginary sin would be their take on things. By their sense of sin being dulled, they also have a dulled sense of needing to be forgiven. One of the biggest

challenges we face as believers is to lovingly present the truth of sin to this culture. There is an offense of the gospel that will be present in any true gospel presentation because it says that the cross was necessary because all sinned and need a Savior and God has appointed only one to be that Savior, His only Son, Jesus Christ.

2) Our culture also has an aversion to violence and animal cruelty. Every movie we make has a disclaimer at the end that no animals were harmed in the making of that film. Judaism and Christianity are brutal and blood religions at heart. The notions of God requiring the shedding of blood to satisfy His sense of justice and righteousness seems dark and primitive to many. Yet, the truth is that the blood of Christ equals life. (John 12:24 speaks of this) The sacrificed blood always carries with it the thought of life being preserved and active beyond death. Christ's blood cleanses us (9:14), it brings us freedom (9:15), and it initiates a new covenant between God and man whereby man can be in God's direct presence (9:16-18). Our focus as Christians needs to be that the blood shed yields life and other benefits.

3) The cross. In your opinion, what do you think the world thinks is the meaning of the cross? Why do so many people wear cross jewelry or dangle it from their rear-view mirror? What are they missing when it comes to the real message of the cross? We need to reclaim the meaning of the cross from our culture. It's not just a good luck charm or meaningless sign that we are somehow pro-God in theory but that those who claim the cross know Jesus personally and understand it's meaning and power.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?