



The Old Covenant Foreshadowed A Greater Covenant Hebrews 9

Introduction

In His present office as High Priest for all believers, Jesus Christ fulfills all the services and sacrifices of the old system. Therefore He could say, *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill* (Matthew 5:17). He is both the one who offers and the offering. He not only serves the tabernacle, He IS the tabernacle (John 2:19-21). Wherever He is, the heavenly sanctuary is.

Regarding Christianity, people ponder and misunderstand two things:

1. the necessity for, and the nature of, the atoning death of Christ
2. the importance of the blood of Christ.

Hebrews 9 explains both of these basic but potentially puzzling doctrines. Both appear throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Everyone deserves to know why Christ died and what His blood means to their own life.

Outline of Hebrews Chapter 9

- I. The Tabernacle of the First Covenant - Hebrews 9:1-10
- II. The Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle - Hebrews 9:11-15
- III. The Necessity of Christ's Blood Sacrifice - Hebrews 9:16-28

I. The Tabernacle of the First Covenant - Hebrews 9:1-10

The writer describes the tabernacle, which had both *ordinances of divine service* and an *earthly sanctuary*.

A. The Sanctuary - 9:1-5

The writer considers only the tabernacle under Moses rather than the temple under Solomon, for the tabernacle was built exactly according to God's instructions. (Exodus 25:40). *Thus Moses did according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did* (Exodus 40:16). King Solomon expanded the directions in building the temple even as we do when we are embarrassed to make things as simple as the Bible says. For instance, he made ten lavers instead of one and twelve golden oxen supporting the main laver where Moses had none. (See 2 Chronicles 3 and 4).

1. The first part - 9:2

The first area of the tabernacle, *called the sanctuary*, was the Holy Place. It contained the *lampstand*, *table* and *the showbread*.

2. The second part - 9:3-4

The second part, called the *Holiest of All* (or *Holy of Holies* in the NASB and *Most Holy Place* in the ESV), housed the golden censer, which was an altar of incense. In the tabernacle, the incense altar was actually in the first part of the tabernacle and not in the Holiest of All (Exodus 30:1-9). However, here the writer places the censer inside the veil, on the Holiest of All side. We do not know the reason for this difference. The other items inside the Holiest of All were the ark of the covenant which held the jar of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. Covering the ark was the mercy seat and over it the two cherubim.

B. The Service - Hebrews 9:6-7

With the furniture in place, the priests served daily in the Holy Place (the first part). But only the high priest went into the second part, the Holiest of All. Furthermore, he only entered once a year and not without taking the blood of the sacrifice in with him. The blood was offered as a covering for his own sins and the sins the people had committed unintentionally during the year.

C. Spiritual Lesson - Hebrews 9:8-10

1. Holiest of all not yet open

The Holy Spirit used the once a year visit of the high priest into the Holiest of All with blood to teach that this second part of the tabernacle was not yet open to everyone. God made it clear that it was not. The penalty for entering unlawfully was instant death. It was a symbol (9:9) meaning that all their service and sacrifices during the year were not sufficient. The high priest had to make one more sacrifice for sins which had been simply overlooked. He had to lay his own life on the line and then he would have to do it again the next year, and so on. But even after all the sacrifices, each individual's conscience still bore the guilt of sin. There was no end to it until Christ came as the perfect sacrifice.

2. *Fleshly ordinances*

The tabernacle was concerned only with physical things: food, drink, washings, and necessary rules until it could all be changed. The next section begins with *BUT Christ came...* and everything changed.

II. The Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle - Hebrews 9:11-15

A. *Christ Came as High Priest* - Hebrews 9:11-121. *Of good things to come* - 9:11

Levitical high priests dealt more with bad things such as sin and sacrifices. Christ as High Priest now deals with *good things* and there are more to come. He operates in the heavenly sanctuary, for as a non-Levite, He was not allowed even to enter the inner parts of the temple, only the outer.

2. *With His own blood* - 9:12-14

a. Superior to animal blood

Animal blood cannot gain admittance to the heavenly sanctuary. Only the blood of Christ can and does. Christ is there now and He has provided a ticket for each of us to be there, for He has bought our *eternal redemption*. We are redeemed forever.

b. Ashes of a heifer

The ritual of the red heifer is given in Numbers 19. The ashes of a heifer were kept to be used for ceremonial purification, particularly when someone was ceremonially defiled by contact with a dead body.

c. *Obtained eternal redemption* for us

Redemption is a business term, actually a pawnbrokers' term meaning "to buy back a possession". We were God's by creation, until we were lost at the Fall. God had to buy back His own possession at great cost to Himself. The apostle Peter wrote, *Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot* (1 Peter 1:18,19).

d. Blood sanctifies

Sanctification means being dedicated, set apart, most usually for holy purposes, as the vessels in the temple were sanctified for use only in worship. We too are sanctified. We are sanctified by the blood of Christ, as He prayed we would be (John 17:19) and as He accomplished for us (1 Corinthians 6:11) and as it is

God's will for us (1 Thessalonians 4:3) making us one with Christ (Hebrews 2:11).

e. Cooperation of the Trinity

Each member of the Trinity had a unique role in Christ's sacrifice. *Through the eternal Spirit* (9:14) means that the Holy Spirit was the agent and the power in Christ, enabling Him to carry out the eternal plan. As the Holy Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters at creation (Genesis 1:2), as He hovered over Mary at the conception of Jesus in her womb (Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:35), so He empowered Jesus from the beginning of His life to the end, and then participated in raising Him from the dead. Jesus Christ offered Himself to God the Father, the one who received the sacrifice. This was the plan even before the fall of man, for Christ is *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Revelation 13:8). Our salvation was neither an afterthought nor a stopgap measure as a response to man's sin, but the determined counsel (purpose) and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). It was God's plan from the beginning to bring *those who are called* (9:15) into eternal fellowship with Himself through the shed blood of His Son.

f. Cleanses our Consciences - 9:14

The writer puts forth the question: If the sacrificial blood of animals cleanses the outside, covering sin, *How much more shall the blood of Christ...cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

1 John 1:9 says, *If we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Sin defiles a person's life and his or her conscience. We may be able to excuse our actions and fool others with a phony facade of competence, but underneath the cool exterior there is guilt on the inside. We find it difficult to hold ourselves together. Sin drives us from God who is our only help, as it did Adam in the garden. God had to come looking for him and lead him to confession and repentance (Genesis 3).

Sin cannot be glossed over or ignored without repercussions, particularly in the conscience. The only way to relieve the pressure of sin is to confess it (Psalm 32:3-5) and take God's forgiveness, offered solely on the basis of Christ's shed blood. Then the conscience can be cleansed. Until cleansing takes place, all of our works are dead works. With a cleansed conscience, guilt is gone and we are free to serve the living God. Are your works good but "dead works" because the blood of Christ has never been applied in your life by faith? Are you freely serving the living God, cleansed from sin all the way to the conscience? If you are not sure, please ask your discussion leader for a Disciplers Confidence Letter so you may have certainty of heart and mind.

B. Mediator of the New Covenant - Hebrews 9:15

1. By means of death

Christ mediated the new covenant by His death. Many Biblical covenants involved sacrifices. In God's covenant with Abraham, five different animals were sacrificed (Genesis 15:9-10). The Mosaic covenant was also affirmed by burnt offerings and peace offerings (Exodus 24:5-8).

2. For the redemption of the transgressions

Christ's death ended the old covenant by satisfying its requirements perfectly for the first and only time. He was the perfect unblemished sacrifice offered once and for all (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, 10:10). All the transgressions committed under the first covenant are finally remitted (literally sent away) and gone. As Paul preached to Jews in a synagogue in the Roman city of Antioch of Pisidia, *By Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses* (Acts 13:39). *Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins* (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22), and that blood had to be sinless and human, for human beings are the sinners. Animal blood covered sin temporarily and incompletely as a visual aid to faith. Salvation was on "credit" in the Old Testament until the real sacrifice came.

3. Promise of eternal inheritance

That those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. The eternal inheritance consists of all that is expressed and implied by salvation: eternal life, being in God's presence, with Christ forever, rewards, fulfillment of love, peace, joy, knowing those who have gone before and those who will come after, the whole family of God. "Who could ask for anything more?" (Irving Berlin).

III. The Necessity of Christ's Blood Sacrifice - Hebrews 9:16-28

A. Necessity of His Death as Testator - Hebrews 9:16-17

It may be redundant to say that the law is a legal matter requiring legal treatment. Nevertheless, if the old covenant was to be replaced, it had to be done legally. Just before His death, at the last supper, Jesus told His disciples, *For this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins* (Matthew 26:28) and, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another...by this all will know that you are My disciples* (John 13:34).

All that was needed was for Christ to die to activate the new, *For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives* (9:17). "'Testament' is the same Greek word translated 'covenant', but the term takes on the more specialized meaning in this context. The benefits and provisions of a will are only promises until the one who wrote the will dies. Death activates the promises into realities" (The MacArthur Bible Commentary, John MacArthur).

B. Necessity of Christ's Blood as the Sacrifice - Hebrews 9:18-27

1. The first testament was ratified with blood - 9:18-22

Blood was the seal of the first testament, even as a signature in ink authenticates a legal document. *Moses took the blood of the burnt offerings and the peace offerings...and sprinkled it on the altar and on all the people saying, This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words* (Exodus 24:3-8).

2. Copies of the heavenly things required cleansing - 9:23-24

The earthly tabernacle and its furnishings were symbolic replicas of the true heavenly tabernacle. Because they were made unclean by the sins of the people, they had to be cleansed by blood. Animal blood was the symbol which looked ahead to Christ's blood and the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

3. One sacrifice for many - 9:25-27

The whole earth and heaven waited for Christ to come to earth as the perfect, sinless man so that He could *put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself* once and for all time.

C. Necessary for His Return Apart From Sin for Salvation - Hebrews 9:28

Christ's blood sacrifice for sin was necessary for his return when He will complete the salvation of those who have believed in Him by faith and eagerly wait for Him. Sin has been dealt with and the completion of our salvation is imminent.

Application

Jesus Christ, the Spotless Lamb of God, had to die only once to take away all sin, once and for all. Have you trusted His blood to save you? Do you eagerly wait for His return?