

The Sanctuary And Sacrifice

Hebrews 9:15-28

Introduction

Ever so often we must return to the theme of the book of Hebrews in order to understand what we are reading. The book was written to the first few generations of Jewish believers who had come to believe that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. But they faced two powerful and persistent challenges; the temptation to return to what they perceived as the purity of Judaism and the Law of Moses; and the fierce persecution from family and authorities who placed constant pressure on them to abandon confidence and trust in Jesus. The book of Hebrews is an exhortation “to hold unswervingly to the hope we profess. . .for he who promised is faithful”

The 9th chapter contrasts the earthly sanctuary or tabernacle with the heavenly sanctuary. The Old earthly Sanctuary is inferior and the New heavenly Sanctuary is superior. In the Old Sanctuary a temporary High Priest offered a temporary sacrifice. The writer of Hebrews draws our attention to Jesus—He is the one who offers the sacrifice (v.11). He offers His own blood (v. 12b). This sacrifice is permanent (v.12a). It is done only once and lasts for all time. The sacrifice is precious, permanent and powerful. It brings about eternal redemption (vv.12c-15).

What do both sanctuaries have in common? Both had to be ratified and purified by blood. Not just any blood—but the blood of an innocent victim! In the Old earthly sanctuary Moses sprinkled the blood. The source was an animal; but the animal could never take away sin. In the heavenly sanctuary Jesus sprinkles the blood (v.23); and He Himself is the sacrifice (vv.25-28). Jesus appears once to die for us (vv.26b-28a); He now appears to pray for us (v.24); He will appear to rule over us (v.28a).

Jesus the Great High Priest is the Mediator of a New Covenant. Jesus is superior and supreme—in His revelation, over angels, over Moses, over Priests. Christ and Christianity offers a New Tabernacle (in Heaven) and a superior sacrifice. A Testament or a Covenant is an agreement between two or more parties. The Lord God conceived the terms and ratified the agreement based on the fact that sinful human beings could not even come to the bargaining table apart from grace, and sacrifice.

We often underestimate our sin and our imperfection. In order for us to have friendship and fellowship with God we must be cleansed of our sin and our imperfection. How is that possible? Jesus makes that possible. Jesus purifies everything—in our hearts and in heaven (vv.23-24). Jesus purifies us—in a never to be repeated sacrifice (vv.25-26).

The Lord Jesus: Mediator Of A Better Covenant (v.15)

Hebrews 9:15 (NKJV) 15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

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1. Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant
2. The Saints are the recipients of an eternal inheritance
3. Those under the OLD COVENANT could receive forgiveness

What do we need? Our greatest need is love and friendship with God and others. We need deliverance from sin and forgiveness of sin and cleansing of heart mind and soul. We need hope in this life and hope for a better life to come. We need a way to overcome the fear of death.

Ernest Hemingway wrote; “Life is a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness. There is no remedy for anything in life. Man’s destiny in the universe is like a colony of ants on a burning log.”

Is life a dirty trick? What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of life?

Jesus meets our every need. What makes Jesus so unique? We could speak of his life and miracles, but the writer of Hebrews points to His death. He sacrificed Himself for our sins. When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus we no longer have to bear our own sins. When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus for our judgment we no longer have to fear or face judgment for our sin (yes we face Jesus for our life—and our gifts—and stewardship to which we have been entrusted). We receive in Christ what we really long for; love and friendship with God; a clean and cleansed conscience; deliverance from sin; eternal life; absolute assurance and security.

The word redemption (*lutrosis*) means the act of freeing—releasing—buying back by paying a ransom. The ransom price for humanity’s sin is death. Jesus pays the ransom price by His own blood sacrifice and so frees us from the bondage of sin—so that we can be brought into the family of God (Gal. 3:13, 4:5).

The writer of Hebrews will make two arguments; that a will cannot come into effect until the testator’s death (v.16-17) and the institution of this New Covenant demonstrates that all things are cleansed by blood (vv.18-22).

God’s Last Will And Testament (vv.16-17)

16For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

We looked at this in our last study. What does the death of Jesus prove? The New Covenant is in effect. And God’s last will and last testament is in effect. God sets the terms and conditions. Man can either accept God’s terms and conditions or reject God’s terms and conditions. The recipient cannot change the terms of the last will and testament—we can only accept or reject the terms. And the point? The covenant is in effect the moment the testator dies! Men give their

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estates to those who they care about. God gives us all things in Christ. Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry; he is the mediator of a better covenant which was established on better promises (Heb.8:6).

Sometimes wills are contested or disputed in court. The benefactor's wishes are set aside. Clever lawyers and greedy relatives can sometimes seek to set aside a person's wishes.

Can Jesus make sure His will and wishes are honored?

Human beings do not normally come back to life to make sure their wishes are honored. But Jesus does just that!

Our benefactor has the power of an endless life to make sure His wishes are honored!

The New Covenant Sealed By Blood (vv.18-22)

18Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.

Let's see if we can follow the author's train of thought. Once again the issue is blood. In the Old Testament—things—were cleansed by blood! When Moses instituted the Old Covenant (Exodus 24:3-8); God gave the Law to Moses; Moses shared the Law with the people; then Moses made a sacrificial offering to the Lord; Moses took the blood of the animal and sprinkled the book of the Law, and the people—this was a dedication service; a service commemorating the institution of God's first covenant—and think—of the type—it was instituted by death—the shedding of blood—Moses says “Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you” (v. 20). This is not the only example; Moses held a dedication service when the tabernacle was completed and sprinkled it with blood (v.21);

19For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

20saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.”

21Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

22And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

We talked about this. The phrase “the shedding of blood” translates one very long Greek word (*haimatekchysia*) found only here in the Greek New Testament. According to scholars (Behm; TDNT; 1:176)—it is the shedding of blood in slaying: “The main point is that the giving of life is the necessary presupposition of the remission of sins. This was prefigured in the animal

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sacrifices of the OT, but what could be actualized in the OT (Heb.10:4) has now been established as an eternal truth by the death of Christ” (p.177).

Humanity has always known without shedding of blood there is no remission—no cleansing—no forgiveness. This is the argument by the writer of Hebrews—Jesus is the mediator of God’s New Covenant with man. Jesus shed His blood. Jesus paid the penalty. Jesus has instituted and launched the New Covenant. “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sin” (Matt.26:28). “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom.5:9).

Salvation is always by blood. The blood must be innocent (v.14); shed (v.22); applied (v.22). In Revelation 1:5; “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

Salvation is always by blood. Salvation is always by a person. “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jonah 2:9). Salvation is always by grace. “For by grace are you saved through faith; and not of yourselves: It is the gift of God: Not of works lest any should boast” (Eph.2:8-9).

This grace is preceded by the sinner’s faith—“therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom.5:1). “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

The Lord Jesus: The Sacrifice For Sin (vv.23-28)

23Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

What does this mean? The writer includes Heaven as a place that required purification! How are we to think about this? Jesus purifies everything! Jesus provides a total redemption. Does this mean human beings are automatically saved? Of course not! We have already seen that salvation includes faith—on the part of the sinner! Is there something in Heaven unclean or impure? It would appear that Heaven remains pure and perfect! How then do we explain this?

Some have suggested that the way into heaven is sprinkled in blood—enshrouded in blood—we might think paved with blood—because human beings must be covered in blood. The picture is acceptance by blood—and no acceptance apart from blood.

It would appear that this concept—covered by blood—is great in the mind and heart and thoughts of God! How great? God insisted His Son die for sin. The sacrifice of Jesus is the covering for Heaven and Earth and this universe. The picture is a picture of acceptance by God based on sacrificial death of His own dear Son in obedience to His Father’s will. Jesus paid the

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ultimate a price—a price so profound so severe—that indicates the horror of sin. This is the reason that Jesus has appeared in the presence of God for us—to cleanse and purify the way for us. Jesus has purified everything! Perhaps this gives us a glimpse into the passage where Paul writes; “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph.5:25-26). Back in (Hebrews 9) 14; “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God”.

Who sprinkles the blood? Christ. Where did He get this blood? Himself.

24For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Jesus appears—He now appears—to pray for us. Jesus is in the presence of God—for us!

25not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—

26He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Jesus has appeared (past tense) to die for us.

The foundation of the world is a reference to creation and the end of the ages—is a reference to to all the eras and ages that find its culmination in the coming of the Messiah. All of human history can be neatly packaged into three broad categories; the times before Christ; the time of Christ and the time when Christ returns.

Jesus “has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”. What does it mean to put away sin? Jesus has done what no animal sacrifice could ever do! The sacrificial death of Jesus is sufficient to put away sin and provide forgiveness for all people in for all times. I heard Robert Jeffers say; “sufficient for all but efficient only for those who by faith will trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.”

27And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

This is the general rule. This is the powerful passage that refutes the false doctrine of reincarnation.

Appointed (*apokeimai*) in Luke 19:20 it is translated in the literal sense “laid up” (KJV) or laid away (NIV); in two other places it is used in the spiritual sense (Col. 1:5; and 2 Tim. 4:8) where

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something is set aside or laid up for the Christian. Here the thought seems to be ‘just as man is destined to die once’ (NIV). We share a common end—death—and after that judgment.

We all have an appointment with death. We all have an appointment with judgment.

Dorothy Parker, a well known writer, was told Calvin Coolidge had died. She asked, “How could they tell?”

Are there rare exceptions to this rule? It would appear that Enoch was taken (did not die). Elijah was taken (did not die). It would appear that a final generation will make its appearance—a generation that knows and loves Jesus and will both substantially and suddenly disappear! We will not all die. But there is a generation that will hear the trump of God and the voice of the Archangel. There is a generation that will “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” change. Lazarus and the people Jesus raised from the dead in the New Testament clearly died twice.

A gravestone had this inscription: “I expected this, but not just yet.”

When infidel Tom Payne was dying, he was heard to utter, “O Lord, help!” His surprised doctor asked, “What’s this I hear? Tom Payne. A man who spent his life ridiculing the Christian faith and scoffing at the Lord Jesus Christ. As your physician, I ask you as a dying man, do you now repent of your infidel views and turn to this Christ for salvation?” Payne replied, “No, I cannot believe on that man.” He died still an unbeliever.

When John Owen, the great Puritan, lay on his deathbed, his secretary wrote (in his name) to a friend, “I am still in the land of the living.” “Stop,” said Owen. “Change that and say, ‘I am yet in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living.’”

28so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

In the Old Testament and even in the New Testament observant Jews eagerly waited for the Day of Atonement. The people in the Temple waited eagerly to make sure the High Priest came out of the place of the Holy of Holies. When the High Priest appeared they knew the sacrifice on the people’s behalf was accepted. In the same way—when Jesus appears at His Second Coming—we have yet another confirmation—that God is pleased—that God accepts—that God is satisfied with His Son’s sacrifice!

Jesus will appear to rule over us!

Jesus appeared to die for us (vv.26b-28a).

Jesus now appears to pray for us (v.24).

Jesus will appear to rule over us (v.28b).

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Jesus appeared in the past to pay the penalty for sin. Jesus appears in the present and prays in the present to deal with the persistent power of sin. Jesus will appear in the future—and deliver us from the very presence of sin forever!

“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time”—not as the sin bearer but as the triumphant King.

Conclusion

We have a better sacrifice.

The New Covenant of Grace is God’s Last Will and Testament. Tell me something Saint. Are you interested in knowing what God has left you in His will?

A full and final pardon.

Jesus appeared to put away sin.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Philip P. Bliss