

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series: Studies in Hebrews
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A BETTER SACRIFICE

The first part of our lesson (9:11-22) is concerned with the strong emphasis on the spiritual and non-material ministry of Christ. This is set in sharp contrast with that of the old order. It has been said that vv. 13-28 are really an expansion of vv. 11, 12. "When we try to understand this passage," remarks Barclay, "we must remember three things which are basic to the thought of the writer to the Hebrews. (1) Religion is access to God. Its function is to bring a man into God's presence. (2) This is a world of pale shadows and imperfect copies; beyond is the world of realities. The function of all worship is to bring a man into contact with the eternal realities. That was what the worship of the tabernacle was meant to do; but the earthly tabernacle and its worship are pale copies of the real tabernacle and its worship; and only the real tabernacle and the worship can give access to reality. (3) There can be no religion without sacrifice. Purity is a costly thing; access to God demands purity; somehow man's sin must be atoned for and his uncleanness cleansed. With these ideas in his mind, the writer to the Hebrews goes on to show that Jesus is the only High Priest who brings a sacrifice that can open the way to God and that that sacrifice is himself."¹

I. THE VALIDITY OF THE NEW COVENANT MINISTRY (vv. 11-14)

NOTE: THE GOOD THINGS are ministered from a greater tabernacle, the heavenly one.

- A. The Place of Messiah's Ministry (v. 11) After 4000 years there is remission and access! H.C.G. Moule declares, "The TIME OF REFORMATION (v. 10), of the rectification of the failures suffered under the first covenant, drew near. Behold Messiah steps upon the scene, the true High Priest (v. 11). Victim and Sacrificer at once, He sheds His own sacrificial blood (v. 12) on the altar of Golgotha, to be His means of acceptable approach. And then He passes through the avenue of the sanctuary NOT MADE WITH HANDS (v. 11), even the heavenly world itself (4:14), into the Holiest Place of the eternal Presence on the throne."²
- B. The Deliverance and Entrance of Messiah (v. 12)
The blood gives Him title to enter; it does not accompany Him. Bruce remarks on this, "our author deliberately avoids saying that Christ carried His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary. Even as a symbolic expression this is open to objection. There have been expositors who, pressing the analogy of the Day of Atonement beyond the limits observed by our author, have argued that the expiatory work of Christ was not complete on the cross – not completed, indeed, until He ascended from earth and 'made atonement "for us" in the heavenly holy of holies by the presentation of His efficacious blood.' But while it was necessary under the old covenant for the sacrificial blood first to be shed in the court and then to be brought into the holy of holies, no such division of our Lord's sacrifice into two phases is envisaged under the new covenant. When upon the cross He offered up His life to God as a sacrifice for His people's

sin, He accomplished in reality what Aaron and his successors performed in type by the twofold act of slaying the victim and presenting its blood in the holy of holies.”³ And Hughes remarks, “The earthly sanctuary, which is the shadow of the heavenly reality, is defined in Hebrews 9:1ff. in terms of the tent: The outer courtyard with its altar of sacrifice corresponds to the reality of the cross, placed here on earth, and consequently has no counterpart above. The notion, then, of the repetition or extension of Christ’s atoning sacrifice on an altar which is imagined to belong to the heavenly sanctuary is inadmissible. Extravagant language of this sort probably intends less than it says, but even so it is seriously misleading insofar as it shifts the focus of the atoning sacrifice from the earthly to the heavenly scene.”⁴

C. The Surpassing Efficacy of Messiah’s Offering

NOTE: The question answered here arises from the last three words of v. 12. It is, “Why is His redemption eternal?” John Owen writes, “The effect of His blood shedding was He OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEEMPTION: He effectually obtained redemption by the price of His blood. All redemption respects a state of bondage and captivity, with all the events that do attend it. The price of redemption is two ways expressed:

1. By that which gave it its worth and value, that it might be a sufficient ransom for all;
2. By its special nature. As to the first, it is the Person of Christ Himself – HE GAVE HIMSELF; HE OFFERED HIMSELF UNTO GOD; HE GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL. This was that which made the ransom of infinite value.”⁵

NOTE: B.F. Westcott points out four ways which the sacrifice of Christ’s is contrasted with that of the old covenant.

- (1) The sacrifice of Jesus was VOLUNTARY. The animal’s life was taken from it; Jesus gave his life. He willingly laid it down for his friends.
- (2) The sacrifice of Jesus was SPONTANEOUS. Animal sacrifice was entirely the product of law; the sacrifice of Jesus was entirely the product of love. We pay our debts to a tradesman because we have to; we give a gift to our loved ones because we want to. It was not law but love that lay behind the sacrifice of Christ.
- (3) The sacrifice of Jesus was RATIONAL. The animal victim did not know what was happening; Jesus all the time knew what he was doing. He died, not as an ignorant victim caught up in circumstances over which he had no control and did not understand, but with eyes wide open.
- (4) The sacrifice of Jesus was MORAL. Animal sacrifice was mechanical; but Jesus’ sacrifice was made through THE ETERNAL SPIRIT. This thing on Calvary was not a matter of prescribed ritual mechanically carried out; it was a matter of Jesus obeying the will of God for the sake of men. Behind it there was not the mechanism of law but the choice of love.⁶

II. **THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW COVENANT MINISTRY (vv. 15-22)**

NOTE: (1) This section is designed to show the need of a new sacrifice and covenant, not in animal blood, but in divine sacrificial blood.

(2) FOR THIS CAUSE: That is, because of the surpassing value of His offering (vv. 13-14).

A. The Fact of it (v. 15)

The covenant is the basis of the inheritance of the called. “The promise of inheritance,” says Calvin, “is taken to mean the promised inheritance as though he had said, ‘The promise of eternal life is given us to enjoy only through the death of Christ.’ Certainly life was promised to the fathers and it had been from the beginning the inheritance of the sons of God, but we only enter into

possession of it by the blood of Christ already given for us.”⁷

1. The evidence: HE IS THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT (v. 15).
2. The means: REDEMPTION (v. 15)
3. The objects: CALLED ... INHERITANCE (v. 15).

B. The Illustrations of it (vv. 16-21)

Is there any tendency today to be ashamed of Christ’s blood? Sadly, as recent developments in what goes by the name Evangelical, many high-profile mega-church pastors either omit any mention of the Christ’s work of propitiation or ridicule it!⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, noted Yale theologian of a past generation describe Protestant liberalism of his day this way, “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”⁹ Today this describes much of what passes for Evangelicalism.

1. The human illustration (vv. 16-17)

The point made is this: Death is necessary. Hughes remarks, “Where death is the effective basis of a covenant, as preeminently with the death of Christ and the implementation of the new covenant, it is the death of one offered in sacrifice; but death of any kind, violent or peaceful, suffices for the provisions made by a testator in his will to take effect. The sacrificial death of Christ, therefore, answers the demands both of a covenant and of a testament.”¹⁰

CONCLUSION: In closing, the question should be asked *who* are the actual recipients of this work of Christ? John Own responds. “The word THERE IS three times repeated (KJV); only those with whom God makes this covenant are included. Some speak of a universal conditional covenant made with all mankind. If there be any such thing, it is not here intended, for they are all actually pardoned with whom this covenant is made. Some say that the condition of this grace of pardoned sin is that ‘men repent, believe, turn to God, and yield obedience unto the gospel’. If so, then must they do all these things before they receive the remission of sins? You say, ‘Yes!’ Then must they do them whilst they are under the law and the curse of it, for so are all men whose sins are not pardoned. This is to make obedience unto the law, and that performed whilst men are under the curse or it, to be the condition of gospel mercy; which is to overthrow both law and gospel. But then on the other hand it will follow, they say, ‘that men are pardoned before they do believe, which is expressly contrary to Scripture’. I answer, that the communication and gift of faith is an *effect* of the same grace whereby our sins are pardoned, and they are both bestowed upon us by virtue of this new covenant. Faith is not required unto the *procuring* of the pardon of our sins, but unto the *receiving* of pardon.”¹¹ It is stated here (v. 12) and also in 10:7 that THEIR SINS God will remember no more. We contend that this is referring *only* to the elect, the ones for whom Christ died (cf. Lesson 5). The design or extent of the atonement was to secure the effectual salvation of the elect. This it did. *Their* sins God will not remember. If it is contended that this is a reference to the sins of all people universal, then an explanation should be forthcoming on Rev. 18:5, where it is stated in explicit terms that there *are* some sins that God remembers!

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Wm. Barclay, *Hebrews* (Westminster Press, 1955), p. 94
- ² H.C.B. Moule, *Messages From The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1912) p. 112
- ³ F.F. Bruce, *Hebrews: The New International Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1964) p. 204
- ⁴ Philips Hughes, *Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 1973) p. 305
- ⁵ *The Works of John Owen* X (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1970) p. 291
- ⁶ B.F. Westcott, *Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 1974) p. 297
- ⁷ *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* XII (Eerdmans, 1974) p. 122
- ⁸ Joel Osteen, among many others, is the most reprehensible. He openly acknowledges that he *never* mentions subjects like *sin* or *God's wrath* – and as such, has nothing to say about the cross of Christ. cf. Mike Horton's excellent analysis of Osteen in *Christless Christianity* (Baker, 2008). At an academic level among the many distortions of biblical truth in our world today, few are more egregious than that of Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker in their horribly mis-titled and misleading book, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (IVP, 2000). The focus of the book is their repudiation of Christ's death on the cross as a penal substitutionary sacrifice. Texts like Romans 3:15 and I John 2:1-2 are glossed over and deemed insignificant in determining the doctrine of the atonement. Cf. the excellent critique by my good friend Sam Storm, <http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/is-a-god-without-wrath-a-good-god-36/>
- ⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God in America* (Wesleyan Univ. Press. 1970) p. 193.
- ¹⁰ Hughes, *op. cit.*
- ¹¹ John Own, *op. cit.* p. 297