

Text: Hebrews 9:11-14

Title: The Eternal, Conscience-Cleansing Sacrifice of Christ

Date/Location: April 17, 2011 at FBC

Introduction

The previous verses had to do with the old covenant operation. Now, we are going to dig into the inner workings of the New Covenant.

I. The Blood of Christ Obtained Eternal Redemption, v. 11-12

11 – But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, **through** the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is, not of this creation,

12 – Not **by** the blood of goats and calves, but **by** His own blood He entered once for all into the Most Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption.

A. Recall in the last section (9:1-10), we saw the **structure** of the Old Testament Tabernacle, the priestly **service** of the Tabernacle, and the **symbolism** of the Tabernacle. The **structure** and **service** ideas come up again in 9:11-15, but this time there is a better **structure** and a better priestly **service**. This is why the passage starts with “but”—there is a contrast between the earthly symbol and the eternal heavenly reality.

B. The Bible presents Christ’s work in a fashion analogous to the Old Testament priest.

1. Remember, the priest went in to the 15’ x 30’ holy place daily, tending the lamp and bread and altar of incense. Then, once a year, he entered the most holy place, a smaller room shaped as a cube, 15’ on each dimension, and offered incense and sacrificial blood on the mercy seat atop the ark of the covenant.
2. In similar fashion, Christ went **through** the better tent (tabernacle), and entered once for all time into the Most Holy Place.
3. He is called a High Priest of the good things to come. Some texts have “good things that have come.” The difference is minor, because we should understand that God’s word is contrasting what Christ brought with the situation before the time of reformation (9:10).

C. The Better Structure, v. 11

The Tabernacle spoken of here is the heavenly dwelling place of God. It is pictured as a building, like the OT Tabernacle. But it is not a building that was man-made or part of the creation we see (earth

and outer space). The Most Holy Place is where God manifests His presence in a special way in Heaven. We could say this is the “throne room” of God (Rev. 15:5-6).

When compared with the earthly tabernacle of Moses, the heavenly one is better (greater and more perfect).

D. The Better Service, v. 12

1. Christ did not enter God’s presence with animal blood because it would not accomplish the task necessary to deal with sin once for all.
2. He was able to enter based on His own blood. This means that He was able to enter on the basis of His own sacrificial death.
3. Christ’s entry into the Most Holy Place means more than physically walking into that place. It signifies that He was *accepted* and that His sacrificial work *appeased* God’s displeasure against sin. He was approved for entrance into God’s presence after having had the demerit of sin imputed to Him at the Cross. By means of His death (v. 15) He had made satisfaction for God’s wrath against sin.
4. **Once for all** does not mean once for everyone, but instead means once with no repetition possible.

It is clear that this **once** contrasts with the many times that that high priest had to enter into the holy place (daily) and the holy of holies (every year).

But it is also interesting to note that **once** contrasts with the high priest having to enter the most holy place *twice* on the Day of Atonement. He first went in with the blood of a bull for his own sins (Lev. 16:11-12); then he went in with the blood of one of the two goats as a sacrifice for the sins of the nation (Lev. 16:15-16).

Christ did not have to go one time for His own sin and then a second time for others—he just did the “others” part!

5. **Having obtained eternal redemption** refers to His action before entering the presence of God. It was the payment of His life for eternal redemption that secured it. The payment was made on the cross and finished (John 19:30) there. He then presented Himself (not just His blood!) to the Father in the Most Holy Place.

This is analogous to the OT ritual in which the priest did sacrifices outside of the Holy of Holies, and then entered there with the blood of those sacrifices. The sacrifice itself was done first; then the presentation of the sacrifice.

Redemption is ransoming or liberating from bondage to sin and more generally refers to all the blessings of salvation.

This redemption is called **eternal**, as in 9:15 where the inheritance is eternal as well. It contrasts with the temporary, external cleansing that was afforded by the OT animal sacrifice.

II. The Blood of Christ Cleanses the Conscience, v. 13-14

The structure of these two verses is an argument from lesser to greater:

Lesser	Greater
Blood of bulls and goats Ashes of a heifer	Blood of Christ
Sanctifies for purifying the flesh	Cleanse the conscience

These verses are here as an explanation of how the blood of Christ was sufficient to obtain eternal redemption (9:11-12). They can be taken as a rhetorical question with the answer understood to be an exclamation of the fact of Christ's conscience-cleansing work.

A. The Effectiveness of Animal Sacrifices, v. 13

1. There was a genuine forgiveness and cleansing that came through the animal sacrifices. The "if" is assumed true for the sake of the argument being made, and in fact, it is true. The fact that animal sacrifices provided some level of forgiveness is shocking to some readers of the Bible, but it is true:

Bulls – Lev. 4:13-21. Leviticus 4:20 says that forgiveness is extended from the Lord (4:13) to nation who had sinned.

Goats – Lev. 4:22-26. Again, forgiveness is extended, in this case to an individual who has sinned.

Ashes of a Heifer – Numbers 19:1-10, 17-22. A real cleansing happened after the appropriate use of the ashes and the cleansing water. This was obviously a ritual and not a physical bath, so because of the obedience to the Word, God reckoned the uncleanness to have transferred to the heifer whose life was forfeited.

2. Animal sacrifices did sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. This means that the sacrifices make holy, at least ritually or ceremonially so. Remember we are talking about the OT system which could not make the worshipper perfect in regard to conscience. The system was external in its emphasis (9:9-10).

B. The Better Effectiveness of Christ's Sacrifice, v. 14

1. His offering was **through the eternal Spirit**. This is a reference to God the Holy Spirit who was integral in Christ's life and ministry from beginning to end.
2. His offering was **without spot**. Christ had no blemish of sin, and thus no need to have a sacrifice for Himself.
3. His offering was **to God**. His offering was of Himself to God, not to Satan or anything else.
4. His offering is able to **cleans your conscience** whereas the repetitive animal sacrifices were not of a quality that they could accomplish that. They were formal external things; Christ's sacrifice is internal. The cleansing is from **dead works** which means the same as it did in 6:1—works that are done in death and lead to death. It is not only works thought of as a means to earn salvation, but "bad works"—sins. The **conscience** is the "inward faculty of distinguishing right and wrong" (BDAG). Before you are washed by Christ, on your conscience are all the bad things you've done, things that have no outlet in terms that will make the conscience be able to deal with them as anything other than wrong and displeasing to God.
5. His offering will cleanse out those sinful things and allow us in good conscience to **serve** and worship the living God. Our conscience will then know that we have been made right before God by someone else taking the penalty of our wrongs.

The OT sacrifices were good for ceremonial cleansing (forgiveness—although only temporary until the death of Christ), but they could not provide positive righteousness. Only Christ's life and sacrifice can do that.

Conclusion

The offering of Christ takes things much farther than the OT sacrificial system could. First, Christ's death achieves access closer to God than the old system—right into the heavenly tabernacle. And second, Christ's death achieves far more than an external or ceremonial purification—it goes all the way into the innermost conscience. The gap is thus narrowed between God and man in the mediatorial work of Christ.

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