

THE EPISTLES TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 4:14-10:18, THE SUPERIORITY OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

HEBREWS 8:1-10:18, THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

- Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus Christ is God's superior Priest; but is there anything that can minimize this superiority? Nothing! For He ministers on the basis of a better covenant (Heb. 8), in a better sanctuary (Heb. 9), and because of a better sacrifice (Heb. 10).*
- Ray Stedman, *Moses used the blood of an animal; Jesus used wine as a symbol of his own blood. Moses spoke of the covenant of the law; Jesus alluded to the new covenant of grace. Moses spoke of God's words which provided for the partial covering of sins so God could remain with his people; Jesus promised the actual remission of sins so God could live within his people forever. It is that excellent new covenant which chapters 8–10 of Hebrews now expounds.*

INTRODUCTION

- A. An outline of Hebrews (to be finalized at completion of Hebrews study)
 1. The superiority of the person of Christ (1:1-4:13)
 - a. Christ has the superior message (1:1-2a)
 - b. Christ is the superior person (1:2b-3)
 - c. Christ is superior to angels (1:4-2:18)
 - d. Christ is superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)
 2. The superiority of the work of Christ (4:14-10:18)
 - a. A superior confession (4:14-16)
 - b. Superior qualifications (5:1-10)
 - c. A warning to keep moving forward (5:11-6:20)
 - d. The superior priestly order of Christ (7:1-28)
 - e. The superiority of the New Covenant (8:1-10:18)
 - 1) A superior High Priest (8:1-13)
 - 2) The earthly sanctuary (9:1-10)
 - 3) The superior sanctuary and Sacrifice (9:11-10:18)
- B. Review of Hebrews 9:1-10
 1. Ray Stedman, *In chapter 9, we will return to the tabernacle and its ritual that we may more clearly grasp the realities of the new covenant and the freedom it gives us to live in a pressure-filled, baffling and bewildered world by the power that flows from our high priest today.*
 2. Thomas Constable, *The writer introduced two subjects in the first verse: regulations of divine worship, and the earthly sanctuary.*
- C. Introductory comments on Hebrews 9:11-10:18
 1. Leon Morris, *The argument moves a stage further as the author turns specifically to what Christ has done. The sacrifices of the old covenant were ineffectual. But in strong contrast Christ made an offering that secures a redemption valid for all eternity.*
 2. Raymond Brown, *The author now turns from the frustration caused by the limited effectiveness of the ceremonial laws to the good things that have come.*
 3. Donald Hagner, *The work of Christ is final, absolute, definitive, complete, and perfect. Only such words are appropriate to describe what the author expounds.*
 4. Douglas Mangum, *While continuing the theme of Jesus' priestly mediation, the writer transitions toward an emphasis on the perfect sacrifice he offered.*

HEBREWS 9:11-10:18, THE SUPERIOR SANCTUARY AND SACRIFICE

A. Jesus' superior effectiveness as High Priest (11-14)

1. He has a better tabernacle (11), *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)*

a. *But when Christ appeared*

- 1) Donald Hagner, *It is now convincingly shown that, although the work of Christ corresponds in considerable detail to that of the levitical priesthood, it stands in contrast to the work of the latter as its ultimate counterpart. It is what truth is to shadow, what pattern is to copy.*
- 2) William Barclay, . . . *Jesus is the only high priest who brings a sacrifice that can open the way to God, and that sacrifice is himself.*
- 3) Charles Spurgeon, *No son of Aaron stands before us, but the Christ, the truly Anointed One, commissioned of the Lord to introduce man to his offended God. . . Up till then religion dealt with externals, such as meats, and drinks, and washings, and carnal ordinances, and priests who could only offer the blood of bulls and of goats. But the coming of the Messiah changed all this. We pass from shadow to substance.*

b. *high priest of the good things that have come*

- 1) Hebrews 10:1, *For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.*
- 2) The intent of verse 11a is that *the good things that have come* speak of the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ as He entered the true sanctuary in heaven.
- 3) William Newell, . . . *the good things to come of which He is High Priest are those good things brought by His having obtained eternal redemption at the Cross: pardon, justification, reconciliation, association with Him as His brethren; "access with confidence," "drawing near" to God in Heaven through Him; and, of course, all future blessings connected with "the promise" of His coming again (10:36-7).*
- 4) Donald Hagner, *Christ fulfills the anticipations of the old covenant and brings his people to the realization of the salvation God has intended from the beginning.*
- 5) Charles Spurgeon, *Jesus has brought to light the precious things of the covenant, which kings and prophets desired to see.*

c. *the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)*

- 1) Mark 14:58, *"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'"*
- 2) Hebrews 9:24, *For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*
- 3) Raymond Brown, *Christ has entered the eternal sanctuary, the greater and more perfect tent in the heavens, taking the blood, not of some sacrificial animal, but his very own.*
- 4) R. Kent Hughes, *Everything foreshadowed by the earthly Tabernacle—the altar, the laver, the candlestick, the altar of incense, the Ark of the Covenant, and the Tabernacle itself—is fulfilled in his new priesthood in ways beyond description.*
- 5) Charles Spurgeon, *This greater and more perfect tabernacle was made according to the power of an endless life.*

d. Comments

- 1) Douglas Mangum, *His priesthood is carried out in the heavenly tent, not this creation. He enters the holy presence of God to secure redemption for his people. Whereas the system of the old priesthood involved animals' blood, his eternal redemption is achieved by his own blood. It might be argued that this unit contains the point toward which the entire division has been building.*
- 2) William Barclay, *When we try to understand this passage, 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 people 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 people into contact with the eternal realities. . . (3) There can be no religion without sacrifice. Purity is a costly thing; access to God demands purity; somehow human sin must be atoned for and uncleanness cleansed.*

2. His sacrifice was once for all time (12), ***he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.***
 - a. Levitical priests' access was by means of the blood of goats and calves.
 - 1) The sacrifice of goats was the offering for the people and the sacrifice of calves was the offering for the high priest and his family.
 - 2) Leviticus 16:15-16, *Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.*
 - b. Jesus' access to the holy places was by means of His blood.
 - 1) Hebrews 10:4, *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*
 - 2) William L. Lane, *The statement that Christ approached God by means of his own blood has specific reference to his death on the cross, which is the sacrifice of the new covenant corresponding to the animal sacrifices prescribed under the old covenant.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *An animal's blood was carried by the high priest into the holy of holies, but Jesus Christ presented Himself in the presence of God as the final and complete sacrifice for sins.*
 - c. *eternal redemption*
 - 1) It was a one-time sufficient sacrifice.
 - a) Hebrews 7:27, *He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.*
 - b) Zane Hodges, *A perfect ransom price had been paid for human "redemption," and because it need not be paid again . . . that redemption is an "eternal" one.*
 - c) William Newell, *Eternal redemption in Hebrews 9:12 signifies everlasting freedom from the penalty of sin, Christ having borne it at the Cross . . .*
 - 2) This word for *redemption* is used only three times in the New Testament.
 - a) It means a deliverance by means of a sacrifice being paid.
 - b) Douglas Mangum, . . . *the deliverance from sin brought by Jesus through the presentation of his blood in the heavenly sanctuary.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, . . . *no animal sacrifices ever purchased "eternal redemption." Their blood could only "cover" sin until the time when Christ's blood would "take away sin" (John 1:29). We have "eternal redemption." It is not conditioned on our merit or good works; it is secured once and for all by the finished work of Jesus Christ.*
 - d. Comments
 - 1) Jesus' superior ministry as High Priest is seen in His superior sanctuary and sacrifice.
 - 2) David Brown, *His entrance into the true Holy of Holies is the consummation of His once-for-all-offered sacrifice of atonement (Heb 9:24, 26); henceforth, His reappearance alone remains to complete our redemption (Heb 9:27, 28).*
 - 3) R. Kent Hughes, *Jesus did not just slip into the Most Holy Place amidst a protective cloud of incense to breathlessly perform a ritual sprinkling and then exit until next year. Instead, he came having given his own precious blood once and for all, and there he sat down at the right hand of the Father—never more to leave.*
 - 4) William Newell, *There is nothing that should bring men to despair of self-righteousness like the story of the Cross, for all we can do is to sit there in the darkness and let Another be judged in our place!*
3. His sacrifice purifies the conscience (13-14), ***For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.***
 - a. *For if*
 - 1) This emphasizes the contrast between the sacrifice of animals and the sacrifice of God Incarnate; a movement from the lesser to the greater.
 - 2) David Brown, *If the blood of mere brutes could purify in any, however small a degree, how much more shall inward purification, and complete and eternal salvation, be wrought by the blood of Christ, in whom dwell all the fulness of the Godhead?*

- b. The external dimension of animal sacrifices.
- 1) The *blood of goats and bulls* was addressed in verse 12.
 - 2) *ashes of a heifer*
 - a) The writer is speaking of the red heifer (Numbers 19).
 - b) William Barclay, *Under Jewish ceremonial law, if someone touched a dead body, that person was unclean. Such people were barred from the worship of God, and everything and everyone they touched also became unclean. To deal with this, there was a prescribed method of cleansing. A red heifer was slaughtered outside the camp. The priest sprinkled the blood of the heifer in front of the tabernacle seven times. The body of the beast was then burned, together with cedar and hyssop and a piece of red cloth. The resulting ashes were placed outside the camp in a clean place and constituted a purification for sin.*
 - 3) Donald Hagner, *These ceremonies, therefore, were really effective only for one kind of cleansing, that is, from ceremonial contamination.*
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *The Old Covenant rituals could not change a person's heart. This is not to say that a worshiper did not have a spiritual experience if his heart trusted God, but it does mean that the emphasis was on the external ceremonial cleansing.*
- c. The internal dimension of Jesus' sacrifice.
- 1) *the blood of Christ*
 - a) Ephesians 1:7, *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
 - b) Charles Spurgeon, *One reason why the precious blood has such power to put away sin is because it is the blood of Christ, that is, of God's Anointed, God's Messiah, the Sent One of the Most High . . . It is the blood of Christ that alone can make you fit to serve the living and true God.*
 - 2) *offered Himself up without blemish to God*
 - a) Hebrews 7:27, *He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.*
 - b) William Newell, . . . *we know that Christ walked all of His life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, without moral or spiritual blemish before the all-seeing eye of God the Father.*
 - c) Jesus' sacrifice was made to God on behalf of those who place faith in Christ alone.
 - 3) *through the eternal Spirit*
 - a) Some believe *eternal Spirit* refer to the Holy Spirit.
 - 1] William Newell, *It is beyond measure blessed that we find here all three Persons of the Godhead occupied in our salvation! First, it is God to Whom the atoning sacrifice for our sin is to be made; second, it is Christ Who offers Himself to this end; third, it is through the eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without blemish.*
 - 2] William L. Lane, *The formulation does not occur elsewhere in the NT or early Christian literature, but it may be understood as a designation for the Holy Spirit.*
 - b) Others believe it refers to Jesus' eternal spirit.
 - 1] Charles Spurgeon, *The Spirit of Christ was an eternal spirit, for it was the Godhead. There was conjoined with His deity the natural life of a perfect man, but the eternal spirit was His highest self. His Godhead willed that He should die, and concurred in the death of the manhood, so that by the eternal spirit He offered Himself.*
 - 2] Charles Ryrie, *If this refers to Christ's eternal spirit, then it is not a reference to the divine nature offering up the human nature, but to the entire person offering up Himself by the action of the highest spirit-power within Him. His own divine spirit was involved in the offering of the God-man.*
 - 3] H. D. M. Spence, *Thus is prominently brought to view the spiritual aspect of the atonement. Its especial virtue is said to lie, not in the mere suffering or the mere physical blood-shedding and death upon the cross, but in its being a voluntary act of perfect obedience on the part of him who was the Representative of man, and in whom "the eternal Spirit" triumphed over the weakness of humanity.*

- 4) *purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*
 - a) William Newell, *The conscience drives the heart of one who knows his sin, to get relief. Dead works, therefore, become the vain effort to relieve a troubled conscience by legal obedience.*
 - b) Douglas Mangum, *The cleansing of our conscience in service of the living God is stated as a direct contrast to 9:9, which speaks of the insufficiency of the old sacrifices to cleanse one's conscience.*
 - c) Donald Hagner, *The new kind of cleansing made possible by this offering of Christ is described as the purifying of our consciences. That is, this cleansing penetrates to the inner recesses of our personhood and so involves far more than the cleansing of the flesh from ceremonial defilement.*
 - d) William L. Lane, *It (conscience) is the point at which a person confronts God's holiness. The ability of the defiled conscience to disqualify someone from serving God has been superseded by the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse the conscience from defilement.*
 - e) H. D. M. Spence, *Believers are not only "cleansed from their former sins," but also put into a position for offering an acceptable service. In the life of Christ in whom they live, and who ever liveth to make intercession for them, they can henceforth "serve the living God."*
 - f) Raymond Brown, *They (dead works) probably refer to man's futile attempts to secure by his puny efforts his own present satisfaction and ultimate salvation.*

4. Comparison of Jesus' sacrifice to Old Testament sacrifices by B. F. Westcott,
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *The sacrifice of Jesus was spontaneous. Animal sacrifice was entirely the product of law; the sacrifice of Jesus was entirely the product of love.*
 - c. *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.*
 - d. *The sacrifice of Jesus was moral. Animal sacrifice was mechanical; but Jesus' sacrifice was made through the eternal Spirit. What happened 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 and women. Behind it, there was not the mechanism of law but the choice of love.*

To be continued, Lord willing.

- B. Jesus' sacrifice mediated the New Covenant (15-22)
 1. His death established the New Covenant (15), ***Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.***
 2. It took place at His death (16-17), ***For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.***
 3. The first covenant was made through death (18-21), ***Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.***
 4. There is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood (22), ***Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.***

- C. Jesus' sacrifice is superior (23-28)
 1. The heavenly sacrifice must be superior to the copies (23), ***Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.***
 2. Jesus' intercession is in heaven before God (24), ***For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.***
 3. His sacrifice was one time for all time (25-26), ***Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.***
 4. His return will not deal with sin but will fulfill salvation for those who have placed faith in Him alone (27-28), ***And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.***