

The Book of Hebrews

מֵאַנֶשׁ מִנִּמְדָּא דְּאֵת אֶקְלָא
צְמֵאֲלֵל נְתַאֲתְצֵרְחָ דְּרֵתְסֵנִ סְק
אֵת פְּקֵלָא תֵּסֵנִ סְרְבֵאל
רֵרֵ תֵּא סְרֵ תֵּאֲקֵסֵנִצֵּ דְּמִמְצ
תֵּאֲתֵפֵלֵשׁ נִ תְּרֵדְנֵהֵרְפֵרֵ נִ רֵלֵד
תֵּאֲנֵשׁ רֵלֵד מֵלֵלֵצֵ סֵס תֵּלֵשׁ



Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)**

Outline of Hebrews

IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)

- A. Jesus Was Appointed By God to Be Our Compassionate But Sinless High Priest (4:14–5:10)
- B. Jesus Is Better – Don't Apostatize (5:11-6:20)
- C. Jesus Is a Priest After the Order of Melchizedek (7:1-28)
- D. Jesus Is the Mediator of a *New* Covenant That Is *Far Superior* to the *Old* Covenant (8:1-13)
- E. Jesus' Sacrifice Is Better Than the Temple Sacrifices (9:1-10:18)

Outline of Hebrews

A. Jesus' Sacrifice Is Better Than the Temple Sacrifices (9:1-10:18)

1. Ministry Under the Old Covenant (9:1-10)
2. Ministry Under the New Covenant (9:11-14)
3. Further Reflections on the New Covenant (9:15-10:18)

Ministry Under the New Covenant (9:11-14)

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) 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. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ 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.*

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) 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.

- This section **begins** with the word “**but**”, indicating that the author is now going to draw a **contrast** between the:
 - **Old** covenant era, with its restrictive regulations and superficial cleansing rituals (Heb 9:1-10)
 - **New** covenant era that has arrived with the coming of Christ (Heb 9:11-14)
- The old covenant’s earthly sanctuary was only “**a shadow of the good things to come**” (Heb 10:1), but with Christ’s appearance “**the good things**” – the new covenant’s better promises (Heb 8:6) – “**have come**”.

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) 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.*

- Christ's ministry as high priest is *similar* to, **but better** than, that of the OT high priest.
- As we saw last week, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the OT high priest passed through the first section of the tabernacle/tent ("*Holy Place*") in order to enter "*the **Most Holy Place***" (Heb 9:2,7).
- But Christ passed "*through the **greater and more perfect tent***" in order to enter "*the **holy places***" (the **heavenly** Most Holy Place).

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) 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.*

- Since the entryway into Christ's **heavenly** sanctuary was "**not made with [human] hands**" (unlike the tabernacle – Exod 31:1–11), it is **exempt** from the frailty and imperfection that comes with being a part of the created universe (Heb. 1:10–12; 12:26–28; cf. Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48).
- By **contrast**, Judaism's second temple would lie in ruins, dismantled by Roman soldiers, only a few years after this sermon-letter of Hebrews was penned.

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)* 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.*

- The OT high priest entered the Most Holy Place “*once a year*” (v. 7), but Christ entered the **heavenly** Holy of Holies “*once for all*” (v. 12).
- The superiority of Christ’s sacrificial offering fits the sanctuary he has entered.
- “*His own blood*” surpasses “*the blood of goats and calves*” – **not only** because animal deaths cannot atone for human sin (Heb 10:4), **but also** because Christ’s blood represents the suffering he **personally endured** as God incarnate in order to lead God’s “*many sons to glory*” (Heb 2:10-12).

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**.*

- Christ's ministry surpasses that of OT high priests with respect to its **result** as well: it secured "*eternal redemption*."
- Both "*eternal*" and "*redemption*" set Christ's ministry apart from that of OT high priests.
- Since his "*once for all*" sacrifice **completely** cleanses consciences, its purifying effectiveness is "*eternal*" (Heb. 10: 3, 10-12).
- "*Redemption*" includes both forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin's penalty, death.
- Redemption further includes liberation from enslavement (Luke 1: 68-71; 2:38; 24:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18).

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**.*

- The term **redemption** does not resonate much with people in our day.
- We don't use terms like *redeem* and *redemption* very much.
- You might redeem something from a pawn shop or redeem something with a coupon, but that's about it.
- In the first century, "redemption" was a commonly used term.
- It was used in slave transactions, for example.

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**.*

- In the first century, sometimes people became slaves because of overpowering military force but sometimes simply because they didn't have didn't have bankruptcy laws.
- If you went into debt to a point where you could no longer make your payments, what you did was you sold yourself or your family into slavery. That was the honorable thing to do. You didn't have any choice because there were no bankruptcy laws.
- Then if you had a rich relative who lived nearby who heard about your plight and had a little bit of extra cash, he might come and "redeem" you.

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**.*

- Likewise, in the Old Testament, slaves could be redeemed.
- Then, of course, every Jewish firstborn male had to be redeemed by the payment of a tax.
- So the firstborn, who hadn't been killed at the initial Passover, now was still under the curse, as it were, but was redeemed by the payment of money. He was bought back, released, freed from death or freed from slavery.
- So “*redemption*” language was everywhere in the first century.
- As a result, the idea of “*redemption*” wasn't just “God talk” like it is in our day. It was **everyday** talk.
- It was very powerful and it would resonate with people right away.

¹³ 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**, ¹⁴ **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.

- That brings us to verses 13–14 where we see how Christ secured the ability of those living in the new covenant to **approach** and serve the living God with a clear conscience.
- The author begins with another “lesser-to-greater” argument (cf. Heb 2:2-4).
- If slain animals’ blood and ashes effected ceremonial “**purification of the flesh how much more**”, effective is Christ’s blood for purifying “**our conscience**”, qualifying us to serve in God’s presence!

¹³ *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,* ¹⁴ *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.*

- In addition to the shedding of “*the blood of goats and bulls*” for regular sin offerings (Leviticus 4) and the once-a-year offering on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), our the author mentions a purification ceremony involving “*sprinkling... with the ashes of a heifer*”.
- This is a rite that was done in the OT to cleanse those who had been ceremonially defiled by contact with a human corpse (Numbers 19).

¹³ 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 ¹⁴ 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.

- We need to stop and talk for a minute about what the NT means in a passage like this one when it talks about the “**blood of goats and bulls**” or the “**blood of Christ.**”
- “**Blood**” in the New Testament, when it is not referring to the fluid itself, means “death, violently and sacrificially occurring”, or “life violently and sacrificially ended”.

¹³ 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 ¹⁴ 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.

- So we're not to think that "**blood**" here is something **mystical**.
- There are people who try to take it this way and actually imagine that Christ somehow, after he died on the cross, scooped up some of the blood that was at the bottom of the cross and offered it before God as a tangible offering in a kind of semi-physical heaven.
- That, of course, is missing the point of what these passages are actually saying.

¹³ 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 ¹⁴ 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.

- In Paul writings, for example, **everything** we are told that the **blood** accomplishes, we are **elsewhere** told that **Christ's death** or **the cross** accomplishes.
- So, for example, if we're **reconciled** by the **blood** of Christ (Col 1:20), we're reconciled by the **death** of Christ (Rom 5:10) or the **cross** of Christ (Eph 2:16).
- What the blood signifies is life, but not **just** life – life violently and sacrificially ended. It's a sacrifice.
- So, it's not the composition of the fluid that is the crucial thing; it's the sacrificial loss of this life, the life of the Son of God. That's the crucial thing.

¹⁴ *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.*

- There have been many attempts to explain this expression, “*who **through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God**,*” but I will tell you the one that makes the most sense to me.
- The animals that were offered year after year had no will, no *Spirit*, no internal being of their own. There was no goat that said, “Here, slaughter me; I’ll bear your sins.”
- The priest took him by the scruff of the neck and slit his throat.

¹⁴ *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.***

- Passover was a bloody mess. Even on the Day of Atonement, with only two animals and another one that was released – it was not a pretty sight.
- It wasn't for the squeamish. On a big Passover, you could slaughter thousands and thousands of animals, slitting this throat that throat, the whole courtyard sopping red with muddy red blood.
- And not one animal had volunteered – the animal's lives were taken without any consent from the animal.
- Christ, on the other hand, **freely gave** up his life for us – no one took it from him (John 10:17)

¹⁴ *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.*

- All the sacrificial animals offered in the OT were to be physically “*without blemish*” (Lev. 4: 3, 23, 28, 32; Num. 19: 2).
- Here we see that Christ “*offered himself*” as one, not merely without any **physical** blemish, but also **spiritually and morally** “*without blemish*”.
- Because he was “*without sin*” (Heb. 4: 15), “*holy, innocent, unstained*” (Heb 7:26), he needed no sacrifice **for his own sins** (unlike the Levitical high priest – Heb 5:2-3; 7:27) and could serve as the flawless substitute **for others**.

¹⁴ *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.*

- The word translated “*purify*” here is a word that appears in another part of Jeremiah’s new covenant prophecy: “*I will **cleans**e them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me*” (Jer. 33:8).
- Christ’s greater sacrifice accomplishes a far **deeper** purification than was provided by the OT sacrifices – not merely a **ceremonial cleansing** of “*the flesh*”, but an **actual cleansing** of our “*conscience*”.
- “*Dead works*” here are violations of God’s law, which deserve death, in other words, “works deserving of death” (Heb 6:1; cf. 2:14-15).
- This is in contrast to the OT sacrifices which could **not** perfect the conscience of the worshippers (Heb 9:9).

¹⁴ *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.*

- Cleansing from sin's pollution and penalty gives us access to God's presence, so that we who trust Christ may draw near to God with confidence (Heb 10:2, 9-14, 22).
- The word translated "*serve*" here is a verbal form of the noun used to earlier in this chapter (9:1, 6) to refer to OT priestly "*service*" to God, implying that in the new covenant we as believer priests can now "*serve the living God*" in his Most Holy Place .
- He will later use this same term to declare that new covenant believers can now "*offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.*" (Heb 12:28).

Summary and Conclusion

- The self-offering of Christ bestows on believers benefits beyond our capacity to fathom.
- His blood silences the charges of our own accusing, shame-shrouded conscience.
- He defeats and disarms Satan, who can no longer prosecute or enslave us by the fear of death.
- Yet Christ's death does more than meet our need for "eternal redemption" through cleansing, forgiveness, and liberation.
- The goal of the redemption he secured is to bring us into God's presence as priests consecrated "to serve the living God."
- What more fitting response could there be than for those who are receiving an unshakable kingdom to "*offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*" (Heb 12:28)?

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- Compared to last week as we contemplated the mind-numbing, detailed regulations of the Old Covenant, how does today's passage make you feel as you contemplate what it means to be a new covenant believer who has been set free and given full access to serve the living God?
- Can you see the contrast here between:
 - Some in our day who will come down an aisle to “get their ticket punched” so they can go on living life apart from God without having to worry about going to hell
 - The outlook of the writer of Hebrews expressed in our text today where he tells us that the purification that we experience in Christ not only frees us of a guilty conscience, but frees us to “*serve the living God*”.