

“The Earthly Compared With the Eternal”

(Part 2)

Heb. 9:1-14

- INTRO. - One of the greatest challenges, for any communicator of God’s Word, is to serve as a “bridge builder” for the ancient text. The fact that we are more than 2000 years removed from the time period and the culture of the original context of the Book of Hebrews makes it difficult for modern readers (and hearers) to comprehend and relate to what we see here.
- Everything in our world is so different from that of the first century – so we often have trouble relating to that ancient setting. And yet, biblical truth *requires* that we understand what the original message was (to the original audience) before we try to apply it to our contemporary culture.
- Those who fail to do that, inevitably end up distorting the Scripture and misapplying it – sometimes even to the degree of falling into gross heresy.
- But here at PBC we want to “get it right,” so we *have* to go back into the world of the first century and understand the original message. And part of doing that means that we recognize some differences between that ancient world and that of our own.
- We have to have a grasp of ancient Judaism, and to understand certain ceremonies and religious practices that may be very foreign to us. Although we live in the age of the new covenant, we need to understand the old covenant and how it compares with the new.
- The Book of Hebrews is a book of comparisons and contrasts. And the truth of the matter is, we can never truly appreciate the new covenant without being able to compare it with the old. All these elements of ancient Judaism are important because they help us have a better understanding of what we have in Christ.
- The particular passage we are focusing on (9:1-14) helps us to see the earthly compared to the eternal. But before we go back into it, let me just give you a couple of issues we have to be aware of as we seek to bridge this gap between our own culture and the ancient world.
- One of those challenges has to do with the understanding of sin and morality. There has been a huge cultural shift *away from* a biblical understanding of sin and morality in our day and time.
- As I’m sure you know, the trend in our day has been to deny any sort of universal ethical standard and to adopt one’s own system of morality.

- People today pull from a number of places – parents, friend, the media, movies, TV, etc. – and construct their own understanding of “right and wrong.”
- On their list of what is “right and wrong” might be things like, “tolerance is right, exclusivity is wrong” or “free choice is always right, while any kind of restriction is wrong” or “helping others is right, harming others is wrong.”
- The whole framework for this new morality is the concept of “being true to yourself.” The whole idea is, as long as you are not hurting someone else, and as long as you are being “true to yourself,” you are good.
- We no longer want to label anything as “sin” because we don’t want to embrace the idea that there could be a universal standard of morality that is *not* found in ourselves but is decreed by God.
- But the biggest problem for the gospel, is the fact that when people adopt this new understanding of sin and morality, there is no longer any need for forgiveness and atonement.
- Most people today see themselves as “basically good” because they naturally conform to their own moral standards. So why would they need any kind of atonement for sin?
- And our answer to that, is that we *must* communicate the biblical standard, in spite of what our world thinks. We must warn people that God is the One who sets the standard, and He doesn’t grade on a curve. He is the One we will ultimately answer to. It is *not* what *we* think that counts – it is what He declares. (Pause)
- Now, related to that is the fact that the concept of the shedding of blood has become very foreign to our generation. The idea of animal sacrifices is considered extremely primitive and dark to many people today.
- There is this vast movement to protect animals from any kind of cruelty, so the sacrificial system under the old covenant in Israel would be understood as barbaric and horrendous.
- Because of these sensitivities, there have been movements within the church to remove any references to “blood” from all hymns and sermons.
- But what is the problem for the gospel here? It is the fact that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” The problem is that we are in danger of losing the truth that all that shed blood under the old covenant was a foreshadowing of the precious blood of Christ that atoned for (and cleansed us from) all sin.

- This has led to a trivializing of the cross. George Guthrie says, “The cross of Christ, once respected, if not revered, as a significant religious symbol, has undergone a transmutation.”
- For a vast host of people today, the cross is simply something you wear around your neck (and if you want to, you can even get it with “the little man” on it).
- The concept of a blood sacrifice to atone for sin has become lost in our day and time. It is (now) a primitive idea that has become completely irreconcilable to modern thinking.
- But once again, we cannot give an inch! We must declared boldly and clearly what the Bible proclaims.
- John Stott wrote, “The gospel contains some features so alien to modern thought that it will always appear ‘folly’ to intellectuals, however hard we strive...to show that is it ‘true and reasonable.’ The cross will always constitute an assault on human self-righteousness, and a challenge to human self-indulgence.” [But, he says] “its ‘scandal’ simply cannot be removed.”
- Folks, the bottom line is that we must take back the ground we have lost, and we must help people (today) see a biblical understanding of the cross and the sacrifice it represents. Why? Because our

world desperately needs to hear (in a fresh way) that God loves us so much, He sent His only begotten Son to die in our place (on a cruel Roman cross) to atone for our sins and give us eternal life.

- We must never abandon the concept of the blood atonement, for it is the centerpiece of the biblical gospel. (Pause) Well, all that is for us to keep in mind, but we *must* move into our text.
- In Heb. 9:1-14 the Old and New Covenants are contrasted, and (as we saw in part 1 last week) in vv. 1-10 the author gives the characteristics of the Old Covenant, while in vv. 11-14 (which we’ll look at this morning) the characteristics of the New Covenant are provided. Last time we saw:

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OLD COVENANT (vv. 1-10)

- We’re using John MacArthur’s outline here, and under this first main point we saw:
 - A. The Old Sanctuary (vv. 2-5)
 - B. The Old Services (vv. 6-7) and
 - C. The Old Significance (vv. 8-10)
- We’re going to have the same basic outline for part 2 (today). Here is the other side of the contrast, so in vv. 11-14, we see:

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW COVENANT (vv. 11-14)

- Beginning in v. 11, the author of Hebrews moves to the Christological arguments of the Son's superior sacrifice for sin. The conjunction "but" highlights the contrast.
- In the previous section (vv. 1-10) we saw two key weaknesses of the old covenant. We saw that it did *not* allow any true access to God, and we saw where its sacrifices were temporary (and could *not* deal with the conscience – the inner man).
- But that section ended with a time limit. These weaknesses would only last until the time of reformation. With the coming of the new covenant those weaknesses would be overcome. And again, we see the same three aspects of this new covenant, beginning with:

A. The New Sanctuary (v. 11)

- Look with me at v. 11, "But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation..."
- Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, has an infinitely greater sanctuary in which to minister. Yes, the old

Tabernacle was designed by God, but it was made of that which was part of this created order. As a result, it was temporary and subject to decay and destruction. The Temple (which was patterned after the Tabernacle) was completely destroyed in 70 A.D.

- In contrast to that (however) the "more perfect tabernacle" in heaven is *not* made of that which can perish. It is *not* made by human hands, but by God Himself.
- In fact, this heavenly "tabernacle" is heaven itself. It is the throne room of Almighty God. This is the real tabernacle Christ has now entered on the basis of His own shed blood.
- The priests in the old tabernacle had to enter with the blood of "bulls and goats" temporarily covering their sin, but He has entered on the basis of His own blood (as we'll see in the next verse).
- But before we get to that, let me point out that there is a textual variant that scholars have vigorously debated in v. 11. The NASB reads, "Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come," but the ESV has "Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things that have come."
- Another translation has, "the good things that are now already here." Peter O'Brien explains this textual variant in his commentary. It's a fairly

complex explanation of the different manuscripts and how they word this, but my conclusion is that this is likely another case of the “already—*not* yet.”

- The phrase “Christ appeared” is in the aorist tense, which means this is something that has already taken place. Herschel Hobbs says, “It refers to the historical fact of his incarnation, which, of course, includes all of his redeeming work in history.”
- The “good things” seem to represent the sum total of the blessings of the new covenant. These are blessings that Christians experience in the here and now, but will *not* fully experience until that future state of glorification.
- Now, I don’t know if that solves the textual variant, but I *do* believe this is a good way of understanding the blessings of the new covenant. Our salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. It is “already—*not* yet” as far as our experience.
- In fact, there is a sense in which (positionally) we have already experienced that heavenly access to God – that Christ has already taken us into the presence of God in a spiritual sense.
- In Eph. 2:4-6 Paul said, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our

transgressions, made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus...”

- The use of the past tense there implies that we are already there (spiritually speaking) – we are (right now) in the very presence of God in His heavenly throne room.
- But (of course) we understand that this is speaking of “positional reality” yet someday that will be “actual reality.”
- I think the best way to understand v. 11 is to say that, now that Christ has “appeared,” in Him the shadows give way to the perfect and abiding reality.
- There is a ring of victory in this verse. Christ has opened the door to heaven and has provided full and permanent access to God. There is no reason for us to go on in the guilt of our sin. We can experience His “eternal redemption.” (Pause) Well, there is a second element we see here, and that is:

B. The New Service (v. 12)

- Look at v. 12, “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

- The services of the priests under the old covenant had to do (primarily) with the offering of sacrifices. Access into the Holy Place (and in particular the Holy of Holies) was always through blood.
- But the atoning work of Christ was distinct from that in three primary ways: (1.) He offered His own blood instead of that of animals, (2.) His sacrifice was a once for all sacrifice rather than having to be offered over and over again, and (3.) He was able to obtain “eternal redemption” for those who belong to Him.
- The word for “obtained” (there) is in the aorist tense, signifying “once and for all.” His offering was an all-sufficient, one time offering that secured eternal salvation to all who are in Christ.
- But there are some details in this verse I think we need to take note of. First of all, there are some translations that give the wrong impression in this verse.
- For example, the RSV has, “...he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood...”
- The problem with this, is that it has led to some wrong conclusions about His atoning work. F. F. Bruce writes, “There have been expositors who...have argued that the expiatory work of

Christ was *not* completed 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.’”

- And, of course, there have been preachers who have tied this to what Jesus said to Mary, when He said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father” (in John 20:17).
- But that is *not* good theology. It is best for us to understand that when Jesus cried out “tetelestai” (it is finished) from the cross, that His atoning work was complete, and that there was nothing else that needed to be done.
- The best translation of v. 12 is “by virtue of His own blood.” It is true that the Levitical high priest carried the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.
- But Jesus did *not* literally carry His own blood into the heavenly tabernacle. He entered the heavenly tabernacle by virtue of His shed blood on the cross.
- I think Bruce is right on target when he writes, “When on the cross he offered up his life to God as a sacrifice for his peoples’ sin, he accomplished in *reality* what Aaron and his successors performed in *type*...”

- Doctrinal statements have it rightly as “the one oblation of Christ finished on the cross.” We don’t need to see some sort of literal carrying of His blood into the heavenly tabernacle.
- But there are a couple of other details I think we should note here as well. The NASB has the phrase “once for all,” and that is exactly what it means. This is the Greek word “ephapax.” It is a word that means “once for all time.” It is something that never needs to be repeated.
- In other words, there is no need for any other work of atonement. It is absolutely sufficient and there is nothing you can add to it. You can’t add human works to this. You can’t add religious requirements. You can’t add any system of merit because it is completely sufficient in and of itself.
- I don’t know about you, but it sure seems to me, that if there is any one truth we should grasp from the Book of Hebrews, it is that Christ has done it all. Where else could you go except to conclude that the gospel is by grace alone?
- And then notice (in v. 12) what His blood has accomplished for us. Through it He has obtained “eternal redemption.”
- The word “redemption” is tied to the concept of a ransom. It is a price that is paid to free a captive or

a slave. Those who are redeemed by Christ are set free from sin’s guilt forever.

- Paul said in Rom. 3:24, “[We who are sinners] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”
- His blood was the ransom price for our salvation. It was the propitiation, the “mercy seat” upon which our sins were covered forever. And that salvation is a totally free gift of God’s grace to be received by faith in Jesus Christ.
- So v. 12 is a succinct summary of Christ’s work as the Mediatorial Savior. He has obtained that “eternal redemption” for all who put their faith in Christ alone. But there is more – so we see thirdly:

C. The New Significance (vv. 13-14)

Verses 13-14 are one sentence. Look at it with me, “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

- This is a classic “a fortiori” argument (from lesser to greater). If you look carefully you can see the conditional clauses (the “if, then”). The first clause states: “if the blood of goats and bulls... sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh...”
- Verse 14 supplies the “then” clause in the form of, “how much more will the blood of Christ... cleanse your conscience...”
- Of course, this is an “argument from lesser to greater,” which reasons: “If something is true in a lesser situation, it is true to an even greater degree in a greater situation.” The blood of animals is the lesser; the blood of Christ is the greater.
- Again, the purpose is *not* to demean the lesser, but to exalt the greater. John MacArthur says, “To condense and paraphrase verses 13 and 14, the Holy Spirit is saying, ‘If these old things were so good as symbols, how much better are the real things they symbolize. If the external, physical, and temporary covenant accomplished its purpose so well, how much better will the internal, spiritual, and eternal covenant accomplish its purpose!’”
- As weak and imperfect as the old covenant was, it *could* (in fact) provide for the temporary covering of sin. The sacrificial system of the Levitical priesthood was able to deal with sin to a degree.
- But the provision of the new covenant is far superior to that. The blood of Christ can cleanse the conscience (the inner man). It can provide that permanent access to God – that “eternal redemption.”
- In fact, the purpose for the old covenant was to symbolize (externally) the cleansing of sin – while the purpose of the new covenant was to actually, (internally) remove it forever.
- The inner man is where sin really exists, and the old covenant was *not* able to deal with that. It couldn’t cleanse the conscience. But the new covenant can do what the old could never do. It can transform the inner man. It can completely cleanse the heart of the sinner.
- But there are some details in these two verses that are important for us to note (as well). First of all, notice the distinction that is made between “the blood of goats and bulls” as opposed to “the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled.”
- The first phrase, “the blood of goats and bulls,” is a general term that refers *both* to the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement *and* the daily sacrifices in the temple.
- But the second phrase, “the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled,” points to

a special ritual prescribed in Numbers 19. Here a special sacrifice was instituted to enable those who were defiled in some way to become ceremonial clean.

- If an Israelite touched a dead body (for example), he would be unclean for 7 days. He could *not* participate in the worship of Israel as long as he remained unclean.
- But worse than that, he would become completely cut off from the covenant people if he remained unclean longer than 7 days. So there had to be a way for him to become cleansed from his defilement.
- This is where the red heifer comes in. For him to be cleansed from his defilement, the people were instructed by God to take a red heifer (without blemish) that had never worn a yoke, and to sacrifice it.
- Its blood was to be sprinkled before the tabernacle seven times. Then the heifer's body was to be burned, but the ashes of that heifer were kept for this purpose of purification.
- Any time a person became defiled in some way, they would take some of those ashes and would mix it in water, and then they would sprinkle it on the person who was defiled. This would happen on

the third day, and then on the seventh day he would be clean.

- This is what the author of Hebrews is referring to here, but I think the main point is that he is talking about any kind of sacrifice under the old covenant. *None* of these OT sacrifices could accomplish what the new covenant could.
- All these were external rituals that could only deal with external defilement. They could *not* transform the heart. They could *not* cleanse the conscience. They could only cleanse the flesh, but *not* the soul. Therefore these offerings pale into insignificance in comparison to the sacrifice of Christ.
- But going to v. 14 notice the phrase, “who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God.” Of course, the “without blemish” part points to the sinlessness of Christ.
- Jesus was *not* “without blemish” *physically*, but morally and spiritually. Of course, Lev. 14:10 tells us the sacrifices under the old covenant had to be “without blemish or defect.”
- That *also* was an imperfect symbol of a perfect fulfillment. The OT sacrifices were without blemish physically, but Jesus was perfect morally and spiritually. He was without sin.

- And notice that His sacrifice was made “through the eternal Spirit.” Scholars have debated this phrase, but I believe it is talking about the fact that everything Jesus did in His earthly ministry, He did it in the power of the HS (including His sacrificial death on the cross).
- Biblically, we would have to say that the work of atonement at the cross was the work of all three Persons of the Trinity. But this truth that Jesus accomplished this through the power of the Spirit is an admonition to us, that we should live the Christian life in the same power.
- Notice that the result of His atoning work (in the new covenant) is that we will be cleansed (in the inner man) “from dead works to serve the living God.”
- What are these “dead works”? Well, we’re running out of time (so I won’t be able to give a full explanation here) but suffice it to say that “dead works” are (for an unbeliever) those works that are *not* able to save.
- Human works cannot save. External rituals cannot save. In the same way that the ceremonies of the old covenant could never bring about full and complete atonement for sin, so “dead works” can never transform the heart and cleanse the conscience. Only Jesus Christ can do that.
- But for those who are Christians, I believe “dead works” are those we do in the power of the flesh instead of the power of the Spirit. If we had time we could do this more fully, but we have to understand that there are certain things we do to try to earn favor with God (even as Christians) that could be considered “dead works.”
- The transformation of the new covenant is intended to free us from these “dead works” so we can “serve the living God” in a way that is pleasing to Him.
- Where do you stand with Christ today? Have you experienced the heart transformation of the new covenant? Have you received “eternal redemption” by putting your faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation?
- ILL. – The famous hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote these profound words: “Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away the stain: but Christ, the heavenly Lamb, takes all our sins away, a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.”
- MAKE APPEAL
- PRAYER