

Hebrews 9

Introduction

More in this chapter about the High Priestly work of Christ. Last time considered His atonement, under then New Covenant. Now going to see His sacrifice in its perfection and glory. Also its superiority in comparison with Old Testament sacrifices.

Begins with picture of Old Testament Sanctuary with its candle stick, veil, Holy and Most Holy Place, the Ark. Then mentions the services – the daily sacrifices, presided over by priests. In particular, the great Day of Atonement, when the High Priest offered sacrifices for himself and the people, one comprehensive atonement for all sins for a whole year. Then the mercy seat was sprinkled with atoning blood, in the Holy of Holies, which the High Priest entered alone. Then he confessed the sin of the people over a live goat, which was led away into the wilderness, taking away the sins of the people.

These sacrifices, which had to be offered year by year, did not really and effectively cleanse conscience and put away sin. They did remove the ceremonial defilement, and taught the costliness of forgiveness and the need for sacrifice, but they merely pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary. They were a pale copy of the reality.

Christ was the priest and the sacrifice. He offered the perfect atonement on the altar of the Cross. His sacrifice was really effective. He is now in heaven, the perfect sanctuary, interceding for us. Securing our acceptance on the grounds of His sacrifice on the Cross. Now our way into the holy presence of God is fully open. We can have full and constant fellowship with God, only possible because of Christ.

He is in heaven itself as our ascended Lord. He will not leave heaven until He comes the second time without sin to complete the work of salvation. Thus the Old Testament priests and sacrifices were merely a pattern and shadow of the reality of Christ and His atonement.

The nature of atonement

- (a) The shedding of sacrificial *blood*. Some people find the constant reference to “blood” repulsive (“the religion of the slaughter house”), far more repulsive than the sin which caused it to be shed. It is essential to speak most reverently of this sacred fact – it represents one of the most glorious and moving truths of Scripture. In the evangelical tradition, the blood stands for the death of Christ. It meant life while it was coursing through His veins. But when it was shed and poured out, His blood meant His atoning death. The liberal school of thought says that Christ’s life was released to be presented as an offering and gift to God, and available to men, that death was just the means of releasing life to bring it near to God. But the evangelical school of thought expresses the “blood” not as the “releasing” of life by death, but the laying down of life in

death – death which the sinner deserved. “Blood” speaks of agonizing suffering, shame, sacrifice, death, not as an event but as something violently caused.

- (b) This shedding of blood was *necessary*. **Without shedding of blood is no remission** (Hebrews 9:22). No forgiveness unless God’s justice is honoured and the moral law of the universe is respected, and therefore the death penalty is exacted. No pardon unless blood is shed. Nothing we can do to get rid of sin. Repentance is not enough, neither reformation, turning over new leaf, wearing hair shirts and sackcloth and ashes, ceremonies and sacrifices, physical suffering and severe self denial, holy living – all in vain without the shedding of blood. God requires the laying down of life as the penalty due for sin. Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
- (c) Sin-bearing death. **Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many** (Hebrews 9:28). (Going to discuss the “once for all” nature of atonement in next of series) He was personally sinless, **without spot** (Hebrews 9:14), He had no sins of His own to atone for, therefore He was able to take on Himself our sins. Our sins were transferred to Christ in the reckoning of God. Hence His cry of dereliction on the Cross, as the Father could not look on His Son.
- (d) A voluntary death. **Through the eternal Spirit offered himself** (Hebrews 9:14). In animal sacrifices, the animal had no choice, no option. Christ chose to die. The animal’s life was taken from it. Jesus chose to die and gave His life. Jesus died, not as an ignorant victim like an animal which does not know what is happening. He was a rational sacrifice, He knew all the time what He was doing. He died open-eyed, knowing whence He had come, whither He was going, and what He was doing.

*“Was it the nails, dear Saviour,
Which held thee to the tree?
Nay, Twas thine everlasting love,
Thy love for me, for me.”*

- (e) Transcendent value. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, the eternal Son, the heir of all things, the express image of God’s person, indeed He could be called God Himself for He was fully divine. We may ask, how can Christ’s death after suffering for three hours on the cross be sufficient to atone for one sinner in hell for eternity, let alone the vast multitude of sinners which no man can number? Answer – the value of the death of the Eternal Son was of infinite value, more than sufficient to cover the sins of every one who had ever lived.

Therefore the death of Christ involved the shedding of blood, it was necessary, it was sin-bearing, though He was perfectly sinless, and was voluntary and of transcendent value, because He was no mere man.

Benefits which Christ’s death confers

- (a) Sin is put away. Contrast the old sacrifices, which “put away” ceremonial impurity, but were only skin-deep, and did not actually remove sin. It only, in a sense, covered sin. In Christ’s death, every one of our sins committed, from first to last, are taken away. There is no fear of judgment after death. Present pardon is offered. Completely, entirely wipes out the debt. At once received into the Father’s house. Embraced in the Father’s love as though he had never sinned. No sin in God’s book against us.

Krishna Pol wrote,

*“Jesus for thee a body takes.
Thy guilt assumes, thy fetters breaks;
Discharging all that dreadful debt.
Canst thou then such love forget.”*

In Pilgrim’s Progress, Christian goes up to the Cross, and his burden is loosed from off his back, and rolls down the hill, “until it fell in a great pit, and I saw it no more.” Then he gave three leaps for joy and went on his way singing.

- (b) Cleanses the conscience. From dead works to serving the living God. Conscience is cleansed. Aware of nothing between us and God. Can look Him in the face. The issue is utterly closed. Free now to serve God. Nothing more crippling than guilty conscience, it dries up the well of Christian joy, makes us want to resign job, prevents us from looking our brothers in the face, ruins prayer life. His blood sets us free to serve the living God. When Luther was once asked where his faith began, he replied, “In the wounds of Jesus. And if my faith began in the wounds of Jesus, that is where I want it to stay.”
- (c) Obtains eternal redemption. Redemption was planned in eternity past. It guarantees our enjoyment of it in eternity future. Able to deliver us and keep us amid all our perils in this mortal life. We cannot be lost because eternal ransom has been paid. “Eternal punishment” is a word of unspeakable terror, but fully covered by “eternal redemption”.
- (d) The blessings of the second coming. **He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation – unto them that look for Him** (Hebrews 9:28). He is going to be seen again. No longer stooping unto the weight of the world’s sins, but to complete the work of salvation. To deliver us from the very presence of sin and to be transformed into His sinless likeness. This promise is for those who wait for Him with loins girt and lamps burning. At the second coming when Christ comes – if He does so as a friend, it can only be a day of glory. But if He returns as a stranger and enemy, it will be a day of judgement. How do we view the second coming? The issue is – how is your heart with Christ?

Conclusion

The sacrificial blood of Christ was necessary, sin-bearing, voluntary, and of infinite value. It puts away sin, cleanses the conscience, brings eternal redemption, and the blessings of the second coming.