



First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS IS BETTER • JESUS, OUR PERFECT SACRIFICE • HEBREWS 9:1-28 • 7/2/2023

MAIN POINT

Jesus has become both our mediator and the perfect sacrifice required to destroy the effects of sin permanently.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What's the favorite part of your daily routine? Why?

If you could eliminate one part of your daily routine, what would it be and why?

We accept routines as a part of life, but they can be restricting and tiresome. Some people become attached to rituals and resist change, even when change is positive. Ritualistic religion can become a routine where actions are done by rote and without consideration of their meaning. The readers of Hebrews came from a religion based on rituals. Christ provides freedom from rituals and offers a clear conscience that moves believers to serve Him with a pure heart.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 9:1-10.

1 "Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. 2 For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of

the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, 4 having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, 7 but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. 8 By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing 9 (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, 10 but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation." (ESV)

Describe the elements of the first tabernacle found in this passage. What was God communicating about Himself through this structure?

One of the key purposes of the tabernacle was to be a reminder to people about the importance of worshiping God. Many of the objects inside were related to worship. God created us to worship Him from the beginning.

What three items are found in the Ark of the Covenant?

What was He communicating about His people and their needs?

Each item found in the Ark was a reminder to the nation of Israel of God's character. The manna was a reminder of God's provision of food and nourishment during the wilderness wanderings. The budded staff of Aaron was a reminder of warning against complaint and faultfinding. The stone tablets reminded the nation of God's expectations for them and all mankind.

Through these symbols God was teaching His people about His holiness and their sinfulness. He taught them of the need for a mediator and the importance of the sacrifice that would come.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 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."*
(ESV)

How did Christ eliminate the need for the ritual of sacrifice? Why is this significant to believers?

Earthly high priests had to make animal sacrifices to God regularly on behalf of sins, but Jesus' sacrificial death is a once-for-all sacrifice—*"by His own blood."*

Rituals, part of the old covenant, were seen as necessary to help prepare one for worship. Rituals were seen as a way for sinful people to outwardly cleanse themselves in order to enter into the tabernacle ("presence of God"). Even at this time, those undergoing the ritual cleansing understood that it was only a temporary condition. Until Jesus, a person could only temporarily cleanse themselves with great fear of God's disapproval. However, Jesus changed this cleaning from an outward one to an inward one, a temporary one to a permanent one, and one based on fear to one built on grace.

To what does "*good things*" (v. 11) refer? How have you experienced "*good things*" from Jesus in your life?

Christ won blessings for believers through His sacrificial death. Jesus continues to bless His followers with His presence in their lives on a daily, ongoing basis. This is the abundant life that He promised.

Are you ever tempted to try and make yourself right before God based on something you've done?

Why do you think we have that tendency?

Why is a cleansed conscience important? How does the condition of your conscience affect the way you serve God?

A pure conscience leads to service and commitment to God. A guilty conscience makes it hard to be outwardly focused because of the inward turmoil that is raging in our hearts and minds. In the words of Apostle Paul while standing trial in Acts 24:16, *"So I always take*

pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man." We too should share his commitment to a clear conscience.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 9:15-28.

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. 16 For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. 17 For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. 18 Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without the blood. 19 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, 20 saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.' 21 And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. 22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

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. 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. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then we 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. 27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 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." (ESV)

How would you describe a mediator? Why is Christ called one?

How does the idea of Jesus' being the perfect mediator impact your understanding of your need for Christ?

A mediator is someone who goes between one person and another, often to settle disputes or differences. Mediators in the old covenant were humans, such as prophets, priests, and kings. They mediated between sinful humans and the Almighty God. Under

the new covenant, Christ now serves as the mediator between God the Father and humanity.

How do these verses offer hope? Which parts encourage you most?

We can approach Christ directly. His death eliminated the need for a human go-between. Christ's death eliminated the need for ritual sacrifices to remove our sins. Christ's sacrificial death offers "*the promise of the eternal inheritance,*" or life eternal. We can look forward to Christ's return when His work of salvation will be perfected in our glorification.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What religious attitudes or rituals do you depend on to "keep you right with God"?

How do spiritual disciplines differ from legalistic rituals?

Is there any area of life in which you need a clear conscience? How might telling someone else about that help you to see that Jesus has cleaned your conscience and given you power over sinful habits?

PRAYER

Close in prayer by thanking Jesus for being the perfect mediator and for destroying the power of sin over His people. Pray for those in your group who need wisdom to apply this truth in their lives.

COMMENTARY

| HEBREWS 9

9:1. This verse summarizes the glories of the old tabernacle, showing its orderliness. The components of the earthly tabernacle showed that it was temporary. The intent of this verse is not to ridicule the past but to prepare the readers to appreciate the superior glories of Christ's new work.

9:2. The old tabernacle had two parts. "First" indicated the room closer to the entrance from the outer courtyard—the Holy Place. It was approximately thirty feet long, fifteen feet wide, and fifteen feet high. This room contained a lampstand, a table, and the bread of the presence (Exod. 35:10–29). The lampstand illuminated the first tent. The glorious presence of God illuminated the second tent. The table contained the bread placed there every Sabbath. Only priests ate the bread (Exod. 25:23–30; Lev. 24:5–9).

9:3. A curtain separated the Holy Place from the second part of the old tabernacle—the Most Holy Place (see 6:19).

9:4. The golden altar of incense was located in front of the curtain (Exod. 30:1–6) so that it actually stood in the Holy Place. This incense altar was vital for the burning of incense on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:13), so it is associated it with the Holy of Holies.

9:5. The cherubim (Exod. 25:18–22) situated above the ark symbolized the presence of God. They were probably winged creatures. They overshadowed the atonement cover, also called the mercy seat. The high priest sprinkled this part of the ark with blood on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:14).

9:6. The priests regularly came into the Holy Place to carry out their ministry. They lighted the lamps daily (Exod. 27:20–21), replaced the loaves of bread every Sabbath (Lev. 24:5–8), and burned incense on the golden altar (Exod. 30:7–8). The daily repetition of these ministries showed that they never resulted in access to God.

9:7. Only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and he could enter only on the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16:12–16 suggests that he entered twice on that day, once with blood for his own sin and again with blood for the sins of the people. The use of blood showed that the priest had offered a sacrifice for sin, but the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement did not bring access to God. This prepares us for the importance of the shed blood of Christ in providing sacrifice for our sins (Eph. 1:7).

9:8. What did these details of verses 6–7 mean? The existence of the outer sanctuary showed that the Old Testament ceremonies limited access to God's presence. Once a year the high priest alone could enter the inner sanctuary.

9:9–10. If the old sacrifices could not bring common people to God, what good were they? These gifts and sacrifices were imperfect and temporary. They were imperfect because they were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. Some Old Testament saints

had clear consciences, but they did not get them through the sacrificial system. The sacrifices were temporary because they applied only until the time of the new order.

9:11. What did Jesus do under the new covenant? Jesus purifies believers for service. He supplied the real action which lay behind the symbols of the tabernacle and its ritual. Jesus' death had secured divine blessings for his people. Jesus came as high priest through the greater and more perfect tabernacle.

9:12. Jesus' redemptive work consisted of offering his own blood, not the blood of goats and calves. Jesus had given himself. The blood of Jesus our High Priest was far more precious than the blood of animals. His was a once for all offering that never needed repeating. Christ's offering required no daily or even annual repetition. A single offering was eternally effective.

9:13. What happened when Old Testament worshipers offered sacrifices? Did these offerings provide spiritual benefit for the offerers? These sacrifices sanctified the offerers so that they are outwardly clean. These offerings were provisions for cleansing from fleshly defilement and provided temporary ceremonial purity. They could not give inner, spiritual cleansing. Only the blood of Christ could touch the conscience.

9:14. This verse argues from the lesser to the greater. If the blood of animals can provide external cleaning, how much more effective is the cleansing of Christ's blood.

9:15. Jesus secures forgiveness of sin. On the basis of giving himself, Christ became a mediator of the new covenant and a ransom to free captives from their sin. Christ's death was the price paid to liberate spiritual prisoners. The old covenant had no provision for removing offenses against God. In his death, Christ removed the consequences of human sin for those who trust him. The real cleansing from sin against God did not come from sacrificing animals but from the sacrifice of Christ.

9:16–18. The death of Christ not only set believers free from their sins, but it also activated the positive benefits of the new covenant.

9:19. Moses proclaimed the commandments to the people and offered animals in sacrifice. Then he announced the symbolism of his actions in sprinkling the people. The acts of sacrifice and sprinkling were important in inaugurating the covenant between God and Israel. Exodus did not mention the use of water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, but we could deduce their usage from Leviticus 14:4–5; and Numbers 19:18. Exodus made

no mention of sprinkling the book, but reading it was central to Moses' contact with the people. The initiation of the first covenant demanded the presence of blood or death.

9:20. The words here sound close to Jesus' words at the institution of the Lord's Supper (see Matt. 26:28). When we compare the words of Hebrews with the words of Moses in Exodus 24:8, we realize that the symbolism of Moses' sprinkling has found its fulfillment in Jesus' death at Calvary. Moses' action of sprinkling the blood confirmed God's covenant with Israel and called his people to obedience.

9:21. This verse contains additional details not found in Exodus. Jewish tradition suggested that Moses' dedication of the altar involved sprinkling blood on the tent and the vessels of worship. The use of blood confirmed the reality of the covenant and showed the importance of obedience.

9:22. This verse draws the general conclusion that the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood. Some Jewish rituals specified the use of water, fire (Num. 31:22–24), or flour (Lev. 5:11–13) to bring cleansing, but the use of blood was the norm. The concluding statement that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness comes from the ideas of Leviticus 17:11. The act of shedding blood referred to the death of the sacrificial animal and to the application of the blood to secure forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness did not become a reality until the death of Christ actually removed sin.

9:23. Jesus' sacrifice never needs repetition. Verses 15–22 show that the old covenant demanded the use of blood for purification. Earthly things needed purification by external means. The hearts of believers demanded a special type of purification before God.

9:24. This verse explains how Christ offered better sacrifices by pointing out the past and present missions of Christ. After his death at Calvary, Christ entered heaven itself. The term heaven referred to the presence of God rather than to a specific location. The presence of God was a reality of which the earthly tabernacle was only a copy.

9:25. This verse emphasizes the finality and voluntariness of Jesus' death. The Aaronic high priest made annual trips into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. Each time he carried the blood of a fresh animal sacrifice. Christ had no need to offer himself repeatedly. One offering was final for all time. The Aaronic high priests came with blood from animal sacrifices that had been slain involuntarily. No animal could consciously say, "I desire to do your will, O God." Christ voluntarily surrendered his life for the sins of the world (Luke 22:42).

9:26. Jews would be acquainted with a repetition of sacrifices. They would need to understand why the death of Christ was final and unrepeatable. This verse implies that a repeated offering would have involved Christ in continual suffering. However, the death of Christ could happen only once in history. There was only one incarnation and death. The timing of this event occurred in God's perfect wisdom.

9:27-28. These verses contrast the death of human beings and the death of Christ. The death of human beings was destined, and judgment followed after it. We cannot avoid death. God has appointed that death should visit every human being.