

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 9, Verses 23-28
Notes From Class on February 2, 2010
Last Revised on (February 3, 2010)

Good evening everyone!

Welcome to our continuing study of the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

Tonight you will need a Bible and a song book.

If you are using an English translation of the Bible other than the English Standard Version ("ESV") then you may also wish to have the handout we have prepared, which has the ESV text of Hebrews, Chapter 9.

There is coffee and tea a the back.

Please get what you want and, then, let's get started.

Introduction

In this class, as you know, we are studying the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

Last week we got to Chapter 9, Verse 22.

However we pushed pretty hard to get there.

And several people told me they thought the material last week was difficult.

So tonight we will not try to go beyond the end of Chapter 9.

Instead we will begin with a brief review of Chapters 1-8.

Then we will carefully go through all of Chapter 9,

including the parts we have already read but possibly not understood.

I will try to make sure that we get to the end of Chapter 9.

But by the end of this evening I hope everyone will feel they have a pretty good grasp of Hebrews, Chapter 9.

Review

As we have continually noted,

Hebrews appears to be the text of a sermon,

written around the end of the First Century, A.D,

to be delivered to a group of Christians

at least some of whom were in danger of "falling away"

and needed to be encouraged to "hold fast" to their confession of faith.

The preacher reminds his audience of the unqualified supremacy of Christ **(1:1 - 3:6)**.

He touches on the sad history of Israel and urges his audience not to repeat the same mistakes **(3:7 - 4:13)**.

The preacher introduces the figure of Jesus as our great high priest. **(4:14 - 5:10)**

He warns that, since only Jesus is finally able to save anyone, to reject Jesus is finally to reject all hope of salvation. **(5:11 - 6:20)**

The priesthood and the law have been replaced by something better **(7:1 - 8:7)**.

The Old Covenant has been replaced by a New Covenant **(8:8-8:13)**.

That's a quick review to the end of Chapter Eight.

Now let's go through Chapter 9 slowly and carefully.

Will somebody please read the first five verses of Chapter 9 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now will someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

Now, please remember where our "head is at" as we read these five verses.

The preacher has spent 8 chapters bringing his listeners to the point where they understand that Jesus, who is greater than everything in all creation, has established a **New Covenant**, which replaces the old one:

The old **priesthood** is finished.

The demands of the **law** have been satisfied.

the preacher will return to this point again in Chapter 10.

Here in Chapter 9, the preacher is specifically interested in looking at the **ceremonial** aspect of the law.

His primary purpose, here I believe, is to make certain that his listeners understand that these ceremonies are **obsolete**,

But the preacher has a second purpose, closely related to the first

and that is to help his listeners see what those obsolete ceremonies **taught**, and **continue** to teach, about the relationship between God and man

and therefore what they help us to understand about **Christ**, who made those ceremonies obsolete.

The ceremonies of the Old Covenant accomplished **temporarily**, **partially**, and **imperfectly** things which Christ accomplished **eternally**, **fully**, and **perfectly**.

Therefore by studying the ceremonies of the Old Covenant, we can understand better (by analogy) what **Christ** has done for us.

In Chapter 9, Verse 1 (please look there) we are reminded that, **even** under the Old Covenant there was a **right** way to worship God,

and this right way involved an **earthly** holy place, toward which appropriate worship was properly directed. (*Draw Tabernacle on White Board*)

This earthly place of holiness is **summarily** described in the first 5 verses of Chapter 9, which we have just read

Verse 5 informs us that a **detailed** description of this earthly holy place is beside the point being made here.

Here what is important is that we understand he is talking about **the** tabernacle which God instructed Moses to build.

Because this was the **symbol**, ordained by God, of God's presence among his people.

Under the Old Covenant, it was only in this earthly tent that the priests might lawfully make offerings and sacrifices to YHVH

Any place **else**, and their religious practices were unlawful and unholy.

But even in this tabernacle, they needed to be very careful to worship God in the prescribed manner.

as we learned from the bad experience of Aaron's eldest sons who offered strange fire to the LORD.

Thus we come to the activities of the priests described in verses 6 and 7.

Will somebody please read verses 6 and 7 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English** (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

Verse 6 reminds us that the all-important tabernacle, which represented God's presence in Israel, was **prepared**,

That is it was **made** by **human** hands out of **earthly** materials,

but **these** preparations were made in accordance with the instructions Moses had received from God,

thus protecting the people and their priests from lapsing into idolatry, sorcery, and the other dangers of creative worship.

We are reminded in verse 6 that the priests had certain **ritual** duties to perform in this Tabernacle.

A ritual is something that is done **repeatedly** and in accordance with a fixed pattern.

Here we are to understand that the rituals were a **good** thing, because they were ordained by God.

And these rituals were **many** and **frequent** under the Old Covenant.

These duties were performed by multitudes of **different** priests over time,

because the priests were ordinary **humans** who become weary and die,

all points that have been made previously.

The important point being made here (still in verse 6) is that all of these rituals were confined to the **first** section of the tabernacle.

Or some translate this as being confined to the first (i.e. earthly) tabernacle, which winds up making the same point.

And the point is that even this **earthly** tent marked off an area (especially the second, inner section) that was so **holy** as to be unapproachable even by the priests.

This point was underscored by the one exception to the general rule, which is remembered in **Verse 7**:

On only one special day each year, the High Priest **could** enter this holiest place.

When he went in there, he had to do it a certain way, including, importantly, taking the **blood** of animals to atone for himself and the sins of the people.

What he accomplished on this day was **atonement** for the sins of the people.

Leviticus 16 says he accomplished atonement for "**all** the sins of the people"

Here the author of Hebrews refers to the "**unintentional**" sins of the people.

We have spent a lot of time pondering this distinction.

But it might be sufficient to say that on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest made atonement for all of the sins of which the people had repented and for which they truly sought forgiveness.

Here, again, the most important thing is not the details of this now obsolete ritual, but the eternal lesson being taught by the Holy Spirit..

This is explained further in verses 8 through 10

Will somebody please read verses 8 through 10 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English** (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

O.K. So this arrangement we read about in the first 7 verses, and in particular the arrangement described in verse 7, whereby the holiest earthly place could be entered **only** by the High Priest **only** on the Day of Atonement was a clear indication that men could **NOT** enter into the **actual** holy places **at all** or by any means.

The tabernacle, which was a symbol of God's **presence** in Israel, was also a symbol of the **separation** between the holy God and the unholy people in the present age (i.e. until the time of reformation foreseen by Jeremiah).

And for so long as God and his people **remained** separate, these ceremonial activities which took place under the Old Covenant remained necessary, and beneficial, and even effective.

Not in themselves of course --- the preacher is quick to point this out.

The ceremonies just used food and drink and washings and regulations for the body which, of course, could not in themselves perfect the conscience of the worshiper.

But these earthly elements were nevertheless effective because of what they **symbolized**.

Q. And what **did** they symbolize?

A. Christ and the atonement he would actually accomplish, thus finally reconciling God and Man.

Christ who is **actually** present to us now --- face to face --- was present to the Fathers through these ceremonies.

Which is precisely why these ceremonies are **obsolete**, now that Christ has come.

OK so far?

Will somebody now please read verses 11 and 12 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English** (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

So Christ who was present to the Fathers only through the elements of the Old Covenant, finally appeared,

and one of the ways we understand his role, by analogy, is as the ultimate, final, and perfect High Priest.

But Christ would never enter into the tabernacle or the temple or require the blood of innocent animals.

Instead he entered into the very presence of God by means of his own death on the cross.

What he accomplished was an eternal redemption. (full atonement)

There is no further need for animal sacrifices or earthly holy places made by human hands.

There is therefore no place for priests to perform any rituals.

And there are no rituals for priests to perform.

All of these things have served their purpose.

And are now honorably put away.

As I have said, I think it is the preacher's main purpose here to make this point.

He does not want anyone in his immediate audience to suppose that there is any point in continuing to practice these rituals of the Old Covenant.

But now he turns it around and uses the rituals of the Old Covenant which they knew so well and loved so deeply to help explain what Christ has accomplished.

Will somebody please read verses 13 and 14 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English** (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

The preacher here acknowledges, what his audience must also have understood through their own experience,

that under the Old Covenant the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, and other rituals, **were** effective

Certainly, as I emphasized last week, where there **is** such a thing as ritual impurity (e.g. from having touched a dead body)

the offerings and sacrifices ordained for ritual purification are **actually** effective.

Through these means the ritually impure person is actually made ritually clean again and restored to fellowship with God and his people.

But this may not be the only point here.

As we have discussed above, the rituals set forth under the Old Covenant for the atonement for other sins --- i.e. not just the ritual purity laws --- ultimately were effective insofar as these foreshadowed the atonement for sin accomplished, once for all, by Jesus Christ.

Even though they could not yet know about Jesus, godly Jews under the Old Covenant would rightfully have understood these rituals as, somehow by God's grace, being effective for the removal of sin. They would at least have been hopeful of this, however uneasy their conscience.

The spiritually insightful in Israel, of whom there were many, even understood that it was God's grace and not the ceremonies themselves that were the main thing, which would have given them even more hope.

This being the case, we can understand the preacher's argument in verses 13 and 14.

If the Fathers were somehow actually purified and sanctified by means of the sprinkling of **animal** blood, how much more will they and we all be purified and sanctified by the blood of Christ.

This is an argument from the lesser to the greater, from the sign to the thing signified.

If the animal sacrifices representing Christ under the Old Testament were so effective, then how much more effective would be the atoning death of Christ Himself?

This, his death, is the reason why he is said to be the mediator of a new covenant.

Which is the next point the preacher makes.

Will somebody please read verse 15 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verse in **English** (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

He is the mediator of a **new** covenant because his death is what finally redeems those who transgressed the **old** covenant,

and makes it possible for **them** to receive the eternal inheritance which was promised to them.

And this new covenant is also the gospel which is now proclaimed to **all** the nations.

The new covenant resembles a will, in that it becomes effective when someone, in this case Jesus, dies.

That is the idea which the preacher picks up in the next two verses.

Will somebody please read verses 16 and 17 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English** (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

Again, the new covenant is like a will, in that it could not be executed without the death of Christ.

When he died, Jesus' instructions were carried out and his property was released to his beneficiaries.

Q. What were his instructions?

A. Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!

Q. What was his property?

His **righteousness**, which is attributed to us.

His **spirit**, which he sends to dwell in us.

His **kingdom** where he has gone to prepare a place for us, and into which he welcomes us.

His **eternal** life, which he shares with us.

In short, he gave his perfect, sinless, human life to atone for our sins and willed to us eternally all that he had.

This is the image in view here.

It is difficult to capture the full significance of it.

The blessed eternal life which we receive under the New Covenant is somehow marked by the innocent blood of Jesus Christ, shed for us.

The ceremonies of the Old Covenant were a preparation for and prefiguring of this New Covenant,

and only the inauguration of the new Covenant can fulfill the promises of the Old Covenant.

This (the preacher tells us) explains the abundance of the innocent blood of animals that was shed under the Old Covenant.

This seems, to me, to be the overall point of verses 18 - 22

Will somebody please read verses 18 through 22 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English** (ESV)

18 Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without 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.

Thank you.

So I think we understand that, logically, but of course not chronologically, the death of Christ comes **before** the Old Covenant.

Because the purpose of the the innocent blood of animals shed under the Old Covenant was to **represent** Christ.

It was and is his eternal, atoning, self-sacrifice which cleansed and sanctified the Fathers.

They could not know that openly, but they knew it through the various ceremonies,

Which God Himself ordained and which the Holy Spirit used for such good purposes,

Will somebody please read verses 23 and 24 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English** (ESV)

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.

Thank you.

The earthly tabernacle was a God-ordained, man-made representation of a heavenly reality. --
- a symbol (and a marvelously complex one it seems to me) of a Holy God dwelling among his unclean people.

The purification rites were somehow "necessary," which I read to mean beneficial for those who lived under the Old Covenant

and now I think we properly understand that the animal blood and other elements used in the various rituals were earthly figures for the death Jesus would suffer.

But what Jesus has accomplished is **not** symbolic. (THIS IS IMPORTANT.)

He **actually** transcended creation and entered into the presence of God, **on our behalf**.

In Jesus man has **actually** entered into the holiest places where God is.

In Jesus God has **actually** come to dwell among his people.

In Jesus Man and God have **actually** been reconciled.

This means that Man has **actually** been purified.

This is not the sort of purification which could ever have been accomplished with animal blood or other symbols or ritual acts.

The symbols and ritual acts merely pointed to the "better sacrifice"

And the better sacrifice was Jesus Christ

Who through a life of perfect obedience, became the perfect sacrifice, and offered himself as an atonement for all of our sins, and with his death bequeathed us his holiness and perfect eternal life in God's presence.

What Christ has accomplished has been accomplished once for all.

Will somebody please read verses 25 and 26 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English**(ESV)

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 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.

Thank you.

Once Jesus sacrificed himself, sin was atoned for, completely and forever, and Jesus entered heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

Nothing further needs to be done, or can be done, to put away sin.

It is true that we baptize believers and celebrate the Lord's Supper.

But these ordinances celebrate the finished work of Christ.

They do not continue it.

Finally will somebody please read verses 27 and 28 in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in **English**(ESV)

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.

Thank you.

Unless Christ returns first, you and I will all die, exactly once.

That is the nature of human life. We all die once, and then comes the judgement.

Many people are curious about what happens after death and before the judgment.

But that does not seem to be part of what the preacher is interested in here.

His point is that, like all of us, Jesus only suffered death once.

His one death is what has put away sin for many.

When Jesus next appears, it will not be to put away sin.

but to be reunited with those whom he has saved.

This is a message of encouragement spoken to the redeemed

and a warning spoken to those who might fall away.