

The Book Of Hebrews

Part II

Jesus, Our Great High Priest 4:14-10:18

Lesson 8: (8:1-8:13)

Outline thus far.

I. God's Final Word Spoken Through His Son (1:1-2:18).

II. The Need For The Incarnation Explained (2:5-18).

III. First Digression - Exhortation To "Hold Fast" And Warning Against Unbelief (3:1-4:13).

Part II - Jesus, Our Great High Priest (4:14-10:18).

I. Jesus Qualified For Priesthood Hebrews (4:14-5:10).

II. Second Digression - Warning Against Apostasy And Encouragement To Perfection (5:12-6:20).

III. Jesus A High Priest After The Order Of Melchizedek (7:1-28).

IV. "A Ministry More Excellent" (8:1-10:18).

A. Introduction to the Superior Priestly Ministry of Jesus (8:1-6).

B. The character of the New Covenant (8:7-13).

IV. "A Ministry More Excellent" 8:1-10:18 (cont'd).

C. The priestly service and sanctuary of the First Covenant (9:1-10).

Connecting thought.

Christ "has obtained a more excellent ministry" (8:6) and contextually His priestly service (1-6). By how much is it better? "Inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant..." The remainder of ch. 8 discussed the better covenant and now 9 explores the more excellent ministry.

Its Sanctuary described (1-5)

The things that belonged to the former (1).

1. "Even ..." The importance and respect to be associated with the former acknowledged, yet this has been surpassed by something far greater.
2. It had "ordinances of Divine service" and a Sanctuary that pertained to this world.
3. "Sanctuary (hagion)" is used of those structures which are set apart to God (Vine) and so the description to follow would apply to the Tabernacle or Temple. They were worldly in that they pertained to this earth as distinct from that not made with man's hands - the heavenly where Christ had gone (9:11, 24).

The arrangement and furniture within (2-5a).

1. The outer sanctuary known as the Holy place (2). It was the first section or part of the Tabernacle/Temple to be entered and was separated from the inner or Holiest of All by a veil (Ex 26:31-33). Within this was placed the lampstand (Ex 25:31-36) and a table upon which was set the shewbread (Lev 24:5-9).
2. The Holiest of All (3-5a). The Tabernacle had two veils, the first served as the only entrance into the structure (Ex 26:36-37) and the second partitioned the outer from the inner. Within were placed a golden censer (Lev 16:12-13), the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:10), the contents that it stored (Ex 16:32-34; Num 17:10; Dt 10:2-5) and the cherubim that over stretched it (Ex 25:18-20).

The writer's purpose (5b). We are only informed what it was not i.e., it was not to speak of these things individually. He was about to focus attention upon the priestly ministry and so likely his purpose was to show the significance of their arrangement within the tabernacle/temple, particularly the two compartments and the veil.

The limitations of the earthly service (6-10).

The respective duties of the priests and High Priest (6-7). The sanctuary being arranged as detailed, the priests were confined in their duties to the outer compartment (6) whereas the High Priest though able to enter the inner was only permitted to do so annually and under strict conditions (7). His entrance was not to be without blood which was offered for his own sins and also for that of the people.

The significance and design of this arrangement (8). The Spirit indicated that "the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing". The two compartment design chosen was not arbitrary but selected so as to signify a particular point that would not have been achieved if constructed differently (8:5).

The symbolism explained (9). The gifts and sacrifices were emblematic (parabole) for the then "present time" and could not make him who performed the service "perfect (teleioo)" as regards the conscience (10:1-2). They could not bring peace to the conscience by reconciling it to God. Such ordinances were fleshly being imposed until the "time of reformation (diorthosis)".

Word definitions and elaboration.

Parabole: "Lit. denotes 'a placing beside' (akin to paraballos, 'to throw' or 'lay beside, to compare'). It signifies 'a placing of one thing beside another' with a view to comparison..." (Vine).

Teleioo: "'To bring to an end by completing or perfecting,' is used (I) of 'accomplishing'; (II), of 'bringing to completeness,' (a) of persons..." (Vine).

Diorthosis: "Properly, 'a making straight' (dia), 'through,' orthos, 'straight'; cf. diorthoma in Ac 24:2; denotes a 'reformation' or reforming." Having two senses, Vine says the word here has the meaning "of a right arrangement, right ordering... What is here indicated is a time when the imperfect, the inadequate, would be superseded by a better order of things." It meant putting things right, setting things as they ought to be. Think of this in relation to what has already been argued. If there had been perfection under the Levitical priesthood... But there was not perfection under this priesthood (7:11). If the first covenant had been faultless... But it was not faultless, there was need for another (8:7). Now is the time for the right ordering of things when all was put into a satisfactory state. The OT arrangement was just a foreshadowing, a parable imposed until the time came when they were set as they ought to be.

D. The more excellent ministry of Jesus (9:11-28; cf. 8:6).*The accomplishment of Christ (11-12).*

Outline.

In order to pick up the meaning of a complicated statement of this sort where there are modifying clauses and several details, it is helpful to re-read it carefully several times so as to pick out the thrust. Here the main point is what Christ has done; He having become a High Priest through two means "has entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption". Notice that the ministrations of the Aaronic Priesthood also involved two things – a sphere of service, an earthly sanctuary (9:1) and blood (9:6-7).

The two means are "a greater and more perfect tabernacle..." and "His own blood".

The outline as evidenced in the ERV but also seen in the RSV, ASV and YLT.

"But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through (dia) the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through (dia) the blood of goats and calves, but through (dia) his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption"

Word definition

Dia: "Through... by the means of" (Thayer). Note that several other versions cloud the meaning by translating the same Greek word "dia" in different ways in the same context.

The achievement explained (13-14).

Such a great accomplishment was made possible by the power that is in His blood. If the blood of animals mixed with the ashes of a heifer had been able to purify the flesh how much more would Christ's blood be effective in cleansing the conscience from sin so as to clear the way for service to God. Thus the argument runs if animal's blood had been able to achieve this... How much more must Christ's blood have the capacity to achieve its objectives.

The only possible reference is to Num 19:2-22 which dealt with the ceremonial uncleanness resultant from contact with a dead body. This is the singular ritual recorded which involved the ashes of a heifer. Its purpose was to remove the obstruction which would prevent the individual from approaching God in worship in the regular way.

The impediment was ceremonial uncleanness and not sin. Yet if animal's blood was able to remove this barrier, how much more effective could the precious blood of God's son be in cleansing the conscience from dead works/the guilt of sin to enable service to the living God.

The necessity of blood for cleansing from sin (15-22; cf. 2:5-18).

The object for which Christ was the mediator of a new covenant – that "they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (15).

"And for this cause" links this verse with the cleansing/purging/purifying power of the blood of Christ (14).

1. Notice how this purpose is more clearly brought out by other translations e.g. the ERV: "And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant (diatheke), that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."
2. The effect of the death reaches back so as to offer redemption from transgressions to those who lived under the old.
3. The same Grk. word, diatheke is translated "Testament" in verses 16-18. The nuances of meaning are best explored by further reading outside this study. In this passage it is undoubtedly used of a particular type of compact, which comes into force on the death of the disposer irrespective of the will of the beneficiary – "the last disposition which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death, a testament or will" (Thayer).

The necessity of His death explained (16-17). It was essential in order that the covenant should be ratified.

1. It is only the death of the testator which gives the testament (diatheke) legal force. Up until this juncture the testator could make changes to its provisions.
2. The context here reveals one of the functions in which Christ served as mediator. The Grk. means middle-man (see notes on 8:6). The fact of His death indicates the condition upon which the New Testament was put into effect.

The indispensability of blood in ratifying a covenant demonstrated - even the first was not dedicated without it (18-20; Ex 24:3-8).

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (21-22). With this additional explanatory statement about the cleansing power of blood, particularly that of Jesus, the closing thought linking with the point of departure in v. 14 where the accomplishment of Christ was under discussion.

The cleansing work of Christ in the heavenly Sanctuary (23-28).

The principle of v. 22 applied (23). The copies of the heavenly (the tabernacle and its utensils [8:5]) must be purified by "these" (the blood of bulls and goats v. 12) "but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices".

The priestly service of Christ contrasted to that of the OT (24-26). The dissimilarity is pointed out with reference to the two items of service already mentioned – the tabernacle and blood sacrifice (11-12). Attention has been given to the power and necessity of Christ's blood, now the emphasis is focussed upon its sufficiency. The elements of the comparison:

1. The Sanctuary into which Christ entered. It was not made with hands and rather than being a copy of the real thing was heaven itself where He appeared in the presence of God (24).
2. The blood offering. His was a once for all appearance "at the end of the ages" with His own blood otherwise He would have had to suffer many times since the foundation of the world (25-26).

The experience of Christ compared to that of men (27-28).

As it was appointed to men to die once and then face judgement so Christ was offered once to bear the punishment due to sinners. Sin having been finally and completely dealt with He will appear the second time without reference to sin for the purpose of completing salvation to those waiting for Him.

The imagery of "waiting" might be portrayed in the crowds waiting outside the temple for the appearance of Zacharias (Lk 1:9-10, 21).

E. Perfection and Finality Attained Through One Offering (10:1-18).*Perfection not attainable through the Levitical system (1-4).*

The inadequacy of the law – it can never make those who approach with sacrifices perfect (1). This is due to its character having a shadow of good things to come and not "the very image (eikon)". To say this is not to hold that a shadow has no value; it gives promise of what is on the horizon and some indication of its nature. A shadow of an approaching figure coming from round the corner signals that something is on its way and gives an idea of its identity i.e., a dog or a person.

The evidence for the assertion (2-3). Two points made:

1. The need for repetition should have convinced the Jewish mind that animal sacrifices could not secure complete forgiveness/restoration to God - the contextual meaning of perfect (2). They were in this regard like medicine. If the prescribed medicine effects a cure a second dose is unnecessary. But if the medication is repeated often and taken periodically through the patient's life it reveals a deficiency and an inability to work a total cure. So it was with sacrifices in respect to the disease of sin. If They had answered the purposes of sin in putting away guilt the need for repetition would have been removed (Barnes).
2. Rather than clear the conscience, they were a reminder of sin imperfectly dealt with (3).

The reason for the annual remembrance of sins (4). Common sense must surely have taught them that the slaughtering of helpless animals could not satisfy Divine justice though meeting as it did the legal requirement.

The adequacy of Christ's blood to enact God's will (5-10).

God's will fulfilled (5). That which was not accomplished by the blood of animals was achieved through Christ (5a). "Wherefore (dio)" or "on account of" (Thayer) or for this reason. This insufficiency was illustrated by quoting from the Psalms.

The citation (5b-7; Psa 40:6-8). The Psalmist is purported to be David but his words have ultimate fulfilment in Christ. When it was clear that animal sacrifices did not satisfy (5-6), said the Messiah I have come to do your will (7, 9).

Explanation and application of citation (8-9).

"Previously saying, sacrifices and offerings... no pleasure in them" refers back to what had just been said with the explanation added "which are offered according to the law" (8).

"Then He said ", I have come to do Your Will o God." In doing this "He takes away the first that He may establish the second" (9) i.e., He takes away the old order of things – the animal sacrifices that He may establish the second which is the accomplishing of God's Will.

The will of God defined (10). That Will which was brought into fruition through the offering of Jesus Christ on the cross "once for all" by which man might be sanctified.

Evidence for the finality of the sacrifice of Christ (11-18).

The sufficiency and finality illustrated (11-14). This is demonstrated by the fact that having offered His sacrifice He is now seated at the right hand of God as opposed to "ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices". He did it, it was done and He sat down (11-13). The reason for His seated posture is next supplied (14). In contradistinction to the priests of the law, by offering Himself once, He has "perfected forever" those who are being sanctified.

Notes on verses.

"And every priest stands daily ministering..." (11). This is not to say that literally every priest was concerned on a daily basis with offering since they were divided into courses (Lk 1:5, 8-9) but that it was continued every day constantly (11).

"But this man" (12). Observe that the word man is not in the original. The Grk. does not specify the type of being – whether man or higher being – but is intended to indicate this priest Jesus in contradistinction to the Levitical priests.

"Waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" (13). Till all that oppose His High Priesthood and sacrificial offering be defeated and His rule is universally acknowledged. There is also perhaps an allusion to the coming destruction of the Jewish system, that is if the book is correctly dated as being before the fall of Jerusalem (cf. 8:4-5).

"Has perfected" (14). Perfected with the idea of bringing to the goal of cleansing, forgiveness which could not be achieved by the ministrations of the priests under the law alone (14). How are statements like this to be harmonised with OT passages promising forgiveness on the offering of various sacrifices (Lev 4:13, 20; 4:22, 26; 4:27, 31 etc.)? Perhaps in this way - they were not effective in themselves but only when viewed as a shadow of the things to come, when foreshadowing the death of Christ on the cross. They were while sustaining faith anticipating the real sacrifice that was to be offered. In that way the sacrifices were effective but not in themselves; they were pointers forward to something that was to come.

The testimony of the Holy Spirit (15-17). The writer appealed to the witness of the Scriptures to sustain the truth of the reasoning presented i.e. that the once for all sacrifice of Christ was to perfect them that are being sanctified (15). After quoting from Jeremiah (16; Jer 31:33-34a), the writer pointed out that Jeremiah had added "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (17; Jer 31:34b). "The first part of it expresses the purpose to form such a covenant; the latter states what that covenant would be" (Barnes).

The conclusion to be drawn from the prophecy (18). Where there is remission of "these" i.e., the sins and lawless deeds committed under the first Covenant, there is no longer a need for another sacrifice.