

Hebrews 9:1-28

Eternal Redemption through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ leads us from the shadows and types in the Old Testament covenant to a glorious reality in the presence of the LORD God.

The new covenant makes the old one obsolete. The old covenant did not have the power to save sinners. It could only point to a greater covenant with a great Savior. God through the prophet Jeremiah declared the old covenant worn-out and useless. He proclaimed the need for a new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-33.

The old covenant came with rules governing worship and approach to a holy God. The tabernacle and the later the temple in Jerusalem were a place of glory.

The Glorious Tabernacle of Israel (Hebrews 9:1-5)

Through his mind's eye the author of Hebrews takes us to the glorious days of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. None of the succeeding temples are being described. For example, the Holy of Holies in Herod's Temple which was destroyed in A.D. 70 was empty when the Romans entered the Temple. In place of the Ark of the Covenant was a stone slab known as "the stone of foundation." Josephus and Tacitus both imply the Holy of Holies was empty. This was common knowledge when the Roman historian Tacitus wrote his history. This was also true when General Pompey entered the temple in 63 B.C. It is most probable that the Ark of the Covenant and the tablets of stone disappeared at the destruction of Solomon's Temple by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Zerubbabel's Temple contained only a stone slab on which the high priest placed his censer on the Day of Atonement. No one knows what actually happened to the ark.

The author is stressing the superiority of the heavenly sanctuary over the earthly one. He is not at this point stressing the types that foreshadowed the ministry of Christ. It was the place where God met with Moses and the people of Israel. It was a shadow of the real thing. It pointed to a greater reality when God would become flesh and dwell with man. It pictured the real sacrifice of the Lamb of God who would take away our sins.

The Tabernacle is described for us by Moses in Exodus 25-31 and 35-40. It was a tent of meeting 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. A curtain fence of fine, linen seven and half feet high separated the people from the presence of God. The everyday Jewish people could come only to the gate of the Tabernacle court. Priests and Levites could enter the court to perform their priestly duties. The officiating priests could alone enter into the Holy Place, and only one day of the year could the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies. It was a place of separation. Sin separates the sinner from a holy God. The curtain at the front of the holy place kept the common people from entering. The ordinary priests were prevented from entering the Holy of Holies by the second veil. It was like going into a hospital and seeing all of the "Keep Out" signs posted near the operating room! God said, "Keep Out!"

There was only one gate that led into the Tabernacle area. In the outer court were the Brazen Altar where the offerings were burned morning and evening, and the Laver. Here the priests bathed themselves in the water in it before they performed their priestly duties.

The Tabernacle was divided into two rooms. The first room as you entered the Tabernacle was the Holy Place. Inside the Holy Place was the Golden Lampstand or Menorah, the Table of Bread of the Presence with twelve loaves of bread, and the Altar of Incense.

The Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by a thick woven veil of fine, twisted, embroidered scarlet, purple and blue linen with cherubim embroidered upon it. Inside the Holy of Holies was the gold covered Ark of the Covenant or chest containing the golden pot of manna from the wilderness, Aaron's budded rod and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. This was the testimony of God to His people. The Mercy Seat was the lid on top of the Ark of the Covenant. On the Mercy Seat there were two cherubim of solid gold with overarching wings symbolizing the holiness of God. The lid of the mercy seat was the place of propitiation where the blood of the innocent victim turned away the wrath of God against the sinner. The LORD God told

Moses, "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel" (Exodus 25:22, NASB95). All Scriptures are New American Standard Bible 1995 Update unless otherwise noted.

The cherubim of glory on the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant overshadowed the mercy seat. The Shekinah glory of God's presence in the Holy of Holies meant that God was with His chosen people. When the Tabernacle was dedicated, "The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).

"Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail" (Hebrews 9:1-5).

It is as the author is taking us into the Tabernacle as the priests performed their liturgical duties. He is not occupied with the physical details of the location of the furniture. His goal is to teach his readers the high-priestly work of Christ and His everlasting covenant has been sealed with His own redeeming blood. On the Day of Atonement, the most holy day of Judaism, the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of atonement on the mercy seat in the presence of the Lord God's glory. There a most holy God met with sinful man. At the cross Jesus our great High Priest entered into the most holy place of God and made atonement for the sins of all who will call upon His name.

For the writer of Hebrews the blood of atonement which was shed on the cross at Calvary was the mercy seat of God and the sacrifice of atonement was the death of Jesus Christ, God's holy Son. The apostle Paul declared that God displayed Christ publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (Rom. 3:25). The whole old covenant comes to a glorious climax with the new covenant in Christ Jesus. The earthly mercy seat was the place of propitiation which pictured the throne of grace in heaven.

Rituals under Old Covenant (Hebrews 9:6-10)

"Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:6-10).

The ordinary priests who officiated daily entered the Tabernacle to perform their ritual duties according to the Law. They burned incense morning and evening on the golden altar of incense and put oil in the golden candelabra. The showbread was changed weekly with fine flower baked bread. Only on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, did the High Priest enter the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16).

Real freedom of access to God came about only by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary. The Levitical offerings and sacrifices never removed the guilt permanently. They pointed the way to the coming of the one perfect sacrifice for sin that could permanently remove guilt. The animal sacrifices could not accomplish this inner cleansing. The Tabernacle and its sacrifices were types and were temporary until the new covenant was officiated. The new covenant was inaugurated when Christ offered Himself as the perfect atoning sacrifice for sins. All of the previous shadows and types were fulfilled in the new covenant. Nothing was left unfulfilled. All of the ceremonial cleansing associated with Judaism has now been laid aside. Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant has been perfectly fulfilled in the work of Christ Jesus.

Christ's Eternal Redemption (Hebrews 9:11-14)

When Jesus Christ came everything changed. His atoning sacrifice changed our relationship with God.

"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; 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. 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?" (Hebrews 9:11-14).

We have now begun to enjoy the good things that have come with the new covenant. The purpose of God becoming incarnate was fully achieved at Calvary. The unique and everlasting priesthood of Jesus Christ and His all-sufficient once for all sacrifice fulfilled all of the meaning and significance of the old covenant priesthood. The moment Christ died on the cross the thick curtain that divided sinful man from the presence of a holy God was torn open and the sinner has access to the LORD God.

What is this "greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands"? Some older expositors saw this in a local sense corresponding to the outer chamber of the earthly tabernacle through which the high priest passed to reach the divine presence. They explained it as the local heavens in which Christ traveled after His ascension. Calvin and others saw it as Christ's glorified body.

However, Christ's death opened the way into the presence of God in heaven. The best identification I think is this greater and more perfect tabernacle is the perfect tabernacle as the heaven reality. "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). The perfect tabernacle is heaven itself of which the earthly tabernacle was only a type. Our risen great high priest mediates in a far better sanctuary, the very presence of God Himself.

Goats were involved on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The author of Hebrews draws a strong contrast with the blood of goats and the blood of Christ. The high priest entered the Holy of Holies with blood of a bullock for his own sins, and then returned with blood of a goat for the sins of the people. Christ accomplished eternal redemption, and perfect cleansing of conscience for the believing sinner when He died once for all on the cross.

The author returns to the new covenant emphasizing Christ's death (vv. 13-22), His presence in heaven (vv. 23-28), and His once-for-all offering of Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin (10:1-18).

No animal sacrifice could ever accomplish what Christ did because He was the morally and spiritually spotless innocent victim. No animal could ever offer itself as a sacrifice. This was the personal decision of Christ.

It was through the "eternal Spirit" that Christ offered himself without blemish to God. The Holy Spirit is described as anointing Christ, empowering Him and guiding Him in His earthly ministry.

When we appropriate His saving work by faith we are regenerated and enjoy peace with God. The "dead works" in verse fourteen are the legalistic ceremonies that cannot give spiritual life. Only the Holy Spirit can give eternal life as we respond by faith to Christ's offer of salvation.

Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15-22)

The author again picks up the idea of the new covenant based on Jeremiah 31:31-34. "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,'" declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 'They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they

will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the Lord, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more'" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant. His death validated the new covenant. The old covenant could not deal with our sin problem; however the new covenant based on the shed blood of Christ has solved our sins problem.

"For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:15-22).

The Old Testament atonement by animal sacrifices depended for its value on the death of Christ. They were only foreshadows of the real one to come. Christ's death is clearly in view. "The redemption of the transgressions" is the redemption of the sinner from the penalty of sin. "The wages of sin is death" and the death of Christ paid that debt. Everyone who has been called by God, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament time forward, has the promise of an "eternal inheritance" based on the death and resurrection of Christ. "The sacrifice of Christ is retroactive. It is effective to wipe out the sins of men committed under the old covenant and to inaugurate the fellowship promised under the new."

Our redemption was purchased by the blood of Christ alone. He died for us to pay our sin debt to the righteousness of God. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). It is Christ "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

Jesus told His disciples on the night before His death at the Passover meal, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The apostle Paul spoke of Him as, "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7). We are going to spend eternity in heaven singing praise to the Lamb. "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

The Perfect Sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23-28)

"Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Hebrews 9:23-28).

Christ is in heaven interceding on our behalf. He is in the heavenly sanctuary, heaven itself, which answers all of the symbolism of the earthly Holy of Holies. He is in the actual presence of God, not a symbolical presence. He is face to face with God as our priestly representative.

The fact that Christ is in heaven indicates that the sacrifice for sin has been accepted, and our sin has been put away once for all, forever.

What the animal sacrifices signified Christ's sacrifice actually achieved. The blood of Christ fully satisfied God's holy wrath against sin. In all of these passages the word blood equals death. It is the sacrificial atoning death of Christ that saves, cleanses, atones for our sins, redeems and propitiates the wrath of God. His blood was poured out, a violently death occurred. His blood dripped to the ground. Like the cross, the blood of Jesus is a graphic way of saying He died for me on the cross. Christ rose from the dead and presented Himself in heaven as proof of His atoning sacrifice being accepted by a holy God. Christ did not repeat the atoning sacrifice for sin in heaven. It was a once and for, one time sacrifice of Christ on the cross that saves sinners. The eternal virtue of that sacrifice was accepted by God the Father. The proof of it is the resurrection of Christ and His presence in heaven. When Christ offered up His life to God as a sacrifice for our sins, He accomplished once and for all sacrifice for sin. He fulfilled the type of the slaying of the sacrificial victim, and the presenting of His blood in the Holy of Holies. "It is finished" echoes down through eternity. "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Every aspect of the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ is the focus of salvation history. Everything in the Old Testament pointed to it; everything in the New is interpreted by it. William R. Newell said, "All previous ages led up to this; all succeeding ages are governed by this!" All of the Old Testament sacrifices were a pale copy of the reality of the one true sacrifice—the sacrifice of Christ. The only priest and the only sacrifice that can deal with our sins and open a way into the presence of God is the all sufficient sacrifice of Christ.

How were the people of the old covenant saved? The same way we are. Their justification was grounded in the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Christ is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. The apostle Peter wrote, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). There never has been any other way to be saved. The Old Testament saints looked forward by faith to the perfect sacrifice, just as we look back by faith to that same sacrifice.

The sin debt of every believing sinner has been paid in full. His death is the expiation for all who trust in Him alone for their salvation.

Christ appears in the presence of God for us right now. His priesthood is everlasting. He always lives to make intercession for us.

We will have a favorable verdict because Christ is in heaven. He is face to face with God interceding for us.

Jesus Christ appeared the first time to deal with our sin problem. He died in our place on the cross. He now appears on our behalf in heaven based on that first coming. We look forward to His next appearing and the full vindication of our salvation.

This passage of Scripture sets forth clearly the work of Christ on our behalf. What is your personal relationship with Christ? Have you put your faith in Him as your Savior? This passage makes clear that it is faith alone in the saving work of Christ that saves us. If you died today and stood before the LORD God and He said to you, why should I allow you into My heaven? What would you say? How would you answer Him?

Many people will say I believe in Christ. The Scriptures clearly teach it is in Christ alone that saves us. I ask individuals to fill in this equation. Faith in Christ plus what is salvation? Faith in Christ plus church membership. No. Faith in Christ plus baptism. No. Faith in Christ plus good works. No. Faith in Christ plus my religious experiences. No. Faith in Christ plus what? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). You can take these words of the apostle Paul and ask the same questions. "For by grace you are saved through . . ." What? Baptism, good works, the church membership, etc. It is none of these. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. "For by grace you are saved through faith" in Jesus Christ alone. Don't be deceived by someone telling you are saved by faith in Christ plus something else.

The Old Testament priest laying his hands on the head of the animal sacrifice is vivid of our laying our hands of faith upon the head of our one perfect sacrifice Jesus Christ who died on our behalf. We are saved by faith in Him, and in Him alone.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ has purchased our eternal redemption. Jesus gave His life for us. He was willing to lay it down. What a contrast His death is to the animals whose lives were taken to fulfill a law. He knew what He was doing when He made His decision to die as a substitution for us. Jesus knew what He was doing, and everything in His life was under His control.

This is why the apostle Peter could conclude one of his sermons saying: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Message by Wil Pounds (c) 2011. Anyone is free to use this material and distribute it, but it may not be sold under any circumstances whatsoever without the author's written consent.

Unless otherwise noted "Scripture quotations taken from the NASB." "Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://www.bible.org/>. All rights reserved.

Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and later in Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for more than ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor, director of missions, and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Ecuador.