Sunday, June 16, 2019

Lesson: Hebrews 9:11-22; Time of Action: 67-69 A.D.; Place of Action: Unknown

Golden Text: “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

I. INTRODUCTION. A covenant is a kind of promise. It’s a promise that is secured by something more than verbal affirmation. We belong to the period of God’s new covenant that was secured by the finished work of Christ. This new covenant replaced the old covenant that was established with animal sacrifices (see Exodus 24:5-8). The Old Testament sacrificial system did not provide the answer for sinful man’s need for reconciliation with a holy God. In a sense, it was only a temporary measure, entirely dependent on Christ’s perfect sacrifice for fulfillment (see Hebrews 10:4, 11-14). Under the old covenant, sacrifices were offered repeatedly. Under the new covenant, Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice was enough. This week’s lesson deals with aspects of the new covenant that Jesus Christ mediated.
II. LESSON BACKGROUND. The author of this epistle or letter is unknown and has been debated since post-apostolic days. In certain places, its language is like Paul’s and because of the reference to Timothy in Hebrews 13:23, some scholars have attributed the letter to Paul. But there is no conclusive proof that he was the author. The occasion for the letter was to address Jewish Christians who had professed faith in Jesus as the Messiah but were wavering in their faith (see Hebrews 3:6), and to “go on unto perfection” (see Hebrews 6:1). The design of the letter is to show how Jesus is more excellent than anything or anyone including the priesthood and the Mosaic Law because it is a better covenant that makes a new people (see Hebrews chapters 3-8:7). In Hebrews 8:8-9 the writer addresses why God made a new covenant. Although there was no fault with the old covenant, the Mosaic Law, God found something wrong with the people. God said that there would be a time when He would give a new covenant to the people of both Israel and Judah. God also said through Jeremiah that the new covenant will not be like the one that He gave to their fathers when He took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. They did not continue following the agreement He gave them, so He turned away from them. Then in verses 10-13, the Lord gives the new covenant and all it involved. Our lesson comes from Hebrews chapter 9. In verses 1-10, the writer describes how the ordinances and the sanctuary of the old covenant were only types of the new ones. Our lesson begins with verse 11.

III. THE TEMPORARY COVENANT (Hebrews 9:11-14)
A. The new Priest (Hebrews 9:11-12).

1. (vs. 11). Our first verse says “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building...” The words “But Christ” indicates that a contrast is about to be made between Jesus Christ and the Old Testament institutions which were imposed upon the Old Testament saints by external carnal ordinances until the time of reformation (see Hebrews 9:10). Those Old Testament institutions, the tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices, and laws were only types or figures of what would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So the writer here in contrast to the Old Testament priest, identifies Jesus as “Christ being come an high priest of good things to come.” The term “Christ” is not a name but a title for Jesus. It is the Greek translation of the Hebrew title “Messiah.” Both terms mean “anointed one.” So when we speak of Jesus Christ, we are actually saying Jesus the Christ or Jesus the Anointed One. He is here described as “an high priest of good things to come.” Under the old covenant or Old Testament, the “high priest” was the head priest and the supreme civil head of the Hebrew people (see Exodus 28:1-3; Matthew 26:3; Hebrews 5:4). Unlike the old covenant priests, Jesus is “an high priest of good things to come.” This may include all the “good things” that were to come during the Old Testament, but it certainly includes the “good things” that have now come under the new covenant. All the spiritual and eternal blessings the Old Testament saints had in their day and under their dispensation they owed to the Messiah on whom they believed and was to come. The
old covenant was just a shadow of what was to come; the new covenant is the accomplishment of the old. Many of the “good things” are yet to come and to be enjoyed when the promises and prophecies made to the gospel church shall be accomplished. Jesus is High Priest of the “good things” already in place for everyone who desire to approach God. Jesus is our “high priest... by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building...” Jesus now serves as “high priest” in a “tabernacle” that is “greater and more perfect” than the earthly “tabernacle” that was in Israel. It is a better “tabernacle” because it is in heaven (see Revelation 15:5; 21:3) and was “not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building...” This statement means that the heavenly tabernacle is not an earthly creation or building (see Hebrews 8:4-5). It should be noted that the old covenant’s earthly “tabernacle” was fashioned or patterned after the heavenly “tabernacle” (see Exodus 25:40; 26:30; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:1-2). Today, we don’t need an earthly “tabernacle” because Jesus Himself is our “Tabernacle,” giving us direct access to God.

2. (vs. 12). This verse says “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Here the writer also makes a contrast between the Aaronic priesthood (see Exodus 28:1, 41; 29:44) and the new covenant priestly work of Christ. Sin has always been the problem between man and God. But our gracious God gave Israel a sacrificial system as a way to deal with sin. Since sin had placed the Jews under the penalty of
death, in a sacrificial ceremony an animal’s life was to be offered in exchange for the lives of the worshipers. Not only would the priests enter the tabernacle to offer the “the blood of goats and calves” (see Leviticus 1:2-4) daily for the sins of the person bringing the sacrifice to them (see Exodus 29:36; Numbers 29:6), they would also enter the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement to offer a sacrifice for their sins as well as the people’s (see Leviticus 23:27-28). But in contrast, Christ’s sacrifice for the new covenant (see Matthew 26:27-28; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:20) was not “by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood.” Christ, our high priest, has entered into heaven not by the blood of bulls and of goats, “but by his own blood” which was infinitely more precious (see I Peter 1:19). The offering made by the priests on the Day of Atonement covered their sins for only one year (see Leviticus 16:34), which showed how imperfect the priesthood was. But Jesus Christ, our high priest “entered in once into the holy place (heaven), having obtained eternal redemption for us.” In other words, unlike the earthly high priests who could only enter the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, Jesus Christ has entered the heavenly Holy of Holies once for all (see Hebrews 10:8-11), not to provide “redemption” for just one year, but to provide “eternal redemption for us.” The shedding of Jesus’ blood “obtained eternal redemption for us.” Our “redemption” is “eternal” because Jesus does not have to die again, and He has been appointed our High Priest forever. The word “redemption” means “to ransom” or “to buy back” (see Deuteronomy 7:8; Leviticus 25:25-27). Since man broke the relationship that God intended to exist
between Himself and His creation, mankind is separated from God. But by shedding His blood at Calvary, the Lord paid the price to redeem or purchase mankind from slavery to sin (see Luke 1:68; 2:38; 24:21; Titus 2:14; I Peter 1:18-19).


1. (vs. 13). This verse says “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh...” As further evidence of the superiority of the blood of Jesus when compared to the blood of animals, the writer again refers to the offering of sacrifices. He began by saying “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh...” This refers to the purification or cleansing ritual given in Numbers 19:1-10, 17-19. As God’s people who were supposed to be holy, they were to obey rules that governed both their religious and social life. The Mosaic Law classified animals as either clean or unclean (see Leviticus chapters 11& 12). Eating or touching animals classified as unclean would make that person unclean also and he would have to submit to the cleansing ritual provided in the Law regarding “the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer.” The writer goes on to say that this “blood” and “ashes” which were sprinkled on “the unclean” person could only “sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh” meaning that the person’s body became ceremoniously clean at evening. These animal sacrifices freed the outward man from ceremonial uncleanness, but
they could do nothing for the inner man. So, the “ashes” and the sacrifices had no real value in themselves. Their value only came when the people obeyed God’s commands.

2. (vs. 14). This verse says “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” In the previous verse the writer stated that in the sacrificial system, if a person who had touched something unclean could be considered clean in the flesh by the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” In other words, if the religious observances could accomplish what the Law said they could, how much more would “the blood of Christ,” meaning the death of Christ, accomplish? The writer then says that “Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.” The fact that Jesus “offered himself without spot” means that He didn’t have a single sinful stain either in His nature or in His life. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice similar to the perfect animals that could not have any blemishes as required by the Law (see Numbers 19:2; 28:3). Their outer perfection was a type of Jesus’ inner perfection (see II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 1:19). But this is where the similarities end. The fact that Jesus “offered himself” means that He willingly gave His life as opposed to the animals which had no understanding of what was taking place when they were sacrificed. In addition, Jesus’ life was worth something as a
substitute. Notice also that Christ offered Himself “through the eternal Spirit.” The “Holy Spirit” was instrumental throughout Jesus’ ministry (see Isaiah 42:1). Jesus also “offered himself...to God.” His sacrifice was accepted by God the Father because it met all the requirements from both the human and divine sides (see Isaiah 53:10-11). Animal blood under the old covenant could only purify the flesh (see verse 13), but Jesus “offered himself...to purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Christ’s blood “purges” or completely cleanses the “conscience” or mind from focusing on “dead works” or worthless ceremonies. The “blood of Christ” cleanses away the defilement of sin and sets our consciences free so that we can truly “serve the living God.” Human nature wants to work for salvation, but that’s not God’s way (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

**IV. THE NEW COVENANT (Hebrews 9:15-17)**

**A. The new Mediator (Hebrews 9:15).** This verse says “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” The phrase “And for this cause” can mean “for this reason” referring back to the previous verse where we are told that Jesus’ blood purges our conscience. For that reason “he is the mediator of the new testament” or the new covenant. A “mediator” is a
middleman or a go-between whose job it is to bring reconciliation or agreement between two parties. Whereas the old covenant was the Law of Moses, the “new testament” is the gospel of Jesus Christ that leads to a new heart (see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13). The “new testament” or covenant that would bring about reconciliation between God and man was a “testament” or covenant in Jesus’ blood (see Luke 22:20). The old covenant was not able to bring mankind into a mature spiritual relationship with the Father and neither was it designed to do so: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (see Hebrews 10:4). As a “mediator,” Jesus acts on behalf of man before God and pleads His sacrificial death for forgiveness for His children. Christ is able to act as “the mediator of the new testament” or new covenant “by means of (His) death.” If He had not died there would be no eternal inheritance for God’s people. By His “death,” Christ abolished the old covenant and ushered in a new era, even though the new covenant has not yet been entirely realized. According to the writer, Christ’s “death” served two purposes. First, it was “for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament.” In other words, Jesus’ death was to redeem people, who were under the Law of Moses from their transgressions against the law or the first testament. They were saved the same way we are, by the “blood” of Christ (see Acts 4:12; John 14:6). Notice that the “death” of Christ is the only basis of forgiveness for sin in any age. Second, the “death” of Jesus provided the means whereby “they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” This refers to those who
come to Christ in the church age and receive all that God has promised us. The possession of the land of Canaan was Israel’s inheritance under the old covenant (see Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 26:52-56); those who are “called” or saved under the new covenant have the promise of eternal fellowship with God (see Hebrews 4:1-11). The promises of the old covenant were mostly temporal, but the new covenant is eternal. The old covenant was limited by man’s obedience, so its promises were conditional. The new covenant is unconditional and rests totally on Christ’s obedience to His Father. **Note:** Old Testament or old covenant believers were saved when they trusted God and looked with expectation for the Messiah. They looked forward to the cross. New Testament believers look back at the cross. Therefore, believers of all times meet at the cross. Jesus’ death was retroactive for the Old Testament saints. Without His sacrifice, all Old Testament sacrifices would have been in vain (see John 1:29). The fact is that Old Testament sacrifices were not a means of salvation; they were evidences of faithful obedience.

**B. The means of the testament (Hebrews 9:16-17).**

1. (vs. 16). This verse says “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” In this verse and the next verse, the word “testament” is used in the sense of a last will and “testament” which explains the necessity of a “death.” The Greek word for “testament” is “diatheke” and can be
translated as a covenant signifying a contract or binding agreement between people, or a gracious undertaking by God alone for the benefit of men. Covenants were ratified or confirmed in Old Testament times with an animal sacrifice. The word “diatheke” can also mean “a last will and testament.” This seems to be the meaning of “testament” in this verse and verse 17. The writer reminds us that “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” In other words, a “testament” or will is simply no good to any beneficiary until the “testator” or the person who made the will has died. **Note:**

A last will and testament becomes operative only at death. Likewise, the divine covenant required a death in order to become operative. In the case of a will, the person who made it must die for it to take effect. In the case of the covenant of Moses, provision was made for death to claim a substitute instead. The point is that Jesus brought a new will and final “testament,” and its provisions could not become effective until His own death as testator took place.

2. (vs. 17). This verse says “For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” Still describing the force of “a testament” or last will and “testament,” the writer here says first, “For a testament is of force after men are dead.” The general nature of every will or “testament” for it to be put into action and operate, it is necessary for the “testator,” or the maker of the will to die. Then the writer says “otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” As long as the “testator” lives
the will has “no strength;” it really means nothing. As long as the “testator” is living, the property is still in his or her hand, and he or she has the power to revoke, cancel, or alter, their will as they please. Therefore, no estate, or no right, is transferred by the will, until the “testator’s” death has made it unalterable and effectual.

V. THE DEDICATION OF THE FIRST COVENANT (Hebrews 9:18-22)

A. The first testament dedicated in blood (Hebrews 9:18-20).

1. (vs. 18). This verse says “Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.” The pattern followed by Jesus in using His “blood” to ratify or confirm the new “testament” or covenant (see Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; I Corinthians 11:25) was nothing new. It had already been established in the Lord’s dealings with the Jews. So in this verse the writer says “Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.” In other words, the “first testament,” or the Law, which was made with the Israelites, was confirmed with “blood” (see Exodus 24:3-8; Hebrews 9:19). Note: It’s very interesting that several of the things that are mentioned in connection with this ceremony by Moses in confirming the old covenant remind us of Jesus’ crucifixion. During this ceremony there was blood, water, scarlet wool, and hyssop (see Hebrews 9:19). The water was
used to dilute the blood so that it would last longer. Hyssop was a stalk-like plant Moses used to sprinkle the mixture of blood and water. The hyssop was tied with scarlet wool, which served as a sponge. These same things were present when Moses confirmed the old covenant and also at Jesus’ crucifixion when He established the new covenant with His death. The “blood” and water came from Jesus’ body when a soldier pierced Him in His side (see John 19:34); a scarlet robe was put on Jesus (see Matthew 27:28); hyssop was most likely the reed used like a sponge to give Jesus vinegar to drink (see Matthew 27:48; John 19:29). If anyone believes that the similarities in the things Moses used when confirming the old covenant and the things present at Jesus’ crucifixion were just a coincidence, I’ve got some farm land off the coast of Florida I’d like to sell you!

2. (vs. 19). This verse says “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people...” Here the author of Hebrews continued to talk about the confirmation ceremony Moses led when “the Law” was given. The writer says “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people...” This was also a purification ceremony describing the act by which Moses consecrated or cleansed the “people” in order to
bring them under the old covenant, the Law. “Moses” had “sprinkled both the book, and all the (Israelite) people” with “the blood of calves and of goats, with water” to consecrate or set them apart as God’s holy nation (see Exodus 19:6). The author of Hebrews wanted his readers to know that now in the church age it’s the “blood” of Jesus that sets believers apart as His followers.

3. (vs. 20). This verse says, “Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.” These words spoken by Moses as he consecrated the Israelites should remind us of the words Jesus uttered at the Last Supper: “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (see Matthew 26:28). Can you imagine Moses and some helpers, walking through the multitude of Jews repeating this single phrase “This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.” The word “enjoined” can mean “to command.” In essence Moses was saying to the people, “This is the blood that marks the beginning of the agreement between you and God, the agreement God commanded me to make with you.” Note: Think about the difference between that old “testament” or covenant and the new “testament” or covenant we as believers now enjoy. We don’t have to provide a sacrifice. God provided it for us. Hallelujah!!! In a sense, we can say that the first covenant didn’t cost God anything since the Israelites provided the sacrifices. They probably dreaded the cost of the sacrificial animals. However, the new covenant sealed with Christ’s blood cost God everything (see John 3:16); but its benefits are ours if we just ask (see
Matthew 7:7-8).

B. Purging and remission by blood (Hebrews 9:21-22).

1. (vs. 21). This verse says “Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.” As part of the confirmation ceremony of the old covenant, in addition to what Moses did in verses 19 and 20, we are also told that “Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.” Now the author of Hebrews turns his attention from the people to the center of worship—“the tabernacle.” Moses “sprinkled” this structure as well as “all the vessels of the ministry” with the “blood.” The “vessels of the ministry” refer to the utensils used by the priests when they served in the tabernacle. These items also needed to be a part of this purification ceremony because they were being set apart for use in special service to the Lord.

2. (vs. 22). Our final verse says “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” The writer’s mention of this ceremony led him to state an important principle: “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood.” Notice that the writer says “almost all things” not just “all things.” This was because there was one exception to this principle: in the case of very poor Israelites. They were permitted to bring an offering of flour in place of a blood sacrifice for a sin offering (see Leviticus 5:5-7, 10-13).
Based on the principle he had just stated, the writer reinforced what Scripture declared that “without shedding of blood is no remission” (see Leviticus 17:11) of sin. The literal meaning of “remission” is “dismissing” or “sending away.” The “scapegoat” being sent out into the wilderness is an excellent portrayal of “remission” (see Leviticus 16:7-11). The “scapegoat” portrays the idea of total removal of sin without a trace. The only remedy for sin is the death of Jesus Christ.

VI. Conclusion. The Old Testament’s fulfillment is found in the New Testament. The blood of animal sacrifices served to remind people of the penalty of sin. The blood of Jesus Christ alone has the power to deal conclusively with sin. Jesus, God’s perfect Sacrifice, offered Himself up for our sins, once for all. He died in our place and took God’s judgment upon Himself. Indeed, this week’s powerful lesson is the very heart of the gospel.

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