

Hebrews Chapter Nine

In the ninth chapter we are told that the followers of Jesus have a better sacrifice than that which was possible under the Law of Moses. This sacrifice was Jesus Himself.

The Earthly sanctuary (verses 1-5)

In Exodus 25:10-40 we can find the background for much of what is discussed in these verses. The first covenant (Law of Moses) had ordinances of divine service and an earthly sanctuary. This will be compared to the second covenant (of Christ) which has a heavenly sanctuary.

The preparation of the tabernacle is described in these verses. The tabernacle was a portable structure that provided a location where the Jews could come to worship God. The very presence of God resided in the tabernacle under the old covenant.

The tabernacle itself was divided into two parts. The first part, which was accessible to the priests of the tribe of Levi, contained several items: a lampstand, a table, and on the table, showbread. The lampstand is described in Exodus 25:31-40; the table is described in Exodus 25:23-30; and the showbread is described in Leviticus 24:5-8. This part of the tabernacle was called the sanctuary.

The second part of the tabernacle was divided by a veil from the first, and was called the Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place). The only person who was allowed to enter the second part of the tabernacle was the High Priest, and even he was allowed to enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. Inside the Holy of Holies were several items: the golden censer and the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark of the Covenant were the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets of the covenant. Above the Ark of the Covenant were the Cherubim and the Mercy Seat (which was actually the lid of the Ark).

The golden pot of manna is described in Exodus 16:32-36. Manna was what God had provided to the children of Israel for food while they were in the wilderness. Aaron's rod is described in Exodus 7:8-13 in the encounter with Pharaoh. The Ark of the Covenant is described in Exodus 25:10-22.

Limitations of the Earthly sanctuary (verses 6-10)

The priests were allowed to enter the first part of the tabernacle on a daily basis to offer up sacrifices. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and this was allowed only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Exodus 30:10). When the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place he first had to offer sacrifice for his own sins and then he was to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people.

In verse eight we learn that the Holy Spirit teaches that under the Law of Moses the way into the Holiest of All was not manifest. This shows the inferiority of the old covenant. It possessed a tabernacle that was symbolic and the gifts and sacrifices offered there could not make anyone perfect with regard to the conscience. The old law was concerned with the flesh, not the conscience. It is only through Jesus that our conscience can be made perfect. This is what the Holy Spirit meant when He spoke of the time of reformation.

The Heavenly sanctuary (verses 11-15)

In these verses we see the superior sanctuary brought by Christ in the time of reformation. His sacrifice as High Priest established a greater and more perfect sanctuary, and most importantly, one not made with hands. In other words, the Heavenly sanctuary is quite different from the earthly.

The very blood of Christ established this heavenly sanctuary. We are told that He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, not every year as required by the old covenant. And, this sacrifice obtains for us eternal redemption. The blood of Christ cleanses the conscience, not just the flesh.

Jesus is portrayed as the Mediator of a new covenant by means of His death. The results of His death include the redemption of transgressions under the first covenant and the promise of eternal inheritance to us. The blood of Jesus which was shed upon Calvary flowed backward to cover the sins of those who lived and died under the old covenant and it flows forward to cover our sins and transgressions under the new covenant.

Christ's death was necessary (verses 16-22)

The first covenant was dedicated with blood (Exodus 24:6-8; Leviticus 8:15). Therefore the second covenant must also be dedicated with blood. The writer speaks of testaments, knowing that a testament (or will) does not become effective until the testator dies. So, likewise, the new covenant that Jesus brought became effective upon His death. The blood He shed dedicated and validated the new covenant.

The Word of God tells us that all things must be purified by blood (Leviticus 17:11). We also find that there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood (Romans 3:25). Jesus used these words when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28).

Christ's sacrifice is superior (verses 23-28)

In these verses the writer once again compares and contrasts the earthly and the heavenly. Christ did not enter the tabernacle, but He did enter into heaven for us. He appeared before God on our behalf. His one-time sacrifice is described as coming at the

end of the ages to put away sin. Jesus was offered once for the sins of many. These verses refute once again any doctrine which says that Jesus is repeatedly offered up. The final thought of this chapter revolves around the second coming of Christ. We are told that He will appear again, without sin, for those who eagerly wait His appearing. As Christians we should always be looking for the return of Jesus (2 Peter 3:10-13).