



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

## THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

### Sermon Notes

### *The Superior Blood of Christ*

Hebrews 9:11-14

October 4, 2009

<sup>11</sup>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) <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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, <sup>14</sup>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.

- ❖ Throughout the Scriptures, the concept of sacrifice is everywhere. Going all the way back in the early chapters of Genesis through the final chapters of Revelation, blood is central to the story and message of salvation.
- ❖ The reason for this is because **sin** has entered into the world and must be dealt with by a just and holy God.

“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Hebrews 9:22

- ❖ The greatest picture of a sacrifice in all of Scripture is Christ on the Cross. As gruesome as it is, it demonstrates the horrific effects of sin.
- ❖ However, many today view the idea of a blood sacrifice as antiquated and Barbaric.
- ❖ One such individual is John Shelby Spong, the retired Bishop of the Episcopal Church Diocese of Newark, New Jersey.

- ❖ In his book *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile* [subtitled, *A New Reformation of the Church's Faith and Practice*], Spong writes: In the “point of view in the early church, barbaric though it now sounds, the image of God began to include a sense of righteousness that was thought to require a blood sacrifice.”
- ❖ He continues stating, “Seldom did Christians pause to recognize the ogre into which they had turned God. A human father who would nail his son to a cross for any purpose would be arrested for child abuse. Yet that continued to be said of God as if it made God more holy and more worthy of worship... This view of Christianity is increasingly difficult for many of us to accept or believe. **I would choose to loathe rather than to worship a deity who required the sacrifice of his son.** But on many other levels as well, this entire theological system, with these strange presuppositions, has completely unraveled in our postmodern world. It now needs to be removed quite consciously from Christianity.”
- ❖ For those like John Shelby Spong Chapters such as Hebrews 9 must be dismissed as out-dated and irrelevant. But, for those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, it leads us into a greater sense of gratitude and worship of the God who demanded that sin be atoned for.

- I. **Christ is the Long-Awaited Messiah**
- II. **Christ Serves as a High Priest in the Heavenly Tent**
- III. **Christ Gains Believers Access to God**
- IV. **Christ Secured Eternal Redemption**
- V. **Christ Purifies our Consciences**
- VI. **Christ Frees us to Serve God**

- I. **Christ is the Long-Awaited Messiah**

<sup>11</sup>*But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,*

- The first ten verses of Hebrews 9 deal with the elements of the tabernacle in the first covenant. In doing so, the author of Hebrews demonstrates the great limitations of the first covenant, writing, in Verses 9-10, “According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,<sup>10</sup> but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.”
- Then, Verse 11 opens, “But when Christ...”
  - It is not insignificant that the author uses the title Christ for Jesus. Of course, this title is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew “Messiah”, meaning “Anointed.”

**Psalm 2:2:** <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,

- Therefore, the coming of Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, ushered in “the good things which have come.”
- When Jesus Christ came and fulfilled His role as High Priest, he gave gifts – the “good things” to His people. The point is that the Old Covenant anticipated the “good things”; however, in the New Covenant, the “good things” have come.
  - Consider the “good things” which **have now come**: the promised Holy Spirit, the final revelation of God the Father in His Son Jesus Christ, the surety of eternal life through Christ our Lord.

## II. Christ Serves as a High Priest in the Heavenly Tent

*then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)*

- Christ is superior to the Old Testament priests and the Aaronic High Priesthood, since the tabernacle in which he serves is perfect and eternal (not made with hands).
- Interestingly, the **King whose kingdom is not of this world also serves as a High Priest in a tabernacle that is not of this creation!**
- How much greater then is Christ to all who have come before, or will come after Him!

## III. Christ Gains Believers Access to God

*“<sup>12</sup>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,”*

- Notice here, Christ “entered once for all...”
  - Donald Guthrie comments, “Our writer is clearly impressed by this sense of finality.”
- Therefore, no longer does a priest need to go in and come out of the Holy of Holies year after year on the Day of Atonement. Rather, through Christ’s blood, the veil has been torn.

- ❑ As a result, ALL believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have direct access to God the Father through His shed blood.

#### IV. Christ Secured Eternal Redemption

*“thus securing an eternal redemption.”*

- ❑ Because of **who Christ was – as the eternal Son of God**, as well as **what Christ did – in His righteous life and atoning death, burial, resurrection and ascension**, he secured for His people, not just a temporary or external cleansing, but an **eternal redemption**.
- ❑ Consequently, the blood of Christ was infinitely greater than the blood of goats and calves.
- ❑ Andrew Murray writes:

“It was the life of God that dwelt in Him (Christ). That life gave His blood, each drop of it, an infinite value. The blood of a man is of more worth than that of a sheep. The blood of a king or a great general is counted of more value than hundreds of common soldiers. The blood of the Son of God! – it is in vain the mind seeks for some expression of its value; all we can say is, it is His own blood, the precious blood of the Son of God!”

- ❑ Some theologians throughout the centuries have asked the question, “If Christ’s blood is of infinite value and He simply had to shed blood in order to redeem us, why couldn’t he have – for example – simply pricked His finger?”
  - The point, however, is that the “shedding of blood” required refers to the loss of life (“for the life is in the blood”).
- ❑ The word here, translated “redemption” comes from the same root as the word translated “ransom.” Further, the idea of the root form “is of an equivalent exchange price, particularly that paid for the free of slaves.”
  - Therefore, only Jesus Christ frees us from our slavery to *sin*. And this He does so through the shedding of His blood.
  - Further, Christ’s emancipation of His people is eternal.
  - Consider that, in the Old Covenant, God liberated His people from Egyptian captivity; however, due to their sin, they went back into exile in Babylon (the Northern Kingdom conquered by Assyria).
  - Yet, God’s redemptive work in us is eternal and our eternal freedom is secure in Him.

## V. Christ Purifies our Consciences

*<sup>13</sup>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, <sup>14</sup>how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience*

- The phrase “the blood of goats and bulls” certainly refers to the entire Jewish sacrificial system. The purpose of the sacrificial system was never intended to be God’s answer to deal with the problem of sin. The blood of goats (representing the people) and bulls saved no one.
- The author also, here, speaks of “the ashes of a heifer...”
  - In Numbers 19, the ashes of the red heifer were mixed with water and then sprinkled on those individuals who were defiled because of contact with a corpse.
  - The water and ashes (of the red heifer) mixture would then render the individual ceremonially (and externally) clean.
- And so, the blood of goats and bulls dealt with (albeit, external) sin. Whereas, the ashes of the red heifer dealt with death (contact with a corpse).

Richard Phillips writes, “Sin and death were the things that defiled; thus these sacrifices dealt with the two great problems that separated man from the holy and ever-living God.”

- Yet, what the blood of these animals **actually** accomplished was only the ceremonial and external cleansing of the people of God. Furthermore, even if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the red heifer actually cleansed the worship internally, the rites and sacrifices only covered past sins, not future. Therefore, a greater sacrifice was needed.
- There are several truths that the author of Hebrews emphasizes in this passage that show the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice to that of the animals of the Old Covenant:
  - First, Christ served as the **offerer**, that is as the High Priest, the one who offered up the sacrifice.
    - And as the author of Hebrews has already established, Jesus Christ, by nature of Him being the perfect and righteous Son of God and Son of Man, is infinitely greater than any High Priest of Aaron’s line.

- Specifically, since Christ was perfect (and righteous), He did not have a need to sacrifice for His sins as every other High Priest did, for He was sinless.
- Secondly, Christ was, Himself, the **offering**. One of the most significant points is that, unlike the animals of the Old Covenant, Christ “**offered Himself.**” That is, it was purely voluntary.

Donald Guthrie writes, “Christ made his offering with the full rational appreciation of what he was doing, whereas no animal ever could.”

- In one of the great Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah, the prophet writes:

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” Isaiah 53:7

- The point of Isaiah here is that a sheep before its shearers is silent. In fact, the sheep does not know the difference between going to be sheared and going to be slaughtered.
- However, Christ, when He was to be crucified, knew **exactly** what was going on; yet, because of His resolve in doing His Father’s will, He was as silent as a sheep before its shearer.
- This truth makes the sacrifice of Jesus Christ all the more remarkable – God the Father did not *force* Christ, as it were, to be crucified – Christ did so **voluntarily**.

**Philippians 2:5-7**: “<sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but ***made himself nothing***,...”

**Luke 9:51**: “<sup>51</sup>When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

- Thus, in the Incarnation, Christ actively **emptied** Himself, or “**made Himself nothing.**” Then, when the time had come for Him to be crucified (taken up), He “set his face to go to Jerusalem” knowing He would be arrested and crucified.

F.F. Bruce writes, “[Christ’s] sacrifice was rational and voluntary, an intelligent and loving response to the holy and gracious will of God, and to the terrible situation of man.”

□ **Yet, how was it that Christ was able to endure His trials and the cross?**

- The answer is found in **Verse 14**:

“<sup>14</sup>how much more will the blood of Christ, *who through the eternal Spirit offered himself* without blemish to God...”

- Some believe that “the eternal Spirit here is the spirit of Christ (versus His flesh). And whereas this could be the case, the most likely is a reference to the Holy Spirit.
- In other words, it was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ offered Himself up to the Father.

A.W. Pink writes, “As the Mediator, He took upon Him the ‘form of a servant,’ and therefore was He filled and energized by the Spirit in all that He did. Christ was ‘obedient unto death:’ as He was subject to the Spirit in going into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1), so the Spirit led Him a willing victim to the cross. This wondrous statement shows us the perfect co-operation of the Eternal Three, concurring in the great work of redemption.”

- This is one of the most beautiful Trinitarian passages in all of Scripture: The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was actually a Trinitarian act. That is, **The Son** offered Himself up **to The Father**, in the power of **The Holy Spirit**.
  - Another powerful truth emerges from this passage: There is such unity between the Father and the Son [and the Holy Spirit], that every act of God is an act of all three persons of the Trinity [otherwise, there would be more than one God] – because they mutually indwell one another .
  - Theologians refer to this “mutual indwelling” of all Three Persons of the Godhead as the doctrine of *perichoresis*.
  - Consider other acts of God, in which all three Persons are clearly present and active:
    - The Covenant of Redemption
    - Creation
    - The Conception of Jesus Christ
    - The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple (Luke 2:21-38)

- Simeon came “in the Spirit” [the Holy Spirit]
- Simeon took Jesus into his arms [the Son]
- Simeon blessed God [the Father]
- The Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1-9-11)
  - Jesus [the Son] was the one in the water being baptized by John the Baptist.
  - The Spirit [the Holy Spirit] descended as a dove upon Jesus.
  - The Father speaks from heaven to/about the Son.
- The Upper Room discourse (John 14:16, 26; 15:26)
  - Jesus [the Son] speaks of His return to the Father.
  - Jesus also speaks of the sending of the Holy Spirit.
- The Resurrection
  - It is attributed to the Father (Acts 2:32)
  - It is attributed to the Son (John 10:17-18)
  - It is attributed to the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4)
- Certainly the author of Hebrews had the *Suffering Servant* passages of Isaiah in mind when He wrote this.

**Isaiah 42:1:** “<sup>1</sup>Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.”

- Also, from this passage (and others like it), we see that Jesus is the true long-awaited Messiah, for unlike the prophets, priests and kings of old, Jesus Christ was “Anointed”, not by oil, but by the Person of the Holy Spirit.

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- Therefore, because Jesus Christ offered Himself up as a sacrifice to God the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit, it accomplished something that sacrifice of goats and bulls never could – the cleansing of the conscience.
- The greatest burden in the world is that of guilt of sin.
  - Yet, the process of being freed from this burden is a fascinating work of God’s grace.
    - First, through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, our hearts are renewed and we come to know and love the things of God. From this comes an awareness of sin – an awareness not known fully by the unregenerate.



- Yet, just as we are made aware of our sin, it seems unbearable, we see Christ, the One who bore our sin and fully satisfied the wrath of God to the end.
- Therefore, through God’s gracious work in our lives, we are made aware of our sin, and then shown God’s provision for it. In other words, **God reveals to us our problem and then provides the solution.**

Richard Phillips writes, “There is no greater burden in this world than guilt of our sin...If you come to recognize how your words have torn the hearts of others as knives tear the flesh; if you think for just a moment how your neglect of duty and selfish pursuit of gain have meant sorrow and woe for real people; if you merely ask how many men and women in this world have real cause to resent you, to wish you had never crossed their paths; if you take stock of God’s holy and unyielding law and your incessant violation of it, then your conscience will speak against you about what you really are and deserve. You will crave a cleansing such as Christ alone can give.”

<b>VI. Christ Frees us to Serve God</b>
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*“...from dead works to serve the living God.”*

- In the context of this passage, the result of Christ’s redemptive work is that those who Christ redeemed will be “free from dead works to serve the living God.”
  - Quite possibly, in this context, the “dead works” from which we are freed are the vain works associated with the sacrificial system (for the original audience of the Book of Hebrews was likely Jews).
  - In other words, we are not saved by works, rather we are saved to do good works.
  - The Greek word translated here “to serve” has a priestly connotation in the original language and context.
  - Therefore, more specifically we are free to do the work of **priests** in this world, for in Christ we are all a nation of priests.

Charles Spurgeon once said, “To serve the living God is necessary to the happiness of a living man: for this end we were made, and we miss the design of our making if we do not honor our Maker. ‘Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever.’ If we miss that end we are ourselves terrible losers. The service of God is the element in which alone we can fully live.”

- The words of Isaac Watts are especially appropriate here:

**Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain:  
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away,  
A sacrifices of nobler name  
And richer blood than they.**