

Lesson Fifteen

(9:11-28)

JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

11 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)¹² he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. ¹⁶For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and

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goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you."²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with the blood not his own;²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Contrasts have been "the name of the game" since 1:1. Our attention has been drawn to several different personalities and the points of similarities and differences. Beginning in ch. 7 with Melchizedek, and running through 10:18, there is a basic dichotomy presented that involves Jesus and the new covenant system on the one hand; Moses, Aaron, the Aaronic priesthood and the old covenant system on the other hand. Our text is the "heart and soul" of that discussion. No more important "but" is to be found in this book than the one in 9:11. It is akin to the "but" in Ephesians 2:4 where Paul there has presented the sad state of affairs concerning sinful people, and then writes, "But God." Our text is similar in that 9:1-10 has outlined the central problem with the Mosaic law: it could not save sinners. So our text is explicitly to that exact point: Jesus, by his sacrifice, provides redemption for all who accept it.

9:11 — **that have come** — The Old Covenant was until the time of reformation, v. 10. The time of reformation came into being with the change of law priesthood, 7:11-19.

not of this creation — Ref. 8:2, where the true tent was set up by God himself.

V. 12 — Few verses in the Bible are as significant as this one, and none are of more eternal importance.

once for all — That is, Jesus needed to “enter” only once, not daily, yearly, etc.

Holy Place — Equals the Holy of Holies. Note that in the “true” tent, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies are one undivided unit, as noted above on 9:1-5. See 9:24 “heaven.”

his own blood — The new system has several intricate involvements of great significance. One of those is the one mentioned in this verse, that Jesus is both high priest and the sacrifice offered by the high priest.

The death (= his own blood) of Jesus for the sins of mankind is the only foundation upon which we may have any relationship with God. Many books have been written upon the subject, rightly so. As far as the Christian is concerned, we find it difficult to speak of the death of Jesus without speaking about the resurrection. However, from any survey of the Old Testament, the major thrust of the things there spoken or typified is in relationship to the death of Jesus. The slain lambs, the suffering servant, etc., all focus on Jesus’ sacrifice. The sentence of the law upon the sinner, that the sinner shall die, was the reason for the death of Jesus, to be a substitute for the sinner. Hence, if one accepts the death of Jesus for one’s own death brought about by sin, then one can live unto God. Otherwise, the sentence of the law of God will be carried out. Stated differently, unless a person takes the substitute sacrifice offered by the high priest, one is guilty before God, and being unable to redeem himself, will die for his sin, just as God has said. It is only in Jesus and a relationship with him that permits anyone to escape the sentence of death and enjoy the life of Christ.

eternal redemption — As noted in v. 10, no redemption was possible under the old system. It had merely a temporal “salvation.” The importance of the new system is in the fact that it offers hope both for the life that now is and also that which is to come.

V. 13 — The old system, symbolized here by the Aaronic priesthood and the sacrifices thereby offered, could not touch man’s problem: the sin of his soul.

V. 14 — **blood** — This word means his death, not just a matter of some blood given.

eternal Spirit — A problem exists here in how this phrase should be translated. Some take the author to have the Holy Spirit in mind (so R.S.V.). Others argue that Jesus’ own person is meant. There are some arguments on both sides on the issue, and no way to settle it for sure.

without blemish — no uncleanness of any sort was in Jesus. The requirements for those sacrifices which foreshadowed Jesus were likewise: they were to be without blemish. See Exodus 29:1; Leviticus 1:3, 10; 2:1, 6; 5:15; Malachi 1:6-14.

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conscience — As remarked on v. 9, the better view is to consider that the whole person is meant. Hence, while "conscience" may well stand for the person, the idea of "consciousness" is preferable, since through the efficacy of Jesus' sacrifice, sin can be removed, new life can be enjoyed.

dead works — Can mean anything done without faith in Christ (i.e., anything done apart from being Christian), since only what is done as a Christian is considered helpful in regard to possessing eternal life. In the context of the Old Covenant, it would be anything done which is prescribed within it, and done in that light. Note here 5:1, and think first about the Aaronic priesthood, and then Jesus.

to serve — The same word as in 8:5; 9:1, 6; etc., *λατρεύω*. In comparison to the Israelites as a nation, Christians have been called priests, 1 Peter 2:5. Paul's apostolic ministry was in the nature of priestly service, Romans 15:16. Certain it is that the Christian is to serve God however God may desire, but willingly, lovingly, constantly.

V. 15 — **a new covenant** — This verse spells out in a different way the message of v. 12, adding the point of 7:11-19 about the change of covenant and priesthood (which mediates between God and man).

eternal inheritance — This idea was implicit in the 8:8-13 text, that promised a relationship with God of such nature that sins could be remitted. On this basis, an inheritance beyond this life, a rest with God (ch. 4) could be offered and obtained.

the first covenant — In the context of this epistle, this refers to the Mosaic law. As 10:1ff. will emphasize, and as 7:19; 9:9 and 13 show, the first covenant was unable to redeem men from sin. Therefore, when Jesus died, the sacrifice was efficacious for all men's sins, if they otherwise trusted God and served him in that trust. So then only one sacrifice has ever been offered that was acceptable to God for the redemption of sin, and that was the sacrifice of Jesus.

V. 16 — **will** — The same Greek word, *διαθήκη*, means will and testament/covenant. A covenant can be made without a death occurring. The will, however, needs the testator's death to make it effective. The new covenant God made with mankind was of this nature, that a death had to take place in order for it to be in effect. When Jesus died as the testator, the Mosaic covenant of God with men was voided, and a new form of covenant relationship became valid. Through this new covenant men are to approach God. No other covenant relationship is acceptable.

V. 18 — **first covenant** — Though the first covenant did not involve the testator's death, it was brought into effect by ceremonial sacrifice, as seen in Exodus 24:1ff. The new covenant now in effect was of somewhat different nature, as seen in vv. 15-17.

VV. 19-21 — Though some of these points are not mentioned in Exodus,

there is no valid reason to suppose they did not take place.

under the law — While most sacrifices for sin involved bloodshed, some exceptions were true, as in Exodus 19:10; 32:30ff.; Leviticus 5:11ff.; 15:5; Numbers 16:46ff.,; 31:32ff.; etc.

Some take 22b to refer to Jesus' sacrifice. While it is true that Jesus had to shed his blood (= his death) to provide a ransom for sin, the verse is not speaking about Jesus, but about the state of affairs under the Mosaic law, and the general facts concerning sin, etc.

For the Christian, the truth expressed here is true. Note Jesus' remark in Matthew 26:28, and that immediate context. When we observe the command of Jesus in the time of communion, we are particularly to remember this point.

V. 23 — **it was necessary** — That is, God had so decreed it, and that made it necessary.

copies — Refers to the Mosaic institution, and implies again that the "real" thing had not yet come.

better sacrifices — The point of 9:1 — 10:18, referring to Jesus, who is better in every way than any other sacrifice ever offered by anyone.

V. 24 — **heaven itself** — In the new covenant, heaven is the place of the true tent, 8:1-2; 9:8 (sanctuary) and Holy Place, 9:12. There is not now a division between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies as in the Old Testament tabernacle.

V. 25 — Still contrastively, Jesus' sacrifice and priesthood are of such nature that only one offering was needed. The Old Testament high priest, because of his inferior position and with a sacrifice of no eternal value, could not do what was needed, even if he offered sacrifices to God yearly.

V. 26 — **foundation of the world** — The reason this expression is used is not that the Mosaic covenant was dated from that point in time (for it was not) but rather because of the point made in vv. 11-14, that Jesus' sacrifice was for sin's forgiveness for all time and everyone. This is part of the backdrop for the theme of 11:1ff., where faith was the means of salvation for everyone, beginning with Abel. If one believed in God, and served God as best he could, in whatever age, Jesus' sacrifice provided the substitute for that person's sin and the sentence upon it.

once for all — What a tremendously important event took place outside Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified between two sinners!

V. 27 — **it is appointed** — In this context, the sureness of physical death (which is obvious in this life) is like unto the sureness of another fact: Jesus is coming again, etc., as v. 2 states. This sort of argument is like that in Acts 17:30, 31, where Paul argues that the sureness of judgment is as sure as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

V. 28 — **a second time** — While the time of the second coming of

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Jesus is unknown, the fact of it is as sure as that the first coming has already happened. When Jesus comes again, however, the purpose will be different from his first coming. In the sense of the salvation mentioned in I Peter 1:5, the saving of all whose lives are characterized by an eager expectation for Jesus will be consummated. Christians are now being saved by being in Christ. When he returns, however, the eternal destiny of all will be sealed. All who are in Christ (whether then alive or not) will be taken with him to be with him forever. No further possibility of "falling away" from Jesus will exist from that point in time. So, eternal salvation will then be true in a sense not now true, in that it will become a fact in respect to time, in the way mentioned above.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15:

133. How do you see this text in relationship to the whole book?
134. Which verse(s) do you think would summarize the extent and nature of the New Covenant?
135. What verse(s) gives the potential of the Old Covenant?
136. Were both covenants from God ratified with blood?
137. Did the second covenant differ from the first in respect to how they were made valid?
138. Does a will differ from a covenant?
139. What was the general requirement for remission of sins under the Old Testament law?
140. Were the "heavenly things" purified with better sacrifices than the earthly copies?
141. Beginning in 8:1, how many different ways has the place where Jesus serves as high priest been described?
142. Whose sins did the sacrifice of Jesus (potentially) cover?
143. What analogy is used to point up the surety of Jesus' second coming?
144. For what purpose is Jesus returning?