

## EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

### Message #17

### Hebrews 9:11-14

As we travel through Scripture we see from many passages that we are born dead in our relationship with God. We are dead in our trespasses and we are dead in our sins. We also learn that we were born alienated from God and were in fact God's enemies. So the big question is this - "How can people like us, who are dead in sins and alienated from God and an enemy of God, ever expect to have intimate access to God and intimate fellowship with God?"

In the preceding context, we saw how limited access to God really worked under the O.T. economy. It was very restricted and very regulated. Only one high priest a year got to enter the Holy of Holies, and even then he had to follow a strict code or else he would die.

But now as we come to these verses, we come to an amazing point. We come to the main contrast between what Jesus Christ gives us by His new grace covenant as opposed to what the O.T. tabernacle or sanctuary offered under the old law covenant. What we truly see here is the superiority of Jesus Christ and His grace covenant that far supersedes the old law covenant.

We may notice that **verse 11** begins with a sharp contrasting conjunction "but" (δε). What this means is that this information about Jesus Christ sits in sharp contrast to the data concerning the O.T. tabernacle, the O.T. priests, and the O.T. law. Here is one of the most Christ-exalting passages you will ever see in the Bible in one context.

The emphasis of these verses is this:

**JESUS CHRIST IS FAR SUPERIOR IN GIVING US ACCESS TO GOD BECAUSE HIS PHYSICAL WORK ON EARTH ACCOMPLISHED SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL THINGS IN HEAVEN.**

What Jesus Christ actually accomplishes under the new covenant of grace far exceeds anything that was in existence under the old covenant of the law.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say, "The book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews to teach the Hebrews that they should no longer be Hebrews." What He meant is that this book of Hebrews was designed to move them from law into grace. It was designed to move them away from a dependency on O.T. ritual to a real intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

No one who understands Hebrews would ever think about having access to God by the O.T. law or by keeping a legalistic code of works. This book of Hebrews says the way to close access to God is by your relationship with Jesus Christ. He is superior to everything.

As we travel through these verses there are six Christological superiorities:

**Christological Superiority #1 – Jesus Christ is a superior High Priest by His appearance . 9:11a**

Due to a slight variation in Greek manuscripts, the question that this clause raises is whether or not the appearance refers to Christ's High Priest appearance on earth and things **that have already come**, or His High Priest appearance in heaven after He had ascended and **things that are yet to come**? Are the "good things" things which will come in the future, or things that have already come? Was the writer talking about all the good things that have come since Christ first appeared, or all of the good things that will come in view of His High Priest work? Serious commentators and grammarians argue and debate this point.

The New American Standard and the King James translate this "good things to come" (των γενομενων αγαθων) and the New International Version translates this "good things that are already here." The reason is because the participle "to come" is an aorist and may be viewed and translated both ways.

Actually both are true. W. H. Griffith Thomas said, "It is difficult to say which is the correct view, especially since from different standpoints both are true" (*Let Us Go On*, p. 111). It was His appearance on earth that brought "good tidings" to the earth from heaven and put an end to the law, and it was His ascension back up into heaven that guarantees wonderful things for the future for believers because He is there and He is our High Priest.

The appearance of Jesus Christ into this world clearly established that something good was happening. A new covenant of grace came into the world which was the best thing ever to happen to this world. John said, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Also Christ's appearance guarantees that many good things will happen in the future (the Church Age, the Rapture, the regathering of Israel, and the millennial Kingdom). The appearance of Jesus Christ into this world was a major epoch moment. The grace of God system that gives sinners complete access to God was clearly introduced by the appearance of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ came into this world, He was a High Priest who brought new spiritual realities with Him. No more furniture was necessary for access to God; one could go directly through Him.

**Christological Superiority #2 – Jesus Christ gives access to a superior sanctuary . 9:11b**

When we think of the O.T. sanctuary, the one thing that would come into the minds of the average person is that because of our sin we do not have access to God. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place of the tabernacle and only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year. If we were living back in those O.T. days, we would say 364 days a year the message of God to us is no access and no admission. But that all changed when Jesus Christ went to that cross.

Jesus Christ was not just a high priest who entered the Holy of Holies on earth once a year; He was a High Priest who entered heaven itself. Jesus Christ did not enter the Holy of Holies on earth on pins and needles and holding His breath hoping He could get out alive.

He entered the Holy of Holies in heaven which is the actual residency of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. He is like no other High Priest. Look at what is stated in Hebrews 9:24 - "He entered heaven itself and He now appears in the presence of God." He is the High Priest that gives all sinners access to God.

The work of Jesus Christ is a heavenly, not earthly priestly work. The tabernacle was eventually replaced by the Temple and the Temple was eventually destroyed. But not the tabernacle work of Jesus Christ. It cannot ever be destroyed because what He accomplished is heavenly.

Jesus Christ gives us access to a heavenly tabernacle that is not of this creation and is not made with hands.

**Christological Superiority #3** – Jesus Christ is a superior blood sacrifice. **9:12a**

**Now the writer changes His focus from the places where one may have access to God to the means by which one may have access to God.** This High Priest did not enter the presence of God "through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood." We had better see this point and we better get this point.

Never did any animal willingly choose to sacrifice itself and shed its blood for a bunch of perverted sinners. But Jesus Christ did. He willingly chose to sacrifice Himself. He sacrificed Himself and shed His own blood.

Those O.T. sacrifices were ineffective in being able to open a door for sinners to have complete access to God. It did not matter how many years you lived in the O.T. economy or how many bulls, lambs, or birds you sacrificed on the brazen altar in your lifetime; you never received personal access to God.

The limited access to God under law in the O.T. required the shed blood of animals like bulls and goats. The unlimited access to God under grace in the N.T. required the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

The reference to shed blood is a reference to His death on the cross. When we think about the death of Jesus Christ we must think in two terms. First, wicked hands put Jesus Christ to death. However, when you read this text in Hebrews, it is very clear that this was all sanctioned out of heaven.

We live in a world that is irreverent to the cross. Crosses are used in rock concerts, in bars, and in cartoons. They are worn as tattoos and jewelry. I doubt seriously that too many who look at a cross actually realize that the cross of Jesus Christ is the only possibility sinners have for having access to the Holy God. That blood that He shed on that cross is what gives us the potential of unlimited access to God. One had better bow reverently at that cross because that is what gives us access to God.

#### **Christological Superiority #4** – Jesus Christ is a superior numerical offering. **9:12b**

The adverb “once” (εφ’απαξ) is very rare and it means once for all (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 191). This word is used only five times in the New Testament. It is used by Paul twice (Rom. 6:10; I Cor. 15:6) and it is used in Hebrews three times (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). It is very strong word. What this means is that Jesus Christ was sacrificed one time and it was a once for all sacrifice. That veil that blocked off the Holy of Holies was torn in two by God one time, and it opened forever by one sacrifice access to God for sinners.

Under the O.T. economy of the law, those high priests had to offer sacrifices repeatedly and annually. Under the N.T. economy of grace, Jesus Christ offered Himself one time.

The power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ one time opens up the potential for continual access to God forever. But all people need to realize this point very carefully. **There is only one very narrow way of access to a Holy God, and it is only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.** It does not matter how good or moral a person may be or how religious he may be, there is one and only one way of access to God and it is through Jesus Christ. His once for all sacrifice is the only thing that opens the door to entrance into the presence of a Holy God. No human can just march into the presence of a Holy God on his own, any more than one could do that back in the days of the O.T. tabernacle. The power to access God lies in the blood of Jesus Christ. He is the only Person who makes it possible for us to be able to forever enter the presence of God.

#### **Christological Superiority #5** – Jesus Christ obtained a superior redemption. **9:12c**

Jesus Christ obtained eternal redemption. Do you understand this point? Many Arminians miss this completely because they do not carefully systematically study the Bible. What does this actually mean? It means that He obtained an “eternal” redemption. Jesus Christ shed His blood one time and that guarantees that when we believe on Him, we have a redemption that is forever and ever without any possibility of end. In other words, your redemption is not temporal; it is eternal. You do not have a redemption that you can lose, ever. Your redemption is not yours until you sin or do or say something depraved. Your redemption is an eternal redemption.

Now I want us to grasp this point completely. There are three words in Greek for redemption:

- 1) Pay the price for a slave at an auction and leave it in the auction (αγοραζω);
- 2) Pay the price for a slave at an auction and take it out of the auction and take it home to be yours (εξαγοραζω);
- 3) Pay the price for a slave at an auction and set if free (λυτροω).

The word “redemption” (λυτροω) used here and again in **verse 15**, means that Jesus Christ paid the complete price to purchase us and set us free from our sins. His shed blood is so potent that it completely releases us from our sins forever and we have access to God. The reason why we have an eternal redemption is not because we deserve it; it is because of what our great High Priest did for us.

## **Christological Superiority #6 – Jesus Christ gives a superior cleansing. 9:13-14**

Now we will notice that **verse 13** begins with “for if.” In Greek **verses 13-14** are one long sentence which argues from lesser to greater in the blood sacrifice. If something is true in a lesser sense, then it is certainly much truer in a greater sense.

The writer is now explaining how Christ’s one time High Priestly redemptive work is eternal work. The point is, if the blood of goats and bulls and ashes of a heifer could ceremonially and temporarily purify and cleanse people concerning some of their sins of flesh, then how much more could the blood of Jesus Christ accomplish, that was offered “through the eternal Spirit” without any blemish.

Now all major English translations capitalize the noun “Spirit,” and the assumption most make is that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. We do know that all three members of the Trinity were involved in the amazing work of Jesus Christ on this earth. However, there are some good reasons to believe that Jesus Christ is referring to His own Spirit:

- 1) The words “eternal Spirit” do not have an article “the” such as in “the Holy Spirit.”
- 2) In Hebrews the emphasis is on Christ offering Himself (Heb. 10:7).
- 3) In the context, the writer is contrasting Christ’s sacrifice with animals (**9:13**).
  - A. There wasn’t any eternal saving power in the blood of animals.
  - B. The animals were sacrificed involuntary and Christ was sacrificed voluntarily.

Now what all of this means is that Jesus Christ made a rational, voluntary choice through His own Eternal Spirit to come to this earth to give us eternal redemption. **He purposed to come here so that He could give sinners like us complete access to God.**

Christ’s personal and perfect sacrificial work completely cleanses us from all sin. **It not only cleanses us from our sins, but it also cleanses our conscience**. The O.T. law could never cleanse a person’s conscience. That is why David cried out to God to cleanse him after he sinned. He said concerning the O.T. law that God did “not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it” (Psalm 51:16). David’s conscience was destroying him because of his sin, and he knew it could only be cleansed by the grace of God (Psalm 51:1).

**What Jesus Christ accomplished on that cross was so thorough that He not only cleanses us from our dead works, but He makes it possible for depraved sinners to actually serve the living God.** Think of this point. In the O.T. system of law, only a handful of priests could be cleansed for serving God. Now every sinner of every background has that potential. God not only cleans up our conscience, but we can actually serve Him. In fact, later in the book he will describe some of the ways we may serve God (Heb. 12:28-13:16).

The work of Jesus Christ is able to cleanse your conscience from dead works. All of those sins committed against the Law of God. All of those dead works you trusted in to save you are gone. All of those sins you have committed, in which the Law said you should get the death penalty, are completely washed away. Christ’s blood saves you from them all and gives you access to God. The blood of Jesus Christ cleans up your life and your conscience.

Kent Hughes gives an illustration of Albert Speer. Albert Speer was an industrial genius and confidant of Adolph Hitler who kept Nazi factories working through World War II. Albert Speer was the only one of twenty-four war criminals tried at Nuremberg who admitted his guilt. He spent many years in prison for his crimes. After twenty years in Spandau prison he was released. He was being interviewed on ABC's "Good Morning America" and was asked about a statement he had made that his "guilt could never be forgiven." He was asked if he still felt this way and here is what he said: "I served a sentence of twenty years and I could say, 'I'm a free man, my conscience has been cleared by serving the whole time as punishment.' But I can't do that. I still carry the burden of what happened to millions of people during Hitler's lifetime, and I can't get rid of it." He went on to say that he didn't believe it was possible to clear his conscience (*Hebrews*, Vol. 1, p. 230).

Mr. Speer is wrong. There is One who can clean hearts and clear consciences. One of the most conscience-cleansing realities that any may have is the knowledge that when we put our heads on our pillows at night our sins have been entirely, totally and completely forgiven by God.

Now why would any person want to go back under the O.T. law when you are offered an eternal covenant of pure grace?