

Conscience Purified by the Blood of Christ

8:13 *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

Argument for this obsolescence: Christ's sacrifice for sins occurred once for all. Unlike the old covenant's most holy sacrifices, Christ's sacrifice did something lasting and effective regarding removal of our sin & guilt, cleansing our conscience, opening up the heavenly sanctuary.

9:1 Now even **the first covenant** had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. 2 For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called **the Holy Place**. 3 Behind the second curtain was a second section called **the Most Holy Place**, 4 having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing **the mercy seat**. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

The First Covenant

- Which covenant is the *first covenant*?
Other covenants are referenced in Hebrews but without being named as such eg Davidic covenant – David's greater Son, King forever. The *first covenant* here refers to the Mosaic covenant; it's laws, systems, and particularly sacrifices making it possible for God to dwell "in the camp".
- This first/Mosaic covenant informed Hebrew culture and worship however this ineffective covenant is a shadow/pattern/symbolic of the new, now needed to be replaced by the effective new covenant mediated by Jesus Christ.
- Out with the old? There is value in understanding the *regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness*. 8:5 *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."*
- Nonetheless, the old covenant was faulty. 8:7-8a *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them ...* 8:9b *For they did not continue in my covenant ...*
 - Presumption on God's promises: God tamed and contained in the Tabernacle? e.g. *Matt 3:9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.*
 - Presumption of atonement through sacrifices: Sacrifice for sins yet still desiring sinful pleasures, chasing after other gods. Sinning presuming to be forgiven by a sacrifice.
 - *Root of bitterness* e.g. Heb 12:15, Deut. 29:18 *Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, ...*

A note on **dead works**: Dead because (a) we were dead in our sins, unable to Love God, unable to keep the law, (b) because our works have no lasting value; self-justifying works are ineffective and offensive to God, and (c) because such works lead to death.

The Tabernacle and the Holy Place

- In 9:1 the tent/tabernacle the writer is drawing attention to is the **earthly place of holiness**.
- Contained Holy furnishings crafted according to God's pattern, by people chosen/called to these specific tasks, who were skilled by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ex 31).
- The Holy Place was entered by many priests behind a first curtain who entered regularly to perform ritual and preparatory duties (9:6).
- This Holy Place contained the lampstand (Ex 25:31-40), and the table and the bread of Presence (Ex 25:23-30), the meaning of which is not described here.

The Most Holy Place

- Through the Holy Place and behind the second curtain was the Most Holy Place -the Holy of Holies. Most Holy because this sanctuary was a dwelling place for the presence of our Most Holy God; *made ... that I may dwell in their midst* (Ex 25:8).
- The Most Holy place was furnished with the golden altar of incense (Ex 30), the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25), and *above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat* (Ex 26:17-22).

Mercy Seat

Was the cover for the Ark containing the manna, Aaron's staff and the tablets of the covenant. The mercy seat and the horns of the altar were the places where, once a year on the day of atonement, the blood of the atoning sacrifices was sprinkled.

The word used for this cover, the Mercy Seat, is ἱλαστήριον/hilastērion, meaning a **propitiation**.

This is the same word used for the work of Christ on the Cross. Romans 3:23-25 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a **propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith* c.f. 1 John 2:2

ἱλάσκεσθαι/hilaskesthai (verb) to make propitiation for: Hebrews 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Atonement through *expiation* (RSV) or *propitiation* (ESV)? (NIV to make atonement).

God's wrath: God is angry with sin e.g. Heb 10:26-31, 1 Thess 1:10, Rom 1:18.

Heb 10:28 *A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses.* 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Lev 16:1-2 *The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died, 2 and the Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. ..."*

God must be propitiated if we are to *dwell in the house of the Lord*, living in His rest.

God is angry with man's sin; we are demonstrably guilty and unable to abide in His presence and live; we fear death because of our guilty conscience; this leads to dead works.

6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, 7 **but into the second** only the high priest goes, and he but **once a year, and not without taking blood**, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. 8 **By this the Holy Spirit indicates** that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing 9 (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, 10 but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

But into the second

once a year: The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). On this the most holy day in the Jewish year, the most holy priest, would bring the most important sacrifices into the Most Holy place.

And, not without taking blood: Lev 16:3-5 *But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. 5 And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering ...*

The sacrifice in the temple required that the blood shed from the bull, one male goat and one ram be sprinkled and placed within the Most Holy Place; sacrificial blood sprinkled on the horns of the altar and the Mercy Seat. This action was required by God, symbolising atonement through the removal of guilt through the substitutionary life blood of the sacrifices.

Aaron was then to lay his hands on the second goat (the live goat) and confess all the sins and transgressions of the law of the people, transferring these to the goat. This scapegoat was taken outside the camp and sent into the desolate place.

Lev 16:30-34 *For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins... And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest... shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary... for the tent of meeting... for the altar... for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ... that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.*

By this the Holy Spirit indicates

These sacrifices were to be repeated annually, symbolically and was ineffectual. There were significant limitations to the earthly sanctuary remained in place, and these limitations had to be removed:

- Limited access. “The people were separated from the object of their devotion” IP – priests only, and even then, only one had access to the Most Holy Place, whereas the once-for-all perfect sacrifice opens the way for all to enter the Heavenly Sanctuary.
- **The old regulations, gifts and sacrifices cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper.**
- BTW 9:9 (*which is symbolic for the present age*): seems to indicate that we currently live in the outer tent offering sacrifices of praise worship (13:15-16), awaiting the age-to-come worshiping face-to-face in the Most Holy heavenly sanctuary. Notwithstanding this, we are instructed to boldly approach the throne of grace, by faith, now (4:16).

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 places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 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, 14 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.

But when Christ appeared

Most Holy Day: *But when Christ appeared ...*

Most Holy Man: *high priest of the good things to come.*

Most Holy places: *through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ... by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

The Most perfect and effective sacrifice: *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.*

- The sacrificial blood offered in the heavenly sanctuary was His own life, propitiating wrath.
- He bore our sin guilt in His body, taking them into the wilderness, bearing them away into the wilderness, until they were gone and no longer remembered.

*Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:4-5*

Purified Conscience ... *how much more will the blood of Christ ... purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*

“Conscience makes us Man, makes us one, and makes us eternal” PT Forsyth

Outworking of a guilty conscience: dead works. Guilt offerings, self-calibrated attempts at atonement with God and each other, suppressed consciences, “side-ways” evaluations, denial or ignorance to God’s Word, unable & unwilling to approach God -fear of judgement and death, anger, selfishness, self-satisfaction, demanding perfection in others ...

Blind to the Holiness of God: We have no idea of how far we have fallen from the Holiness of God, nor how much redemption cost. If we say we have no sin, we make God out to be a liar (1 John 1:10). But, by God’s grace and mercy we are shown enough to cry out for cleansing (Psalm 51).

Purified conscience:

- Loves God! Luke 7:47 *Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”*
- Freed from dead works, freed to serve the Living God in purity.
- Freed to approach and worship God, freed to Love God and one another.
- Freed to live and love as we were created to be, in His creational rest, dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.