

## **Intro**

In this advent season we've considered the person of Christ. Jesus is God the Son incarnate. Jesus, who eternally existed as God the Son, took on human flesh, veiling his divine glory and setting aside his divine rights.

Jesus is the seed of the woman. The offspring from Eve who would deliver a fatal blow to Satan. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus defeated Satan at the cross.

Jesus is the second Adam. The first Adam brought God's very good creation into ruin. The second Adam passed the test where Adam failed. And those who attach themselves to Jesus escape from the curse incurred by the first Adam.

This morning we see that Jesus is the great high priest. Jesus is superior to the Old Covenant priestly system that foreshadowed his high priestly work.

This morning we'll consider a crucial element that fuels Christian living. And what the great high priest did to achieve this. This morning we'll ask this question.

**CRUCIAL QUESTION: What enables us to confidently face today and tomorrow?**

## **READ PASSAGE**

## **PRAY**

## **Body**

### **Passage Focus**

Christ's once for all offering of himself is superior to the OT sacrificial system

Jesus is both the sacrifice and the high priest

FCF: guilt over our sins...the need to appease God...worry over God's displeasure

Grace given: guilt satisfied in the great high priest's offering

### **Point 1: A cleansed conscience frees us to serve God today (9:11-14)**

### **Explanation**

This section speaks of Jesus' superiority to earthly priests. When Jesus arrived on the scene he came as a high priest bringing good things.

the good things that have come = all the spiritual blessings secured by his death on the cross (e.g., forgiveness of sins, regeneration, glorification)

Then the author details his priestly work. In one act (*“once for all”*), through his shed blood, Jesus secured eternal redemption. As high priest, Jesus passed through the heavenly realm (*“through the greater and more perfect tent”*) into the presence of God (*“the holy places”*) by means of his own blood.

The point is the superiority of Jesus over the earthly priesthood. 9:13-14 provides further explanation. If the blood of goats and calves, and the ashes of a heifer purified Old Covenant worshippers, how much more will Jesus’ blood purify us? The blood of goats and bulls alluded to the day of atonement where the high priest once a year would enter the holy place and make atonement for himself and the whole assembly of Israel, because of their sins (see Lev 16). As a result of the high priest’s sacrifices, the people would be cleansed from their sins (Lev 16:30). The ashes of a heifer alluded to laws of purification where those who came into contact with the dead needed to be cleansed with the heifer’s ashes (see Num 19).

Under the Old Covenant, animals offered as sacrifices had to be without blemish. Christ was without blemish morally. He never sinned. As a sinless sacrifice, Christ offered himself *“through the eternal Spirit”* = in his humanity he was aided by the Holy Spirit. If under the Old Covenant, goats, bulls, and heifers provided cleansing, how much more the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God? As a result, Jesus is able *“purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God”* (9:14).

Goats, bulls, and heifers provided temporary cleansing. The day of atonement was repeated every year. And the heifer’s ashes were needed with every contact of the dead. Not so with Jesus’ *“once for all”* offering of himself.

Summary:

The contrast between Jesus and earthly priests is six-fold:

- 1) Earthly high priests entered through the earthly tabernacle constructed by men, but Jesus went into the heavenly realm = God’s presence
- 2) Earthly high priests entered on the basis of animal blood, but Jesus entered on the basis of his own blood
- 3) Earthly high priests had to cleanse themselves before they entered, but Jesus was already clean and required no cleansing
- 4) Earthly high priests offered animals, but Jesus offered himself (like the animals he was a guiltless victim)
- 5) Earthly priests had to repeatedly offer sacrifices, but Jesus had to do so only once
- 6) Earthly priests temporarily appeased God’s wrath, but Jesus’ sacrifice is able to *“perfect the conscience of the worshipper”* (9:9) and secure eternal redemption

## **Application**

What the author is getting at is the superiority of the finished work of Christ in contrast to the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant. The animal sacrifices pointed to a greater sacrifice: Jesus' voluntary offering of himself on the cross. Jesus' offering is once for all. It's finished. It's not repeated. It's sufficient. No other sacrifice is necessary. It's effective. It accomplishes all that God intended. Christ's finished work accomplishes what the sacrifices couldn't: rescuing us from our dead works.

The author's logic is that Jesus' sacrificial death purifies the human conscience. And a purified conscience results in a life lived for God. The problem is a conscience is troubled by dead works. It's dead works that our conscience needs to be purified from. What are these dead works?

Works characterized by death. Actions and attitudes related to spiritual death. In other words, sins that spring from our sinful nature and separate us from God. But a purified conscience leads to a life lived for God. How does this work?

What's assumed here and unstated is faith. In faith we trust in the finished work of Christ, not ourselves. We trust that Jesus died to pay for our sins, and that his death is sufficient to merit our forgiveness. We acknowledge our sin before God. We ask for forgiveness. And we trust God's promise that we can be pardoned because Christ suffered in our place. And what's the result? We're free from guilt. We're no longer afraid of God's punishment. We have no need to appease God or earn forgiveness. Instead we're free to live for God with confidence we're forgiven and loved. With joy that our Creator is for us.

There's something about the certainty of pardon that's critical to living the Christian life. If we're worried that we aren't forgiven. If we're worried that God's punishment is hanging over us. If we're worried our performance isn't good enough, we're not free to serve God. We'll be worried, trying to earn God's favor instead of living with confidence and gladness that we already have God's favor.

### **Worry illustration:**

Dating vs marriage: a man who wants to date or court a woman is nervous...they're worried as to whether or not their interest will be rejected by the woman...after initial acceptance the worry doesn't go away...there's still doubt as to where the relationship will end up...will I do something that drives them away?...what if they take a liking to someone else...after marriage the worry subsides...by covenant before God they've pledged themselves to me...I can rest from worry because they've chosen till death do us part to be my spouse...there's confidence because they've pledged themselves to me...confident of commitment we're free to love

shipyard interview vs job security: at a job interview we're worried...will I represent myself well?...are they interviewing a better candidate?...what are my prospects if I don't get this job?...the first year was provisional...and after three years, because of union rules, there was virtually no chance I could be fired...confident of security I'm free to work

Likewise a purified conscience frees us to serve God. When we're certain we're forgiven, when we're certain we're loved, there's no worry. There's peace and confidence and gladness. A purified conscience, attained only through trusting in the finished work of Christ, frees us from worry. Certainty of sins forgiven is critical to living the Christian life! Why did Jesus come? Jesus came to cleanse our conscience, by dying in our place, so that we could live for God!

## **Point 2: A cleansed conscience eagerly awaits Christ's return (9:15-28)**

### **Explanation**

In this section, the writer argues that death is necessary in order to attain the inheritance of the covenant. Jesus, through his sacrificial death, secures the New Covenant blessings for all who believe. Jesus' once for all offering of himself is superior to the Old Covenant animal sacrifices, because Jesus' death doesn't need to be repeated.

As mediator, Jesus stands between God and man. It is through the once for all offering of himself that Jesus bridges the separation between God and man that began in the garden. Jesus is the critical link between New Covenant promises and realization. The Father makes the promises, and the Son secures the realization of the promises through his death.

Jesus acts as mediator between God and man in the new covenant "*so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance (9:15).*" In Paul's writings the called are all those who will ever believe. When God calls a person they believe. In Romans 8:30, everyone who is called will be justified. You can't be justified without faith, so those who are called believe.

Jesus' death was intentional. He died so the called would be redeemed (paid the price for their release from the punishment of sins) and receive the eternal inheritance. If you believe, if you're justified this is you. Jesus died specifically to ensure you would receive the promised inheritance.

The writer argues that death is necessary to secure the New Covenant's eternal inheritance. A will only goes into effect after the person who made it dies (9:16-17). You don't receive the inheritance until after a loved one dies. Likewise, there's no eternal inheritance unless Jesus died.

The writer proceeds to argue that the Old Covenant required blood. Without blood, the Old Covenant couldn't have been inaugurated (9:18) = brought into effect. Moses sprinkled blood following the reading of the law (9:19-21). Blood sealed the covenant (see Exod 24:8). Under the Old Covenant almost everything was purified with blood, though not all purification required blood, but in order for sins to be forgiven blood needed to be shed (9:22). For example, the blood shed during the day of atonement.

So like death is required to receive an inheritance, and blood is necessary to inaugurate covenants, Jesus' death was necessary to inaugurate the New Covenant. Jesus' death was necessary to secure the forgiveness of sins.

The tabernacle was a copy of heavenly things that in some sense needed to be purified (9:23). In what sense? Well it's not that God's dwelling place needed to be cleansed of sin or was unclean. Whatever the meaning, in some sense Jesus' blood ritually purified God's heavenly dwelling. And his sacrificial death was better than the death of animals.

## **Intercession**

Jesus has entered heaven itself where he appears *“in the presence of God on our behalf”* (9:24). This speaks of Jesus’ priestly intercession:

**Hebrews 7:25** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Jesus intercedes for God’s people. He’s seated at the right hand of the Father appealing on our behalf. This is one reason why our justification and eternal inheritance is secure. As intercessor, Jesus dispenses help when we need it (Matt 28:18; Heb 4:14-16).

Jesus didn’t have to offer himself annually (9:25). If that were the case he would have needed to die every year since the world was created (9:26). The reality is that “he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Jesus appeared at the end of the ages = the last days began when the baby Jesus was birthed.

In 9:27-28, the writer makes an analogy between our situation and the once for all offering of Jesus on the cross. Just like every man dies once and then faces judgment after death, so also Jesus died only once and will appear again. When Jesus returns it won’t be to offer his life again. He’ll come *“to save those who are eagerly waiting for him”* (9:28).

## **Reincarnation**

9:27 reveals that reincarnation doesn’t exist. Man dies once and that’s it. Reincarnation is the belief that at bodily death the mind, soul, or consciousness remains and passes on to exist in another entity whether human, animal, or say a tree. The belief that we can be reborn and live again in a different form. 9:27 rules that belief out. We only die once, not over and over again. We only receive one life, one opportunity to be reconciled to God.

## **Eagerly awaiting inheritance**

Jesus’ death secured an eternal inheritance for his people. Again it’s assumed that faith is the human part in securing these New Covenant blessings.

If faith removes worry and gives us confidence to live for God today, faith also gives us confidence in what God has for us tomorrow. Confidence in an eternal inheritance, a heavenly city:

**Hebrews 11:13-16** These all died in faith [Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah], not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Trusting in the finished work of Christ, a heavenly homeland awaits us. No more living as exiles = strangers in a land where God's ways are seen as odd. No more living in a land where sin and death are present.

Who will Jesus save when he returns? "Those who are eagerly waiting for him." So faith includes an eager anticipation of Christ's return. This anticipation is a conviction based on what God has promised. It's not hoping I might be right with God when Jesus returns, it's certainty. Certainty of God's pardon gives us confidence to joyfully live for him today. Certainty of God's pardon gives us confidence an eternal inheritance awaits us tomorrow.

Note the two actions that go hand in hand in this passage. Serving God today while eagerly waiting for him today. Confidence in pardon fuels love for neighbor, personal purity, spiritual disciplines that fuel growth, and evangelism. And confidence in pardon fuels a longing to be with God.

### **Conclusion**

**What enables us to confidently face today and tomorrow? A cleansed conscience.** Which comes through trust in the finished work of Christ. **A cleansed conscience frees us to serve God today. A cleansed conscience eagerly awaits Christ's return.** Jesus died as a substitute in our place to bring us forgiveness of sins and a cleansed conscience. Jesus came to free us from guilt and the fear of punishment. Jesus came to free us to serve God and long for his return.