

HEBREWS CHAPTER 9

[VI] THE NEW ORDER SUPERSEDED THE OLD ORDER (8:1 - 10:18).

1. The old order sanctuary, priesthood and covenant contrasted with the new (8:1-7).
2. The old covenant definitely superseded by the new covenant (8:8-13).

Hebrews chapter 9 to 10:18 teach a change of sanctuary, a change of sacrifices and a change of law.

The inadequacy of *the old order* as compared with *the new order* is now set forth first with reference to the arrangements of the sanctuary and then to the sacrificial ritual associated with it. The sanctuary of the old covenant, in its furnishings and in sacrificial rituals proclaimed its own temporary character. The writer remains biblical and refers to the tabernacle and not to the first or second temple.

3. The sanctuary under the old covenant was inadequate and temporary (9:1-5).

9:1. Hebrews 9:1 says, “The first covenant had ‘regulations’ or ‘ordinances’ (δικαιωμα)(literally: ‘that which is demanded by righteousness’) for ‘worship’ or ‘religious service’ (λατρευιας) and also ‘an earthly sanctuary’ (το αγιον κοσμικον).

According to Hebrews 8:5, this sanctuary was ‘a copy’ (υποδειγμα) and ‘shadow’ (σκια) of the sanctuary in heaven. Therefore, the whole Old Testament ceremonial law with its tabernacle and later temple, and the sacrifices made in it by priests was ‘a copy and shadow’ that pointed forward to the real things that would be revealed later in the New Testament.

‘The sanctuary’ of the old order was inadequate and temporary and had to give way to the new order. The mobile tabernacle (tent) in the wilderness proclaimed its own *temporary* character. It had to be built up and broken down again and again. Already Isaiah proclaimed that “heaven is God’s throne and earth is his footstool” and that people cannot build a temple in which God would dwell (Isa 66:1-2). He proclaimed that God “lived in a high and holy place” and preferred “to dwell with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit” (Isa 57:15). And Ezekiel prophesied that because of Israel’s sins, God himself would desecrate his first Jerusalem temple (Ez 24:21)!

Jesus prophesied that the second Jerusalem temple would be replaced by a “temple made without hands” (Mk 14:58; Jn 2:19-22). He taught that in the new order, Christians will never again worship God in any temple or on any mountain, but in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:21-24). Stephen and Paul proclaimed that “God does not live in temples built by men” (Act 7:48; 17:24). In Ephesians 2:22, Paul teaches that Jewish and Gentile Christians are being built together to become “a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”. Therefore Hebrews 3:6 teaches that sincere Christians are “God’s house”. And according to Revelation 21:22, in the new heaven and new earth there will not be any temple, “because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple”!

9:2. The ‘tabernacle’ or ‘tent’ (σκηνη) in two parts was ‘furnished’ (κατεσκευασθη)(indicative aorist passive). ‘The Holy Place’ (Αγια):

i) The ‘lampstand’ or ‘menorah’ (λυχνια), which consisted of a main stem with 3 side branches to each side that supported 7 flower-shaped lamp-holders (Ex 25:32ff; 37:17ff). It signified the outward unity of the nation-state of Israel. Contrast Christ standing in the midst the seven lampstands signifying not an organisational unity, but a spiritual unity of the churches in the world (cf. Rev 1:12-13).

ii) ‘The table of showbread’ (η τραπεζα και η προθεσις των αρτων)(‘and’ = hendiadys) had 12 cakes placed on it every Sabbath (Lev 24:5-8) and the old cakes were eaten by the priests (Lev 24:9).

9:3-5. ‘The Most Holy Place’ (Αγια Αγτων):

i) The ‘curtain’ (καταπετασμα) separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place.

ii) ‘The golden altar of incense’ (θυμιατηριον) stood in the Holy Place according to the Hebrew text, but according to a possible Greek translation it stood within the Most Holy Place. The words ‘before the veil’ suggests that it stood in the Holy Place. On the Day of Atonement, incense was burned on it and the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled on the horns of the incense altar and on the mercy-seat (Ex 30:10; Lev 16:15).

iii) ‘The ark of the covenant’ (κιβωτον της διαθηκης) ‘covered on all sides with gold’ (περικεκαλυμμενην <περικαλυπτω)(participle perfect passive). The ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s ‘staff’ (ραβδος) that budded and ‘the stone tablets of the covenant’ (αι πλακες της διαθηκης). Originally the pot with manna and Aaron’s staff were outside the ark, but later put inside the ark for safekeeping. After the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. no more is heard of the ark (Jer 3:16). The ‘cherubim’ (Χερουβιν) of glory had no likeness of anything in heaven or on earth and appeared to have symbolised the storm-winds on which the God of Israel was pictured as riding through the sky (Ps 18:10; Dt 33:26; Ezek 1:5-13; 10:9-14). They ‘overshadowed’ (κατασκιαζοντα)

(participle present active) the lid of the ark, called 'the mercy-seat' (το ἱλαστήριον)(Hebrew: kapporeth), which was the place of propitiation (Hebrew: kipper, to make atonement) and thus symbolised the throne of God's grace.

4. The sacrifices under the old covenant were inadequate and temporary (9:6-10).

(not able to clear the inward conscience, because they are outward ceremonial regulations)

9:6. "Now these things having been thus 'prepared' (κατεσκευασμένων)(participle perfect passive, used in temporal sense), the priests 'go in' (εἰσιτασιν<εἰσειμι)(indicative present active) 'continually or at all times' (δια παντος) into the first tabernacle, 'performing' or 'accomplishing' (ἐπιτελοῦντες<ἐπιτελεω)(participle present active) 'the religious services' (λατρεία)."

The Holy Place was in continual use. Daily in the mornings and evenings the appointed priests entered the sanctuary to trim the lamps on the lampstands (Ex 27:20f) and to burn incense on the incense altar (Ex 30:7f). Weekly they put fresh loaves of bread on the table of the showbread (Lev 24:8f). The present tense is a historic present, indicating the procedure laid down by the Levitical law rather than the procedure which was still being enacted at Jerusalem while the author was writing - even though the latter cannot be excluded.

9:7. "But into the second (tabernacle) the high priest alone, 'once in the year' (ἀπαξ του ενιαυτου), not without blood, which he 'offers' (προσφερει)(indicative present active) for himself, and for the 'sins of ignorance' or 'errors' (αγνοημα) of the people."

But the Most Holy Place was entered only once a year and only by the high priest. On the 10th day of the 7th month (Tishri, about October) the high priest entered the Most Holy Place twice to make atonement for his own sins and for the sins people had committed in ignorance (9:7). First he carried the blood of the bullock which had been sacrificed as a sin offering for himself and his household (5:3; 7:27), and sprinkled it on the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat, which all the time was shrouded in a cloud arising from the incense burned on the incense altar. Then he brought the blood of the goat that had been slaughtered as a sin offering for the people of Israel and sprinkled it on the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. Thus he completed the atoning ritual. He would come out of the sanctuary and confessed the national unintentional sins (cf. 5:2) over the head of the second goat, assigned by lot 'to Azazel', which was then driven from the dwelling place of people into 'a solitary land' (Lev 16:8,10,26).

9:8. "The Holy Spirit 'makes clear' (δηλουντος)(participle present active) that 'the way into the holies' (meaning the Most Holy Place)(την των αγιων οδον) has not yet been 'made manifest' (πεφανερωσθαι)(infinitive perfect passive), 'while the first tabernacle was still standing' (ετι της πρωτης σκηνης εχουσης στασιν).

The Most Holy Place was completely out of bounds for the other priests and all other people. *The Holy Spirit teaches that throughout the whole Old Testament period there was no direct access to the living God!* The way into God's holy presence was barred by the curtain hanging between the outer and inner rooms of the tabernacle. As long as Christ has not yet 'passed through the heavens' (4:14) into the presence of God, the earthly structure has not yet lost its sanctuary status.

9:9-10. "Which (is) a 'parable' or 'figure' (παραβολη) for the 'present' (ενεστηκοτα<ενιστημι)(participle perfect active) time; according to which are 'offered' (προσφερονται)(indicative present passive) both gifts and sacrifices that cannot 'with respect to the conscience' (κατα συνειδησιν), make 'the worshipper' (τον λατρευοντα) 'perfect' (μη δυναμεναι τελειωσαι)(participle present medium, infinitive aorist active), being only - 'with foods and drinks' (επι βρωμασιν και πομασιν) and 'various washings' (και διαφοροις βαπτισμοις) - 'carnal ordinances or regulations' (δικαιωματα σαρκος) 'imposed' (επικειμενα<επιτιθημι)(participle present medium) 'until a time of reformation' or 'reconstruction' or 'setting straight what was out of line' (μεχρι καιρου διορθωσεως)."

The first tabernacle with its curtain barring the way into God's presence is an illustration (parable) for the present time that animal sacrifices were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. Not an outward reality, but *an inner reality hindered people to have access to God. The sinful nature and every kind of sin caused people to have a guilty conscience and a guilty conscience made it impossible to approach the holy God.* In order to have direct and free access to God, a person must have a purified conscience! A person must first be regenerated before he is set free to approach God with confidence and before he is able to worship and serve God in an acceptable way. All animal sacrifices and other religious actions which accompanied it (the food laws and the ceremonial washings) could not effect a purified conscience, that is, could not effect regeneration. At best, they could only effect ceremonial and symbolical removal of pollution. They were only "external regulations until the coming of the new order (restoration, reconstruction, reformation)". The new order would be a time of reconstruction, when Christ reshaped the structure of Israel's religion. Then 'the old covenant' would have to give way to 'the new covenant' (8:13); 'the shadow' to 'the realities' (10:1; Col 2:17); and 'the outward and earthly copy' to 'the inward and heavenly reality' (8:5)! In Hebrews the law is a pattern or preliminary blueprint of the redemptive order introduced by Jesus Christ.

5. The sacrifice of Christ is perfect in nature and eternal in effect (9:11-14).

9:11-12. “But Christ ‘having come’ (παράγενομενος)(participle aorist medium) the high priest of the good things that are coming, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats (τραγός) and calves (μωσχος), but through his own blood, ‘entered in’ (εισηλθεν<εισερχομαι)(indicative aorist active) ‘once for all’ (εφαπαξ) into the holy place, having ‘found’ or ‘obtained’ or ‘secured’ (ευραμενος<ευρισκω)(participle aorist medium) eternal ‘redemption’ or ‘releasing by payment of a price’ (λυτρωσις).”

Now the time of reformation (restoration, reconstruction), the time of the new order, has arrived. ‘The good things expected to come’ (ARV) during the Old Testament period has become ‘the good things that have come’ (RSV)! With the first coming of Christ, ‘the temporary shadows’ have given away to ‘the perfect and abiding realities’.

During the Old Testament period the day when the high priest entered the Most Holy Place was a day of soul-afflicting and fasting (Lev 16:29,31; 23:26,32). But now in the New Testament period after Christ had entered the heavenly sanctuary it has become a day of joyful celebration for the enthronement of their High Priest King.

The heavenly sanctuary is not made with human hands and would be replaced by a sanctuary not made by human hands (Mk 14:58; Jn 2:19ff). God does not dwell in an earthly sanctuary (Act 7:48; 17:24), but among and within ‘the people of God’ - they are now the heavenly sanctuary, ‘the house of God’ (3:6). God lives in a high and holy place, but also prefers to make his dwelling with people that are humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at God’s word (Isa 57:15; 66:2). How can Christ who passed through the heavens be regarded as dwelling amongst his people? By raising his people up with Christ to share the throne of Christ in the heavenly realm (Eph 2:6)!

The participle ‘having secured eternal redemption’ means that Christ entered into the heavenly sanctuary ‘after’ he had secured an eternal redemption at the cross on earth! His work of redemption is absolutely fulfilled and completed by his death on the cross. “It is finished!” (τετελεσται)(indicative perfect passive)(Jn 19:30). He does not first have to carry his own blood into the heavenly sanctuary, as Stuart and Monroe say, thus *basing a doctrine on a type instead of using types to illustrate securely based doctrines!*

The ‘ransoming’ or ‘releasing’ or ‘redemption’ takes place at the price of the life of God’s only Son. Here the question to whom the price is paid is irrelevant. The Old Testament high priests entered the earthly sanctuary repeatedly, because the redemption which their ministry procured was a sign and had a temporary character. But our High Priest Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary once for all time and sits on God’s throne for ever, because the redemption which his ministry procured is *perfect in nature and eternal in effect*.

9:13-14. “For if the blood of goats and ‘bulls’ (ταυρων), and the ‘ashes’ (σποδος) of a ‘heifer’ (δαμαλεως) ‘sprinkling’ (ραντιζουσα)(participle present active) ‘them (the people) that have been defiled’ or ‘made common’ (τους κεκοινωμενους<κοινοω)(participle perfect passive), ‘sanctify’ or ‘to set apart’ or ‘to remove from the common or profane’ (thus qualifying a person to worship God again)(αγιαζει)(indicative present active) ‘with a view to’ (προς) ‘the cleanness of the flesh’ (την της σαρκος καθαροτητα), *how much more* shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit ‘offered’ (προσηνεκεν<προσφερω)(indicative aorist active) himself ‘without blemish’ (αμωμος) unto God, ‘cleanse’ (καθαριει<καθαριζω)(indicative future active) your ‘conscience’ (συνειδησιν) from dead works to serve the living God?”

The blood of slaughtered animals during the Old Testament period did possess a certain efficacy, but it was only *an outward efficacy for the removal of ceremonial pollution*. The sin offerings presented during the Old Testament period had no effect on the consciences of the people on whose behalf they were slaughtered. They served merely in an external and symbolical manner to counteract the defilement of sin.

The slaying of the red heifer (Num 19), which had previously taken place on the Mount of Olives, “outside the camp” (13:13), was discontinued after 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed.

“Spirit’ with a capital S is meant. The writer is thinking of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42:1. God put his Spirit on him and in the power of that Spirit he accomplished every phase of his ministry:

- his incarnation (Lk 1:35),
- his ministry with people (Isa 11:2; Lk 3:22),
- his death, in which he fulfils the role of priest (cf. Isa 52:15) and victim (Heb 9:14),
- his resurrection (Rom 1:4; 1 Pet 3:18)
- and his triumphant ascension into heaven proclaiming his victory over all disobedient people (1 Pet 3:19).

The sacrifices during the Old Testament had to be without blemish outwardly. But Christ was without blemish spiritually and morally. Like the Servant of the Lord, he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth (Isa 53:9). He was without 'sin' (4:15) and he was completely actively obedient (5:8; 10:7).

- Only a human being (not an animal),

- only a sinless human being (not a sinner),

- only a completely willing and actively obedient person (not a martyr),

- and only a person chosen by God and endowed with God's Spirit (not a self appointed prophet)

could at one and the same time satisfy God's will and meet the human predicament. God's demand was and is that people should be 100% holy and righteous and that their unholiness and unrighteousness should be 100% punished. It is not ritual purification, but spiritual and moral purification that counts with God (Isa 1:13-18; Mk 7:1-13). *Only when the heart and conscience is cleansed from 'dead works' can the barrier between God and man be removed. Only when people are emancipated from the inward bondage can they worship God in spirit and truth. This is 'the perfection' which the Old Testament rituals could not achieve.*

6. Christ is the Testator (Guarantor) and the Executor (Mediator) of the new covenant (9:15-22).

9:15. "For this reason (δία τουτο)(Christ's effective sacrifice) he (Christ) is the mediator of 'a new covenant' (διαθηκης καινης), that 'those who are called' (and now are God's elect)(οι κεκλημενοι<καλω)(participle perfect passive) may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance - 'now that he has died' (now that a death has taken place)(θανατου γενομενου)(participle aorist medium) as 'a ransom to set them free from the sins' (for the redemption of the transgressions)(εις απολυτρωσιν των παραβασεων) committed under the first covenant."

The basis of Christ's mediatorship is his sacrificial death. The costly price of his death provided redemption for those who broke the law of God. The new covenant is based on the blood of Jesus Christ, that is, on the death of Jesus Christ!

- Mark 14:24. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (not for those not called).

- 1 Corinthians 11:25. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (established by my death).

The first covenant was a *temporary* covenant, which provided a measure of (a *temporary*) atonement and (a *temporary*) remission of sins committed under it. The first covenant was incapable of providing 'eternal redemption', 'eternal forgiveness' (in which sins are remembered no more, Jer 31:34), and an 'eternal inheritance', because it was NOT an 'eternal covenant' (13:20)! The new covenant is the 'eternal covenant', because it is eternally valid and eternally effective! The writer associates the word 'eternal' with the new covenant! Jesus Christ is the Author of 'eternal salvation' (5:9). He sacrificed himself through the power of the 'eternal Spirit' (9:14). The new covenant and everything that the grace of God provides under the new covenant is *forever* the possession of those called.

The eternal inheritance of grace and glory both here and hereafter is for "those who have been called" (cf. 3:1). The close connection between God's effectual calling of his people and the heritage which is theirs as his sons and heirs and joint-heirs of Christ is explained more fully in Romans 8:14-30.

'Redemption of transgressions committed under the first covenant, could have direct relevance only to readers of Israelite birth or adoption, because *these transgressions were breaches of the Mosaic law*, which was an integral part of the first covenant. The retrospective validity of the death of Christ is stated in more general terms, which cover Gentiles as well as Jews in Romans 3:25-26 and Act 17:30.

- Romans 3:25. God presented him in his blood as a sacrifice of atonement (which becomes effective) through faith. He did this to demonstrate his justice (at the present New Testament time, vs.26), because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand (the breaches of the Mosaic law by Gentiles during the Old Testament period) unpunished."

- Romans 2:12-16. All who sin apart from the law (who commit sins other than the breaches to the Mosaic ceremonial law) will also perish apart from the law. ... The Gentiles have the law (the Ten Commandments) written in their hearts and when they do not listen to that law, they will not be declared righteous on the final judgement day.

- Romans 3:19. God's law (his requirement that all people are 100% holy and righteous and that all unholiness and unrighteousness must be punished 100%) silences every mouth (that tries to justify itself) and holds the whole world (of people before and after Christ) accountable to God.

- Acts 17:30. In the past (during the Old Testament period) God overlooked such ignorance (among the Gentiles, that people are created in the image of God and should not make dead images of the divine being), but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

9:16-18. 16. "For where (there is) a *testament* (διαθηκη), there must of necessity (αναγκη) be (φερεσθαι)(infinitive present passive)('be brought' in the sense of 'to register') the death of him that made it (the testament). 17. Because a testament is 'in force' or 'firm' in the sense of 'valid' (βαβαια) only where there has been a death (literally 'over dead bodies')(επι νεκρος); it never 'has strength' in the sense of 'takes effect' (ισχυει) while the one who made it is living." 18. "This is why not even the first (*covenant*, vs 15)(διαθηκη) was 'renewed' or 'inaugurated' or 'initiated' or 'put into effect' (εγκεινισται<εγκαινιζω)(indicative perfect passive) without blood."

The word 'διαθηκη' basically means 'settlement' in which the notion of 'sworn fidelity of the lesser to the greater' rather than that of 'mutual contract or agreement between two equals' is emphasised. In this passage the word has two meanings:

- i) A 'testament' is the settlement in which the will of a person that has died is established for his heirs (9:16-17). By law, the heirs have no title to the inheritance unless the testator dies. A testament depends on the death of the testator.
- ii) A 'covenant' is the settlement in which God sovereignly bestows grace and establishes a new or special relationship with his people (Hebrew: 'berith', 9:15,18). By grace, Christ bequests or transmits his inheritance with the heirs when they believe in him. By fulfilling the divine requirement for holiness and righteousness Christ (the heavenly Covenanter) meets all the claims of God's outraged righteousness. *By the death of the Testator (Christ), his inheritance assumes the aspect of a bequest accruing to his brothers. And by his resurrection, Christ becomes the Executor or Administrator or Mediator of his inheritance. Christ is the Testator (9:16-17) and the Executor (9:15,18) in one, the Surety (Guarantor)(7:22) and Mediator (8:6) alike.*

The first covenant (διαθηκη) also required death for its ratification. In that case it was not a testament that required the death of the Testator. But it required death nevertheless. In the covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 15:1-18 and in the covenant made with Moses in Exodus 24:3-8, some covenant victims were slaughtered. But there is no suggestion that these victims represented God, the Covenant Maker, or that they represented Abraham and Israel, the recipients of these divine covenants. In Hebrews 9:18 the writer is thinking of Exodus 24:3-8, when the first covenant was inaugurated.

9:19-20. 19. "For when Moses had proclaimed every 'commandment' (εντολης) of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves (μοσχων)(and the goats) together with water, scarlet and wool and branches of hyssop, and 'sprinkled' (ερραντισεν)(indicative aorist active) 'the scroll' (το βιβλιον) and all the people. 20. "He said, 'This is the blood of the covenant (το αιμα της διαθηκης), which God has 'commanded' (ενετειλετο <εντελομαι)(indicative aorist medium) you to keep'."

The words of Hebrews 9:19-20 are a summary of the words in Exodus 24:3-8. But there are differences in the text and they are probably due to the fact that the writer of Hebrews drew upon some source which is no longer extant (It is suggested that it was a Jewish commentary on Exodus 24). See also the difference in Hebrews 9:4 concerning the position of the incense altar and the contents of the ark.

- i) The reference to 'goats' is probably a later addition to the text of Hebrews.
- ii) The text agrees with the Greek translation of Exodus 24:5 which specifies 'calves' (μοσχαρα)(Hebrew: parim, oxen) as the sacrificial animals used at this occasion.
- iii) In Exodus Moses sprinkles part of the sacrificial blood on the altar (as representing God, the Author of the covenant) and part on the people (who are thus brought into God's covenant). But in Hebrews the blood is sprinkled on the book and on the people.
- iv) In Exodus Moses sprinkles nothing but blood. In Hebrews the blood is accompanied by water, scarlet wool and hyssop. The hyssop was apparently tied with the scarlet wool to a cedar wood stick, thus forming a sprinkling implement which was dipped in the blood diluted with water. Although 'water and scarlet wool and hyssop' are not mentioned in Exodus 24 account, there is no reason why this common method of sprinkling should not have been used by Moses in the procedure described. See also the sprinkling of blood of the paschal lamb round the doorway (Exodus 12:22); the sprinkling of blood (and water) on the cured leper or on a house which had been cleared of a leprous infection (Lev 14:4ff,49ff); and the sprinkling of blood mixed with water (Hebrew: me niddah) on persons or objects that had become ceremonially defiled by contact with the dead (Num 19:18). It looks like features of the purification ritual in Numbers 19:18 are here associated with the ratification of the first covenant in Exodus 24:3-8.

9:21. "In the same way he 'sprinkled' (ερραντισεν) 'with the blood' (τω αιματι)(dative case) both the tabernacle (την σκηνην) and 'all the vessels used in its ceremonies' (παντα τα σκευη της λειτουργιας)".

Purification by the sprinkling of blood was done at:

- i) The ratification of the first covenant (Exodus 24:3-8).
- ii) The purification of the tabernacle and the vessels of divine service. On the Day of Atonement the mercy-seat and the horns of the altar of burnt offering were sprinkled with the blood of the bullock presented as a sin offering for the high priest Aaron and his house (Lev 16:14-19). The tabernacle and all its furnishings, inside and outside, were hallowed by being anointed with oil (Ex 40:9-11; Lev 8:10f, Num 7:1). But because the high priest Aaron and his sons were hallowed with the blood of the ram of consecration and with the oil of anointing when they were installed in their sacred office (Lev 8:23f,30), it might be inferred that the tabernacle and its furnishings, which were hallowed at the same time, were sprinkled with the blood in addition to be anointed with the oil.

9:22. "And, 'almost' or 'I may almost say' (σχεδον), 'by blood' (εν αιματι) all things are 'cleansed' (καθαριζεται) (indicative present passive) according to the law, and without 'the shedding of blood' (αιματεκχυσιας) there is no

(ου γινεται αφεσις)(indicative present medium)(the present tense signifies something that is always true) ‘releasing’ or ‘forgiveness’ (αφεσις)”.

Almost everything, which requires to be ceremonially cleansed under the old covenant (the Mosaic Law), must be cleansed by means of blood. There were some rare exceptions:

- i) A poor Israelite may bring some flour or even two turtledoves or young pigeons to the priest as his sin-offering instead of a lamb (Lev 5:11).
- ii) After the rebellion of Korah atonement was made by burning incense (Num 16:46).
- iii) Metal objects captured in war were to be purified by fire and the sprinkling of blood mixed with water (me dinnah) (Num 31:22f).
- iv) After fighting the Midianites the Israelite commanders brought captured gold objects to make atonement for their souls (Num 31:50).

The general rule was: “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”. Ceremonial cleansing or atonement had to be effected by means of blood.

7. The sacrifice of Christ was a perfect sacrifice that is perpetually effective (9:23-28).

9:23. “It was necessary (αναγκη), then, for ‘the copies’ or ‘patterns’ (τα υποδειγματα) of the heavenly things ‘to be purified’ (καθαριζεσθαι)(infinitive present passive) ‘with these (sacrifices)’ (τουτοις)(instrumental dative), but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these”.

The writer acknowledges that the Old Testament rituals were real and effective for ceremonial cleansing of the earthly things, but denies that they were of any use for the removal of inward and spiritual defilement. They were only ‘copies’ of the spiritual realities. ‘The heavenly things’ that required cleansing were the defiled consciences of people. This is *a cleansing that belongs to the spiritual sphere and not to the material sphere*. Ritual cleansing was adequate for the material order, but a better sacrifice is necessary for effective purification in the spiritual order.

It is the people of God who require inward cleansing so that they may approach God without defilement of sin and that they may be fit to dwell with God. By the death of Christ and thus by the sprinkling of his blood the people of God become ‘the house of God’ (3:6; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:22; 1 Pet 2:5). In order to be a spiritual house of this kind, they must have experienced regeneration and cleansing by ‘the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ’ (1 Pet 1:2,19,22f). Thus the book of the new covenant (the eternal gospel written in heaven), the Christian sanctuary (the heavenly Zion, 12:18-24), the new Israel (the Christian Church including the company of the redeemed in heaven) have all been consecrated by the blood of Christ. They all have the stamp of Christ on them.

9:24. “For Christ did not ‘enter’ (εισηλθεν<εισερχομαι)(indicative aorist active) ‘a man-made sanctuary’ (χειροποιητα αγια) that was only ‘copies’ or ‘antitypes’ (αντιτυπα) of ‘the true one’ (των αληθινων)(a counterpart of reality); he entered heaven itself now ‘to appear’ or ‘to become visible’ (εμφανισθηναι<εμφανιζω)(infinitive aorist passive) in God’s presence” ‘for us’ or ‘on our behalf’ (υπερ ημων).”

If sinners are to appear before God, even through the representation of a sinless high priest, they themselves must be cleansed from sin, otherwise the very presence of God would be polluted. Having finished his work of salvation through his death and resurrection on earth, he ascended into heaven right into the presence of God to be our eternal Representative with God (cf. 1 Jn 2:1-2).

9:25. “Nor in order to offer himself (προσφερη)(subjunctive present active)(The present tense means ‘again and again’) ‘often’ (πολακις) or ‘again and again’, even as the high priest ‘enters’ (εισερχεται) the Most Holy Place ‘year by year’ (καθ ενιαυτον)(distributive use of the preposition) with blood ‘belonging to others’ (αλλοτριω).”

The high priests entered the Most Holy Place only once a year, very briefly and with the blood of animals - they did not sacrifice themselves. This had to be repeated year after year, because they were *token sacrifices*, pointing to the one real sacrifice that was necessary and that was coming (cf. Isa 53:5-6). The sacrifice of Christ was not a token sacrifice, but a *real sacrifice*, the shedding of his own blood, perpetually effective and calling for no repetition.

9:26. “ ‘else’ or ‘since’ or ‘if that were true’ (επει) he (Christ) would ‘have to’ (εδει<δει)(indicative imperfect active) ‘suffer’ (παθειν)(infinitive aorist active) ‘often’ (πολακις) ‘since the foundation of the world’ (απο καταβολης κοσμου). But now ‘he has appeared’ or ‘has been manifested’ (publicly)(πεφανερωται)(indicative perfect passive) ‘once for all’ (απαξ) ‘at the end or completion or consummation of the ages’ (επι συντελεια των αιωνων) ‘in order to’ (εις)(purpose) ‘put away’ (αθετησιν) sin by the ‘sacrifice’ (της θυσιας) of himself.”

If the sacrifice of Christ was not perpetually effective and did call for repetition, then Christ would have to endure suffering and death times without number throughout the ages of history (cf. 4:3). The death of ordinary people is only once (9:27) and the death of Christ is also 'once for all'!

To talk about Christ's sacrifice as 'an *eternal* sacrifice' could be very misleading. The Roman Catholic Church says that Christ is *eternally offering himself* in heaven and this is repeatedly re-enacted on earth in the Eucharist. The truth is that the sacrifice of Christ is once for all time in history (it is never repeated) and expresses the eternal mercy of God and the eternal efficacy of his sacrifice.

The fact is that Christ has been manifested once on earth at 'the time of fulfilment' (at his first coming) in order to deal conclusively with sin. It is not that Christ happened to come at the time of fulfilment, but rather that *his coming made that the time of fulfilment!* His first coming and his redemptive work inaugurated 'the time of fulfilment'.

See Hebrews 1:2. "The last days" is the period between the first and the second coming of Christ. The following events take place "in the last days":

i) 1 Peter 1:20. The first coming of Christ. He was revealed "in these last times" (φανερωθεντος δε επ εσχατου των χρονων).

ii) Hebrews 1:2. God's final revelation. "In these last days" God spoke to us by his Son" (επ εσχατου των ημερων τουτων ελαλησεν ημιν εν υιω).

iii) Hebrews 9:26. Christ's sacrificial death. "Once at the end of the ages" he did away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (απαξ επι συντελεια των αιωνιων ... αθετησιν της αμαρτιας).

iv) Acts 2:17. The outpouring of the Spirit. He was poured out "in the last days" (εκχεω ... εν ταις εσχαταις ημεραις).

v) John 6:39,40. The resurrection of the dead. I will raise him up "at the last day" (αναστησω αυτον εν τη εσχατη ημερα).

vi) John 12:48. The final judgement. Christ's words will condemn him "at the last day" (κρινει ... εν τη εσχατη ημερα).

The divine revelation progresses up to Jesus Christ, but there is no progression of revelation beyond Jesus Christ! God spoke through Jesus Christ "in the end of these days" (επ εσχατου των ημερων τουτων)(Hebrew: "in the latter end of the days" or "in the end-time" or "ultimately"), which is the Old Testament phrase that denotes the period of time in which the words of the Old Testament prophets will be fulfilled (Genesis 49:1; Deuteronomy 4:30; Isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 30:24; Ezekiel 38:16; Daniel 10:14; Hosea 3:5; Micha 4:1).

The purpose of his coming was '*the removal*' or '*cancellation*' of sin. The same word is used in Hebrews 7:18, "the setting aside of the law". The announcement of the Melchizedek priesthood in Psalm 110:4 constitutes the *disannulling* or *abrogation* of the earlier law that set up the Aaronite priesthood. Christ's first coming was not 'a destruction' (καταλυσαι) of the law, but 'a fulfilment' (πληρωσαι) of the law (Mt 5:17).

9:27-28. 27. "Just as (καθ οσον) man 'is laid away' or 'is appointed' or 'is destined' (αποκειται<αποκειμαι) (indicative present passive) to die once, and 'after that' (μετα δε τουτο) '(to face) judgement' (κρισις), 28 so Christ, 'having been sacrificed' (προσενεχθει<προσφερω)(participle aorist passive) once 'in order to take up (bear) and take away' (εις ανενεγκειν<αναφερω)(infinitive aorist active) the sins of 'many people' (πολλων); 28. and 'he will be seen' or 'he will appear' (οφθησεται<οραω)(indicative future passive) 'a second time' (εκ δευτερου), *without sin* (NIV: not to bear sin; Key: without any further sin being laid on him)(χωρις αμαρτιας) 'to those who wait patiently for' or 'to those who eagerly expect' (τοις απεκδεχομενοις)(participle present medium) him 'with a view to salvation' (εις σωτηριαν) (NIV: but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him)".

People die once, by God's appointment and in their case *death is followed by judgement!* Christ dies once, by God's appointment, and in his case *death is followed by salvation* for all his people! This is because Jesus Christ 'took upon' himself (bore) and 'took away' their sins when he sacrificed himself (cf. Isa 53:10,12; 1 Pet 2:24).

During the Old Testament period the people waited expectantly for the high priest to reappear from the temple after he had presented the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. The writer of Hebrews presents the second coming of Christ in terms of this re-emergence of the high priest from the sanctuary. At his second coming he will complete the salvation of his people (1:14; 1 Cor 15:26).