

Heb. 9:6-28 The Most Beautiful Offering: The Pre-eminence of Christ in his priestly office (part 1)

As we've seen, the author of Hebrews has one main argument in his letter to those Hebrew Christians, namely: Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of God in the OT. And particularly, Mosaic Law under the old covenant has come to an end as Jesus has ushered in a new covenant by his death and resurrection. I think as Israel looked forward to their Messiah, they knew he would be a prophet. They knew he would be a king. But, they did not know he would also be a priest. For he did not find his lineage from the line of Levi, but from the line of Judah. This is why the author spends so much time on the person of Melchizedek, the priest of a different order to picture and explain the priesthood of Jesus. And the most unusual, yet beautiful part of Jesus' priesthood is that HE HIMSELF is the offering. The Great High Priest lays down his own life as an offering, the most beautiful offering, which is what we see in our passage today. (Read 9:6-28). I have 4 big truths from this passage about the sacrifice of Christ: 1) The Excellency of his sacrifice; 2) The Reach of his sacrifice; 3) The Sufficiency of his sacrifice; and 4) The Effect of his sacrifice.

1. Excellency of his sacrifice. In our text, the author compares the function of the priests in the tabernacle, particularly that of the high priest who goes into the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. Let me ask, "*What does the high priest bring into the holy of holies?*" Well, he brings himself, dressed in a very simple linen outfit with a turban. He brings burning incense. What else? It is the most important element of the entire process. He brings the blood of a bull, a goat, and a lamb. These animals were killed, they were offered as a sacrifice; their blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat in the most Holy Place. Look at v. 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.**" (See Lev. 16)

Now, these animals were special, they were selected and kept for this purpose. The lamb was the most precious. It was young, "spotless," and without blemish. It had nothing wrong with it. If so, it did not qualify as a sacrifice. And God accepted these sacrifices, as they were given in obedience by faith. But, the blood of those animals under the old covenant served a greater purpose. They were "copies" and "shadows" of another sacrifice (Heb. 8:5). Look at v. 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 . . .**"

I hope the comparison is obvious that the blood of Christ is far better than the sacrifice of bulls, goats, lambs, and heifers. After all, it is the blood of a human being. And not just any human being; it is the blood of the Messiah—the King of Israel and the entire world. The animals offered in the old covenant were physically unblemished, but Christ was morally unblemished. He was sinless. 1 Pet. 1:18-19 says: "**knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.**" Heb. 4:15 says: "**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, without sin.**" And Heb. 7:26: "**For it was**

indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.”

Now let's go a step further. We must consider the incarnation. God took on flesh. Yes, He was a man. But, he was also God (%100 man - %100 God). And here we have the most beautiful union ever: two natures united in one person. Do you ever contemplate such a truth? Do you ever meditate on this fact? It is mind boggling! It is such a mystery! From his conception to his death, we see two natures united into one person! This makes the sacrifice of Christ the greatest ever, and this is beyond comparison! We are not comparing apples to apples when we compare the blood of bulls and goats with that of Christ. There is no canyon, there is no chasm, there is no space . . . large enough or sufficient to even consider a comparison. You see, until his death, these two natures were joined together. And this doesn't mean that God himself dies in the sense that God ceases to exist when Jesus was crucified. But it does mean we can say that this union of two natures into one person makes this sacrifice the most unique, the most mysterious, the most beautiful, the most precious, the most excellent sacrifice the universe has ever known. And this truth is what separates this sacrifice from every other in the history of the world. And I would argue that merely a created sinless man in and of himself (which is the what the Mormons and JW's believe) would not be a sufficient sacrifice. As v. 12 says, it could not secure an *“eternal redemption.”*

By way of application, is there anything to consider more worthy or of more value than the excellency of this great sacrifice? For those Hebrew Christians, he was warning them, *“Do not go back to that system of sacrifices!”* For us today, he is saying, *“Do not consider any sacrifice, any work of righteousness, any other way to get to God, than in this one-time sacrifice of the Son of God.”* Also, we should see in this sacrifice the great mind of God, his inexpressible majesty, his infinite wisdom, his great love toward sinners . . . that He would carry out such a plan for those who do deserve such love. And we should know that ONLY God can secure our eternal redemption . . . and this through the blood of Christ! I think of the time when Abraham killed A heifer, a female goat, a ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon. And he placed their carcasses in two parallel lines. And as the sun went down he fell into a deep sleep. And what did he see? He saw a flaming torch pass between these sacrificed animals . . . What did this picture? God was saying, *“Abraham, ONLY I can do what is necessary to cover your sins. ONLY I can secure the redemption required!”* Therefore, we worship God for such an offering!

2. The Reach of his sacrifice. In this passage we see that the Messiah (Christ, v. 11) did not enter an earthly tabernacle, but instead, he entered the heavenly tabernacle, which is to say that He entered into the very presence of God. In vv. 6-10 we see the limitations of the earthly priests in the earthly tabernacle. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after and even the function of the high priest once a year. And their offerings were of the things of this earth. And they were limited as they could not purify the conscience of the people. (more on that next week). Now, look at v. 9-10 **“According to this arrangement, gifts, and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.”** Here, the author is comparing the work of those priests and their offerings with that of Jesus. Look again at v. 11: **“then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) . . .”** Look also at v. 24: **“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made**

with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” Now, it is true that the body of Jesus is the tabernacle, but here the tabernacle is not picturing the body of Jesus, but instead it is heaven itself, the place where God dwells. The blood of bulls and goats could take no one to heaven, nor could those sacrifices secure an eternal redemption. Why? Because they could not reach all the way to heaven.

When I think about reach, I think about a boxer. The length of the arm (reach) is so important. Often the boxer with the longest reach will ultimately win the fight. I think of little Nora, trying to reach our piano outside. Until recently she just wasn't tall enough to play the keys. I think back to when I was a child as I could not reach the cherries on the tree (instead I climbed on the roof). In the same kind of way, the blood of bulls and goats could only reach so far. In other words their efficiency could only reach to the things of this earth. But it is not so with the sacrifice of Christ. His sacrifice is powerful and efficient to enter heaven itself! And for those whose sins are covered by his sacrifice, they also go with Christ to heaven. This why the Bible can say that those who are in Christ NOW are **“seated in the heavenly places with him”** (Eph. 2:6). This means that if you are a Christian, if you have received the Lord Jesus, if you have believed on him . . . NOW, by faith you have free and unhindered access to God. You don't have to go to a priest to confess your sins. You don't have to take your sacrifice to a priest or a “Mullah” but instead, your position is as Christ's is. You are “in him” now.

By way of application, we must not forget the great motive behind the heavenly reach of Christ's sacrifice. It is the love of Christ, which is the love of God. This love is deeper than mercy (which I cannot comprehend). And this goes back to our example with Abraham and the flaming torch. Only God can save. Only God can do what is necessary for our salvation, thus the incarnation and humiliation of Christ on the cross! **“For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son . . .”** A great picture from my quiet time on Friday is the picture of the **“outstretched arm of God.”** In Ps. 136:11-12 the Psalmist remembers the great love of God as he delivered Israel from their slavery in Egypt. He says, You **“brought Israel out from among them, for your steadfast love endures forever; with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his steadfast love endures forever.”**

Last week at Emily's house Nora was having “room time.” And after peaceful playing for a while, we heard her begin to get frustrated and eventually to cry out. And we found her stuck in the corner of the room between her crib, the wall, and a chair. We still don't know how she got there. But, her arms were too short and her strength was too little to get her out. So, Emily went with outstretched arms to take her from the place she could not escape to the safety of her own arms. Brothers and sisters, God's arms are outstretched to deliver us from our peril. Our arms are too short. Our sacrifices, our works, our ways, . . . cannot take us to heaven. And at the end of the outstretched arms of God, we find the most beautiful sacrifice of the Son, our great high priest! He delivers us from the hold of Satan, from the power of sin, from penalty of sin, and eventually from the very presence of sin.

Listen to these words from Is. 53 as we consider the great reach of Christ and his sacrifice. **“Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we**

should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 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. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”

So in closing what do we do after hearing about this most beautiful sacrifice? 3 quick applications:

1. We worship God for the sending of the Son. We worship God for doing what only He could do.
2. We tell those around us about this great sacrifice. Acts 4:12 says: “**And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**”
3. Because of the sacrifice of the Son, we are now free to **offer ourselves in service**. In Rom. 12:1-2 Paul says: “**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**” We no longer have to rely on a system with priests and the sacrifice of animals. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” and gave up his Spirit, and died on the cross, He secured our redemption. And there is no longer anything left for us to do except offer ourselves every day in his service. Peter says “**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**” (1 Pet. 2:9).