

A better ministry in a better tabernacle – Hebrews 9:1-15

James Muldoon - Carey Baptist Church - 2 September 2007

Hebrews 9 continues to compare and contrast the old covenant and the new covenant. It shows again that the new is better than the old. Therefore the Hebrews need to stand firm in their faith.

i A Better Sanctuary

A sanctuary is a holy place, a place where God is. The question in Hebrews 9 is this: which sanctuary is better, the old covenant's or the new covenant's?

v1-8 describe the old covenant sanctuary, the tabernacle (which was later replaced by the temple) with all its paraphernalia. It was actually all about separation. It was only the priests who could go into the Holy Place, **v6**. It was only the high priest who could go into the Most Holy Place, **v7**. Everybody else was kept at arm's length. **v8** explains the significance of that. **"The way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed..."** The way for ordinary people like you and me to enter God's presence was not yet open.

Hebrews 8:5 shows an even more serious problem with the old covenant sanctuary. It was, says the writer, just an earthly copy of heavenly realities. It was only a symbolic representation of God's presence.

v11 shows the new covenant sanctuary. Where the old covenant high priest entered an earthly representation of heavenly realities; Jesus Christ entered those heavenly realities themselves. He went into God's immediate presence. He went into the place which really counts.

ii A Better Sacrifice

v12 tells us all about the sacrifice which Jesus offered for our sake. His offering was not that of an animal. He offered himself. And that's an immensely valuable sacrifice. How valuable must the blood of the Son of God made man, the one person who ever lived a perfect life, be? It's priceless. It's of infinite value. It's the only sacrifice valuable enough to deal with the infinite debt against us because of our sin. Christ's sacrifice is a better sacrifice. That's why it was only offered once.

As a result, Jesus obtained eternal redemption. He obtained redemption which lasts as long as eternity itself. By nature we are slaves of sin. We can't free ourselves. We can't pay the price. But Jesus did. He paid the ultimate price. There's no more to pay. As soon as we trust in him, because of his better sacrifice, we go free.

If you don't trust in him, please do! He gives freedom from sin and death and hell. He gives eternal life, an eternal redemption, as **v12** puts it. But for this to mean anything to you, you must believe in him, confessing your sin to him and starting to live for him. Don't be content to know about Christ and what he has done. Know him. Turn to him today.

A Better Spotlessness

Hebrews also asks how you can get a clear conscience before God. Can the old covenant deliver? Can the new covenant deliver? Which covenant is going to clear your conscience?

v9-10 speak of the old covenant. **v9** shows that the sacrifices offered in the tabernacle could not clear the conscience of the worshipper. They did give an outward, external cleansing, as **v10** shows. They could make a man or a woman ceremonially clean. They could give an outward spotlessness. But they could not make him or her clean on the inside. They could not provide the sinner with a clear conscience.

v13-14 speak of the new covenant. **v14** boldly proclaims that the blood of Christ, that great sacrifice, cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God. The new covenant delivers! It gives us a total and complete spotlessness on the inside, a better spotlessness.

One of the glories of the new covenant is that it delivers a clear conscience. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from all sin. Even if you have committed the worst sin imaginable, Jesus' blood can cleanse you from it. Christian, no matter what you've done, no matter what you've been, there is forgiveness for you, and there is a clear conscience for you. Please take that as an absolute promise from God.

iv A Better Salvation

v15 shows that the new covenant gives a better salvation than the old covenant! In fact, it's only the new covenant which gives salvation at all!

Have you ever wondered how people were saved in the Old Testament? **v15** goes some way to answering that question. It teaches that Jesus' sacrifice brought in the new covenant. It provided an eternal inheritance for men and women. And how? Because his death set them free from sin. The writer narrows right in upon men and women living under the old covenant. They committed sins under that old covenant. But it's Jesus' death which set them free.

So the simple truth of the matter is that people in the Old Testament were saved by Jesus Christ. When they put their faith in the one the sacrifices pointed forward to, the one the prophets foretold, the one who would come to be the Messiah, they were saved. And when Jesus died, their sin was dealt with in a kind of retrospective way. People in the Old Testament were saved by Jesus Christ.

And it's the same today! Salvation comes only through him. So if you're a Christian, rejoice in him. And if you're not, cry out to him now!