

Hebrews 9:11-15 – “Better!”

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Intro: It will help us to begin by reminding ourselves of a basic principle taught to us in the first chapter of Genesis: the only reason the universe we live in exists is to serve as a means through which God can communicate to us the unseen realities that exist beyond this present creation. In other words, this present, fallen, temporary reality, points away to an unfallen, permanent reality you and I cannot now see with our eyes, but which is solidly there, nonetheless. Unless we realize this tonight’s lesson will simply leave us in confusion. Tonight, we’ll remind ourselves that God has taken away the ineffectual and temporary because the effectual and permanent has now appeared in Jesus Christ, His Son. The Old has passed away and something Better has come!

Proposition: In Jesus a Better Priest, a Better Sacrifice, and A Better Covenant has come. Rejoice!

Billboard: (vv.11-12) A Better Priest
 (vv.13-14) A Better Sacrifice
 (v.15) A Better Covenant

(vv.11-12) A Better Priest – In the Old Testament economy the High Priest had to enter the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement bringing blood to cleanse the ritual impurity of himself and the people. But we are told in **Hebrews 10:4 - 4** *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*. Because of this that sacrifice was ineffectual and temporary and had to be repeated year after year. Furthermore, it could not cleanse the conscience of the worshippers since it only dealt with the external issue of ritual purity, enabling the worshipper to come back into the Tabernacle once sins had been ritually atoned for. The Old Testament ritual was simply a symbol, pointing forward to the unseen spiritual reality yet to come. The High Priest did what he was commanded to do, but what he did was ineffectual and temporary. It was never designed to be anything else. Its purpose was to point away toward a Better Priest, a Better Sacrifice, and a Better Covenant yet to appear: **Hebrews 9:11–12 - 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*. When Jesus appeared, a Better High Priest came – one who brought with Him all the reality unseen – “*the good things*” the old High Priest could only point to. How could Jesus do this? “*Through the greater and more perfect tent,*” His body. The Old Testament Tabernacle pointed toward Jesus, the ultimate dwelling place of God with Man. When Jesus offered Himself on the cross through the sacrificial death of His body, “*he entered once for all into the holy places,*” presenting His own blood, not the blood of goats and calves in atonement for our sins and in doing this “*thus securing for us an eternal redemption.*” We were “set free by the payment of a ransom price”¹ – bought back forever through the work of our Better Priest.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] A Better Priest has now secured eternal redemption for all who have put their faith in Him.

[ILLUSTRATION] It is informative to remember that under the Old Dispensation there was no provision for chairs in the Tabernacle built by Moses. There were other types of furniture ranging from the Table of Showbread to the Ark of the Covenant, but nowhere in the Tabernacle or the Temple that later succeeded it would one find a chair to rest in. The reason is simple: no one had time to sit down – not even for a moment. The work of sacrifice specified in God’s Law was continuous; the priests were always

¹ Expositor’s Bible Commentary

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in motion. The work of ritual purification never ended. But now Jesus our Better High Priest has entered once for all into the Holy Places bringing the unceasing struggle for forgiveness and acceptance by God finally to an end.

[APPLICATION] How many people who call themselves Christians have yet to realize that their struggle for acceptance by God has now ended? How many saints continue to work to the point of exhaustion convinced that God’s love must be earned through their performance? Guilt-ridden in conscience because of every failure and fault, these poor folks tread toward heaven with heads hung low, expecting a stern dressing down when they finally arrive – a flashing video screen showing everyone all their failures before they are finally, reluctantly allowed through the gate. What a poverty-stricken conception of God’s love! Our Better High Priest, Jesus, has gone into the holy places bearing his own blood for our atonement, once for all. The struggle is over for all who have responded to God’s effectual call to become His child through Jesus’ finished work on Calvary. That is why the Bible now assures us that we are “*seated with Christ in the heavenlies*” (Ephesians 2:6). SEATED dear one! Seated because our Better High Priest has gone into the holy places once for all on our behalf, giving us rest. Rejoice!

(vv.13-14) A Better Sacrifice – Concerning His blood’s power there is much to say: **Hebrews 9:13–14 - 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.* The blood represented a life sacrificed under the Old Testament system. Ritual impurity was cleansed, and the worshipper permitted to come again into the Presence through the offering of the blood of bulls and goats and the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer on the defiled person. But the effect of this was only temporary and external. A Better Sacrifice was needed – one that could cause permanent cleansing of the sinner’s heart rather than just ritual purification of his body. The old sacrifices pointed away to a Better Sacrifice in Christ: **Hebrews 9:14 - 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.* Christ’s sacrifice is better because “*through the eternal Spirit [He] offered himself without blemish to God.*” All three persons of the Trinity – the Father willing, the Son sacrificing, the Spirit empowering – all three members of the Trinity worked through Jesus’ sacrifice to do what the blood of goats and bulls could never accomplish: To “*purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*” In other words, an inward work was done in the conscience (heart) which renders the old outer works, “*dead*” – powerless so that now we can “*serve the living God.*” (**Romans 7:6 - 6** *But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*)

[DOCTRINAL POINT] A Better Sacrifice has now purified our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

[ILLUSTRATION] “Clean up your room or you are not going out with your friends tonight!” How many of us, desperate to be ready when our friends arrived, “cleaned up our room” by pushing dirty socks and smelly tee shirts under the bed? We “cleaned up our room” by sweeping all the clutter on our desktop quickly into a conveniently open drawer and hiding the dirty dishes on the floor among the clothes in the overflowing laundry basket. In other words, the supposedly “cleaned up” room looked fine on the surface, but underneath – well that was another story! The dirt, clutter, and general crud was still there – it was just pushed out of sight. That is exactly what the Old Testament system of Laws did with the sins

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of the people: it got them out of sight – off the surface – but underneath in the worshipper’s heart, in the conscience, the knowledge of sin was still there.

[APPLICATION] And then came Jesus. He dealt not only with the surface, but with the heart as well. Jesus’ blood doesn’t just “clean up our act,” it cleans up our heart; it satisfies our conscience and gives us a whole new perspective on life. No longer slaves to “*dead works*” we are now released into the freedom of the sons of God, serving Him with joy because we know His love for us. Jesus didn’t clean us up because He had too; He cleaned us from the inside out because He got to. Now we can serve Him from that same motive: not because we *have* to, but because we *get* to. Rejoice!

(v.15) A Better Covenant – Because the Old has been set aside, the New must necessarily come.

Hebrews 9:15 - 15 *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. Why must a New Covenant come? “So that those who are called may receive the promised inheritance.”* In other words, this New Covenant can now deliver to us all the “*good things*” that have fully come through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (cf.v.11). How can this be? It can happen “*since a death has occurred that redeems them from transgressions committed under the first covenant.*” In other words, Jesus’ death not only reached into the future – your future and mine – but it also stretches into the past including atonement for all the sins of God’s people committed under the Old Covenant – a covenant that was ineffectual and temporary and which pointed away toward an effectual and permanent covenant of grace yet to come – a grace that now sweeps away all our sins; past, present, and future.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] A Better Covenant has now come, bringing us the promised eternal inheritance at last.

[ILLUSTRATION] Remember when you were a kid and there was that thing you wanted so badly for Christmas or your birthday? Mom and Dad hinted that maybe you’d get it, but you were never quite sure. But then the moment came when you unwrapped the gift and there it was; the very thing you had hoped for all along. When Jesus appeared as our Better Priest and Better Sacrifice, the package arrived – the Better Covenant. It was put into our laps containing all “*the good things that have come*” – everything we’d could ever want for eternal life.

[APPLICATION] All the promises made to us under the Old Covenant – a home with God; ruling and reigning with Him; best of all, eternal life, and freedom from sin – all those promises become ours for good and all in Jesus, Mediator of the New Covenant. His death has redeemed us once for all from every sin chargeable to our account under God’s Law. All our sins, past, present, and future are washed away in the precious blood of the Lamb. Now, all “*the good things that have come*” are certainly and forever ours in Him. Rejoice!

Conclusion: God has taken away the ineffectual and temporary because the effectual and permanent has now appeared in Jesus Christ, His Son. The old has passed away and something Better has come! Jesus is the Better Priest, the Better Sacrifice, the Mediator of the Better Covenant. Rejoice!