

THE PERFECT OFFERING

Hebrews 9:11-15

Many times in advertisements we see and hear such phrases as “new and improved” as it relates to a particular product or service. With all the technological advances that have happened in our lifetime, we have seen a lot of new and improved things come on the scene. It seems that there is no end to the improvements. No one has found the ultimate improved product which would point to there being no absolutes in the physical realm.

In the spiritual realm there are absolutes. We find in the letter to the Hebrew Christians several “new and improved” situations with regard to the way God deals with mankind. Before this time, the Bible had various prophecies with promises that pointed to a restoration of the perfection that was lost when mankind rebelled against his Creator. There are still promises and prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled that point to a future new world. In the meantime, we have available to us the benefits of what God has already implemented to provide the ultimate in “new and improved.”

The writer of Hebrews started out in the early chapters with the argument that in Christ Jesus we have the ultimate Messenger who has brought to us God’s ultimate message of salvation which is found in the New Covenant that is mediated by a New High Priest Who is ministering in the New or True Eternal Sanctuary on behalf of a New humanity born, not of Adam, but born of the Spirit.

In previous parts of the letter the writer made reference to the need for a priest to bring gifts and offerings on behalf of the people as he entered the tabernacle. The superiority of what this superior High Priest offers in the superior Tabernacle was mentioned previously. In the process of describing the furnishing in the earthly Temple or Tabernacle which are types of spiritual truths, the writer gives further evidence of the superiority of the offering that Christ has made on our behalf.

Everything in the earthly outer sanctuary pointed to Christ and the new covenant. The lamp stand with the seven lights has been variously pictured as the church (see Rev 1). The oil for the light is pictured as the Holy Spirit. The bread is seen as the representation of Jesus as the bread of life. There were twelve loaves representing the twelve tribes of Israel. There was the incense altar which represents the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In the Most Holy Place, we find the ark with the manna (heavenly bread) of which Jesus is the true Bread from Heaven. The staff that had budded showed God’s ability to bring new life to that which is dead. The tables of the law pointed to the engraving of the character of God that would be done on our hearts. On these tables were the words given by God and pointed to the Logos of which Jesus is the Word or perfect revelation of God. The purpose of the ministry of Jesus was to bring glory to the Father as represented by the cherubim over the mercy seat. This covering for the ark is referred to as the place of propitiation of which Jesus provided an everlasting atonement for the sin of the world. The blood which the high priest took into the Holy of Holies pointed to the shed blood of Christ by which the permanent atonement was effected.

Christ’s Entry – 9:11-12

¹¹ But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; ¹² and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:11-12 (NASB95)

During the time that the Old Covenant was in operation, God had promised a new and

better way that would make spiritual benefits available to mankind that were typified in the physical benefits that obedience to the Old Covenant provided. We see such things as good crops, rain, physical wellness, protection from enemies, victory in battles, and other physical or material blessings as the temporal benefits of the Old Covenant that were contingent upon the obedience of God's people. The promised spiritual benefits were the "good things to come" in conjunction with the New Covenant. John Gill has listed such typical benefits as peace, reconciliation, atonement, a justifying righteousness, pardon of sin, eternal life, and any number of other spiritual blessings associated with salvation.

In The Bible Exposition Commentary Warren Wiersbe pointed out that the "good things to come" had already arrived! All that was foreshadowed by type in the tabernacle was now reality because of Christ's priestly ministry in heaven. The tabernacle was patterned after the sanctuary in heaven, but today we no longer need the pattern. We have the eternal reality!

The question that we need to address for ourselves is "Are we walking in and benefitting from these 'spiritual and eternal blessings' or are we thinking that the 'good things' are still 'yet to come' in some future times such as the millennial kingdom or in Heaven?"

Just as the New Covenant provided better (perfect) promises than the Old Covenant, we see that the new High Priest (of a new order) Who was perfectly qualified to minister to the needs of a new, born-again humanity in an eternal, heavenly sanctuary offered a new and perfect sacrificial offering as He entered into the real, holy place.

Christ's Superior Sacrifice – 9:13-14

¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrews 9:13-14 (NASB95)

The sacrificial system under the Old Covenant was directed toward ceremonial cleansing using the blood of animals. The superiority of the perfect offering that Christ took into the heavenly holy place is more fully developed in Chapter ten of this letter, but we see here several significant things that point to the superiority of the "new" versus the "old."

First, and maybe most significant, was the fact that the new sacrifice involved human blood that was not tainted by sin rather than animal blood that was from a mere "physically" perfect animal used under the old system. The idea of perfection for such animals is perhaps well illustrated in the requirement for the heifer whose ashes were used in the ceremonies. Perfection simply meant that the color was uniformly "red" with no more than two white hairs. Logically, we should ask "How could the blood of any animal (however perfect it might be) ever solve the problem of human sin?" That was never the intent of those animal sacrifices. The purpose was to provide a cleansing of the flesh (body) for those who had been defiled by sins so that they would be ceremonial clean to be able to participate in the rites and rituals of worship.

The sacrifices under the Old Covenant did not address the issue of sin (singular) which is the condition of all those who are of the seed of Adam. Sin, of course, is man's greatest problem. No matter what kind of religion a man has, if it cannot deal with sin, it is of no eternal value. By nature, man is a sinner, and by choice, he proves that his nature is sinful.

The annual Day of Atonement did not accomplish "remission of sin" but was only a "reminder of sin." The annual repetition of the ceremony was evidence that the previous year's sacrifices had not done the job. True, the nation's sins were covered; but the people did not have God's inward witness of forgiveness and acceptance because there was no change of their basic

nature which John the Baptist had alluded to when he pointed out Jesus as the “Lamb of God who takes away the SIN of the world.”

Dealing with the “sin” problem is an internal work rather than an external work that was associated with the Old Covenant. The offering of the blood of Christ was a “once for all,” perfect sacrifice provided by God that was able to cleanse our consciences from the effect of acts that lead to death (or dead works). The internal nature of what God would do under the New Covenant is seen in the prophecy of Jeremiah (31:31-34) in which God promised “I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts” (Heb. 8:10). This work is done by the Holy Spirit of God. But the Spirit could not dwell within us if Jesus Christ had not paid for our sins and redeemed us. Cleansing our consciences cannot be done by some external ceremony; it demands an internal power.

The cleansing of the conscience is essentially accomplished by the new birth. Watchman Nee (*The Spiritual Man*) pointed out that human conscience is a part of or function of the spirit of man. Following the rebellion of Adam in the Garden of Eden, his conscience began to operate from the “knowledge of good and evil” that now was coming from his own intellectual interpretation of what was happening in his world rather than from his communion with God the Creator. In other words, his conscience was functioning in his spirit that was experiencing death since it was cut off from its life source. With the new birth, the spirit of man is quickened by the uncreated life of God and is now able to commune with God. Therefore, our consciences do not need to operate from the ideas of good and evil that are driven by an unregenerated mind operating in a fallen world.

Christ’s Mediation – 9:15

¹⁵ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. Hebrews 9:15 (NASB95)

Since the shed blood of Jesus Christ was (is) able to cleanse completely He is uniquely qualified to be the Mediator of this new covenant that is based on better promises that deal with the internal condition of man rather than the external appearances. In this role of Mediator we see that He had obtained eternal redemption (v. 12) for all humanity who will receive salvation by dying to self and being raised to new life through the new spiritual birth. This redemption was possible because His innocent blood had been shed on the cross. His death is the price of liberation from the judgment and guilt produced by sin.

As Mediator of this New Covenant we find that He has set us free (in our consciences) from the guilt that results from acts that lead to death so that we might freely serve God to do the “acts” that He had foreordained that we should do when we are saved (Eph 2:10).

Not only did Christ initiate the New Covenant He died to make it effective since the provisions of a “will” do not become effective until the death of the one who made the will. Beyond that, He was resurrected from death and now is the Mediator of the provisions and promises of that “will” on behalf of those who are receiving and will receive the benefits of the eternal inheritance. This is linked to ‘the world to come’ (2:5), the ‘Sabbath-rest for the people of God’ (4:9), ‘the heavenly Jerusalem’ (12:22) and other such descriptions of our position and destiny as Christians. Jesus has opened the way to his inheritance for us by dealing with the sin that keeps us from drawing near to God.