

A Better Sanctuary

Hebrews: Jesus is Better • Hebrews 9:11-28

Baxter T. Exum (#1694)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
June 11, 2023



It is a great blessing to be together this morning, and if you are visiting with us today (either here in person or online), we are glad to have you with us, and we would invite you to fill out an online visitor card by using the QR code on the front of the bulletin or by going to our website at fourlakeschurch.org/visitor. Or, you can use the cards in the pews this morning – not just if you are visiting with us, but also for special questions and prayer concerns. You can put those in the box on the wall in the entryway or give your card to me on your way out this morning.

We are here this morning to preach the good news that God loves us so much that he sent his only son to this earth to die on the cross for us; he was buried, and he was raised up on the first day of the week, which is why we assemble to worship on this day, so many years later. We obey this good news by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by confessing our faith that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with him in baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And we've had many examples this week, starting with an update from the Lord's church down in Buford, Georgia. They quote 2 Corinthians 5:21, ***"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him,"*** and then they say that,

Our amazing God continues to provide the increase! Alysa is a friend and former coworker of one of our members who made it their mission to win a soul for Christ this year! All that planting and watering led Alysa to be baptized into Christ. God gave the increase, and Christ washed her sins away. How great is our God? He allows us to take on His own righteousness through His Son. Join us in welcoming Alysa to the Household of the Faith!

We also have an update from the church in Cowan, Tennessee. They say,

We're so pleased that Steve chose to put Christ on in baptism. Steve has been studying with David for the last 3 months. He's asked so many questions. But, that's just fine! The truth NEVER minds being questioned. Steve told David Wednesday morning that he had studied with many denominational preachers over the last 15 years and never had one that insisted on answering everything with the Word of God. Thankfully, the Lord's church isn't a denomination and we rely solely on the scriptures! After 3 months of going to scripture and scripture alone he was convicted and insisted on being immersed for the forgiveness of sins. David was in

Mississippi Wednesday morning and couldn't be in Cowan to baptize Steve but both men knew that wasn't important, what was important was salvation and Steve didn't want to wait another minute! Thankfully we have wonderful men at the Cowan church of Christ who came to help Steve put on Christ and welcome him into the family of God! Many times since studying with Steve, David has asked him the same question Ananias asked Saul, ***"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"*** (Acts 22:16). Praise God with us. We are so thankful for Steve and his two sons who worship with us.

This next update comes to us Jeff Whatley, who preaches for the North Jefferson Church of Christ in Mount Pleasant, Texas. He says,

To God be all praise for His steadfast love and matchless grace and mercy! Though my Dad cannot physically walk, what a tremendous blessing to spiritually walk in newness of life. ***"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection"*** (Romans 6:1-5).

And this last one comes to us from somewhere in Columbia, I believe. Luis Alberto Castañeda posted a few days ago, and he says that,

Nely was baptized today, to the glory of God. She had been baptized 10 years ago in an evangelical group, but she didn't know it was the gospel (the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ - 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). For this reason the Lord Jesus Christ said, ***"Go into all the world and preach THE GOSPEL to every creature. Whoever believes, (in the gospel) and is baptized, shall be saved"*** (Mark 16:15-16). Biblical baptism is a symbol of the gospel: Christ died for sin, I also die to sin. Christ was buried, I am also buried with him in the waters for the forgiveness of my sins. Christ is risen, I too come out of the waters into a new life with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:1-4). The gospel is the power of God for salvation for Jews and Gentiles (Romans 1:16). Without the holy sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ there is no forgiveness of sins for anyone. TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOR EVER AMEN.

As our tradition has been, we share these pictures and these stories to encourage and to show exactly what it means to obey the gospel. And if you have not yet obeyed the gospel yourself, we invite you to get in touch. Pull me aside after worship today or reach out using the contact information on the website or on the bulletin, and we would love to study together.

This morning we return to our study of Hebrews, and today we continue in the middle section of this book, where we are now in the ***"meat"*** of this series of lessons. We've looked at Jesus as being from a BETTER PRIESTHOOD (based on the priesthood of Melchizedek, in Chapter 7). We've looked at Jesus as being the mediator of a BETTER COVENANT (in Chapter 8), and today we finish up a two-part series of lessons from Chapter 9, where we're thinking about Jesus as a priest who serves in a BETTER SANCTUARY. We are headed toward thinking about Jesus himself being a BETTER SACRIFICE (in Chapter 10).

Today, though, we are looking at a chapter where we have several references to the TABERNACLE or to the SANCTUARY. Last week, we looked at the OLD SANCTUARY, and we noted that Jesus is better, because he serves in a BETTER SANCTUARY (as opposed to the old one), and we also learned that Jesus serves through BETTER RITUALS (as opposed to those old rituals). This week, we continue, with a focus on Jesus by looking at three roles he fills in this new and better sanctuary.

- I. And we'll start this morning with verses 11-14, as we find that in this new sanctuary, **JESUS HAS REDEEMED US WITH HIS OWN BLOOD**, not with the blood of animals (as was the case in the old sanctuary).

So let's notice Hebrews 9:11-14,

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. 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?

Let's notice, first of all, how this section starts with a **"but."** In other words, we have a contrast, don't we? As we learned last week, the priests under the Old Covenant would enter that old sanctuary with the blood of an animal, and that would make the people ceremonially clean (meaning that they could come before God in worship). But now, instead of the blood of goats and calves, Jesus has now entered into a heavenly sanctuary by means of his own blood. And this means that he has redeemed us. He has secured our eternal redemption (as the ESV puts it). He has purchased our freedom from sin with his own blood. In that passage Michael read for us, Peter says (in 1 Peter 1:18) that we were redeemed, not with perishable things (like silver and gold), but we were redeemed with **"precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."** And that's the contrast: In the old sanctuary, in the old tent, the priests would offer the blood of animals, but that only covered the flesh. The blood of Jesus cleanses the conscience. This is our greatest need! I need to be able to sleep at night in spite of the terrible things I've done in the past. The blood of Jesus can do this! The blood of Jesus is better. And he enters, not an earthly tent with the blood of a goat, but he enters the heavenly sanctuary, with his own blood, a perfect and willing sacrifice.

And the result of this is that we get to be a part of the team! Down in verse 14, we've been redeemed, allowing us to **"serve the living God."** Because we've been redeemed, our lives have purpose. We now serve, like the Levites once did. And we serve, because we have been redeemed. We were redeemed when Jesus entered into the heavenly sanctuary through his own blood.

- II. The second aspect of Jesus' work in the heavenly sanctuary is that he has used his superior blood to **MEDIATE A BETTER COVENANT**.

We continue with Hebrews 9:15-22,

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. ¹⁶ For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. ¹⁷ For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. ¹⁸ Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. ²² And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

We are back to death and blood, aren't we? Not only is has Jesus redeemed us, but his death and his blood have allowed him to mediate a better covenant with us. And in this passage, the covenant is compared to a will. In verse 17, a covenant only goes into effect when someone dies. And so, the picture is of someones "Last Will and Testament," as we would describe it today. Just as my will is all signed and ready to go, it doesn't go into effect until I'm dead! Well, in the same way, Jesus declared his will during his life on this earth, but his will didn't go into effect until his death on the cross. Yesterday, I did a quick search for the phrase "**blood of the covenant,**" and it's found in Exodus when blood was shed at the giving of God's first Law, it's found in Matthew and Mark with reference to the Lord's Supper, and it's found right here in Hebrews. We think back to Jesus on the night before he died. When he instituted the Lord's Supper, he referred to the cup as being his "**...blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.**" Every Lord's Day morning, then, we come together to remember this blood of the covenant that was poured out for the forgiveness of sins. From time to time (as I travel) I'll hear someone refer to Jesus' blood that was "spilled" on the cross. I understand the thought, and I would never criticize, but Jesus' blood was not "spilled," no, it was "**poured out,**" it was offered intentionally. His blood was shed.

And this reminds us that under the Old Law, the blood of animals was important. God didn't ask for their hair, or their horns, or their milk; no, God demanded their BLOOD. A life was taken. This was serious, especially if you were the goat or the sheep! In the same way, Jesus gave up his life – his life in exchange for ours. Blood was shed, and as the author points out in verse 21, "**...all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**" Blood cleanses. And yet, when we think of blood, cleansing may not be the first thing that comes to mind. I think of blood in terms of a stain. I am the stain remover in our family, and as most of you know, blood is a tough one. It's up there with ink in terms of being difficult to remove. I'm also not a fan of chap stick or a Sharpie going through the dryer. Not cool at all! But a bloodstain can also be pretty tough to remove. We think of murders that are solved years later due to a bloodstain on a wall or in somebody's car. So, we don't always think of blood as cleansing. But isn't cleansing one of the main functions of blood? Think about the role of blood in the body. Certainly, blood is responsible for bringing nutrients and oxygen to every cell in the body. But isn't blood also responsible for removing waste from those cells? Blood cleanses. And in this case, blood cleanses as it is used to mediate a better covenant.

III. Let's close today by looking at the last paragraph in Hebrews 9, where the author makes the argument that in this new sanctuary the blood of Jesus PURIFIES US AS A BETTER SACRIFICE.

Let's look at Hebrews 9:23-28,

²³ Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not

enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵ nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

We continue with the emphasis on blood, but here we find that his blood purifies, not by entering a temple or tabernacle made with hands, but by entering heaven itself. And I hope we notice that Jesus is now in heaven ***“to appear in the presence of God for us.”*** This is what his sacrifice has actually achieved. We’ll get back to this emphasis on Jesus being a better sacrifice in the first half of Chapter 10 (hopefully next week), but for now, we learn that his sacrifice prepares us to face God ourselves. Just as he appears before God for us (right now), so also we will some day appear before God ourselves. And we need to be ready for that. We prepare by having him go first, on our behalf. He prepares the way for us, and when he returns for us, we face the judgment. So, don’t give up, because he’s coming back for us.

Conclusion:

So, we close this morning with the reminder (in verse 27) that, ***“...inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”*** All of us have an appointment with death. We know what it means to schedule stuff, to put things on our calendars, to set alarms and reminders. Sometimes, appointments can be rescheduled or missed or put off. But our appointment with death is different.

Unless the Lord returns first, all of us here this morning will die. Last week, I told you I wasn’t really looking forward to getting my blood drawn this week. I had an appointment for a physical with my nurse practitioner. And in preparing for that appointment Thursday morning, I made sure not to eat or drink anything. I had an appointment with her at 8:40 and with my dermatologist at 9:45, and in my mind I was headed to the lab right in between those two appointments, just as I have done for several years now. I like getting it over with all at once. But as the appointment progressed, she said, “You are in perfect health, I use your chart on intermittent fasting to motivate my other patients, keep up the running and swimming, eat some more avocados, and based on what I’ve seen today, I see no need to have you do any labs this morning.” Yes! By the way, after the dermatologist’s exam, he said that I was completely unexciting. I didn’t know whether to be happy or offended, but I suppose it’s good when the dermatologist finds you unexciting. But as the nurse practitioner was wrapping it up, she plugged the data into her computer and said that I had a 4.1% chance of suffering a cardiac event over the next 12 months. And that’s good, apparently. Something new for me to worry about. But you know what the chances are of me dying at some point over the next 100 years? 100%! All of us have an appointment with death – rich and poor, no matter how old we may be, regardless of where we live – all of us will die. Now, this doesn’t mean that it’s a fixed date, necessarily; this just means that after death, all of us have an appointment to face God in judgment.

And thankfully, this is an appointment we can prepare for. We prepare for it by obeying the gospel. As the prophet says in Amos 4:12, ***“Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”*** And when we’re prepared, we eagerly look

forward to the Lord's return. One of the most common prayers of the early church was, "Maranatha," an Aramaic word meaning, "Lord come," or "Lord, come quickly."

This morning, we've looked at Jesus serving in a new and better sanctuary. He redeemed us with his own blood, He mediated a new covenant with superior blood, and he purified us with a better sacrifice. Hopefully we can move into Hebrews 10 next week as we learn a bit more about Jesus as a sacrifice.

Before Jim leads us in a song to prepare us for the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

This morning we praise you as our almighty and loving Father. We ask for your forgiveness when we sin, knowing that your Son died in our place. Thank you for loving us, even when we have done absolutely nothing to deserve it.

We come to you today through Jesus, who now serves in a new and better sanctuary. Lord, come quickly! AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com