



CONTRASTS IN THE OLD AND NEW COVENANT WORSHIP

GOLDEN TEXT

“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”. (Hebrews 9:22)

USEFUL PRACTICE

The effectiveness of worship in this period of the New Covenant lies in the fact that it is grounded in the blood of Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 9:1-5, 14, 15, 22-28

9:1 - Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary.

2 - A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place.

3 - Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place,

4 - which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.

5 - Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

14 - How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

15 - For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.



22 - In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

23 - It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24 - For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

25 - Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

26 - Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 - Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

28 - so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To explain that worship in the New Covenant is grounded in the blood of Christ.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- I. **To point** out how worship and its elements were like in the Old Covenant;
- II. **To show** the effectiveness of worship in the New Covenant;
- III. **To explain** the uniqueness of the New Covenant worship.

INTRODUCTION

In speaking of the tabernacle as the place of worship in the Old Covenant, the sacred author details some of its main utensils. He shows that he has worship in mind as he uses the Greek term *latreia*. This word is used in other passages (Hebrews 9:1, 6, 9, 14) meaning adoration or sacred service. It is noticeable that the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ



dominates much of the epistle and much of what has been said about the subject is emphasized here again. The intention is to contrast ancient worship provided by the Old Covenant priestly system and the service rendered by Christ in the New Covenant eternal tabernacle.

I - WORSHIP AND ITS ELEMENTS IN THE OLD COVENANT

1. Worship and its utensils. The author demonstrates a deep knowledge of the Old Covenant worship when he speaks of the tabernacle and its utensils. He has in mind the two main sections of the ancient sanctuary: the Holy Place and the Holy of holies. In the description he makes of the first compartment, the Holy Place, were the lampstand and the table of showbread. In the second compartment, the Holy of holies, which was separated from the first one by a curtain, the author cites the Ark of the Covenant and the Golden Altar of Incense.

2. Worship: its officiants and liturgy. There is a whole symbolism in these utensils of ancient worship, as shown by biblical typology. The Lampstand would represent the testimony of the people of God; the Table of Showbread, fellowship with God; the Altar of Incense, prayer, and the Ark of the Covenant, the presence of God. However, the author does not dwell on details of this typology. His intention is to show worship as a whole, as it was rendered in the ancient tabernacle and thereby to contrast it with the heavenly tabernacle in which Christ officiated as High Priest. Into the Holy Place, priests entered daily to worship, whereas only once a year did the high priest enter the Holy of holies to officiate. Their sacred service was only a shadow and did not fix the problem of guilt. Through self-sacrifice, Christ entered the heavenly Holy of holies to solve once and for all the problem of sin.

II - THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NEW COVENANT WORSHIP

1. An eternal redemption. The difference between the Old and the New Covenant worship can be seen in the contrast between the two Covenants as to the effectiveness of the sacrifice made in the context of each one. On the effectiveness of the redemption worked by Christ, the author claims to go far beyond that of ancient worship (Heb. 9:12). In the text of Hebrews nine, the word "redemption" translates the Greek term *lutrosis*, which means "ransom" with the sense of "releasing by means of payment". While the Levitical worship, with its many rituals, produced only ceremonial purity, the sacrifice of Christ worked eternal redemption.



2. A clean conscience. We have already seen that sacrifices in the Old Covenant had a purely external aspect, that is, ceremonial. They could not deal with the inner part of man. In fact, these many sacrifices only "covered" sins instead of removing them. On the other hand, Christ's sacrifice deals with the problem of sin at its root. He not only "covers" transgression, but removes it (Heb. 9:14). No sacrifice in ancient worship was capable of coping with the problem of conscience. However, the blood of Christ purifies and cleanses conscience by making it fit for the worship of God.

3. An eternal inheritance. The immediate effect of inner purification worked by the blood of Christ is seen in the words of the author in Hebrews 9:15, when he states that "those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance." The word "inheritance" translates the Greek term *kleronomia*, meaning something that someone has a right to. In the New Testament, it is used in relation to earthly (Luke 12:13), and heavenly things, in the sense that Christ called us "into an inheritance that can never perish" (1 Pet. 1:4). Therefore, our inheritance is heavenly, spiritual and eternal.

III - THE UNIQUENESS OF THE NEW COVENANT WORSHIP

1. The heavenly sanctuary. The earthly tabernacle was a type of the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ officiates as High Priest (Heb. 9:24). Worship in the Old Covenant, with its earthly sanctuary, was only a shadow of which the heavenly sanctuary is a reality. The true model of worship cannot be seen by looking at earth but at heaven. If worship in the ancient sanctuary, in spite of its innumerable limitations, had its value, what then shall we say to an adoration that takes the heavenly sanctuary as its starting point?

2. A higher sacrifice. The service rendered by priests in ancient worship is contrasted with that performed by Christ in the New Covenant. Christ, unlike priests, did not need to repeat his sacrifice nor to do so through the blood of others (Heb. 9:25). Worship in the Old Covenant was imperfect because its priests were as imperfect as their sacrifices. True worship, superior in everything, was only possible because the Lamb of God gave himself for us.

3. A glorious promise. The author concludes his exposition of the Old and New Covenant worship with a promise: "so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not



to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Hebrews 9:28). The author of Hebrews sums up well the message of the text on the work of Christ when he says that our Lord "has appeared, to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26). Now he appears for us in heaven (Hebrews 9:24), but one day he will appear to take us away to his home (Heb. 9:28). These "three times of salvation" are based on his work finished on the Cross of Calvary.

CONCLUSION

The author achieved his goal by contrasting worship in the Old and New Covenants. Ancient worship was earthly, imperfect, transient, incomplete. On the other hand, worship in the New Covenant is grounded in heavenly, eternal, and perfect principles. Therefore, there is no way to worship God in a pleasant way, based on the rudiments of this earthly dimension. Our worship is superior because our Lord is enthroned above the angels.