

BLOOD



Hebrews 9:13-28 New International Version (NIV)

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. **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.

16 In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, **17** because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. **18** This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. **19** When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. **20** He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.” **21** In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. **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.

Do we cover the sacrificial ceremonies of Jewish traditions and tabernacles?

Do we cover the role of Christ as a priest; a new high priest from the order of Melchizedek?

Do we compare and contrast the first and the new covenants?

Let's review our limited understanding of why and for whom the book of Hebrews was written. These people were probably second generation Hebrew Christians considering returning to Judaism. They are under persecution from both Jews and Romans. Christ has not returned as promised to establish his kingdom, and the believers needed to be reassured that Christianity is true and that Jesus is the Messiah.

They were having to transition their belief system from Judaism which they had lived for generations waiting for the Messiah with exact traditions and lifestyle regulations to a new covenant that propose free, unrestricted access to God. This transition was difficult for the Hebrew Christians to accept, they were entrenched in the thinking and worshiping in traditional forms. Those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah often found themselves slipping back into familiar routines, trying to live a hybrid faith.

The author or "sermon" of the book of Hebrews was to present the sufficiency and superiority of Jesus Christ. Christ is better; better than angels, better high priest, better blood sacrifice. He is the perfect revelation of God and completion of God's covenants.

Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

Thus, to help the Hebrew Christians mature in their Christianity they had to have certain beliefs reinforced again and again, as we see these themes repeating throughout the entire book of Hebrews. Today's passage once more emphasizes the role of Christ's sacrificial death and especially his blood.

Hebrews 9:13-28 details the distinction between the old ceremonial sacrifices and the perfect sacrifice of Christ once and for all.

Hebrews 9:13-14 *The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 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!*

This is the essence of today's lesson and perhaps for the entire book of Hebrews. Prior to Jesus's death, the Jewish people under the first covenant were sacrificing animals to cleanse themselves from sin. This was a yearly ritual that covered the past years sins but as described here was only an outwardly cleansing.

When the people sacrificed animals, God considered the people's faith and obedience, cleansed them from the sin and made them ceremonially acceptable according to the Old Testament law. Christ's sacrifice transforms our lives and hearts and makes us clean on the inside. Old-Covenant rituals served for the ceremonially unclean and only made them outwardly clean. But the blood of Christ can do much more. His was a sacrifice of infinite value because through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself unblemished to God.

Plus, in these two verses, the writer of Hebrews involved all three Persons of the Godhead. **“the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God”**

These previous sacrifices were a shadow of things to come. They pointed forward and prepared man for Christ who is the reality. When Christ came, he offered himself as the perfect sacrifice. A single offering for sin once and for all. Plus, more than that. It cleansed our hearts and renews our minds so that even our consciences can be purified. We do not have to dwell with the guilt of our sins and the burdens that weigh on our souls. We are free to do what we were created to do, serve the living God!

Hebrews 9:15 *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.*

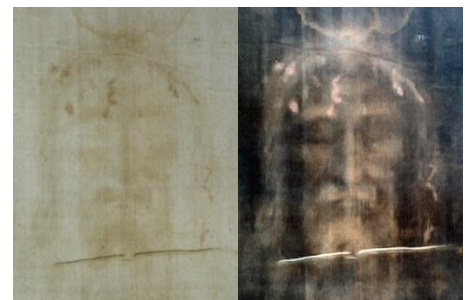
People in Old Testament were saved through Christ’s sacrifice, although that sacrifice had not yet happened. In offering unblemished animal sacrifices, they were anticipating Christ’s coming and his death for sin. There was no point returning to the sacrificial system now that Christ had come and had become the final, perfect sacrifice.

Romans 3:5 *God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

Forbearance- the action of refraining from exercising a legal right, especially enforcing the payment of a debt.

Hebrews 9:16-17 *In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.*

A will or final testament. All the arrangements in a will/testament are finalized and secured by the testator/ the one writing the will and its beneficiaries need only accept its terms. God has done all the advanced work, he alone provides the inheritance. It is something that has nothing to do with our efforts. Also, wills are enforced after the death to bequeath inheritance to those that are still living here on earth. Christ’s death on the cross, brought the terms of his will into effect. The new covenant/testament/will was fully enforced and the gifts were bequeathed to all of those who are willing to receive or accept. He has willed us life, life abundant and live everlasting.



Hebrews 8:18-26 *This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. 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. 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. 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. 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.*



Once again, the writer of Hebrews needs to remind the Hebrews believers that the first covenant had its place and required blood to symbolize the outward cleansing of ceremonial items. But it is clearly pointing to the true heavenly things that only Christ can purify with his pure holy sacrificial blood. Once accomplished it was over, finished, never to need repeating again.

Holy Blood relic in [Santa Maria della Scala, Siena](#).

Hebrews 9:27-28 *Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 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.*

Humans are sinful creatures destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. But this danger is turned aside by the fact that Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people. The wording of "once" (Hebrews 9:26, 28) and of "once for all" (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 10:10) stresses the finality and the singleness of Christ's sacrificial work in contrast with the repeated Levite sacrifices at the temple. In addition, the "once"-sacrifice of Christ compares with the "once"-death of each person. Now those who are waiting for Him can look forward to His coming, not with a fearful expectation of judgment, but with the anticipation of salvation and eternal life.

"Those who are waiting for Him" constitute a smaller circle than those whom His death has benefited. They are the ones who "hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (Hebrews 3:14). The "salvation" He will bring them at His second coming will be the "eternal inheritance" of which they are heirs (Hebrews 9:15; 1:14). Thus, as mentioned at the beginning of the class, the writer of Hebrews is trying to encourage and reinforce the new Christian theology so that they (new Hebrew Christian/us) do not lose faith or fall back on old ways/traditions but strive to serve the living God under the new covenant, free from guilt, obtaining the inheritance that Christ's death has bestowed on us.

Summary of thoughts:

Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate fulfillment of all that the Old Testament sacrifices represented. The forgiveness of sins.

Christ is the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He died as a ransom of the first covenant. Our sins are completely forgiven- past, present and future.

Christ removed sin in our lives, which barred us from God's presence and fellowship. But we must accept his sacrifice for us. By believing in him we are no longer guilty but cleansed and made whole. His death enacts the last will and testament of God that allows us access to his inheritance- life, abundant life and eternal life. So we may serve the living God.

BLOOD



Relic of the Holy Blood, Bruges. The basilica is best known as the repository of a venerated phial said to contain a cloth with blood of Jesus Christ, brought to the city by Thierry of Alsace after the 12th century Second Crusade. Although the Bible never mentions Christ's blood being preserved, one of the apocryphal gospels asserts that Joseph of Arimathea preserved the Precious Blood after he had washed the dead body of Christ.

The blood of Christ:

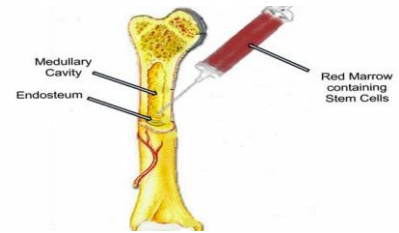
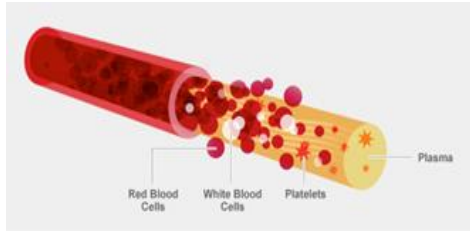
What has the blood of Christ done for us besides paying the ransom for our redemption?

Cleansed us from our sin. 1 John 1:7

Cleansed our conscience. Hebrews 9:14

Given us bold access to God in worship and prayer. Hebrews 10:19

Able to conquer the accuser of the brethren. Revelation 12:10-11



Questions for discussion:

1. How does the sacrificial blood of Christ differ from the blood of sacrificial animals?
2. The Hebrew Jews at this time, who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, often found themselves slipping back into familiar routines, trying to live a hybrid faith. Do we do the same thing with our church traditions or society pressures?
3. We have had our sins forgiven with the sacrificial blood of Christ. Verse 14 tells us that our consciences have been cleansed. Is there a difference between being forgiven of sins and having our consciences free of guilt?
4. As redeemed believers, how are we “to serve the living God”? Would words such as obedience, growth, maturity and sanctification be considered?
5. Imagine being at the reading of the will when Christ died. What other inheritance would we as believers be given besides eternal life?