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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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# NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

## Chapter 9: 11-28

### The Contrasting Excellency of Christ's High Priesthood Analysis

	Verses
1. (a) It is good things to come (b) by a greater tabernacle.	11
2. (a) He entered by His own blood (b) having obtained eternal redemption.	12
3. (a) He offered Himself through the Eternal Spirit (b) His blood cleanses the conscience, to serve the living God.	13, 14
4. (a) His death for former transgressions makes Him Mediator of a new covenant (b) gives the called the promise of eternal inheritance.	15
5. (a) Whereas death, and the shedding and application of blood were necessary under the first covenant, with its copies of the heavenly things (b) Christ's better sacrifice cleanses the heavenly things.	16-23
6. (a) Christ entered into Heaven itself (b) appearing before God for us.	24
7. (a) Not often, but once at the height of the ages He has been manifested (b) to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself	25, 26
8. (a) As man dies once and then comes judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear sins (b) and will appear for His waiting people a second time, sin apart, unto salvation.	27

### NOTES

*Verse 11.* *But Christ, having come a high priest of the good things to come*—That is to say, having come as a High Priest who procures future blessings; this the high priests of old could never do.

*through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation,—“Through” is here almost equivalent to “in connection with”, or through the instrumentality of, cp. 10:20.*

*Verse 12. nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place.—*The high priest of old carried into the inner sanctuary first the blood of a bullock, which he sprinkled on the mercy-seat, Lev. 16:14, and then that of a goat, with which he did the same, 16:15. Christ did not take blood into Heaven, for this holy place is not a material sanctuary. He entered it in the full efficacy of His completed sacrifice, the shedding of His own blood.

This indicates His own interest in, and unutterable love for, us. It was a love that overcame all difficulties, that overpowered all opposition, refusing to be turned aside, that underwent all the judgments, suffering and agony of the cross, in order to secure redemption for us—eternal redemption, too—for sin has been put away for ever, Satan has been vanquished irretrievably and death and the grave have had their terrors for ever removed. That Christ has obtained eternal redemption for us recalls the effects of His death as mentioned in 2:13, 14, namely, that He has delivered those who were in bondage. Redemption, as spoken of here, includes both the price paid down and the liberation of the captives.

We have in these two verses (1) the good things to come in contrast to the merely figurative arrangements of old, (2) the perfect tabernacle in contrast to the sanctuary formed of earthly materials, (3) the blood of Christ in contrast to animal sacrifices, (4) the entrance of our great High Priest into the holy place once for all, in contrast to the repeated entrances of the Levitical high priests into the earthly sanctuary, and (5) eternal redemption in contrast to the bondage of an unsatisfied conscience under the Law.

We are now to have our attention drawn more fully than before to the character and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. To this subject is devoted the section from 9:13 to 10:18. This constitutes the third section of the central part of the Epistle concerning the priesthood of Christ. The first, 7:1 to 25, gives a comparison between His priesthood and that of Melchizedek. The second, from 7:26 to 9:12, presents a contrast between His priesthood and that of the priests under the first Covenant. The third, from 9:13 to 10:18, recalls the substance of the two sections,

and gives a comprehensive view of the redeeming work of Christ on the cross, His ministry in the sanctuary and the effects of all this as made good to the believer. The 13th and 14th verses of this ninth chapter both sum up what preceds and introduce what follows.

*Verse 13. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh:* The special point of significance is that the water in which the ashes of the sacrifice were put, having been laid up in a clean place outside the camp, served to cleanse those who had been defiled by contact with a dead body. A person who was clean was to sprinkle the unclean with the water of separation. Thus the cleansing was purely outward. Not so with the sacrifice of Christ.

*Verse 14. how much more shall the blood of Christ:* That is, the giving up of His life in the shedding of His blood in expiatory sacrifice.

*who through the eternal Spirit*—Not Christ's own spirit, but the Holy Spirit, the Person. It was by the Spirit's overshadowing power that Christ was born of the Virgin (Luke 1:35). The Spirit descended upon Him in form as a dove at His baptism (3:22), led Him subsequently into the wilderness (4:1), and was upon Him in His ministry (4:18), God having anointed Him with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38). Again, after His resurrection, it was by the Holy Ghost that He gave commandment to His Apostles (Acts 1:2). So in the work of the Cross, the oblation was made through the same Holy Spirit, an important point in the representation of the infinite value attaching to the sacrifice.

There is also an intimation of the perfect obedience of Christ, even unto death. The Spirit who led Him from Jordan into the wilderness in subjection to the Father's will, also led Him to the Cross in the same undeviating and devoted obedience. While it is true that the offering was Christ's own voluntary act, yet it was at the same time the fulfilment of the eternal counsels of the Triune God. It would be unprofitable to endeavour to distinguish between the purpose of Christ and the purpose of the Holy Spirit: they were inseparably one in counsel. We have in this verse the Trinity acting in the work of redeeming grace—the Father to whom the sacrifice was acceptably offered, the Son who willingly offered Himself, and the Holy Spirit through whom the offering was accomplished.

This mention of the Spirit of God in connection with the sacrifice is consistent also with the teaching of the whole passage. The writer has already mentioned the part that the Holy Spirit had taken in the arrangement of the tabernacle of old, and the sacrifices connected therewith. He it was who caused the special significance to attach to the entry of the high priest every year with the blood of animal sacrifices, which the priest offered both for himself and for the errors of the people, "the Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holy place was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (verses 7, 8). Now, in passing from the symbol to the antitypical reality, the writer shows that the same Being who had, as the Holy One, arranged the symbol, Himself, as an eternal One took part in bringing about the great offering which these former sacrifices had foreshadowed.

That He is now spoken of as the "eternal Spirit" indicates three things: *firstly*, as to the past, that the sacrifice of Christ was the fulfilment of the eternal counsels of God; *secondly*, as to the life and death of Christ, that there was an unbroken continuity of obedience and steadfastness of purpose on the part of the Son of God until the sacrifice was accomplished; *thirdly*, as to the future, that the value of the offering would never pass away. Whatever took place in connection with the offering under the Old Covenant was necessarily temporary. The sacrifice of Christ, offered through One who is the eternal Spirit, is of permanent validity.

*offered Himself . . . unto God*—This reminds us of the words in the third verse of the seventh chapter, that it was necessary that as a High Priest He should have an offering to offer. That, as we saw, indicated that His death was a priestly act. He offered Himself; this is stated in Scripture in several ways. In the words of Isaiah, "His soul was made an offering for sin" (53:10). The Lord Himself said, "The Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28)—the word rendered "life" also denotes "soul"; and again, "I will give . . . My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:5). He spoke also of His body, as that which was to be given for us (Luke 22:19). Hebrews speaks of "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (10:10). Whether the soul, or the flesh, or the body is mentioned each, while having its own significance, speaks of the

Person Himself. He "gave Himself for our sins"; "gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 1:4; 2:20). "Christ gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God"; "Christ . . . loved the church and gave Himself up for it" (Eph. 5:2, 25).

All these point to the voluntary character of the act of Christ in submitting to death in entire obedience to the Father, and therein also in love toward fallen man. Men had power over Him solely in so far as He permitted them to exercise it. He had said "I lay down My life for the sheep . . . I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power (*marg.* 'authority') to lay it down, and I have power (authority) to take it again. This commandment received I from My Father" (John 10:15-18). Of this He gave practical evidence in causing those who had come to arrest Him in the garden of Gethsemane to fall backward to the ground. That they were able to bind and lead Him away was due to His devoted submission to the Father's will. So with His death; He submitted to be crucified, for so the will of God had determined. In His dying moments His life did not slowly ebb from Him; "Jesus . . . cried with a loud voice"; "He bowed (inclined) His head, and gave up His Spirit" (Luke 23:46; John 19:30).

"The words translated 'bowed His head' occur again but twice in the N.T., in Matt. 8:20, and its parallel, Luke 9:58, where they are rendered 'lay His head.' They mean more than the mere physical act; they mean that the rest denied Him on earth He found, His work completed, on His Father's bosom . . . He had voluntarily assumed the body prepared for Him, that in it He might do the will of God; He voluntarily left it, that by so doing He might fulfill that will to the uttermost . . . to that end He submitted to crucifixion at the hands of men. 'He bare our sins in His own body upon the tree;' He bowed under the stroke of Divine justice; He laid down His life; He gave up His spirit. He endured the penalty of sin to the uttermost; but each act that went to make up the whole of that absolute obedience, the price of our redemption, was His own."

*without blemish*—He offered Himself thus. Not only is this antitypical of the animal sacrifices under the Law (e.g., Ex. 12:5; Lev. 9:3; Num. 19:2), it sets forth the sinlessness of Christ in contrast to the high priests of old, who had to offer for their own

sins (v. 7). Christ was "holy, guileless and undefiled" (7:26); "in Him is no sin." He needed not to offer for His own sin, for He had none of His own for which to offer. Had there been the slightest taint in His character, had He made a single mistake in word or deed, He could not possibly have obtained redemption for us; His sacrifice would have been entirely unavailing. Nor could he have been our High Priest, for the blessing He came to provide would have been required first for Himself. But the redemption He has obtained for us is complete, for we are redeemed "with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19).

Since He offered Himself, the sinlessness of the Person involved the spotlessness of His offering. God, who had smelled a sweet savour in the former sacrifices anticipatively, now actually found in the sacrifice of His Son that savour of rest by means of which the Divine purposes of grace towards sinners, in the pardon of their sins and their acceptance with Him, could be provided.

*cleanse your conscience from dead works*—The effect of the death of Christ is to do away with all works on our part, as a means of obtaining acceptance with God. These are dead works, they effect nothing before God, they bring no pardon, no peace, no life, no communion. More, they leave the conscience still under a burden of defilement and alienation. But if the blood of Christ cleanses our conscience from such a condition, it brings us thereby into a life of service to the living God not a mere outward service, but springing from the inward experience of communion with, and devotion to, the Lord, and therefore devoid of all self-merit. And this effect of the death of Christ is made good to us through His entrance into the presence of the Father for us.

*to serve the living God?*—The word rendered "serve" is *latreuō*, which denotes to serve as a worshipper. This implies that the way has been made clear for the believer to draw near to God and so render service to Him. We learn also that in order to serve God acceptably our conscience must be freed from all that interrupts our communion with Him.

Any attempt to render service apart from this must fail of its purpose. The provision made in the offering made by Christ once for all is sufficient to enable the believer to enjoy such communion with God that his service may be rendered in the spirit



of worship. The Israelite who had been ceremonially cleansed under the Law was thereby enabled to take part in the worship of God in connection with the tabernacle, though as a worshipper he had not been perfected as regards the conscience. But now all who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ can enjoy fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and thus are able to serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

*Verse 15.* *And for this cause He is the Mediator of a new covenant, that, a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.* It is owing to the necessity of such a sacrifice as Christ offered, an offering which could put away sin and transgressions and cleanse the conscience, that He is the Mediator of the new covenant. The eternal inheritance, as a blessing promised under the new covenant, could never be granted unless atonement were made for the transgressions under the first covenant; and in order for this there must be a death efficacious for its accomplishment. Never could any other sacrifice but that of Christ Himself accomplish it. None other was either of sufficient value or of sufficient dignity to suit the terms of the new covenant.

Now a covenant was ordinarily ratified by the sacrifice of a victim, suggesting that the covenanting parties were dead to all possible change of mind. Hence arose the use of the phrase, "to cut a covenant," the reference being to the death of the victim. Thus, when the Lord made a covenant with Abraham concerning the inheritance promised to him and to his seed, he was commanded to sacrifice a heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. These, except the birds, were divided, and laid, the half of each victim over against the other half, a Divine token, accompanied by the symbols of the smoking furnace and the flaming torch, that the covenant of promise would be carried out. As another illustration we may take God's message through Jeremiah to the men who had transgressed the covenant into which they had entered, "when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof" (Jer. 34:18). That breach of covenant involved their death (verse 20). Again, the writer of the Hebrews epistle draws attention to the fact that the first covenant, that of Sinai, was not dedicated without blood; for when Moses had given every commandment to all the people, he

took the blood of calves and goats and sprinkled both the Book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you" ("commanded to you-ward," R.V., verses 18 to 20).

The death of these victims, necessary to the old covenant, prefigured the death of Christ as the basis of the new covenant, by which "they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." "They which have been called" are the spiritual seed of Abraham, "even us whom He hath also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:24). "The promise of the inheritance" stands not for the promise itself, which was made long before, but for the subject of the promise, the inheritance. Christ is both the sacrificial Victim and the Mediator. He is the latter in virtue of His sacrifice. Its unique character constituted Him the only possible Mediator through whom the covenant could be promulgated, and such an inheritance could be promised.

*(To be continued)*

## THE HEBREW PSALTER

BY E. W. ROGERS

The N.T. usage of the Psalms (*contd.*)

### Psalm 2

We select this Psalm because as Psalm 1 sets out the two classes of persons in the world, so Psalm 2 visualises the age-long conflict that exists between them. That conflict was seen in full force at Calvary. It will again be seen in a little lesser force at Armageddon. And from time to time it breaks out in lesser ways and becomes evident as history attests.

Psalm 2 may be read in three ways: As demonstrated (*a*) at the cross (cf. vv. 1 and 2 and Acts 4:25, 27; (*b*) at Armageddon; and (*c*) at any time when the wicked seem to be in persecuting power.

The main divisions of the Psalm are indicated in the R.V. (*a*) Vs. 1-3, the revolt of man. (*b*) Vs. 4-6, the intervention of God. (*c*) Vs. 7-9, the announcement of Messiah. (*d*) Vs. 10-12, advice to world rulers.