



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for June 15, 2008  
Released on Wednesday, June 11, 2008**

**"Christ as Redeemer"**

**Devotional Reading: John 4:21–26.**

**Background Scripture: Hebrews 9:11–10:18.**

**LESSON Text: Hebrews 9:11–18; 10:12–14, 17–18.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 9:11–18**

**11** But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;  
**12** Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

**13** For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;

**14** How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

**15** And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

**16** For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

**17** For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

**18** Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

**Hebrews 10:12–14, 17–18**

**12** But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

**13** From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

**14** For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

**17** And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

**18** Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

**TODAY'S AIM**

**After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:**

- 1.** Summarize the nature and effects of Christ's sacrifice.
- 2.** Explain how the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ.
- 3.** Write a prayer of gratitude for Christ's sacrifice.

## **How to Say It**

LEVITICAL. *Leh-vit-ih-kul.*

YOM KIPPUR. *Yom Kih-pur*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Sin is the perennial and basic problem of the human race. Politicians and reformers deal constantly with its symptoms and try to keep them under control. War, crime, disease, domestic violence, economic corruption, racism, and even natural disasters are outcomes, directly or indirectly, of sin.

Reforms should not be minimized, for many have kept human life from degenerating into chaos. They have curbed discrimination, improved health, and made government more accountable. But humans themselves need more than reform; they need transformation by redemption. In the gracious providence of God, a Redeemer, Jesus Christ, has come to earth to effect this transformation.

Among the vivid images of Christ in the book of Hebrews, one of the most central is His portrayal as Redeemer. That image is at the heart of this week's lesson.

## **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The New Testament often uses slavery or bondage as an image to express spiritual realities. Paul speaks of three great spiritual tyrants: sin, death, and the law. For example, Paul sees us as being servants (slaves) of sin while in the sinful state of unbelief, unable to do genuine acts of righteousness. Faith in Christ saves/redeems us from this slavery, giving us the freedom to serve Christ (see Romans 6:16–19; 8:2). Christ has truly freed us (Galatians 5:1; compare John 8:32).

The book of Hebrews exhibits both an abundant Old Testament background and an awareness of the social structures of the first-century Roman world. When Hebrews speaks of Christ as the redeemer, it draws upon both worlds. The book's original readers looked to God as Israel's redeemer and deliverer in both past and future senses.

The book of Hebrews also understands the realities of the world of freed slaves, with the gratitude and devotion they felt for the one who rescued them. When it comes to sin, we can never redeem ourselves. Our redemption can be purchased only by the blood of the Son of God, our Savior (Colossians 1:14). This is forgiveness and freedom to live as true servants of our Lord.

## **Eternal Redemption (Hebrews 9:11–14)**

The primary function of the Jewish high priest was to offer sacrifices that would atone for the sins of the nation. These sacrifices were offered at the central place of worship for Israel: first the semiportable tabernacle and then the Jerusalem temple. The author of Hebrews draws upon the image of the tabernacle to explain the nature of Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

### **1. How does the heavenly sanctuary differ from Israel's (Hebrews 9:11)?**

The writer to the Hebrews took pains to establish that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and His final revelation (1:1-4), has become the great High Priest for His people (7:24-28), superseding the priesthood of Aaron. He summed this up in the statement "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne

of the Majesty in the heavens" (8:1). He also pointed out that He fulfills His priesthood in a heavenly sanctuary (v. 2).

In today's lesson, Hebrews 9:11 calls Christ a "high priest of good things to come." The Old Testament shadows had forecast His coming; now they were replaced with spiritual reality.

In keeping with his theme of comparing Christianity with the Mosaic covenant, the author uses the ancient tabernacle (rather than the Jerusalem temple) for the point of comparison. The tabernacle was understood to be an earthly representation of the eternal dwelling place of God.

The true tabernacle, however, is in Heaven (Revelation 15:5). God did not dwell in the earthly tabernacle or in the Jerusalem temple (Acts 7:48; 17:24). These merely served as specific locations for the Israelites to perform various offerings for sin. Jesus' work as a high priest was not in Jerusalem, but in Heaven at the *greater and more perfect tabernacle* (compare Hebrews 8:2).

## **2. How were Levitical sacrifices limited in their results (v. 12)?**

One of the high priest's duties was to offer an annual sacrifice for the people on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This involved the sacrifice of a young bull and a goat, plus the sprinkling of their *blood* on the mercy seat within the Holy of Holies, the innermost chamber of the tabernacle (see Leviticus 16:14, 15).

In the Christian system there is no more need for sacrificial animals, because Christ has offered *His own* perfect *blood* for this function. Christ's sacrificial death purchased our *eternal redemption*.

He did this only "once" (literally, "once for all") (Heb. 9:12), for His perfect sacrifice of Himself made further offerings unnecessary. By it He obtained "eternal redemption for us." The word translated "redemption" signifies liberation. Christ has liberated forever those who trust Him. They will never again need to have a sacrifice offered on their behalf.

## **3. What can Christ's shed blood do for the human conscience (vs. 13, 14)?**

These animal sacrifices had an effect, even if only a temporary effect. If they had been totally ineffective, then God would not have commanded the people of Israel to use them. This does not nullify the author's main point, however, that the animal sacrifices were short-term fixes offered by earthly priests, who had their own sin problems.

Whatever these sacrifices did to restore ceremonial purity, however, they could never cleanse the conscience (Heb. 9:9). They could not assure one of forgiven sin, for they had no power to remove it (10:11). They could only point forward to the One who could do so.

If the rituals of the Old Testament tabernacle possessed' merit, even as an outward, ceremonial cleansing, how much superior the merit of Christ's shed blood will be! If God accepted the former ritual as a purifying of the flesh, how much more will God be satisfied by the sacrifice of His Son! He accepts it so completely that it inwardly regenerates the individual and purifies his conscience (cf. 9:9). There exists a peace of conscience because there is now peace with God (cf. Rom. 5:1).

## **4. What are some of the "dead works" you have done instead of being involved in active service? How did you put this behind you?**

*Dead works* are things that do not result in or accompany works of active service. Dead works especially include empty rituals. Empty rituals are not heartfelt; they are things we do that amount to little more than formal religious practices.

One example is when we use prayer as a substitute for action (please see Exodus 14:15). When we see giving to the church as fulfilling our service, then we are drifting into a “hire it done” mentality. Praying, giving, attending, etc., are not bad things in and of themselves. But when they are used in place of becoming actively involved in service, they become empty rituals. A key is to make a commitment to *be* the church rather merely *belong to* a church.

### **Eternal Inheritance (Hebrews 9:15–18)**

The word translated *covenant* has a dual meaning. It can carry the sense of a binding agreement between two parties. It can also have the sense of a person’s will, one’s instructions for disposing of possessions after death. When it has this second sense, it may be translated “testament,” as it is in the *King James Version* (compare 2 Corinthians 3:6, 14). Here, Hebrews uses both senses in that a new covenant begins with the death of the covenant maker.

### **5. How is the new covenant better (v. 15)?**

A *mediator* is one who brings two sides together into an agreement. Jesus did this by His death. Jesus’ sacrificial blood makes possible and begins the *new testament* (see Luke 22:20). The old covenant (*first testament*) is not so much nullified as it is now fulfilled completely.

God redeems His chosen people in an eternal, spiritual way. The Lord has brought about a redemption that frees men and women from the curse of sin and gives them an *eternal inheritance*, meaning eternal life (see John 3:16).

### **6. Why was Jesus’ death a necessity (vs. 16-18)?**

Hebrews emphasizes the importance of the death of Jesus. Covenants sometimes take the form of wills, in which inheritances are passed on from one generation to another. But in such cases the one who made the will must die for the inheritance to be transferred (v. 16). If the testator is still living, the will cannot go into effect (v. 17).

Both the old Mosaic covenant and the new covenant of Christ included this necessity. This was true of the law of Moses (Exod. 24:8; Heb. 9:18), for the shedding of blood was essential to every aspect of Jewish worship (Heb. 9:19-22). But this was only a preparation for the better, climactic sacrifice of Christ by which He put away sin (v. 23-28).

### **7. What gives you confidence in the promise of your eternal inheritance? How do you live out this confidence?**

God is a maker of covenants. He is always faithful to uphold His part in the covenant. Jeremiah 31:31 offers a promise of a new covenant. We see this covenant fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

In a sermon in which Paul preached on how God made promises and covenants with Old Testament saints, we read, “We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again” (Acts 13:32, 33). We have personally experienced God’s fulfillment of His promise to strengthen and protect His people. Based upon this perfect track record, we can expect God to continue to fulfill His promises. *God is in charge—no matter what* can be the way we live out our lives.

### **Eternal Forgiveness (Hebrews 10:12–14, 17-18)**

We Christians know we are saved, but we may forget what we are saved *from*. We are saved from the legitimate consequences of our sin: eternal punishment by God. Unless this sin problem is taken care of in a permanent way, we always live under the threat of the future wrath of God being poured out on us. This section of Hebrews lifts up the eternal nature of our forgiveness through the blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **8. Why is our High Priest seated (Hebrews 10:12)?**

The long section of Hebrews devoted to proving the superiority of Christ's priesthood reaches its climax in chapter 10.

The writer next focused on the finality of this sacrifice. He reiterated the fact that priests were, even then, still standing in the temple to offer animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:11). This daily round would never end, for their sacrifices could not remove sins.

But the work of Christ, the High Priest of the new covenant, was finished. He offered "one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb. 10:12), after which He "sat down on the right hand of God."

The theme that Christ is now seated recurs several times in Hebrews (1:3; 8:1; 12:2), and the reason for this posture is that He has completed His redemptive work. The Aaronic priests never sat down because their work was never finished. But Christ's is, for His sacrifice effectively removes sin.

### **9. In what sense is Christ's victory still incomplete (v. 13)?**

However, "From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his foot-stool" (Heb. 10:13; cf. Ps. 110:1) reminds us that His victory is still not complete. Although His sacrifice is sufficient to save all mankind, many will not receive it. They will persist in their enmity, and He will have no choice but to subdue them by force and punish them as their unbelief deserves (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Rev. 19:11-16).

This mention of "enemies" in Hebrews 10:13 also reminds readers of this letter that there is no middle ground in regard to Christ. Either one accepts His sacrifice for sin and enjoys His favor, or he rejects it and becomes His enemy. Later the writer issued a stern warning of what awaits one who turns from God's final revelation (vs. 26-31).

### **10. In what way are God's people said to be sanctified (v. 14)?**

*Sanctified* means to be holy. We are not holy through our own efforts, but because Christ's atoning death has taken away the taint of sin in our lives. The author does not mean that we have eliminated sin from daily life, but that in God's eyes we are *perfected* because our sins are forgiven. We don't need to seek out a temple and slaughter animals as a proxy sacrifice.

### **11. How did Christ's sacrifice end the Levitical sacrifices (vs. 17, 18)?**

While the sacrificial system of the old covenant has been superseded in Christ, the Old Testament is still a valid Word of God, a *witness* from the *Holy Ghost* (vs. 15,16). However, to clinch his argument, the writer invoked Jeremiah 31:33-34. Those who are in Christ are forgiven; their sins are erased from God's record forever. How different from the Levitical offerings (v. 3)!

Under the new covenant, the Levitical sacrifices no longer have a place. To go back to the old sacrifices was serious, for it meant abandoning Christ's finished work, the final sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:26).

**CONCLUSION:**

The sacrifices of the Old Testament could not provide the redemption that sinful man needed. The priests' work was as incomplete as it was inadequate.

Jesus died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin. This one-time offering of the Son of God made all previous attempts at redemption obsolete and any future attempts unnecessary.

This week's lesson has clearly revealed Christ as our Redeemer, the One in whom we have been perfected forever if we have accepted Him by faith.

Perhaps there is someone attending your class who has never accepted Christ. Extend an invitation to trust in Him and receive the benefits of His complete work of redemption.

**PRAYER**

Lord God, who reigns in majesty from Heaven, we offer our thanks for our redemption through Jesus Christ. May we live as people who are not under the threat of punishment, but as those who have been redeemed. We pray this in the name of our Redeemer, Jesus, amen.

**THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

The perfect Christ perfects us.

**ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:**

The next lesson reveals a Christ who leads and corrects us so that we can share in His holiness. Read Hebrews 12:1-13 ("**Christ as Leader**") as you anticipate this challenging lesson.

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