



Conducted by
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"In Leviticus 16:16 we see a direct link with Hebrews 9:23. The question is: What are 'the heavenly things'? And why should they require purifying, being in heaven?"

Here is the verse to which reference is made in the question:

"It was therefore necessary that the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with (or by) these rites; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these," (RSV).

The 9th chapter of the letter to the Hebrews refers to the Tabernacle and the animal sacrifices which were offered according to the Mosaic Law.

I might say, in passing, that it is worth noting that all illustrations used by the writer of this letter, as he deals with the subject of Worship, are based on the Tabernacle system and not on the Temple. This is because;

(1) Whilst the Tabernacle was built by Moses in obedience to the *direct* will, plan and command of God Himself, the Temple was built according to the plan of David, under the *permissive* will of God.

(2) A Tabernacle - a moveable structure - was more appropriate to the needs of a pilgrim people, than was a Temple. The replacing of the Tabernacle with the more permanent Temple indicated that Israel had lost sight of her 'pilgrim' character.

THE INTRODUCTION

In chapter 9:1-10, the writer introduces a discussion of things with which his readers would undoubtedly be familiar; namely, the furnishings of the Tabernacle and the sacrifices that were offered in it.

He is careful to point out, however, that everything included in worship offered according to the Covenant enacted at Sinai, was merely preparatory and represented or portrayed, something to come later which would accomplish what had been impossible to achieve under the Mosaic system.

The frequent references to '*blood*' are significant. That word is mentioned 12 times in this chapter alone. The reason for this is given by the writer when he states that, under the Law, '*almost everything is purified by blood, and without the shedding of blood there would be no remission of sins*' (v.22).

THE PROBLEM

It is this reference to 'purification' that is the crux of the question which we are requested to consider.

We have no difficulty in following the writer's reasoning when he refers to the purification, or cleansing, of the Tabernacle and everything and everyone connected with it, because we recognise that this cleansing was necessary for the purpose of sanctification.

This was the way in which people and things were made fit for the service of God.

It is here, however, that we are reminded of the vast difference between what was effected by the blood offered in the Tabernacle by the *Aaronic* High Priest, and that which was offered by the High Priest who was '*after the style of Melchizedek*', the Lord

Jesus Himself.

The Tabernacle and the High Priest who served in it, along with the sacrifices he offered, were only copies of the 'true' or 'real' sanctuary, which is Heaven itself, and of the True High Priest, who offered blood, which *really* took away sin.

That word 'copies' is the word '*hupodeigmata*' and means that they were '*imperfect representations of the real*'. As symbols, or types, they conveyed a sense of the 'true', but what they were and what they accomplished, fell far short of the reality.

The meaning of the passage therefore, is that under the Mosaic system, God was willing to allow the High Priest to enter the Holy of Holies and approach Him on behalf of the people, as he bore the blood of an animal sacrifice which was, in itself, a confession of their guilt before Him. But Heaven itself, the true Holy of Holies, could not be entered on that basis. A better sacrifice was required. That better, effective sacrifice was that of the blood of Christ Himself.

We need not see a difficulty in the use of '*sacrifices*' in v.23, and '*sacrifice*' in v.26, because the word '*sacrifices*' relates to those that were offered on the Day of Atonement, which is the occasion referred to in v.6, whilst the '*sacrifice*' mentioned in v.26, is the one, true act of atonement, accomplished by the shedding of the blood of Christ.

TRUE PURIFICATION

The writer implies that the use of animal blood served an important purpose as the means of ritual cleansing. In verse 13 we are told that such sacrifices were effective in '*purifying the flesh*', and v.22 states that '*almost everything*' was '*purified with blood*'.

But such sacrifices were ineffective in the infinitely more important matter of the cleansing of the heart and conscience. This is stated in v.9, where we read that they were sacrifices '*which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper*'.

What we see here, therefore, is a reference to the contrast between the *physical* (bodily) *cleansing*, for which the Tabernacle and the animal sacrifices were sufficient, and the *spiritual cleansing*, that of the conscience, or the spiritual side of Man's being, which needed the 'better sacrifice'.

The writer states that the 'heavenly' or 'spiritual' things, are only cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ Himself.

Verses 13-14 appear, to me, to provide the answer to our question:

"For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God".

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IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS

Circumstances of life are not always pleasant. There is much sorrow, heartache and pain; but in every situation and in everything we are to "give thanks". The best reason for such thanksgiving is that it "**is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you**" (1 Thess. 5:18). It is God's desire we be thankful. Our whole life should be a continual "thank-offering" for the many blessings we receive. From childhood we are taught to say "thank-you." Such a virtue in life will serve each one well that practises it. It is much easier to help someone when we know it is appreciated by them.