

58-09-04.wpd --Christ, the Purifier of the Conscience
 tabernacle, guilt, sin, sacrifice, high priest, conscience, atonement
 Heb 9:1-14
 God makes the guilty conscience into a pure one through Christ.

INTRODUCTION: (text for Scripture reading)

--God used the OT Tabernacle to illustrate many spiritual truths, but as **v.5** says, "*But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.*"

--What we could discuss in this passage is how Hebrews compares the ritual sacrifices of the OT with the final sacrifice made on the Cross in the NT: the first were *shadows*, the second was *reality*; the first were *provisional* and *temporary*, the second was *permanent* and *eternal*. But my message today will address only one area of comparing these two sacrifices, an area that we are all familiar with: *the conscience*.

--Although we will not discuss the Tabernacle in detail, there was one thing in it that we need to look at to help us make this comparison....

I. A Look at the Lamp in the Holy Place

- A. The lamp in the Holy Place illustrates our need for the light of God's Word in our lives-- Psa 119:105, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. But that light isn't only from the Written Word
1. Christ makes sure everyone in the world gets that light-- John 1:4, 9 (NKJV), In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.
 2. That light from Christ is what gives every human a *conscience*-- Rom 2:14-15, (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)
- B. The conscience produces a sense of guilt when the *target it reveals as right is missed* by a person (this is the biblical definition of *sin*)
1. We see the operation of a guilty conscience in the sin of our first parents in the garden-- Gen 3:8, Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
 2. OT sacrifices *atoned for* [or *covered over*] sins with the blood of animals, but they failed to restore again the blessing humans had in Eden of standing in God's presence with a pure conscience.

TRANS: [In Eden, before the Fall, Adam and Eve had full access to the presence of God. A guilty conscience from their sin led them to flee His presence. When God sought them out and they again stood in His presence, now guilty of a sin that required their death, He covered them instead with the skins of sacrificed animals. But those sacrifices did not restore their former standing. They could no longer dwell in the presence of God and had to leave Eden.] The Tabernacle contained an inner room called the Most Holy Place [or Holy of Holies], where God's presence was manifested. People couldn't go in there, even when the high priest had finished making the annual atonement offering. Access to presence of God, as in Eden before the Fall, was never restored by the OT sacrifices, and "*the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.*" This has a strong lesson for us....

II. Religious Activity Cannot Clear a Guilty Conscience

- A. The word "*worshiper*" implies that the person wants right standing with God and God's eternal blessing. (All religions want this!)
1. The *conscience* only point this out to us as our proper goal,
 2. But, even if worshipers are sincere, with the right goal and right motives, the *conscience* has no power to cleanse itself and bring us back into the peace and presence of God.
- B. Fear of God's punishment is a driving force that can motivate us to try to silence a guilty conscience by some form of action, such as keeping busy in religious activity or making sacrifices.
- a. Some raise a memorial in death to someone they mistreated in life, but to their own heart, it only memorializes their guilt!
 - b. Some promise to live a life of self-denial to make up for a life of loose living, but when do things balance out? A guilty conscience will say, "*Never!*"
 - c. Some offer gifts to God to make up for their offenses against other people, but this is also useless-- Mat 5:23-24, Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."
- C. God's emphasis not on religious activity but on relationships, especially a love relationship with Himself, which is the only hope for a guilty conscience-- 1 John 4:18, There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (perfect love is not human but divine, and we get this perfect love only by relationship with God)

TRANS: God's love, manifested in Christ, removed the barrier of sin that barred us from and caused our guilty souls to fear His presence-- John 3:16, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **God makes the guilty conscience into a pure one through Christ.** In the OT it was impossible because the way into the Holiest of Holies was not open.

III. Jesus Alone Can Bring Humanity into God's Presence Again

- A. Let's read again about OT access to the Tabernacle's Most Holy Place where the presence of God was manifested-- **v.8-9**, *The Holy Spirit was showing by this that **the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.** This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.*
- B. When Jesus died on the Cross, He became the High Priest of a totally "new order" of human relationship with God (When Jesus arrived, the Tabernacle was already gone, but if you remember, the Tabernacle was actually a replica of the heavenly one that Moses had been shown by God) listen again to **v.11-12**, *When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. What did this mean?*
 1. The curtain that blocked the people from ever going into the Most Holy Place is now, in Christ, ripped apart from top to bottom, so that "*whoever will may come*" into God's presence.
 2. The sins that the blood of OT animal sacrifices could only cover up temporarily are now, in Christ, entirely removed-- v.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!*
 3. The conscience that nothing could ever clear is now, in Christ, cleansed entirely from guilt, so that we can again stand unashamed in the presence of God, as in the beginning.

CONCLUSION: Through Christ, God makes the guilty conscience so pure that we could sleep as unworried as baby, even "in the mouth of a cannon."

Heb 9:1-14 (NIV) 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, the table and the 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. {6} When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. {7} But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. {8} The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. {9} This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. {10} They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order. {11} When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. {12} He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. {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!