

Hebrews Lesson 12 Articles

Verses 15–23 use the illustration of a testament or will. A person makes a will and determines how to distribute the estate. But the inheritance goes to no one until the person dies. Christ had an eternal inheritance to give to His church, and this inheritance is spelled out in the New Covenant, Christ’s “last will and testament.” For the will to take effect, He had to die. But the amazing thing is this: Christ died to make the will effective, and then came back from the dead to administer His estate personally! Even the first covenant, under Moses, was sealed with blood (Ex. 24:6–8). When the earthly sanctuary was erected, it was also dedicated with blood. But this blood of animals could only bring about ceremonial purity, not inward cleansing.

Verse 23 suggests that Christ’s death even purified the heavenly things. These things may be the heavenly people of God (see 12:22ff; Eph. 2:22) who have been purified by Christ’s blood; or, it may suggest that the presence of Satan in heaven (Rev. 12:3ff) demanded a special cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.

v. 24 The Aaronic priests ministered in a tabernacle that was temporary; it pointed to a Christ yet to come. Christ is not ministering in a man-made tabernacle full of earthly imitations; He is ministering in a heavenly sanctuary that is the fulfillment of these OT practices. The high priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat for the people, but Christ represents us in the very presence of God. What a tragedy it is when people cling to religious ceremonies that please the senses and fail to lay hold, by faith, of the great heavenly ministry of Christ.

vv. 25–28 The superiority of Christ’s sacrifice is the theme of chapter 10, but it is also mentioned here. The priest’s work was never done because the sacrifices were never final. Christ’s death was final. He appeared “at the climax of the ages” to put away sin, not merely cover it. The veil has been rent and the way opened into the presence of God. Christ appears in heaven for us; we can come into the presence of God. The OT Jew did not have access to God’s immediate presence; he would not have dared to enter the holy of holies. But because of Christ’s completed work on the cross (“It is finished!”), we have an open path to God through Him.

Note that the word “appear” is used three times in vv. 24–28. We see Christ’s past appearance, which put away sin (v. 26), His present appearance in heaven for us (v. 24), and His future appearance to take us to glory (v. 28). When the high priest disappeared into the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement, the people waited outside expectantly for him to reappear. Perhaps God would refuse the blood and kill the high priest. What joy there was when he came out again! And what joy we will have when our High Priest appears to take us to our eternal holy of holies, to live with Him forever!¹

v. 20. The words here sound close to Jesus’ words at the institution of the Lord’s Supper (see Matt. 26:28). When we compare the words of Hebrews with the words of Moses in Exodus 24:8, we realize that the symbolism of Moses’ sprinkling has found its fulfillment in Jesus’ death at Calvary. Moses’ action of sprinkling the blood confirmed God’s covenant with Israel and called his people to obedience.

v. 21. This verse contains additional details not found in Exodus. Jewish tradition suggested that Moses’ dedication of the altar involved sprinkling blood on the tent and the vessels of worship. The use of blood confirmed the reality of the covenant and showed the importance of obedience. The use of the blood obligated both parties to be faithful to the covenant. If either party were unfaithful to a covenant, he or she experienced the fate of the sacrificial animal.

v. 22. This verse draws the general conclusion that **the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood**. The concluding statement that **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness** comes from the ideas of Leviticus 17:11.²

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (702–703). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Lea, T. D. (1999). *Vol. 10: Hebrews, James*. Holman New Testament Commentary (170). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.