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THE LOOKOUT

OCTOBER 2021

Unit: HEBREWS (Part 2)
Theme: HIGH PRIEST

Overview: Sooner or later in life we need someone to represent us. When purchasing a home, we might need a Realtor. When executing a will, we might need a lawyer. When making arrangements for a funeral, we might need a funeral director. The Bible calls the representative between God and people a priest. In this unit students will learn of the character, calling, office, covenant, and sacrifice of Jesus our high priest.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 31, 2021

LESSON AIM: **Anticipate the coming of Jesus, which will “bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”**

UNIT: Hebrews (Part 2)

THEME: High Priest

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 9:11-28

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Revelation 5:9-13

BOTH PRIEST AND SACRIFICE

BY MARK SCOTT

The Bible is a bloody book—from beginning (Genesis 3:21; 4:10) to end (Revelation 5:9). One could argue that a bloodless Bible is no Bible at all. “Blood” is mentioned 11 times in the *New International Version* of our lesson text. (Of all things—to speak of blood on Halloween!) While the Bible uses the word *blood* in a literal way (Leviticus 17:14), most of the time it is a figure of speech for sacrifice and death.

Under the Old Covenant, priests would bring animals to the tabernacle and sacrifice them. The priest administered the sacrifice, but he was not the sacrifice himself. By contrast, the Messiah not only administers the sacrifice, he *is* the sacrifice. This is the value of double imagery.

Blood and Priest

Hebrews 9:11-14

When Christ came to earth, he got his feet dirty with the sand in the land of Israel and taught in the physical temple in Jerusalem. But for the writer of Hebrews, Jesus’ mission while on earth was spiritual in nature. While the physical and spiritual are inextricably linked, the writer pictures Jesus entering a tabernacle that is *greater and more perfect*. It was not humanly engineered and not part of this creation as the tabernacle had been.

When Jesus died on Skull Hill, he was, spiritually speaking, entering the equivalent of the holy of holies and securing *eternal redemption* for people. His sacrifice was not that of animal blood but of human blood. The fruit of this salvific act was effectual from the inside out. It dealt with the *conscience* (a sort of moral empire). This liberated the worshipper to *serve the living God*.

Blood and Will

Hebrews 9:15-22

Christ could mediate this New Covenant which resulted in a *ransom* because he actually died. The writer used the human illustration of a will to drive home his point. A will was not put in place until the death of the person who had it drawn up. In the case of the Old Testament, the animal died. That allowed the sacrifice to be effectual.

The writer reminded the people that Moses sprinkled blood on the Ten Commandments as well as the

people themselves to ratify the Law of the covenant (Exodus 24:3-8). That act symbolized their cleansing as well as the cleansing of the tabernacle. Everything got a blood bath. Then the writer offered an aside about blood. He wrote, “*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*” If that is a Scripture-wide principle, then the priest of the New Covenant would have to use blood as well—and he did.

Blood and Heaven

Hebrews 9:23-28

The writer returned to something emphasized earlier. The veil between heaven and earth is thin but real. What was on earth and used in the Old Covenant had corresponding spiritual significance to what Jesus did in the New Covenant. He offered a better sacrifice—not an animal sacrifice. He did not enter a *sanctuary made with human hands*. That sanctuary was simply a *copy* of the sanctuary in heaven. Jesus came to earth, but he operated “heavenly.” By dying on Calvary’s cross, he brought heaven’s sanctuary to earth.

Unlike the priests who had to offer sacrifices *again and again*, Jesus offered himself *once for all*. In Judaism, the high priest would enter the holy of holies once each year (in the fall) with the blood of an animal. He would sprinkle that blood on the mercy seat, which sat on top of the ark of the covenant. It was a dark and somewhat foreboding place. The act was repeated each year at the same time. If Jesus had followed this same rhythm, he would have had to be crucified yearly. This would mean, spiritually speaking, that Jesus would have had to suffer many times since the *creation* (foundation or “handing down”) of the world.

But, of course, that was not necessary. Jesus *appeared* (became known or manifested) *once for all at the culmination* (end purpose) of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. The deal was sealed. The deal that remains concerns the believer. All humans are terminal. Once they die, they are judged. Once Christ died, sin was atoned for. But Jesus is coming back a *second time*. (This is the closest the New Testament gets to using the language of “second coming.”) And when he returns, Christ won’t have to deal with sin anymore. Rather, he will bring *salvation to those who are waiting for him*. ■

THE LORD'S PORTMANTEAU

BY DAVID FAUST

Years ago, I coined the word *idrealism* to describe someone who is idealistic and realistic at the same time. I use my made-up word to explain what it means to live by faith. *Idrealism* is an example of a literary device known as a portmanteau.

The word *portmanteau* originally meant a large trunk or suitcase that opens into two equal parts. In time, writers used it for terms that combine two other words, like *motel* (from motor and hotel), *brunch* (breakfast combined with lunch), *podcast* (an iPod broadcast), and *smog* (smoke mingled with fog). At dinner you can experience two portmanteaus at once by using a *spork* (a spoon combined with a fork) to eat *turducken* (a turkey stuffed with duck and chicken). Do you ever fasten something with *Velcro*? That's a portmanteau derived from *velvet* and *crochet*.

TV portmanteaus include *sitcoms*, *infomercials*, *mockumentaries* (fictional stories told in documentary style), *romcoms* (romantic comedies) and *telethons* (television marathons). Pop culture gives portmanteau nicknames to couples like *Bennifer* (Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez), *Brangelina* (Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie), and *Billary* (Bill and Hillary Clinton). Someone quipped that if Natalie Portman married Jacques Cousteau, they could be called Portmanteau.

The Sacrifice and the Sacrificer

God puts together some unexpected combinations. Lions and lambs don't have much in common, but Scripture uses both to illustrate the glory of Jesus Christ. The twelve apostles included an unlikely combination of personalities, like Matthew the tax collector (whose work required collaborating with the Romans) and Simon the zealot (who most likely despised the Romans). First-century Jews and Gentiles seemed irreconcilable, but the Lord brought them together as one body.

The incarnation required a mysterious intermingling of divinity and humanity. "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9), yet, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity" (Hebrews 2:14). Revelation 7:17 says "the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd." As the Lamb, Christ acts like a member of the flock who identifies with the sheep; yet simultaneously, as the Good Shepherd, he is the leader who guides and protects the flock.

A fascinating combination appears in the book of Hebrews, which portrays Christ as both the ultimate sacrifice for sin and the high priest who stands before the altar. Christ is both the sacrifice and the sacrificer—the offering and the offerer—the gift and the giver at the same time. As the priest, he serves as our intermediary. As the sacrifice, his own precious blood (not the blood of animals) atones for our sins. He came "to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

It took incredible ingenuity and sacrificial love to secure our salvation! How could sinful people like us stand in the presence of the holy God? How could God uphold his justice while showing mercy and lavishing his grace upon us? Why was the sinless high priest willing to lay his own life on the altar as the sacrifice for our sin? How could "love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Psalm 85:10)?

Somehow God brought it all together at Calvary, like two wooden beams coming together to form a cross.

Personal Challenge: Think about the personal and theological significance of Jesus' death on the cross. What did his sacrifice mean for the world? What does it mean for you as an individual? Write or say aloud a prayer expressing praise for the great high priest who sacrificed himself for your sin. ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How did you serve others last week?
2. What challenges did you face last week?

Ask two people to read aloud **Hebrews 9:11-28** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to provide a summary of the passage. Remind them to keep it to a minute or less.

3. What functions does blood play in both the Old and New Covenants?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - What roles does Christ play for our salvation as shown in this passage?
 - Contrast the human-built tabernacle/sanctuary with the heavenly one and the activities that happen within each. How are they different and how are they the same? What do you learn?
 - What is the difference between being made "outwardly clean" and having our consciences cleansed?
 - Why should people be careful of depending too heavily on things made with human hands, especially in their spiritual lives?
 - Look at the word *appear/appeared* in verses 24-28, and the timing of each appearance by Christ. What does this summary statement of Christ's finished work reveal to you?
5. What do you learn about Jesus from this passage?
6. What do you learn about humanity?
7. Under the Old Covenant, people tried to be right with God by perfectly obeying him, and when they failed, they needed sacrifices offered again and again to cleanse them of their sins. As New Covenant believers, however, Jesus has made us right with God through his once-for-all sacrifice. What is our motivation, then, for obeying God? (See John 14:23-24; cf., 1 John 2:4-6; 2 John 5-7.)
8. Every person must make a choice between the earthly and the heavenly, between the temporary and the eternal, between earthly treasures and treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20). How might you use this passage (and others like it) to help someone make the better choice?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenges are you facing this upcoming week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Hebrews 3:7-19** as we continue studying the book of Hebrews but now with the theme of "faith." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. **■**