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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 9 (Continued)



Part 14/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

I believe we closed our last session at Hebrews 9:10 which, on your outline, is on Page 9/3. We'll continue now with verses 11–14 and we'll be consistently following the outline all the way through. First of all, I'll translate verses 11–14 from the Greek and my translation will not be elegant but it's designed to give you an idea of what is really being said. Then we will pursue the note outline.

> "But Christ having come as high priest of good things that have happened ..."

But there's an alternative translation, a different word which means "that are to come." I think it's not necessary to go into a lot of that. Either it means Christ has already done it or He came to bring to pass things that had not yet happened when He came. I don't want to get involved in that because it's not a point of major significance.

> "... through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation order; neither through the blood of goats nor or bulls, but through His own blood, He entered once for all [it's an emphatic word] into the holy place [the Holy of Holies], having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who were defiled, sanctifies to the purity of the flesh [or the physical body], now much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself blameless [or without spot] to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve [or to worship] the living God?"

Now we'll go back to the outline for those verses. This is another example of the continual process of contrasting which we find throughout this epistle. At this point the writer sums up five aspects of the superiority of the new order which he has just talked about in the previous verse. We'll just look at them—this is a continuing exercise in

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analysis. I do believe everyone that really faithfully goes through all this, no matter how many years it may take, at the end you'll have a much more analytical mind than you had when you started.

I've been trained in analysis, it was my background. I have to tell you that this is a tough exercise for me. If you find it a little complicated at first, don't despair. You're probably making much more progress than you really know. My observation is, in this kind of study it's only later you realize how much you've received. It's a process of ingestion and digestion and then you begin to experience the benefits.

The five points or aspects of superiority of the new order. First in verse 11: Christ entered the sanctuary in heaven, not the mere copy of it on earth.

Second in verse 12: He entered through His own blood, not that of animals.

Third, also in verse 12: the redemption He obtained was eternal and not just for one year. This is a point that is continually being brought out. The sacrifices of the old order only availed for one year until the next sacrifice became due. But Christ has now obtained eternal redemption. That means not merely for the rest of time but for eternity as well.

Verse 14, He offered Himself and not just some substitutionary animal through the eternal Holy Spirit, not through a carnal commandment, thus transcending all limitations of time. I want to pause on that for a moment. It's extremely vivid for me because of an experience in my own life. The second time I ever attended a "gospel" service—and I didn't know what a gospel service was at that time—at the end of the message the preacher said anybody who wants this—whatever "it" was he was talking about—put up your hand. I'd been to one two days previously where the Holy Spirit had put up my hand for me, much to my embarrassment. I thought to myself, You couldn't expect that to happen twice, so this time, having no clear idea of what "it" was really all about, I put my own hand up. Each time I was the only person that made any response.

Afterwards the preacher, who was a different preacher from two nights previously, came to me and he looked at me and I looked at him and I think he already realized he had a problem on his hands. He asked me two questions, very sensible questions. The first one was, "Do you believe that you're a sinner?" My background was in philosophy, my specialization was in definitions, so the obvious way for me to answer that question was to go through all the accepted definitions of a sinner—which I did quickly in my mind and every one of them fitted me exactly! I said, "Yes, I believe I'm a sinner." Then he said, "Do you believe that Christ died for your sins?" I looked at him and I can remember the answer I gave exactly. I said, "To tell you the truth, I can't see what the death of Jesus Christ 19 centuries ago could possibly have to do with the sins I've committed in my lifetime." And for me that was a very real, logical problem. I think the man was wise; he didn't try to argue with me. I'm sure he prayed for me. The Lord left me to solve that with Him alone.

I then experienced the new birth, the new order, the new creation, but without any intellectual understanding of what was happening to me, without any doctrinal basis for what I was doing. I began then to study the Bible to find out what had happened to me. I realized the Bible was the only book that could answer that question. In due course, studying the Bible, I came across this passage in Hebrews 9:14, "through the eternal Spirit." That might not mean much to most of you, but to me it was the perfect answer to the question. You see, the word eternal doesn't mean just existing for a long time, it means out of time, in a different order of being. I then saw intellectually that the sacrifice of Christ, because it was in the eternal realm, could comprehend the sins of all men of all ages: past, present and future.

I knew that it had done so in my experience but it was only when I found that verse that I had a clear intellectual grasp. Probably most of you would never be bothered with that problem. But it is actually a genuine problem. Jesus died 19 centuries ago, what could that have to do with the sins that you've committed? The answer is, He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit. The transaction that took place on the cross transcended all the limits of time and space. It was an eternal transaction. The Holy Spirit is called "the eternal Spirit." I think that's very illuminating. When we are in the Holy Spirit, in a certain sense, we are set free from the limitations of time.

I've discovered, for instance, that something that is said in the Spirit is almost timeless. I remember an occasion—and it doesn't matter which—in which somebody quoted to me something that another Christian had said to him. The person who quoted it to me didn't have any idea of what the other person meant. The moment I heard it, I saw it's true. So, something that is said in the Holy Spirit, in a sense, never dies; it's eternal, it's not subject to the limitations of time. I think you'll find in your experience when you are what John called "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," I think you find that time begins to have a different significance. Scientifically, they tell us—and this really baffles my limited mind—that if you travel at the speed of light, time ceases to operate. The quicker you travel, the slower time goes. You

know that, I'm sure; you're all scientists and physicists and so on! I'm not. For instance, if people could be projected in some space capsule out into space, they could be away three generations, come back and ask, "What's for breakfast?" They wouldn't realize they'd been away more than 24 hours. See? So, the Bible says—and it got there first—time is a mystery. It says it in the book of Revelation. I don't remember the exact chapter, but it says "time shall be no more, this will be the end of the mystery which God has created." I'm not attempting to tell you all about that mystery, I'm just pointing out that where the Bible makes contact with the mystery, philosophically and logically what it says is perfect. That, in a sense, is a miracle.

Through the eternal Spirit. You see, through the eternal Spirit you can sit here and Calvary can become real to you as if it happened five minutes ago. That's the ministry of the Spirit. One of the things I observed was, when I came to know the Lord in this way through the Holy Spirit, as a boy probably 15 years earlier I had been obliged to learn Bible stories at preparatory school. I used to get very good marks, I had a very good memory. They had ceased to have any significance for me, they were not in the forefront of my mind. But the moment that I was in touch with the Holy Spirit, it was as if I had heard them all yesterday. The people who knew me who knew I had not been at church or been interested in religion for years were just amazed that suddenly I could quote the Bible to them. That, again, was the eternal Spirit, the timeless Spirit.

We're returning to our outline for the fifth aspect of superiority of the new order which is in verses 13 and 14. "His blood cleanses our conscience from dead words and not just our flesh from ceremonial uncleanness." The cleansing of the conscience is something that reappears in chapter 10. It's one of the requirements for entry into the Holiest which we'll find in due course when we get to chapter 10. We have to have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. I don't know how it is with every one of you but if you have experienced the blood of Jesus ministered by the Holy Spirit, you should have no trouble in your conscience. You should know without a doubt that nothing is held against you in the records of heaven, that your past is absolutely clear. It makes a lot of difference.

Let me add that I believe the Holy Spirit is the only agent who can sprinkle the blood of Jesus. I've heard people in Pentecostal circles, there could be other circles, speak about applying the blood. I'm not saying that's wrong, but unless it's by the Holy Spirit it won't happen. The blood is not under human control. It's the Spirit of God alone that can apply the blood and He does not apply it until we've met God's conditions. He's very jealous of the application of the blood. In 1 Peter 1 it says that we were ordained of God to sanctification through obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. Obedience comes first. The Holy Spirit does not minister the blood to the disobedient.

Now we're going to go on with verse 15. Hebrews 9:15.

> "And for this reason He is mediator of a new covenant, so that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Notice again, the objective that we're working towards all the time is what? Inheritance, that's right. Which is also, what two other words go with it? Perfection and rest. You find if you put these three together, this is the continual thrust of Hebrews. It will not permit us to stop short of our inheritance in which we find our rest and perfection.

Because the first covenant could not bring us into our inheritance or into rest or into perfection, therefore Jesus became the mediator of a new covenant. It states in that verse two features of this transaction which are important, so I'm looking again at the outline on Page 9/3, 9:15. Christ thus became mediator of a new covenant with two results. I've already pointed out earlier that we cannot have access to God without a priest. There is no way of access. We cannot bring Him gifts or sacrifices without a priest. Also, there is no way that God can enter into a covenant with man without a mediator. There has to be a mediator. The mediator of the first covenant were the angels and Moses because it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. But the mediator of the New Covenant is the Son of God, Jesus Christ who is also the high priest.

The two results are these: First of all, He paid the redemptive price for those who had transgressed under the Old Covenant. Second, to those called of God He opened up the promise of an eternal inheritance, including rest and perfection.

Let me make a statement here that I made somewhere and I don't know whether it was in this place and somebody came up and asked me about it afterwards. I made it casually because I assumed that everybody would be familiar with it, but it seemed that not everybody was. There are basically—and by no means totally—three different kinds of problem of wrongdoing with three different

characteristic words. Number one is sin. Sin is defined in Romans 3:23 as coming short of the glory of God. Sin, in a sense, is failure, it's missing the mark, it's not achieving the purpose for which we were created, which is the glory of God. As I said a couple of nights ago, anyone who does not live for the glory of God has no right to live. There is no other justifiable reason for living. Sin is a failure to achieve the purpose for which we were created.

Then there's the word which we have here which is transgressions. Transgression means stepping over a known limit. It's rather like the word trespass. They're used interchangeably. Trespass is stepping out of a permitted area into an unpermitted area knowing you're doing it, knowing where the line is. Where there's no law there's no transgression, but once there's a law, that means not only is there the possibility of sinning but there's also the possibility of transgressing, which is breaking a known law knowing the law exists. None of you here, I'm sure, have even thought of doing such a thing. You see the speed limit that says 35 and you're speedometer says 40. What are you doing? You are transgressing, that's right. We are transgressing. I must admit that it does sometimes happen to me!

The third word is in most translations translated iniquity. It's also translated lawlessness. Iniquity or lawlessness is doing your own thing no matter what. "I don't care what anybody says, I'm going to do it." That's iniquity or lawlessness. You'll find, for instance, Jesus says in Matthew 24:12: "Because iniquity [or lawlessness] shall abound, the love of the majority will grow cold." That, I believe, is a period in which we're living. Abounding iniquity or lawlessness. People could care less, they don't mind what the law says, they don't mind what people think, they're going to do their own thing anyhow. That's iniquity. We're talking here specifically about transgressions because we're talking about people who were under the first covenant, the covenant of the Law. Where there's no law, remember, there's no

transgressions. That doesn't mean there's no sin, the two things are not the same.

I would like to go into this a little more fully. To me, it's an extremely important statement that Jesus paid the redemptive price for those who had transgressed under the Old Covenant. I'd like to turn to Romans 3:24–26. As I said last time, the problem when I get into Romans is it's difficult to get out again. Since we've just been talking about sin we might as well begin with Romans 3:23 which says:

> "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Notice, that's the nature of sin. Sin is like an arrow shot at a mark which falls short of it, it doesn't make it. There need not necessarily be any deliberate disobedience or any iniquity or lawlessness. It's just we didn't make it. It's true of the whole human race. Nobody ever made it except Jesus.

Seeing we have sinned, God is going to do something about it. Let me say, the problem God has is not the problem that's attributed to Him in contemporary culture. The problem that contemporary culture seeks to put upon God is, "How can You be so unkind as to punish sinners?" Let me tell you, that isn't God's problem the least bit. A lot of Sunday school teachers and people nowadays are trying to exonerate God from the guilt of punishing sinners. That's a complete misapprehension. God's problem is not how to punish sinners; it's how to avoid punishing sinners. Here is the passage where the solution God has is stated.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified [acquitted, counted righteous, justified: just–as–if–I'd never sinned] as a gift [or freely] ... Well, wait a minute. I'm going to read another version. The NASB is not good. I'm turning to the NIV. I don't mean the NASB is not good generally, but its translation of that passage is not clear. The NIV takes risks but when they come off, it's very successful. Sometimes they don't come off. What I mean by that is it departs from the exact wording. Here's the NIV.

> "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely [it cannot be earned] by his grace [and grace is always free] through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

In other words, we have the same word "redemption" as in Hebrews 9.

> "... God presented him [or set him forth] as a sacrifice of atonement."

The word there that's used in Greek is the same word that's used for the mercy seat. That's the Greek word for the mercy seat, the thing that covered the ark and had the cherubs on either end of it. Jesus is, in a certain sense, the mercy seat; He's a place where heaven's justice and heaven's mercy meet. The problem of justifying the unrighteous was resolved. God set Him forth publicly

thereby vindicating His own righteousness to the entire universe.

The problem that God had to solve was, for many centuries He had witnessed people sinning and not visited them with final judgment. I'm sure the angels were saying for a long while, "How come? How is this?" It seems to me that God didn't let anybody into His secret plan. He didn't let the angels into His plan, He didn't let the devil into His plan; otherwise the devil wouldn't have been the one to bring the plan to fulfillment. See? Because it was the devil that actually produced the solution.

But, when Jesus died on the cross, that vindicated God's righteousness. Jesus paid the penalty for all the sins that God had overlooked for many, many centuries. Let's try and read that again.

> "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement [or as a mercy seat], through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished."

That's the crux of the question, how could God go on century after century leaving sin unpunished? God didn't tell anybody, as far as I know, what He was going to do about it. But He had His plan. His plan was one word, Jesus.

Verse 26:

> "He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus."

That's God's problem. How can He be just and justify the sinner? The problem was resolved by the death of Jesus. There was no other way to resolve the problem.

We go back now to Hebrews and we come to a very critical and rather difficult passage which is verses 16–17. It could well be we'll take a good part of the rest of this session and maybe some of the next. First of all, I'll translate those two verses and then we will look at them. Hebrews 9:16–17.

> "For where there is a covenant, it is necessary that the death has taken place of the one who made the covenant."

How do they say it here? "There must of necessity be the death of the one who made it." That doesn't say it all. Let's see what they say in this one. This version, the NIV, doesn't say "covenant," it says "will." That creates another problem we'll come to in a minute. "In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it." Now that's very easy for us to understand, because we all are familiar with the fact that a will or "the last will and testament" of a person does not come into force until the person has died. Sometimes it's a complicated, legal process to prove that a person really has died. Then, as you may know, there are some times when it's question of who died first, the husband or the wife. So, death is a critical factor where there's a will. But, the problem is that the word will is really a kind of interjection of modern thinking, it isn't the word that's actually used.

Now we're going back to Derek Prince. Are you ready? I often give spontaneous translations when I'm preaching. Sometimes people come up and ask me where it's in print. The answer is nowhere.

> "For where there is a covenant, there must of necessity be established the death of the one who made the covenant. For a covenant is valid [or in force] when people are dead, since it is of no force [or has no validity] as long as the one who made the covenant lives."

The word that we're dealing with is the standard Greek word for covenant and it corresponds to the standard Hebrew word berith. You may not know it, but you've probably heard of the B'nai B'rith. That means "the sons of the covenant." That's the same word. It's the word that we have in our Bible in the first and second part of the Bible, the Old Testament, the New Testament. The word is covenant. It would be better to translate it the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. And indeed, in the German, Scandinavian versions and others, that's how it's translated.

What has to be clarified is the relationship of death to a covenant. You understand, if we use the word "will," there's no problem. Everybody knows a will is only in force when a person who has made the will has died. But when we think of a covenant, normally we don't think that way, which is because we don't think the Bible way. Analyzing these two verses forces us to investigate the Bible picture of a covenant. We're going to do that. Reason number one is because I like doing it! Reason number two is because if I

can do it rightly it will be a source of tremendous illumination to you. Things that you have probably never been able to put into place will fit in place.

Going now to my note outline on Page 9/3, at the bottom of the page I'm reading this. All through the Bible a covenant/testament requires a sacrifice, which requires shedding of blood, signifying a life laid down. Wherever there's a sacrifice there has to be the shedding of blood which is the indication of a life laid down. There's never a covenant made in the Bible—at least between God and man—where you don't have a sacrifice. So, it's implicit in the fact of a sacrifice.

This was made vivid to me in a very remarkable way. I never have been able to understand why I did what I did but in 1944 or '45 I decided to teach myself Hebrew from reading the Old Testament. It was a slow and wearisome process, but a very rewarding one. I was a great underliner in those days and I had three colored pencils. One was read, one was blue and one was green. I decided as I plowed into the Old Testament beginning with Genesis that I would take three themes and underline them in three colors. Number one was covenant, which was to be underlined in blue. Number two was sacrifice, which was to be underlined in green. And number three was shedding of blood, which was to be underlined in red. Well, by the time I was about two-thirds of the way through the book of Genesis I had made a very vital discovery. That wherever I had the blue for covenant, I had the green for the sacrifice. And wherever I had the green for sacrifice, I had the red for the shedding of blood. So what I have put down here is something that I learned in 1945 and it's been of inestimable value to me in understanding the Bible ever since. Let me say it again. Wherever you have a covenant—at least between God and man—you have a sacrifice. And wherever you have a sacrifice you have the shedding of blood. And the shedding of blood always speaks of a life laid down. When you see covenant in those terms, then you realize why it says wherever there is a covenant there must be the death of the one who made the covenant. The death being represented by the sacrifice and the shed blood.

Let's turn to the two covenants that God made with Abraham. Genesis 15:8–21.

> "And he [that is, Abraham—or in those days, Abram] said, 'O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it [that's the land of Canaan]?'"

I want to point out to you God's answer was to make a covenant. God's final assurance is a covenant.

He said, "I'll make covenant with you, that way you'll know."

So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. And God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces [of the sacrifice]. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. " And then He lists the ten nations that were currently occupying the land.

This covenant was, in many ways, an extremely limited covenant. I'm considering it with a view to suggesting to you that it's parallel to the covenant of the Law. We'll see in a few moments in Genesis 17 God made another covenant with Abraham. We'll look at that in a minute. I want to suggest to you that the second covenant corresponds to the covenant of grace through Jesus Christ that was based on the sacrifice of Golgotha.

Let's look now at the covenant in Genesis 15 and you'll see in due course that we're contrasting it with Genesis 17. This covenant is simply called "a covenant" which is distinct from the one in Genesis 17 which God calls "My covenant." It's based on the sacrifice of animals: a heifer, a female goat, a ram, a turtledove, a young pigeon. Essentially, those were the main animals that were sacrificed under the Law and by the Levitical priesthood. It guaranteed inheritance of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. The significant thing is it didn't guarantee Abraham himself anything at all; he got nothing out of it. If you look in verse 18 God said to him:

> "To your descendants I have given this land ..."

It doesn't include Abraham.

Two other points that are not mentioned in your typed outline but I will add them, first I've already said there was nothing for Abraham himself. Secondly, his name still remained "Abram." His name was not changed. But, it denoted the mutual commitment of God and Abraham to one another.

Look in the chapter a little and I want to point out some other features. In verse 8 Abraham said, "How may I know that I shall possess the land?" God's answer was a covenant. That might not satisfy some of us, but when God makes a covenant, that's His ultimate. He has no further satisfaction to offer us than that.

Abraham cut the sacrificial animals in two halves except for the birds. He placed one half of each animal opposite the other half. That was an accepted way of making a covenant. I want, for a moment, just to compare that with a statement in Jeremiah 34. We're not going to go into all the background of this passage in Jeremiah 34 but I just want to point out to you the principles. Verses 18–19. God is expressing his anger with Israel because they entered into a covenant with Him and then they broke their covenant. Their covenant was to release their Hebrew slaves, which it was contrary for the Law for them to retain. Once God had lifted the immediate pressure, they went back on this and took their slaves back. They broke the covenant and God says, "I will judge you for that." All I want to point out to you now is the way they made this covenant. If you're there in Jeremiah 34:18–19:

> "And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts—the officials of Judah, and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers, and the priests, and all the people of the land, who passed between the parts of the calf— ..."

So you see that the making of the covenant involved sacrificing the appointed animal, cutting its body in two and then the people who made the covenant passed between the two parts of the slain animal. Symbolically they were saying, "That dead body through which I've passed represents my death. I am passing through a symbolical death into this covenant commitment." There is no way, you remember, for a covenant to be effective until there's a death. This was the symbolical, substitutionary death. Once they had passed through the parts of the calf they had committed themselves to the covenant. God was angry with them because then they went back and refused to fulfill their commitment.

I'm simply taking that as a clear illustration of the way in which God made His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15. Abraham cut the sacrificial animals in two and I think it probable—some people don't agree—that Abraham walked through the pieces of the slain animals. He was thus committing himself to the covenant.

Let's read another part of that chapter 15, we're going back to Genesis 15:10.

> "Then he [that's Abraham] brought all these to Him [the Lord] and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the [two] birds. I presume one bird was on one side, one on the other. But that's a presumption, I don't know."

And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

That, to me, represents man's part in protecting his covenant with God. The "birds of prey" are the representatives of Satan in this and various other passages. They were going to take away from the sacrifice which guaranteed the covenant. Abraham's job was to drive them off.

This became so real to me, again out of my experience in 1943. I spent a year on end as a patient in military hospitals in Egypt with a condition that the doctors apparently were not able to cure. In the end, in desperation, as a new believer I turned to God and the promises of the Bible and I laid hold of God's provision of healing through the atonement of Jesus. That was my sacrifice. For many, many weeks I went through the experience of Abraham. Every time I affirmed my faith in the sacrifice, the birds of prey came down and tried to take away from it. I would think I have been assailed mentally with every argument that has ever been offered against divine healing. I doubt whether there's a single argument that Satan didn't present to me. That was the birds of prey coming down on the body of the

sacrifice. I couldn't produce the sacrifice but I could keep it intact.

I want to suggest to you that when you begin to deal with God and the terms of covenant, you'll discover that the birds of prey want to deface the carcass and it's your business to drive them off.

Next, verse 12:

> "Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him."

This was a spiritual experience and it says a "terror" of "great darkness." I believe that it's prefiguring the enslavement of Abraham's descendants in Egypt. In a certain sense, spiritually he went through before them what they were to go through. I think that's a spiritual principle—that we sometimes are called upon to go through in the spirit something that other people will walk out in the natural. God said to Abraham: "Know for certain that your [seed or your] descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years."

That's the "horror" of "great darkness."

> "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

It's important to notice that God guaranteed that four hundred years before it happened. You remember when Israel did come out of Egypt they had spoiled the Egyptians; they had taken their gold, their silver, everything? It says in Psalm 105:37:

> "He brought them forth with silver and gold, there was not one feeble person among their tribes."

That was all guaranteed by God four hundred years before it happened. Verse 16:

> "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

There's the word iniquity. They were rebellious people, they went their own ways, served their own gods, broke all the moral laws and intended to go on doing it.

But God said, "I'm waiting to judge them until the cup of their iniquity is full." And so, in a certain sense, that kept Abraham's descendants out of the land until the time of judgment came for the Amorites.

And when you read the record of how Israel entered the land and what they were required to do to the previous inhabitants, you need to read it in the light of this. God had waited four hundred years before He brought that judgment upon them. Verse 17:

> "And it came about [that] when the sun had set, that it was very dark [it was not merely a spiritual darkness but also a natural darkness] and behold, there appeared a smoking oven [or furnace] ..."

What does a furnace speak of in the Bible, symbolically? Purification, but through what? Suffering, that's right. God said to Israel in Isaiah 48:10, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Again, this is a picture of Israel's suffering in Egypt. Now here's what I've been leading up to.

> "...there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between the pieces [of the sacrifice]."

In the greatest darkness God sent a supernatural light that was not a natural light. It passed between the pieces of the sacrifice. That was God represented by the torch. God was committing Himself to the sacrifice. As I understand it, Abraham had walked through them; now the flaming torch passed through (a type of the Holy Spirit), God's representative. So the covenant was sealed when God Himself in the form of the torch passed through the pieces of the sacrifice. There was a commitment from God to Abraham and Abraham to God.

Again, I just want to give an application. When it's darkest, then you can expect the supernatural light. But, the only thing it illuminated was the sacrifices. Ultimately, your assurance is based on the sacrifice illuminated by the Holy Spirit. I have to say I learned all that in 1943. I didn't enjoy learning it but there's no way I could estimate the value of the lesson that I learned. When everything was dark and I felt totally hopeless, the Holy Spirit illuminated the sacrifice.

That's the first covenant between God and Abraham. Let me summarize the points. It was "a" covenant, it was based on the sacrifice of animals, it guaranteed inheritance of Canaan into Abraham's descendants, and it did not guarantee a permanent inheritance. It offered nothing to Abraham himself and his name remained unchanged. There were many limitations.

Now, let's go on to Genesis 17 and we're turning over to Page 9/4 in your outline. We'll read this second covenant. I want you to read it with the thought in mind that this prefigures Calvary and the New Covenant. Genesis 17:1–22. I'm going to read as quickly as possible.

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless." That, I believe, is the way to maturity. This was to be the last lap of Abram's life, in a sense. "Walk before Me, be blameless, be upright, be perfect."

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly." And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram [which means "exalted father"], but your name shall be [called] Abraham [which means "father of a multitude"]; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish My covenant [notice how many times God says "My covenant"] between Me and you and your descendants [or your seed] after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession..."

Notice two things. It was to Abraham first, then to his descendants. Then it was an everlasting possession.

"...and I will be their God." God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

You could not be a male member of Abraham's household without circumcision.

"But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her, and indeed give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!" But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac [which means 'he shall laugh']; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year." And when He [had] finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham."

Let's look now at the nature of that covenant. I want you to be thinking that where there is a covenant there has to be a sacrifice. Okay? Where there's a sacrifice there has to be shedding of blood, speaking of a life laid down. This is a kind of puzzle to find the sacrifice. Okay?

Let's just go to our outline and I'll use that as a starting point. This covenant God called "My" covenant. I think He must have called it five or six times "My" covenant. This is the one He says, "I'll accept responsibility for. This is the one that expresses what I really want to do for you." It's everlasting. The possession of the land of Canaan is everlasting. It guaranteed permanent possession of Canaan and an heir to Abraham by Sarah. That was Isaac.

Let me also add this, which is not in your outline. It was to Abraham first, then to his descendants. His name was changed. So was his wife's name. The change of name in the Bible, if it's from God, always indicates some significant change in that person. Abram was not capable of entering into this covenant. He had to become Abraham. Sarai had to

become Sarah. See, the Law never could produce an inward change, remember that? Now we're talking about a covenant that produces an inward change represented by the change of names.

Let me just mention something interesting. If you look in Genesis 17:8:

> "And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

In 1947 I was in Jerusalem when complete confusion broke loose, civil war started. There were snipers at every street corner, bombs were placed in houses and streets and it was the prelude to the war that actually began in May of 1948 officially. It was very dangerous, lots of people had lost their homes, their possession and some lost their lives. My family and I had to move out of one of our homes in the middle of the night and never went back, to save our lives. One day I had to go down to an electric supply store on Ben Yehuda Street. I was one of those fanatical Pentecostals who had to witness to everybody. I'm buying some little piece, an adapter, and the man was talking to me in Hebrew. He's saying, "It's a bad time." I'm telling him, "It's fine for me"—which was a silly thing to say. He said, "What do you mean, it's fine?" I tried to tell him about everlasting life. I really wasn't communicating very well and he said, "In our Bible [meaning the Old Testament] there's nothing about everlasting life or about resurrection." I happened to have been memorizing a passage and I quoted to him in Hebrew Genesis 17:8. When I spoke those words in Hebrew —there were about half a dozen people in the store— everybody was paralyzed. Not a person moved. I said what I said. "God said He would give the land first to Abraham, then to His seed." I said, "Up till now all Abraham has had is enough to be buried in. If there's no resurrection, how can that promise ever be fulfilled?" I was amazed at what I was saying. Furthermore, I was amazed I could say it in Hebrew! But, I have never faulted my own logic. Think of all that's involved. "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." That promise has never yet been fulfilled.

Either it will be fulfilled or the Bible is not reliable. There's just no third possibility. Personally, I believe it will be fulfilled.

It involved an heir, a miraculous child. It's a really interesting topic to study how much of God's plan of redemption depended upon women having children who weren't able to have them. It was almost the rule rather than the exception. In a sense, it went so far above Abraham's ability to conceive or believe, that he went back to Ishmael. He said, "Well, if only Ishmael could live." I'm sure he must have had regrets about that later. God said, "I'll take care of Ishmael because he's your descendant, but My covenant is with you and with Isaac and with your descendants."

Then He said something very, very strongly emphasized. "Every male has to be circumcised. Any male that is not circumcised in your household has broken My covenant." If you talk to Jewish people— most of you probably don't do that—and you say, for instance, "I was converted to Judaism." If you're male, they'll say to you, "Was it a bloodless conversion?" They won't acknowledge that, there has to be the shedding of blood. It's done very symbolically, just a little drop of blood is taken, but it has to be. That's the clue to understanding where the sacrifice is. The blood was taken from Abraham's body and from his descendants. It was not a life laid down but it was a picture of something that was to happen. How was it to be fulfilled? In the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ. So, in that symbol of the covenant there was the promise of the Redeemer. You have to know that—you've got to look for the blood and you've got to find out how the blood speaks of a life laid down.

If you turn to Galatians 3:16:

> "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ."

So Paul says the ultimate seed of Abraham was his descendant, Jesus Christ. The blood of the covenant was the blood of Jesus Christ. It was typified 2,000 years in advance by the ordinance of circumcision.

If you now put together these two covenants, I think you'll see that they exactly anticipate, first of all, the covenant of the Law; secondly the covenant of grace.

Going back to the bottom of Page 9/3 for a moment. In the first covenant it was merely "a" covenant, it was based on the sacrifice of animals. It was not an everlasting covenant. It guaranteed inheritance of Canaan to Abraham's descendants but not forever. It was all fulfilled with the Law, but it left Abraham with nothing and his descendants with

nothing permanent. Every descendant of Abraham should praise God that there's another covenant.

The second covenant, we'll go on to Page 9/4, God calls "My" covenant. It's an everlasting covenant. It guaranteed permanent possession of Canaan first to Abraham and then to his descendants. It promised an heir to Abraham by Sarah. The names of both Abraham and Sarah were changed, indicating something radical that took place within them. It was sealed with a sign of circumcision in which the blood was drawn from Abraham and from his male descendants prefiguring the blood that was to be shed by Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham.

Coming back to Hebrews, you might have forgotten that that's where we were! Hebrews 9:16–17.

> "For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it."

Okay? Covenant, sacrifice, shedding of blood, life laid down.

> "For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives."

In the first covenant, animals were substituted for the ones that made the covenant. That was not ever final, it was merely an on-the-way covenant preparing the way for the final covenant. I think it's also significant for you and me because the sacrifice of which our New Covenant is based is the death of Jesus. But, for that to be valid in our lives, what is required? How was the first covenant enacted? It was enacted when the Lord and Abraham passed between the pieces and passed through the sacrifice. That sacrifice represented a life laid down.

In effect, if I'm right, that covenant relationship meant Abraham saying to God, "From now on everything I have is yours. If there is any need in your life which I can meet, my resources are at Your disposal. Those dead creatures represent me. I have laid down my life to enter into this covenant relationship with You."

Also, I believe, it meant that God said the same to Abraham. "I've laid down My life to enter into this covenant with you."

It was beautifully worked out in history. Some years later, God took advantage of the covenant and said, "Abraham, you have a son; I want you to sacrifice him." Abraham was committed. There was no way he could back out and keep the covenant. To his eternal credit he was willing. But that wasn't the end of the story. Two thousand years later God said, "Now it will be My Son." And this time there was no backing out.

I don't know whether I can communicate it to you but if I can you'll see that, in a sense, covenant determines the course of history. The commitments of it are so solemn and binding that nothing can be allowed to change its course. I believe in contemporary history we are witnessing a further outworking of God's covenant with Abraham. That's why Israel are back in their land. Not because they deserved it or even in most cases because they wanted it, but because God is keeping His covenant with Abraham.

When we come to the New Covenant we enter into it through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ. As we pass through we say of that dead body, "That's my death. When He died, I died. Henceforth, I do not live for myself, I live for the one who died for me." You cannot be in a covenant and hold on to your life. Jesus said, "He that forsaketh not all that he has cannot be my disciple."

It's interesting that you can go back to that very apparently primitive ceremony in Genesis 15 and it becomes so tremendously powerful for you and me. When we enter into a covenant we must pass through a sacrifice. The sacrifice speaks of a life laid down. I cannot make a covenant and live. Can you grasp that? Where there is a covenant there must be the death of the one who made the covenant.

Not only that, but it applies to our relationship with each other. When I enter into a covenant through Jesus Christ with my brothers and sisters, I have to be able to say to them, "Henceforth, my resources are your resources. If there's anything you need that's legitimate, if you don't have it, I have it. My supply is yours." This is stated, it's not just something I'm thinking up, in 1 John 3:16–17.

> "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us..."

That's the demonstration of love. We wouldn't have known love if Jesus hadn't demonstrated it.

There was no adequate demonstration without Him.

> "... and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

We cannot come into that covenant and hold on to our lives. Because, where there is a covenant there must of necessity

be the death of the one who makes the covenant. You say, that's very spiritual, but John is not so spiritual as you think he is. Read the next verse.

But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? He's a covenant breaker. I'm very, very reserved about using that phrase "covenant breaker." I would never use it to hold somebody to some commitment that wasn't life and death. I do believe if we understand the nature of covenant, that's where it's at. We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. We have this world's goods, another brother has a need which he cannot supply, it's a legitimate need; then what I have is his.

See, Jesus said in John, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I love you." Then He said, "Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends." What is the issue? It's laying down your life. You cannot hold on to your life and be in covenant. Where there is a covenant there must of necessity be the death of the one who makes it.

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