**Meet God through Death?**

Hebrews 9: 6-14

Arkansas Loving Church, Pastor Sungtae Hong, 2/7/2021

[Hebrews 9: 6-7] 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.

The author of Hebrews manifests the limitations of the old covenant by referring to the practices of the proprieties of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), on which the high priest enters the inner room, the Most Holy Place, once a year. The most distinctive attribute of the proprieties is 'it being not without blood.' In fact, the high priest wears very colorful clothes. However, on this particular day, he wears linen clothes, a linen crown, and a white belt. What the high priest, who wears in white from head to toe, must do before entering the Most Holy Place is to kill an animal and sprinkle the blood of the animal onto his own body. He gets almost fully covered with blood. If you saw him standing in front of the Holy Place, you would think of the corpse that shed blood all over his body. The white linen itself is a shroud for the dead. Thus, basically, God makes him dead, and orders him to come into the Holy Place. How can he meet God there if he is already dead and comes into the Holy Place as a dead body? God lives there for sure, but the high priest is dead. Thus, the meeting is impossible.

[Hebrews 9: 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.

This is just an illustration. The purpose of sacrifices is to let people know that 'those who have limitations of sins and death have a zero possibility of meeting God.' However, we know the truth. We know that the breaking moment of 'the limitations of sins and death' has already come. All things are possible because of Jesus Christ, who is the mediator of the old and new covenants, who has covered all sorts of accusations of our sins with the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, and who is our Mercy Seat.

[Hebrews 9: 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!

The high priest had to cleanse his sins using the blood of an animal. However, Jesus did not need the sacrifices of cleansing for himself. He had always been qualified for meeting God. That Jesus died for us. Therefore, we have the privilege of meeting God through His death. How wonderful comparisons are they? How amazing gifts we have received? Even the high priest, who had lived his entire life tied to the laws surrounded by commandments and traditions, was not cleansed, and, thus, could not meet God. However, we can meet God through Jesus Christ, through His power. The Jewish Christians always responded at the wonderful grace that had been given to them as below:

"How are we better than our own people, the Jewish people, who live their lives following the values of the old testament, the values of the laws, and the values of the temple? We met Jesus, through whom all the values of the old testament were shown, and who was the reality of shadow and analogy. Now, what's good for us? Why are our lives so difficult today? Why are we not well off, but always persecuted? Should we get back to our people?"

[Matthew 5: 10] Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This verse does not mean that "we must pass, endure, and get persecuted in order to get the gift of heaven," but that "we rejoice and endure persecution because we got the gift of heaven and because persecution is the evidence of having heaven." The Jewish Christians doubted the fact that they 'possessed heaven' because of the dire situation of having been persecuted. They cried out to Jesus that 'let me have proper pleasure of owning heaven.' Don't we do this, too?: 'Let me live an affluent and healthy life in this world! I don't care about the children of the others, but just let my own children be successful in this world as a proof of having the gift of heaven!'

Heaven does not exempt us from having difficulties in this world: The miracle of meeting God does not exempt us from the difficulties of our lives. Rather, we have more difficulties and get more persecuted, but that does not negatively influence the grace of God that was given to us. God gives us the grace of meeting Him, and, also, gives enough grace for us to win our difficulties. Let's acknowledge that we have received the best gift without having been dead. If God has given us the best gift, he will also surely give us everything else. That gift might not be what we desire, but the best gift in God's sight. Let's rejoice the best gift that we have already received! Let's expect many more gifts that God has prepared for us! And let's live our lives happily every day!