**A new order**

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**A study of Hebrews 9:11 and 24-28**

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews had only one goal in mind. He wanted to explain to people who struggle with disorder in their lives, that the Lord has provided a new kind of order for us. God offers this order to us. For most people, believers and unbelievers, the word "faith" has religious overtones. To them, to profess faith means to submit to all sorts of laws and requirments imposed by God. Following these rules requires enormous effort--and it is human nature to feel severely curtailed by this.

This is perhaps understandable in the light of the Old Testament, with its emphasis on the LAW, which the Lord gave to the Jewish people on Mount Horeb after the deliverance from Egypt. This was the "old covenant" between God and his chosen people. On the basis of this covenant it was possible for the people of Israel to experience a limited form of fellowship with God. The tenor of the law was: "**Thou shalt**. . ." and "**Thou shalt not.** . ." (see Luke 10:25-28).

This covenant, however, was a temporary agreement which was destined to be replaced at the coming of Jesus Christ by a new covenant, which would make the possibility of fellowship available to all people, based on the atoning Sacrifice for sin. God, in the person of Jesus, the Christ, made it possible for every person who believes in this reconciliation to live in unhindered fellowship with the eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Man is now no longer left to his own devices. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the SON of God, the Lord gave humanity a brand new opportunity. The question then becomes: how can we grab a hold of this in our own lives, and how does this new order work in practice?

**The good things that are here**

First, it is important to remember that this new beginning was never a human initiative. It is the Lord, the Creator, who forged this new beginning. We have seen that He accomplished this through the person and the work of Jesus Christ (CHRIST means ANOINTED of the LORD). This reality must be the starting point of our faith. The Lord created man (men and women) for a purpose. This purpose was caring for and working in God's creation (Gen 1:26-28). For this reason, God created man "in His image, in His likeness" (Gen 1:26). They were able to fulfill this purpose because they lived in unhindered fellowship with their Creator.

Our passage (Hebrews 9:11-15) starts off with a peculiar phrase in regards to Jesus' work in this fallen world. "When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here. . ." Most translations use the phrase "the good things to come", but the NIV uses the phrase "the good things that are already here".

Regardless, this passage indicates that the coming of Jesus Christ into this fallen world heralded the beginning of a new arrangement! An arrangement in which God was going to bring about new possibilities for man and creation. It is more than worth the effort to list these "good things" and to let their reality sink in, because they clarify the content of verse 12, which speaks of "eternal redemption". When we hear the word "eternal", we usually assume it refers to our eternal future as believers. In this verse, however, it refers to a redemption which we can enjoy here and now. It is NOW, TODAY, that anyone who believes is rescued from the state of being separated from God. Rescued from the state of "sin".

Man, by faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice, is placed in a new situation by God himself. Now he can partake of the "good things" referred to in verse 11, which are now here. What follows is a list of these things and what they mean:

1. Atonement: atonement, or reconciliation with God, is a fact. It means a restoration of fellowship with the eternal God and Father of all.

2. Forgiveness of sins: this means that our past is no longer held against us.

3. Spiritual power is now available to the believer; he can count on God's help and no longer has to rely on his own strength.

4. The believer receives new possibilities; he is "born again", which means that he is now able to change and act in new ways.

5. The believer receives inner peace.

6.  An inner cleansing takes place; when the believer confesses his sins to God, his sins are forgiven.

7. Most importantly, the believer now lives in fellowship with the Lord God and his Son Jesus Christ, and he is plugged in to an inexhaustable source of power: the Holy Spirit.

8. Verses 13-14 mention an incredible fact about cleansing, which actually involves a process. The writer refers again to the temporary covenant which God made with the people of Israel at mount Horeb. There, too, God offered a way to be cleansed, but those sacrifices foreshadowed and pointed to the sacrifice that Jesus Christ would bring on Calvary at the cross--a sacrifice which would make actual, inner cleansing possible.

**Spiritual revelation**

The spiritual life of a believer is centered in his inner being. It begins, according to Hebrews 9:14, with a cleansing of the human consciousness. What is this consciousness? The NIV uses the word "conscience". It is one of the things that separates us from other creatures. Human beings are created with abilities that other creatures lack. We have been created as "spiritual beings".

The first pages of the Old Testament reveal that God created man in his image, "in the image of God He created. . .them" (Gen 1:27). Later, Jesus says, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). To worship means "to approach God", that is, to seek fellowship with God. Other creatures do not have this ability. In this, man is unique. The apostle Paul says, "For in Him we live and move and have our being. . . . We are his offspring" (Acts 17:28). In Hebrew 12:9 it says, "How much more should we submit the Father of our spirits and live!" Based on the reconciliation which Jesus forged between God and man, this submission (surrender) to God leads to fellowship with God. God desires to reveal himself to people this way. To reveal means "to make known". See Matt 11:25, and 1 Cor 2:9, 10.

Spiritual revelation, according tot he Bible, is not a feeling. It is a perception of the human spirit which God has placed in the person. It also differs from intellectual understanding. The intellect, emotions and will are properties of the human soul. Man was created as a spiritual being. This sets us apart from all other creatures. The human soul contains the mind, the emotions, and the will. This is what the Bible tells us. So man has the ability to process the things which God reveals to his spirit by means of the mind, the emotions, and the will. Because of this, he can consider and judge whether his thoughts and plans are in accordance with God's will.

Man can also evaluate after the fact whether his thoughts, words, and actions were in accordance with God's will and intention. Man is responsible for his thoughts, his words and his actions. No other creature has this sense of accountability. Animals have instinct, but no rational, moral awareness. They cannot be called to account.

**Cleansed consciousness**

This rational, moral consciousness has been corrupted by the Fall. It no longer functions the way the Creator intended it to when He created man. In Hebrews 9:14, however, it says that through faith, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses our conscience from acts that lead to death, so we can serve the living God. Through this sacrifice, God opened up new opportunities for fallen man. Anyone who believes in this reconciliation receives a real, functioning, restored relationship with the living God. God, who is spirit, can now lead and reveal Himself to the individual once again.

We now see that the Lord God, who is spirit, is able to reveal himself to people because man is created by God as a spiritual being. Once fellowship with God has been restored, God, through his Spirit, can once again make the person aware how to live life the way He intended, according to his will. Our human conscience will bear witness of this in every situation. God even makes his Spirit live in the believer. Jesus said about this, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

This truth, that anyyone who believes in the atoning sacrifice and accepts this as the

foundational truth of his or her life, receives the Spirit of God, is also expressed clearly in

Peter's sermon on Pentecost in Jerusalem. (See Acts 2:37,38)

I hope this study has made it clear that life in fellowship with God can be much more real

and fruitful that many christians experience. It is not without reason that the apostle Peter

says

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our

knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Pet 1:3).

**Door J.C. Graaff**

Translated by Mariette Brotnov