

Hebrews 10:1-18

Jesus the Only True Sacrifice for Sin

God takes our sin seriously.

The blood of animals could not obtain redemption. However, by His death, Jesus Christ removed "the sins of many people."

A permanent sacrifice for sin is needed to deal permanently with our sin problem. The Levitical sacrifices could not deal permanently with our sins; however the once-for-all perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross dealt with our sins permanently. There will never be a need for another sacrifice for sin. The blood of Jesus Christ wipes the record clean forever.

The Purpose of the Old Testament Law (Hebrews 10:1-4)

"For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:1-4). All Scripture references are from New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update unless otherwise noted.

Jesus fulfills the shadows of the Law.

The law and its offerings were only a "shadow" (*skia*) or a vague reflection, a silhouette of the real thing to come. However, the "form" (*eikon*) is the "image." It is the real thing, the true form, and accurate representation. It is the appearance of the reality itself. Jesus casts His shadow over the whole Old Testament in preparation of His coming to fulfill all of the reality of its symbolism, types and shadows. It is His shadow that is seen throughout the Old Testament. He is the real object that produces the shadow. The reality is Jesus Himself. The author of Hebrews has already spoken of copies and shadows in Hebrews 8:5 where the emphasis was on earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. Now he draws out the comparison between the sacrifices offered by the priests under the Law and the one perfect sacrifice of Christ.

The purpose of the Levitical sacrifices

The Law and its sacrifices was a constant daily reminder of the reality of sin. If the sacrifices under the old covenant could have permanently dealt with sin the sacrifices would not have been terminated. The sacrifice in view at the opening of chapter ten is the Day of Atonement. The constant repetition of the daily and annual sacrifices only proved that the Levitical sacrifices could not satisfy the righteousness of God. They were imperfect and could never "make perfect those who draw near." Their very repetition argues for their insufficiency to deal with sin. The high priest could never declare to the worshipers this is the final sacrifice; there will never be another sacrifice because this sacrifice has removed all your sins, once for all.

Moreover, the constant repetition of the sacrifices kept before the eyes of the people their human depravity. It was a constant reminder that they were sinners and in the need of the atoning sacrifice for sin. They could never get away from the idea that they were sinners. They were under the judgment of God. The Day of Atonement reminded them that the one final payment for sin had not been made. The full perfect, never to be repeated, all sufficient payment by the Lamb of God was still in the future. The Day of Atonement was a shadow of the real thing to come. It reminded the people they were sinners, and at the same time pointed to God's appointed Lamb. It was a reminder of sin, the sacrifice, and the Savior.

The Mosaic system with its laws and sacrifices were by nature preparatory because they reminded the people of the reality of sin, the righteousness of God and the necessity for atonement for sin. They looked forward to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. They pointed to expectation, not fulfillment in themselves. We look back upon the perfect fulfillment of the expiation of our sins. The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement did not possess

the power to cover the sins of the past year. They simply called to mind the divine pardon which would come with the death of Christ, the Lamb of God.

What does the atoning death of Christ cause us to remember, but that we are depraved sinners in need of the atoning sacrifice of Christ? It reminds us of the remedy God has provided in the blood of Jesus.

When Christ offered the perfect sacrifice for sin the inadequate sacrifices were terminated at the Temple. Christ dealt with our sins once for all, never to be repeated. There was no need for another sacrifice. Jesus paid it all. He fulfilled the requirement of the law that declared, "The wages of sin is death."

This passage also reminds us of the new covenant. In Christ, we inherit the good things to come. Though God remembers sins that have not been propitiated, He forgets the sins for which atonement has been made. If we have come by faith believing in the all sufficient sacrifice for sin made by Jesus Christ it is great comfort to know God remembers them no more. He is a God who "remembers" and "forgets" our sins based on the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). One of the clear messages that has been repeated in Hebrews is the fact that only a perfect man, without sin, could stand in the place of another man and make perfect atonement (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15-16; 5:8-10; 7:26-28; 9:26-28). No animal could ever make that decision. The old covenant could not accomplish cleansing and forgiveness. We have already been told in Hebrews 9:14, "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). For both the Old and the New Testament believers there is only one propitiatory sacrifice for sin. It is the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Levitical sacrifices only pointed to a future expiation. They satisfied the requirements of the law, but they could not deal with the heart of the problem of sin. With the coming of the expiation of sin by Christ these old sacrifices ceased because they were not truly propitiations. Christ provided the true propitiation. His sacrifice cast the shadow over the old that pointed to Him. His sacrifice declared, "It is finished!" There will never be any need for another sacrifice for sin.

The apostle Paul declared this same great truth: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). This is true because Christ is the end of the old Mosaic covenant sacrifices. Christ brought to an end the Mosaic Law, Levitical priesthood, sacrifices and offerings.

Perfect Obedience of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:5-9)

"Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God.' After saying above, 'Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will' He takes away the first in order to establish the second" (Hebrews 10:5-9).

The writer of Hebrews puts the words of Psalm 40:6-8 on the lips of Jesus. He writes as if they are the words of Christ at His incarnation. It is as if Christ is speaking in verses 5-8. The writer is fond of taking Old Testament passages and applying them to the person and work of Christ. "Lo, I have come to do Thy will, O God." Again he said, "Lo, I have come to do Thy will." We cannot miss the messianic emphasis.

"When He comes into the world" is a Semitic way of referring to the incarnation "when Christ was born." The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:9, 14; 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37).

What did God want? He desired perfect obedience, and He found perfect obedience to His will in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to do the will of God. He stated this clearly the night before His death in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39). "Not My will, Your will be done." Doing the will of God was crucial in the life of Christ.

To accomplish the will of God, the Son needed "a body." As the eternal Word of God He could not die, therefore God prepared a body for Christ. Only as a man could He fulfill the will of God by dying as a bloody sacrifice. God provided the Son with a perfect body to fulfill His eternal purpose. He assumed that body when

He became flesh and dwelt among men (John 1:14; Phil. 2:8). That is why the virgin conception is so important to Biblical theology. Athanasius said, "At one and the same time as man He was living a human life, as Word He was sustaining the life of the universe, and as Son He was in constant union with the Father."

The old animal sacrifices were not capable of making atonement once and for all, but there was one sacrifice that answered to the demands of the will of God. Christ sacrificed His body once for all to atone for the sins of His people.

"In the scroll of the book it is written of Me" refers to all the Scriptures whose theme is the coming of the Messiah to accomplish the will of God. Remember the words of Jesus when He spoke to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27).

Christ fulfilled the demands of the first covenant and terminated it. But He also established the second covenant when He came to do the will of God. The incarnate Son of God abolishes the "first in order to establish the second" (v. 9). "He takes away the first," i.e., the sacrifices associated with the Levitical law, "in order to establish the second," the will of God which was the offering of Himself to take away the sins of the world. It was by His will that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (v. 10). The passive obedience of Christ is observed in His fulfilling the Aaronic priesthood. Moreover, His active obedience is seen in the priesthood of Melchizedek in the new covenant. Christ is involved in the fulfillment of both covenants in Hebrews with the termination of the old and the inauguration of the new.

The author's use of the word "sanctification" in Hebrews is the cleansing from sin and reconciliation to a holy God. Our redemption has been accomplished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The sacrifice of Christ is absolutely adequate to deal with our sins and restore our relationship with God. It is an all sufficient sacrifice for sin.

Results of the One Sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:10-18)

The work of the Levitical priest was never finished. Rivers of blood flowed daily from the Temple of Jerusalem as one animal sacrifice after another was slain for the sins of the people. The High Priest could never sit down because his job was never completed.

The writer of Hebrews draws out the contrast with the Priesthood of Jesus and His one sacrifice for all time. Christ's work was finished, and He sat down! In fact, Christ sat down in everlasting rest and blessedness at the right hand of the Majesty on High. Our redemption was completed and the Levitical priesthood was terminated.

"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, And on their mind I will write them,' He then says, 'And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:10-18).

We have been sanctified by the blood of Jesus.

"We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (v. 10). Again in verse 14 he writes, "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." Here the emphasis is on our positional sanctification. The verb is in the perfect tense and speaks of an act completed in the past with present results. We have been deemed from the moment we believed on Christ perfectly holy, yet making someone holy is a process. We are progressively throughout this life being sanctified. It is always the tension of the now and the yet to be in the Christian life. "We have been made holy," yet we are exhorted to make every effort to be holy. This is the great tension in the Christian life. We have received sanctification

once-for-all, but we have not achieved it yet. It does not mean we are now already sinless and perfect, but that Christ has fully earned our perfection for us which we will receive in glory. One day we will be glorified. That is yet to come when we see Jesus in His glory (1 John 3:1-3; John 17:22; Rom. 8:18, 29; 9:23-24; 11:33-36). Our eternal perfection is based on the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Our sanctification is past, present and future. The writers of the New Testament stress the process of sanctifying. The work of perfection is not yet complete; however it will be one day. Christ has made perfect forever those who are being made perfect. We are still a work in progress, but there is a clear image of the final outcome. God has predestined us to become conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-30).

Because we are "in Christ" He sanctified us by His shed blood. Since we are "in Christ" we have received these benefits that were purchased by the death of Christ. They have been ours since the moment we believed on Christ as our Savior. Our sins have been forgiven, our conscience has been cleansed, and we have peace with God, the gift of eternal life, eternal security, reconciliation with God, and propitiation by His blood that turns away the wrath of God. John Owen said Christ sanctified the believer first, and then afterward He perfected him.

This sanctification is by the election of God the Father (Heb. 10:10, 14, 29; 2:11; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jn. 17:19). It is His work from beginning to end. It is the result of our vital union with Christ, the Son of God (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; 1 Thess. 5:23). The Holy Spirit applies it to the believer (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Thess. 4:7-8). It is coincident with our justification (1 Cor. 6:11; Acts 26:18; Rom. 8:29-30). Positional sanctification covers all believers collectively (Acts 20:32; 26:18). It is once-for-all, and perfect forever (Heb. 10:10; 2 Thess. 2:13).

Christ offered one sacrifice for sins for all time.

Remember in verses 11-14 the author gets to the heart of the message in Hebrews. "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10-14).

His comparison is now on the daily sacrifices and offerings in the Tabernacle. There was ceaseless activity under the Levitical system. Day and night there was the repetition of sacrifices all year long leading up to the Day of Atonement. These sacrifices could never take away sins. Then one day Christ offered up Himself and paid the debt in full, a single sacrifice for sin, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High. The work of the Levitical priesthood was never finished, but the sacrifice of Christ was once for all. The Levitical priests were still standing, but Christ completed His sacrifice and sat down. The continual offerings were inadequate, but sacrifice of Christ alone was perfect. Again the contrast is between many sacrifices and one sacrifice, many priests and the one great High Priest. The contrast is between many sacrifices that could only point to another in expectation, and one perfect sacrifice of Christ of absolute worth.

Jesus Christ is "seated" in royal sovereign glory "at the right hand of God" after having offered His sacrifice.

It is one single sacrifice for all that can never be added to or be repeated. This has great implications for our salvation. The message of Biblical evangelical Christianity is faith in Christ plus nothing equals salvation. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone for God's glory alone.

Our great High Priest is seated; therefore we have the security of a finished work of atonement. God has accepted the work of Christ because He raised Jesus from the dead, and He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. God would not have raised Jesus from the dead if He had not accepted the sacrifice. He would not be in the presence of God the Father in heaven interceding on our behalf if His sacrifice was not perfect.

Moreover, there is something else just as marvelous. Christ is seen "waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet" (Hebrews 10:13). Christ is busy interceding on our behalf. But He is also patiently waiting until the very last person to be saved trusts in Him for salvation and then He is coming in glory. He is not sitting in heaven wringing His hands. Nothing catches Him by surprise. Nothing.

Satan has been judged and defeated. He was crushed at Calvary. He is waiting for the appropriate time for His return and His enemies are made His footstool.

Psalms 110 permeates this great letter to the Hebrews (1:3, 13; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1; 8:1; 12:2). It is also an important theme in the New Testament (Matt. 22:44-45; 26:64; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34-35; 3:13, 21; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Pet. 3:22).

Jesus commenced the new covenant.

Now with the completion of the sacrificial work of Christ, the new covenant is inaugurated. We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and we celebrate it every time we go to the table and celebrate the Lord's Supper.

The Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of true believers applying the great message of redemption. In verses 15-18 the Holy Spirit and Yahweh are one. What the Holy Spirit says is what the Lord (Yahweh) says. The author of Hebrews had a high view of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and he believed in the Trinity.

He picks up once again the theme of the new covenant and applies it to the believer (Jeremiah 33:31-34). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the application. He writes the principle of the new covenant in the heart. Our guilty hearts are purged of sin and guilt. When there flashes upon the mind some old sin or guilt the Holy Spirit brings to our conscious mind the cleansing in the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus though the eternal spirit offered Himself without blemish on our behalf. True forgiveness of all our sins is provided in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The Holy Spirit writes God's law upon the heart and empowers us to live by it.

God imputed all our sins to Jesus Christ and He died in our place as our representative. Moreover, He also imputed all the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ to us, and now we have a perfect standing before Him for all eternity. The beautiful thing about this new covenant is that God has a perfect forgetter; He remembers our sins no more! "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). Why is that a true statement? It is true because Jesus died and His blood covers all our lawless deeds! I love Psalm 103:12 which declares: "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Because our sins are under His blood, God has forgiven and forgotten all of them. They are cast into the depths of the sea. "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

There is no longer any need for more sacrifices.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross was final. "Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18). Praise God! There is no need for another sacrifice, ever. Jesus paid it all!

Christ's covenant was eternal and His offering for sin was perfect so there is no longer any need for any other offering for sin.

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God" (Hebrews 10:19-21).

By His death, Christ has opened up the way into the presence of God. The moment He died the curtain to the Most Holy Place was torn from top to bottom, and there is no longer any veil between God and His people (Matt. 27:51). We have access to God through the shed blood of Jesus. He said to His disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

How significant that the author of Hebrews after setting forth the atoning sacrifice of Christ, His resurrection and session in heaven, that He stresses toward the end of his epistle the second coming of Christ. He is returning as the sovereign king of glory. He "shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await Him, for salvation" (9:28). "For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay" (Heb. 10:37). It could very well be that He is patiently putting off His coming for you to put your faith in Him as your savior. One day someone like you or me will put their trust in Christ and that person will be the last Gentile to believe and instantly Christ will come (Rom. 11:25-27; Matt 24:24). "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to

repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:9-10).

Even so, come Lord Jesus! Come!

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