

HEBREWS

(Primary textbook: Holy Scriptures. Primary translation: NIV.)

VI. JESUS' SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF IS SUPERIOR TO THE SACRIFICES OF THE OLD COVENANT AND SETS US FREE FROM SIN (9:1-10:39)

- A. The Tabernacle and Its Tools (9:1-5)
- B. The Day of Atonement (9:6-10)
- C. Jesus' Sacrifice Cleanses Our Conscience (9:11-14)
- D. Jesus' Death Inaugurates the New Covenant (9:15-22)
- E. Jesus' Sacrifice Was Once for All (9:23-28)
- F. Old Covenant Sacrifices Could Not Take Away Sin (10:1-4)
- G. Christ Offered His Body to Make Us Holy (10:5-10)
- H. Our High Priest Now Reigns (10:11-14)
- I. Witness of the Holy Spirit through Jeremiah (10:15-18)
- J. Let Us Draw Near to God and Spur One Another On (10:19-25)
- K. The Judgment of God on Those Who Keep Sinning (10:26-31)
- L. Reminder of Earlier Suffering (10:32-34)
- M. The Need to Persevere (10:35-39)

(This lesson will cover Section F and Section G)

F. Old Testament Sacrifices Could Not Take Away Sin (10:1-4)

1. The law is only a what? Of What? Not what? (v.1)

“Shadow” – This metaphor has been repeated several times, not only because it was so, but because it was/is difficult for some to believe it.

2. For this reason it can never make perfect those who do what? It cannot do this by the same what? Repeated how often? (v.1)

“It can never” – The Greek text here is emphatic about the point. In the idiom of today we would say, “There is no way” The reason for its inability is stated in verse 2.

Hear what a commentator has to say at this point in the study of Hebrews: “There is a progressive relationship between (1) the believer’s perfection, (2) the believer’s conscience, and (3) the believer’s ability to draw near to God. The word translated ‘perfect’ is the same word which has figured so prominently into our writer’s description of the believer’s salvation (which has past, present, and future dimensions). In its past sense (justification), it describes the removal of sin’s guilt from our lives. In its present sense (sanctification), it describes the gradual removal of sin’s power from our lives as we grow daily to become more like Jesus. In its future sense (glorification), it describes the eschatological consummation of our holiness and hope.”

3. If it could, would they not have what? For the worshipers would have been what? (v.2)

“If it could” – Indeed, if the Mosaic law system had been at all able, then no other system would have been brought into being (7:11-19; 8:8-13). However, God knew (what some people seem to dispute) what He intended to do with the Old Testament system. Having done that, He introduced the new order called Christianity.

4. And would no longer have felt how? For their what? (v.2)

While “perfection” terminology in Hebrews most consistently refers to the fact of sin and the real guilt which it incurs for us (in an objective sense), our writer also recognizes the impact of such sin upon our “consciences” (9:9, 14) or the subjective level at which we “feel guilty” for our sins. Only a sacrifice which accomplishes real forgiveness can truly cleanse the conscience as well.

5. But those sacrifices are a what? (v.3)

The endless repetition of the sacrifices is offered as one sign of their inadequacy. If they had removed sin once for all, they would not have had to be repeated, but they were. Another sign of their inadequacy was the testimony of conscience. In their own hearts and minds, the worshipers knew that they were not truly clean. As a result, the most that could be said for the Day of Atonement was that it was “an annual reminder of sins.” This is not an insignificant purpose for we need to be become aware of our sin and our true situation before God. But it provides no remedy for the guilt and power of sin.

6. Because it is what? For the blood of what two? To do what? (v.4)

“It is impossible” – Never, not at all, in no way! The author continues to drive home the point that the old could not achieve that which the new has brought about for the person of God.

G. Christ Offered His Body to Make Us Holy (10:5-10)

7. Therefore, when Christ did what? He said He did not desire what two? But a what prepared for Him? (v.5)

“Therefore” – Again the thought is made clear that God planned to bring Jesus into the world, together with the system built upon Him, and thus every thing prior to His coming in point of time was but preparatory and also ineffective. As verses 5-7 tell us, quoting Psalm 40:6-8, never had it been God’s plan for all man’s sins to be removed by anything except the death of Jesus.

“A body” – Is it not astounding that He knew even before He came to earth what His purpose was, and yet He came?

8. With what two was He not pleased? (v.6)

9. Then He said here He was and He said it was written about Him where? (v.7)

10. He says He has come to do what? (v.7)

To accomplish what the sacrifices prescribed by the law of the old covenant could not, “Christ came into the world.” To describe His mission, our writer appeals to Psalm 40:6-8 (actually the LXX (Septuagint) of Psalm 39:7-8). As in other Messianic Psalms, the words of David prefigure those of the Messiah.

11. First He said that He did not desire what four? (v.8)

12. Nor was He what with them? Although what required them to be made? (v.8)

The legal requirements for sacrifices and offerings are described in Leviticus 1-7. Here our writer is not concerned with particular details about them or fine distinctions between them but with their collective inability to satisfy God. The prophets had warned and rebuked Israel for permitting a false confidence in their ritualistic cleanness to erode their sense of guilt or need for repentance (Hosea 6:6; Isaiah 1:11-14; Micah 6:6-8; etc.). Jesus similarly criticized the Pharisees (Matthew 9:13; 12:7; cf. Mark 12:32-33). Note the obvious question here – Why would readers want to return to a system which was not only ineffective in dealing with their sin but could well contribute to a spiritual apathy and false confidence which might blind them to their true spiritual condition?

13. Then He said that He had come to do what? He sets aside which one? To do what? (v.9)

The terms “first” and “second” are the same terms used throughout the letter to contrast the old and new covenants and they reveal our writer’s method with the Psalm. The writer distinguishes between the sacrifices required by the law and the body prepared for the Messiah who came to do God’s will.

The “first” is “set aside.” This is a strong term and portrays the concept of something that has been killed or destroyed. God has “set aside” the first “to establish the second.” This is the will of God, do not return to the former, it is done away with, the second (The New Covenant) is God’s will now, and it is the superior way, the only way.

14. And by that what? We have been made what? (v.10)

15. We have been made holy through what? Of Whose body? (v.10)

16. What 3-word phrase describes how effective this sacrifice of the body of Christ is? (v.10)

Two words in the passage provide the basis for our author’s conclusion: “will” and “body.” God’s will had never been for believers to depend perpetually upon the repeated sacrifices offered under the old covenant. They were ineffective for removing sin and served only to remind us of our guilt (10:3-4). As in 7:11ff., we have read of yet another prophecy which indicated that, all along, God had planned for something better.

His plan was that the sacrifice of Christ’s body would do what the other sacrifices could not – make us “holy.” The same Greek word was used back in 9:13 to describe how the blood of animal sacrifices “sanctified” those who were ceremonially unclean. What Christ has done for us is more than ceremonial, however, for we also read in 9:14 that His offer of His “unblemished” self to God was able to “cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death.” His sacrifice accomplished in truth and reality what the others could accomplish only in ceremony.

For the third time our author now employs the Greek word translated “once for all” (see 7:27; 9:12). More specifically, the word denotes “once for all time” (see 9:12) and here it occupies an emphatic position in the sentence. Because God chose to forgive sins only upon the basis of Jesus’ death, that choice ruled out all other possibilities.

An application can be made at this point concerning the relationship between salvation and the daily service of Christians. One is not acceptable to God because he makes sacrifices of time, talent, money, or anything else to God. The sacrifice for sin and salvation has already been made by Christ. His offering was complete and sufficient. Only by accepting His Son can one be received by the Father. The only sacrifice that He accepts in return is that of a life submitted in worship to Him (Romans 12:1-2). Time, talent, and money used in service to Him will naturally follow, not as sacrifices to God, but as expressions of the faith of one who has received life through the redemptive work of Christ and has yielded himself to Him.

“Making Disciples for the Master”