

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 H and Section I)

H. Our High Priest Now Reigns (10:11-14)

1. Day after day every priest does what? (v.11)

The phrase "performs his religious duties" renders the same word which elsewhere is simply translated "serve." The term denotes a service performed in some official capacity, whether political or religious. The verb tense suggests continuous, repeated action.

2. Again and again he offers what? Which can never do what? (v.11)

The idea conveyed here is that the priests have always offered the same sacrifices and continue to offer the same sacrifices. But no matter how many sacrifices they offer, none has taken away sin, and as one translator suggests here, they "never, ever take away sin.

3. But when this priest did what? (v.12)

After Jesus offered His "one sacrifice" which was "for all time," He "sat" (the verb tense is of such nature that what is indicated is a decisive point in the past). One commentator states, "The sacrifice of Jesus was singular, sufficient, permanent, and decisive."

In chapter 5 (5:1ff.), our writer reasoned from what was true of "every high priest" to what is similarly true of Jesus our great high priest. Here, in 10:11-12, our writer begins by describing what is true of "every priest" but his

point will rest in yet another significant difference between Jesus and every other priest. The other priests *stand* while Jesus *sits*. This frames the comparison.

4. He sat where? (v.12)

Where Jesus sat is significant as well, for He sat “at the right hand of God,” by His throne which is in Heaven (8:1). He was thus able to “draw near” to God, to enter His presence.

5. Since when? He waits for what? (v.13)

Having completed this aspect of His priestly service (sacrifice for sins once for all), there are no more sacrifices to be made. Jesus now reigns. Only the final victory awaits, for the outcome has been determined. That victory is described with terms from a passage that by now is quite familiar to the writer’s readers – Palm 110 (verse 4 figured prominently into chapters 5 and 7; here, our writer echoes verse 1, quoted back in 1:13). At least some of the first readers of Hebrews had suffered at the hands of persecutors (10:32-34). For them, the “enemies” of Christ had faces and names and to know that they would be one day made His footstool was a promise of redemption and deliverance that was both physical and spiritual.

6. Because by what? He has made perfect forever what group? (v.14)

In this verse we read why Jesus was able to sit and reign – the results of His “one sacrifice.”

“Has been made perfect” – Past, completed action with continuing consequences.

“Are being made holy” – Durative, incomplete action of an event in progress.

Throughout Hebrews it has been made repeatedly clear that the salvation of the believer is an accomplished fact, and ongoing event, and a promise for the future.

In one sense, we “are being made holy” (we “are being saved” as daily our lives become in fact more like Christ). Nevertheless, at the same time, we have already “been made perfect” (i.e., Jesus’ sacrifice purchased the forgiveness of our sins and our salvation does not depend on anything we could possibly add to God’s plan by our own efforts). So, in this verse, one phrase describes our justification (the forgiveness for sin which we have as a result of our covenant relationship with God – the removal of sin’s guilt) while the other phrase describes our sanctification (the process of spiritual growth through which, with the aid of God’s Spirit, we someday attain to the fullness of the stature of Christ – the removal of sin’s power).

In Hebrews 10:11, the writer refers to the daily offerings of the priests. His mention here of their work shows the contrast of what they did each day in the earthly sanctuary to the sacrifices offered once each year for the Day of Atonement as mentioned back in verses 1-4 of this same chapter 10. A final contrast between the incomplete service of the Levitical priesthood and the perfect ministry of Christ is drawn from the positions that they assume while performing their duties in representing the people before God. The law of Moses required that the Jewish priests always stand in the tabernacle and from that position minister and offer their sacrifices daily. Christ, however, after He had made His once-for-all sacrifice, sat down at the right hand of His Father in Heaven. Surely referring to Psalm 110:1, the Hebrews writer also noted that Jesus will maintain that position until His enemies are destroyed. (See also 1 Corinthians 15:22-28.)

One should be careful to understand that, in describing this superior characteristic of the sacrifice and ministry of Christ, the Hebrews writer is not contradicting the present intercessory ministry of Christ, which has already been discussed in chapters 4, 7, and 9. The reference to our Lord’s sitting at the right hand of His Father is not meant to imply that He is resting from His work of mediation, but that He has a position of superior honor from which to perform that ministry.

Perhaps it would be well to list in summary fashion the contrasts between the sacrificial systems of the two covenants. (1) The Old was a shadow; the New is real. (2) The Levitical priests and high priests used animals; Christ offered Himself. (3) The old system, while providing a limited access to God, constituted a barrier between Him and the people; the sacrifice of Christ under the new has opened the way for the people to approach God. (4) The blood of the Old Testament sacrifices, though providing temporary satisfaction for sin, only effected ceremonial purification; the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience and removes the guilt of sin. (5) Under the Old Covenant,

sacrifices were slaughtered repeatedly; Christ died once. (6) The sacrifices of the Old were a reminder of sins; the sacrifice of the New removes the sin forever. (7) The Levitical priests stood as they made their offerings; Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father after He had given Himself.

By the perfect sacrifice of Himself, Christ has accomplished what the older order could not. He has by His one offering provided absolute redemption and made “perfect” those who are sanctified by His blood. This is not to say, of course, that believers are perfect in the sense that they can do no wrong. It is to say that they have experienced full salvation, and, as long as they continue in Him, that salvation remains complete.

I. Witness of the Holy Spirit through Jeremiah (10:15-18)

7. Who also testifies to us about this? (v.15)

For further “testimony” as to the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice, our author returns to Jeremiah 31 which was first introduced in chapter 8 because it described the new covenant and proved that God had planned for this covenant from the beginning. There we read that “God said” these words (8:8) and here (10:15) that the “Holy Spirit also testifies” through them. Though they have come to us through the prophet Jeremiah, our author clearly recognizes the divine inspiration of Scripture, all of which is “God –breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). Elsewhere Peter tells us that “no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Whether our author was acquainted with these letters (2 Timothy and 2 Peter) we cannot know but he certainly held to the same view of Scripture.

8. First He says this is the what? I will make with them after that time, says Whom? (v.16)

In comparison to his citation in chapter 8, our writer is now more selective in quoting from Jeremiah 31, citing only those portions of the passage which suit his purpose here. The first portion (from 31:33 in verse 16) identifies the new covenant as topic of the passage while the second portion (from 31:34 in verse 17) emphasizes a particular feature of that covenant – its provision for complete forgiveness of sin.

9. I will put what? Where? (v.16)

10. And I will do what? Where? (v.16)

11. Then He adds that what two will be remembered no more? (v.17)

12. And where these have been what? There is no longer any what? (v.18)

The absence of any further sacrifices within the new covenant is a sign of the sufficiency of the single sacrifice of Christ.

Jeremiah predicted the great truth of verse 14. As we note Jeremiah 31:31-34 we see this. Attributing the prophet’s words to the Holy Spirit, the Hebrews writer shows conclusively that even in the Old Testament, God had promised that under the New Covenant, sins would be removed forever. That promise has been fulfilled in Jesus. Through Him, God treats the believer’s sins as if they had never been committed. If full forgiveness of sin has, therefore, been achieved, there is no need for further sacrifice. God has brought an end to it Himself through the death of His Son.

“Making Disciples for the Master”