

Text: Hebrews 10:1-10

Title: Sanctified Through the Offering of Christ

Truth: The inadequacy of animal sacrifices under the law is shown by their repeated use and God's will for something better. The "better" is full cleansing by the offering of Christ.

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Introduction

Since chapter 8, we have been studying the section of Hebrews that has to do with the New Covenant. We've seen some features of this New Covenant:

- * a heavenly sanctuary, that is, heaven itself;
- * a heavenly High Priest, that is, Christ;
- * eternal redemption and a cleansed conscience;
- * a one-time self-sacrifice of the High Priest.

We should remember that the New Covenant was initially promised to the nation of Israel in Jeremiah 31 and other prophetic passages. We understand from 1 Cor. 3:6-18 and Hebrews 8:1-10:18 that this same New Covenant has been put into operation and the church at large receives many of the marvelous benefits that were promised to Israel. The New Covenant was inaugurated with the death of Christ as He told His disciples at the last supper (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25).

Note that the promise remains to be fulfilled in completeness with the nation of Israel. That will not occur until the second coming of Christ (Rom. 11:26-27).

We are coming to the end of what many commentators call the doctrinal section of Hebrews (up to 10:18). After 10:19, the book turns to matters of exhortation and encouragement in the Christian walk. But for the moment, we should take particular note of how the section is coming to a conclusion about the sacrifice of Christ and how it fully deals with the problem of sin that has plagued humanity for millennia.

I. The Law Cannot Make Anyone Perfect, v. 1-4

10:1 **For the law**, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, **can never** with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, **make those who approach perfect.**

Never - That is kind of depressing! But it is true.

- A. Note that the subject of the sentence is the law. We are taught here that it is not only the sacrifices that cannot perfect the worshippers; rather it is the entire law system.
- B. Verse 2 invites us to **consider the alternative**, namely, suppose the sacrifices did make the worshippers perfect. If they did that, then logically there **would have been a termination of sacrifice** because no additional sacrifice would be needed.
1. The consciousness of the worshipers would have been purified . All the guilt of their sin (past, present, and future) would have been removed by the perfecting sacrifice and they would not have to consider making more sacrifices.
 2. This is not to suggest that those among us who have been purified in the Christian era do not do sins anymore. Rather we know there has been a complete and perfect and final sacrifice for sin. That's what it means to not have consciousness of sins anymore.
- C. Verses 3-4 introduces a problem with the **alternative consideration**. The problem is that there **was no termination of sacrifice!** Because of this fact, the sacrifices make a reminder of sins every year. And this is because verse 4 is true, namely that it is impossible for animal sacrifices to take away sins.

And since the OT law prescribed animal sacrifices to take away sin, and no other type of sacrifice, this deficiency of the sacrificial system reflects as a deficiency in the entire law system. Thus the law cannot make perfect because its sacrifices cannot.

- D. Side note: this passage gives a prime illustration of why it is important to study the text of the Bible carefully.
1. The small connector words in the Scripture are important. They often are the key to unlock the larger thought pattern of the author. The word 'for' at the beginning of 10:1 is such a key word in this passage. Now I will admit it is not always easy to extract the precise meaning of such connectors, but I think we should work at it. The NIV translation is problematic here because it omits the connector entirely, so the English reader has no idea that there is even the Greek word *gar* (γάρ) there. The *gar* is explanatory, giving the reason or basis of the preceding statement about Christ's once-for-all sacrifice and its absolute necessity (9:23, 28). So, this little word "looks back" and gives a reason for the preceding thought.

2. The word “having” has significance too. It is a participle that I understand to be giving the reason as to why the animal sacrifices were insufficient. **Having** could be translated as “**because** the law **has** a shadow...it can never...make perfect the worshippers.” This word “looks forward” and gives a reason for what follows.

Illustration of John 3:16 and “so.”

E. And all of this serves the larger thought, which is this: 9:23-28 teaches us that Christ died once to bear the sins of many. 10:1 answers WHY this was necessary, and that is because the law could not do it. And WHY could not the law do it? Because the law is outmoded; it has only a shadow of the good things that came with Christ. Christ had to come to pay for sins because it was impossible for the Law to do that.

II. God’s Will Was for Something Better, v. 5-10

A. The text in the Psalms is not clearly Messianic on its surface. But then again, neither is it clear what it means that God did not desire sacrifices, for the Psalm was written during the Mosaic law which was full of sacrifices. Hebrews makes it clear that it does have a Messianic interpretation, or at least a Messianic application.

B. Hebrews puts the words in Christ’s mouth, when he came into the world as a man.

C. Note how the author “breaks down” the text and shows its major point, namely, that one set of things (sacrifices) is going to be replaced with another (the will of God).

The will is not specified in the quote, nor in verses 8-9 which interpret the quote.

D. However, in verse 10, we learn that the will had to do with our sanctification, that is, our being made holy through the offering of Jesus Christ. Quite clearly we are seeing that God’s will was for Christ to die (Luke 22:42). In that death, he offered Himself once for all time, and for all people.

Conclusion

This is how God loved the world. Hebrews 10:22-23.

MAP

Think about this for a minute: what religion in the world has been subjected to such massive changes in the course of its lifespan? In the Bible God teaches us clearly that He did make such major changes in the OT system of the Jews as He transitioned to the Christian era. You would be hard-pressed to find a religion that admits a shortcoming of some of its forms and rituals and replaces them with others of a very different quality. But in Hebrews, the Bible clearly says that the law could never make people perfect, so it was replaced with something better.