



JESUS

Up Close and Personal

A Study of Hebrews | The Pastors' Bible Study 2013-2014

Hebrews 10:1-18

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A SHORT REVIEW

Since beginning our study of the Book of Hebrews, the Pastors have been discussing what I believe is the author's main point, which is this: ***Everything about Jesus is superior to everything about the Old Testament system of Law and religion.*** Whether you're talking about angels, Moses, Joshua, the covenant, the sacrifices, the temple, or the priesthood, Jesus wins in every category! The most recent subjects that the author has focused on were the temple and the high priest's entrance into it. The Holy of Holies in the earthly temple could only be entered into once a year, after the high priest went through several sacrifices for his sin. But Jesus entered the heavenly Holy of Holies - the throne room of God.

The difference, as you may recall, is that the temple on earth was just a model of the throne room of heaven. The author said this about the earthly temple, he said it is just "a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things." (Hebrews 8:5). In chapter 9, he adds that it's "a mere copy of the true one." (Hebrews 9:24).

Now, chapter 10, the author is about to show us something else that was just a model, just a copy.

THE TEXT: HEBREWS 10:1-18 (NRSV)

¹Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)." ⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," ¹³and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, ¹⁶"This is the covenant

that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds," ¹⁷he also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How is the Law compared to the new covenant brought by Christ? ([10:1](#))
2. In what way was the Law of Moses glaringly inadequate? ([10:1-2](#))
3. How did the author of Hebrews show that the Law was inadequate? ([10:2](#))
4. What function did the annual sacrifices serve? Why? ([10:3-4](#))
5. How successful were animal sacrifices under the old covenant? ([10:4](#))
6. Why wasn't God pleased with the sacrifices and offerings of the old covenant? ([10:5-6](#))
7. What was the attitude of Christ when He came into the world? ([10:7](#))
8. What evidence of the futility and emptiness of the old covenant did the author cite? ([10:8](#))
9. If God neither desired nor was pleased with old covenant sacrifices, why did the Israelites make them? ([10:8](#))
10. What role does a believer play in earning God's approval? ([10:9-14](#))
11. What did Christ's single act of dying accomplish for those who would trust in Him? ([10:14](#))

12. How did the new covenant change the way God motivates His people to live for Him? ([10:16](#))

13. What effect did the sacrifice of Christ have on the way God views our sins? ([10:17](#))

14. Why are additional sacrifices for sin unnecessary? ([10:18](#))

CLOSING COMMENTS

What does all this matter to my church today? They would too easily agree with the author of Hebrews that God does not desire sacrifice and that the blood of bulls and goats does not take away sins. The whole sacrificial system is foreign to them. They do not even think about slaughtering animals in order to deal with their sins. What would they care about the repetition of sacrifices that Hebrews is so concerned about?

The concerns that Hebrews has and the questions that are answered are not our concerns and questions. Yet, we still must deal with sin and guilt. Maybe that is why so many commentaries concentrate on the interior aspects of chapter ten. We have to deal with our conscience, even if we do not handle it with animal sacrifices. No matter what we do to deal with sin, Jesus Christ has said the final word. We may try to deal with our own sins by attempting to do God's will. We might substitute our own kinds of sacrifices for those required by the mosaic law, but only Jesus fulfilled the will of God.

Attempting to be obedient to the moral aspects of the law is just as futile as trying to be obedient to its cultic aspects. However, is Hebrews dealing with the moral law by speaking about doing the will of God? He is talking about fulfilling what God had already willed as the way to deal with sins. A body was prepared for offering and Jesus was that body and made that offering. Yet, Jesus was sinless and made an offering that was without any blemish. His sacrifice is put in moral terms, but those moral terms are absent from chapter ten. It's too much to read chapter ten in terms of Jesus making a moral sacrifice.

Where does that leave us? There are at least two options. We can learn to think in ritualistic and cultic ways by studying the Old Testament. We need to learn more about what our scriptures teach us. We could also focus on the permanent quality of Jesus' sacrifice. Because Jesus has fulfilled the will of God, bringing forgiveness of sins we no longer have to worry about sacrifices. We can understand the single sacrifice for sins without having to first fathom the many ineffectual sacrifices. We do not need to be reminded of our sins by putting ourselves into the sacrificial cult. Hebrews is trying to get us to stop thinking in terms of the cultic repetitions. Maybe my church has a better understanding of the argument of Hebrews than his first readers might have had. They were thinking in terms of the legal sacrifices. Hebrews is trying to get them to stop looking at the cult and look at Jesus Christ, the final sacrifice.

NEXT WEEK: Hebrews 10:19-39
Rachel Poysky

NOTES AND THOUGHTS