

“The Superior Work of the Superior Priest”

(Part 2)

Heb. 10:1-18

- INTRO. - Well, we started through this passage last week but we didn't get very far. I hope to make better time this morning.
- Heb. 10:1-18 concludes the central theological argument of Hebrews, that speaks of the superiority of Christ's high priesthood and atoning work. This section concludes the authors' comparison of the two priesthoods. This is the culmination of the discussion of Jesus, the Son of God, as our great High Priest.
- Some have pointed to this passage as the highest peak of this book. It is certainly the conclusion of the central theological section of the book. This will be followed by an exhortation to respond in light of these doctrinal truths.
- We got through the first main point in our outline last time, which is:

I. THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE SHADOW (vv. 1-4)

- In those first four verses we saw (again) that the Old Covenant system was ineffective in providing access to God. It was only the shadow, *not* the substance. It had no ability to cleanse the conscience of sinners.

- The decisive conclusion of this section is: The Law cannot make perfect the sinner. It was never intended to. It was only the shadow of the form of the good things to come (the new covenant).

- I won't go back over all that this morning, but I want to move on (now) to a second element we see in this passage, and that is:

II. THE INCARNATION OF THE SON (vv. 5-10)

- We see *that* in vv. 5-10. Look with me at v. 5, “Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for Me...’”

- Notice the phrase “when He comes into the world.” That is speaking of His incarnation. He talks about the “body” God the Father prepared for Him in His incarnation.

- On the other hand, he addresses the nature of sacrifices (in general) as he says, “Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired,” and (continuing on in v. 6), “in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast taken no pleasure.”

- It's like there are two sentences intertwined (here), one dealing with Christ's incarnation and the other dealing with the nature of sacrifices.

- But the point (the Bible makes about sacrifices) is that there is an internal requirement – *not* just an external ceremony. Even under the Old Covenant, God expected the people to offer their sacrifices with a right heart.

- We see this many places in Scripture, such as Amos 5:21-23, which says, “I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.”

- Why did God say that to them? Because they were *not* bringing their offerings (and sacrifices) with the right heart. It had become empty ritual to them. It had become simply a meaningless external.

- Going back to Heb. 10:5, when he says “sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired,” he’s talking about the fact that mere external ceremonies can never change the inner man. What God has “desired” all along, is to make men new on the inside. The Old Testament ceremonies could point to that, but they could *not* produce that.

- Empty rituals were *not* the kind of sacrifices and offerings God desired. They never are. If there is *not* a sincere change of heart (and nature) the symbols are (really) meaningless.

- MacArthur writes, “The people had taken what was meant to be a symbol of real faith and used it as a substitute for faith. Their trust was in the outward form. It came to be seen as a form of magic, wherein the prescribed words or actions automatically produced the desired result.”

- We know that God Himself instituted the Old Covenant sacrificial system, but it was intended to be an expression of obedience and genuine devotion to God – *not* just empty ritual.

- That’s why Samuel said to Saul, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). To just go through the motions of the sacrifice without obedience and devotion to God was (and is) hypocrisy, and (in essence) was worse than *not* sacrificing at all.

- In Ps. 51 David described the only kind of sacrifice that was acceptable to God during the OT era. He said, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”

- Even under the Old Covenant, when sacrifices were not offered with the right heart, they could not even cover sin temporarily. They were rejected by God and even lost their symbolic value.

- Just listen to the way the prophet Isaiah describes it: “‘What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?’ Says the LORD. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams,

and the fat of fed cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies -- I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.”

- All their religious ceremonies were worthless because it was *not* pleasing to God. Their hearts were *not* right, and they were in sin and compromise – therefore the sacrifices they brought had even become an abomination to God. He would *not* accept their offerings.

- So (going back to Heb. 10:5), we see what kinds of sacrifices and offerings God has no delight in. He does *not* desire mere empty religion. He has no pleasure in mere external ceremonies (apart from obedience and genuine devotion to Him).

- But he also alludes (there in v. 5) to our Lord’s incarnation. He says, “but a body Thou hast prepared for Me...” He says (in v. 7), “Behold, I have come...to do Thy will, O God.”

- Now, this statement concerning His incarnation is from Ps. 40:6-8. The Psalm is attributed to David, but it cannot

refer to David himself – it must refer to “David’s greater son.” It must refer to Jesus Christ. In fact, what we have in this Psalm is the pre-incarnate voice of the Son of God. The person speaking in this Psalm cannot be the Psalmist but the word of the Second Person of the Trinity.

- F. F. Bruce says, “The Septuagint reading, ‘you have fashioned a body for me,’ suggests to our author the incarnation of the Son of God, and the whole passage from Psalm 40 is understood as spoken by him ‘at his coming into the world.’”

- And the Psalm itself is summed up in the words, “I have come to do your will, O God.” The incarnation itself was an act of submission to the will of the Father, and the ultimate act of submission to the divine will was His death on the cross.

- In fact, this is one of the main reasons why the sacrifice of Christ was superior to all the sacrifices under the Old Covenant. The ultimate sacrifice of Christ was God’s will all along. This was the divine plan to atone for sin from before the world began.

- This is reflected (in v. 5) in that fact that God the Father prepared a body for the Son. God the Father prepared in advance the body of His incarnation. And here’s the kicker – as the Son was standing on the edge of heaven (as it were), ready to be incarnated and take on human flesh, it was understood that His own body would become the sacrifice that would please God.

- The ultimate mission of the Son, (in coming to earth), was to do the Father's will. His submission to that will was perfect. His obedience to that will led him to live a sinless life. Satan was unable to tempt Him and to divert Him from accomplishing that will. And ultimately His submission to that will resulted in our salvation. He willingly went to the cross to become the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

- Why did Jesus enter the arena of human history? It was because animal sacrifices could *not* remove sin and effect a right relationship with God. What the Law could never provide, God provided through His Son.

- But this passage makes it clear that this was the Father's plan for the Son all along. By the way, you might have a translation that reads (in v. 5) "ears you dug for me." Most translations have "a body have you prepared for me," but it is the difference between the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

- O'Brien explains that "the Greek translator may have understood the original as an instance of a part standing for the whole: 'digging' or hollowing out of the ears is part of the total work of fashioning a human body."

- And there is one more detail (from vv. 5-7) that might be helpful to you – the phrase in parentheses (in v. 7), "In the roll of the book it is written of Me," literally makes reference to the "head of the book."

- It probably referred to the knob at the top of the rod that the scroll was rolled onto. And since the scroll represents the Word of God, this is probably saying that Christ came as the centerpiece and ultimate fulfillment of God's Word.

- But let's go on to vv. 8-9, "After saying above, 'Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Thy will.' He takes away the first in order to establish the second."

- In vv. 8-9 he goes back over Ps. 40 and then adds this commentary: "He takes away the first in order to establish the second." Again, the author of Hebrews is hammering home the truth that the Old Covenant was never sufficient to deal with sin.

- As John MacArthur writes, "It was *not* meant to be permanent or truly effective, only temporary and symbolic. God's focus was always on the second covenant, the superior covenant."

- And listen – the truth of the matter is, you can't live under two covenants at the same time. So, in order for the second one to be established, the first one had to be done away with.

- Whatever purpose the first one had, it has now been fulfilled. Whatever authority the first one originally had,

it has now been superseded by the second. That means the Old Covenant no longer has a purpose, and therefore God has set it aside. The word for “takes away” literally means “to abolish.”

- Hear me (and hear me well), the Old Covenant has been completely abrogated! God has forever taken it away. For all these people who are still trying to hang on to the trappings of the Old Covenant – it is no longer valid! The first covenant has been abolished to make room for the second one.

- Of course, for the original hearers of this “sermon,” the message was to let go of the remnants of Judaism and turn to Christ. Today we have Seventh Day Adventists (and other groups) who are still clinging to the Old Covenant – but why would anyone cling to that when something as superior as the New Covenant is here?

- One commentator called this a “revolutionary principle” because it emphasizes the division of two epochs. We’re no longer in the Old Covenant dispensation – we are now in the New.

- Everything connected with the symbolism of the Old has been fulfilled. The Law has been replaced by the gospel of grace. The one perfect, final, and complete sacrifice has replaced the nonstop, imperfect, and temporary sacrifices. The priesthood is gone. The Temple is gone. God has taken away the first in order to establish the second.

- Verse 10 is the clincher! Look at it, “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” The will of God is that we would be “sanctified” by His once for all offering of Himself.

- God the Father prepared a “body” for His incarnation, and He offered it (on the cross) as a perfect, once for all sacrifice. The word for “sanctified” (here) is equivalent to “justified” in the Book of Romans. This has to do with the securing of our eternal salvation.

- The sacrifice of Christ accomplished what no animal sacrifice could ever accomplish – it sanctified the believer. It made him “holy.” The old system had no way of doing that, but the new covenant accomplishes this by imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer by saving faith.

- The Greek word used for “sanctified” (there) is “hagiazō.” It means “set apart.” When it is used to refer to *men*, it means “set apart for God.” We get the word “saint” from this word. Biblically, this is a synonym for a genuine believer in Jesus Christ.

- Sainthood is *not* something conferred on someone (by the church) after they are dead – it is a fact (forensically and actually true) for all who are saved here and now. Every genuine believer in Jesus Christ has already become a “saint.” They have been “set apart” for God, and are (right now) perfectly righteous in the sight of God.

- And of course (as we have seen) the Bible teaches that God *not only* wants us to be sanctified *positionally*, but also *practically*. We are “holy” (positionally) the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ to save us eternally. But God desires that we also become “holy” in a *practical* way as we grow in grace and Christlikeness.

- Paul wrote (in 1 Thess. 4:3), “...this is the will of God, your sanctification...” The desire of God for us is expressed in 1 Peter 1:16, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” God wants us to reflect His holiness. He wants us to be separate from the world.

- Now, that’s what *progressive* sanctification is all about – but Heb. 10:10 is referring to *positional* sanctification. In Christ we are made completely holy. We have the imputed righteousness of Christ credited to our account by faith.

- John MacArthur writes, “Regardless of how holy our walk may be, in our *standing* we are completely and permanently set apart unto God if we have trusted in ‘the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.’”

- And the key phrase in this verse is “once for all.” The problem of sin has been dealt with (permanently and completely) through the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

- No other sacrifice is needed. No other work is needed. We can’t add anything to His perfect sacrifice for sin. We can’t add any human works. His offering of Himself on

the cross was totally sufficient once and for all to save us eternally.

- So we have the ineffectiveness of the shadow, the incarnation of the Son – thirdly we have:

III. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SACRIFICE (vv. 11-14)

- Look with me at vv. 11-12, “And 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...”

- The Old Covenant could *not* (permanently) remove sin, but the New Covenant *can* and *does*. The contrast is from *never-ending* sacrifices to *one* sacrifice. It is from *ineffective* sacrifices to a perfectly *effective* sacrifice. It is from priests that never finished their work to One who “sat down” because His work was done. It went from hundreds and thousands of priests to one supreme Priest.

- This stark contrast is highlighted by the phrase “but He” (or as the KJV has it, “but this Man”). What the old system was never able to do, this Man *was* able to do.

- Here the author of Hebrews brings back in Ps. 110, which is the most prominently cited OT passage in the entire NT. We’ve already seen it referred to three times in this book. But *now* he employs it to demonstrate the decisive, final nature of the Son’s sacrifice.

- The first part of this has to do with the fact that this Great High Priest has taken His seat of authority at the right hand of God the Father. But *then* (in v. 13) we see the second aspect of this Psalm – that this will be His position until His enemies are fully and finally conquered. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:25, “For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”

- Look with me at Heb. 10:13, “...waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.” George Guthrie writes, “...for Hebrews this truth demonstrates that the Son’s sacrifice was completely satisfactory, never having to be repeated.”

- Verse 13 is (really) speaking of the time of His Second Coming. Nothing else needs to be done in regard to His atoning work – so He *waits* for that day when all His enemies become a footstool for His feet.

- The “enemies” are *not* identified (here) but in general terms we would have to conclude that this includes every power that resists God’s gracious, redemptive purposes.

- His ultimate enemy is Satan – so here is another contrast between the first and second covenant. All the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could never do anything to get rid of Satan. But the atoning work of Christ sealed his doom, and His Second Coming will result in Satan’s being bound for a thousand years.

- Really, there is a sense in which we would have to say that Jesus’ death on the cross dealt a death-blow to all His enemies. We’ve already seen (in Heb. 2:14) that He conquered “him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Col. 2 tells us He has triumphed over all the fallen angels.

- But there is coming a day when that will be fully consummated. He is now waiting for that day when “His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.” According to Phil. 2:10 they will acknowledge Him as Lord of all.

- And (of course) we would have to add to that, all those men who have refused to acknowledge Him as Lord of all. This will certainly include all the nations of the earth that come against Him at the Battle of Armageddon.

- In fact, throughout history there have been enemies of the cause of Christ. All those who have put to death the Lord’s saints; all those who have burned God’s Holy Word; all those who have cried out in godless defiance of His truth – these will also (one day) fall down before Him and acknowledge His Lordship.

- There is coming a day when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. One author wrote, “It matters not what the papers may report. It matters not what the historians record. Our earth is moving inevitably toward a final victory for Jesus Christ when every enemy will be under his feet. He will be King of kings, Lord of lords for all eternity.”

- Oh, but please understand – you do not have to wait until that day when you are (in judgment) *forced* to confess Him as Lord. You can confess Him as Lord now and never have to face His judgment.

- You can bow your knee to Him (here today) and receive His free gift of eternal life. You can join the winning team today. You can be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light through faith in Him.

- Someday all His enemies will become a footstool for His feet. But what you need to do today is to make sure you are *not* among that group. You need to make sure that you are among His saints and *not* His enemies.

- Well, let's go on to v. 14, "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." We've already spent time on this, but this is speaking of those whom He saves eternally. He has provided that salvation by one perfect offering. And those who are "sanctified" are perfected for all time.

- The word "perfected" is in the Greek present tense, meaning something that began in the past and continues on in the present. It began at the cross where He "perfected" us – and it continues even today.

- The phrase "for all time" indicates that it continues on into the future. In fact, the testimony of Scripture is that it will last forever. The salvation God grants will never end.

(Pause) But there's one last thing we see in this passage, and that is:

IV. THE INSTRUCTION OF THE SPIRIT (vv. 15-18)

- Look with me at vv. 15-17, "And the Holy Spirit also bears witness 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 upon their mind I will write them,' He then says, 'and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'"

- This (of course) is a description of the New Covenant. And this comes as a promise of the HS of God. But what we have to understand (here) is that this is *not* new revelation. This is from the prophet Jeremiah.

- So it's as if the author of Hebrews is saying (to his Jewish audience), "It is impossible for you to accept the teaching of your beloved prophet Jeremiah, and at the same time reject what he clearly said about the coming of the New Covenant."

- In other words, you can't accept one without the other. If you accept Jeremiah, then you must accept the One of whom he prophesied. You must accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The "perfection" (the sanctification) that the author of Hebrews is talking about is bound up in the New Covenant. That is made clear from this quote of Jer. 31. But notice the last phrase, "and their sins and their

lawless deeds I will remember no more.” That’s from Jer. 31:34. This also is part of the New Covenant. There is the promise of the Spirit that our sins will be remembered no more.

- Of course, we know that God is omniscient, so this does *not* mean that God literally *forgets* something. What it means is that He willfully chooses *not* to remember it (in the sense of *not* holding our sin against us anymore).

- The concept of not remembering is paralleled (here) with the concept of forgiveness. Guthrie says, “When the Scripture says to us that God ‘forgets’ our sins, what it means is that God ‘forgives’ us completely, stamping our sins as having been dealt with.”

- And that leads us to the summary verse – v. 18. Look at it with me, “Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.” If all our sins and lawless deeds have been forgiven by God, then there is no need for any further sacrifice.

- There is no need for us to think that we can *add* anything to Christ’s finished work. The perfect offering for our sin has already been made. Full forgiveness is available to anyone who will put their faith in this perfect sacrifice.

- So the application is clear: Why would anyone ever go back to the old sacrifices? Why would anyone ever go back to that which is imperfect and ineffective? Why

would anyone put their faith in external religious rituals instead of Christ (the shadow instead of the reality)?

- You know, there is something about human nature that leads us to think that we need to contribute something – that we have to earn our salvation in some way. In fact, most religions involve some form of “doing something” for God.

- The vast majority of people (today) think they must make some sort of sacrifice to win the favor of Almighty God. But at the core of Christianity is the truth that God has done something for us that we can never earn. God has done something for us (through the sacrifice of His Son) that we could never do for ourselves.

- ILL. – I’ll close with this true account. A woman named Dona Nusa lay in her casket, killed in a car accident the day before. Her son Cesar, her daughter, other relatives, and a young woman named Carmelita stood nearby. Tall and dark, Carmelita was dressed this day in simple clothing. The young woman, from the interior of Brazil, had been adopted into Dona Nusa’s family more than two decades earlier. At that time she was seven years old and an orphan, the product of a prostitute and an unnamed father. Moved by compassion, Dona Nusa intervened, taking little Carmelita into her family.

When almost everyone else had left the funeral chapel, Carmelita stayed behind, weeping quietly at the side of the casket. Earnestly, tenderly, she leaned over the coffin

of her adopted mother, caressing it gently. She voiced her good bye with “Obrigada, obrigada” (“Thank you, thank you”). Dona Nusa had reached out and given Carmelita a life that the little orphan had no ability to craft for herself. Pure grace.

- In the same way, we should weep – for the forgiveness, the everlasting life that we could never win for ourselves. Our sins have been taken away, *not* because of anything *we* have done, but by the underserved grace of God.

- The sacrifice Christ made on our behalf is absolutely sufficient. It is once for all time. There is nothing that can ever be added to it.

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER