

## DAY 7: CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK

Hebrews 10:1-18

**THE LAW IS A SHADOW** “*The law*” (10:1) often refers to the whole Old Testament system of worship. In its strictest sense, however, it refers to the Law of Moses or the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy). “*A shadow*” only suggests the reality that casts it. Here, the reality is personal access to God and all else that the new covenant brings.

“*Of the good things to come*” points to the benefits of Christ’s new covenant, just as had 9:11. Now, as the apostle Paul says, “*Christ is the end of the law*” (Romans 10:4). We see a progression in the way God revealed Himself to humanity. First came the Law of Moses, then the gospel of Christ, and ultimately the fullest reality in the heavens. A worshiper of Jesus enjoys the fulfillment of the good things promised in the Old Testament and anticipates even greater things to come.

“*The same sacrifices that are continually offered every year*” (Hebrews 10:1) were powerless to cleanse the conscience of God’s people. This system of worship waited for its perfection in a sacrifice that would go beyond ceremony and actually cleanse the inner person, once for all.

“*In these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year*” (10:3). They provided ceremonial purity, or “external” cleansing. They educated and prepared the people’s faith for the coming of Christ, when their true meaning would be seen.

**CHRIST, THE ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE** Embedded in the Law of Moses was the teaching of the temporary nature of animal sacrifices. In Psalm 40, the psalmist speaks of his realization that God demands willing obedience to His commands. The author of Hebrews approaches Psalm 40 in its Messianic, or prophetic, sense. The words of the psalmist are seen as expressing the mind of the incarnate Son of God on His coming into the world. The writer thus reads in the light that is shed by the New Testament, and in these lines of David, rightly hears the voice of Christ.

Hebrews 10:5-6 states that animal sacrifices and meat and drink offerings are not primarily what God seeks—and they never were: “*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams*” (1 Samuel 15:22). God appointed the sacrifices to provide the way for people to live in holiness. He wanted fellowship with an obedient people. Verses 5-7 allude to the Incarnation of the Son of God and imply His pre-existent life. They speak of the time when the Son left heaven and assumed His redemptive task. While the sacrifices and offerings were divinely commanded, and failure to offer them would be disobedience, they were not the final will and fully formed purpose of God.

In verse 5, the original Hebrew spoke of God *creating*, or literally *hollowing out* ears as a sculptor would. The Greek translators put it this way: *a body you prepared for me*. Both languages imply that Christ, in His humanity, was completely open to hearing God and willing to obey Him. God prepared both a human body and tasks for His Son to accomplish, and the Son willingly accepted them. In offering Himself as a sacrifice, Jesus did away with all inferior sacrifices. The phrase “*it is written of Me in the scroll of the book*” (10:7) refers to the mention of Christ in Old Testament Scriptures. In Luke 4:21, Jesus applies such words to Himself.

Verses 8-10 are examples of “*midrashic commentary*,” a Hebrew method of teaching. Taking line upon line, or even word upon word, the teacher explains the meaning of a text. By the time of the prophets, the people knew that God sought a person’s heart, not a ceremonial, habitual performance. Psalm 40:8 is quoted: “*I delight to do Your will.*” The Messiah, of His own volition and without being ordered to do so by the Law, presents Himself to do God’s will. Hebrews 9:26 further asserts that the obedience of Christ to the will of His Father necessitated His voluntary self-sacrifice. The next sentence, “*He abolishes the first in order to establish the second*” (Hebrews 10:9), may be paraphrased this way: “God does away with all the old sacrifices and authorizes in their place the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.”



Through the offering of Jesus, “*we have been sanctified ... once for all.*” Christ’s

sacrifice secures the justification of His people and sets them apart for God. Salvation is not the effort of man seeking God, but the will of God received by man. It was God's will that the inferior sacrifice should give way to the sacrifice of the Son. It is also God's will that His people be holy.

**THINK ABOUT** what it means to be “*sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.*” The word *holy*, when describing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, denotes absolute purity, goodness, and righteousness. But when it refers to people or things, *holy [sanctified]* means *separated or dedicated to God*. This holiness is spiritual and God-ordained; it is not self-attained. God declares, “*Be holy, for I the LORD Your God am holy*” (Leviticus 19:2). In our spiritual nature, we are made holy. In our behavior, we are commanded to be holy. Our attitudes and actions should reflect the holiness that God has planted within each of us at the moment of our personal spiritual rebirth.

**EVIDENCE OF CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK** Again, the writer emphasizes that God's purpose for sacrifice is the removal of sins. The Levitical priest repeatedly offers the same sacrifices; he stands while performing his duties, and his offerings do not take away sins. In contrast, by one offering, Christ Jesus accomplished His work, and His sacrifice removed sin. His perfect high priesthood and His intercession as High Priest remained. The need for further sacrifice ceased.

Sanctification comes to God's people, but complete defeat comes to all His unyielding enemies—the devil, the power of death, and those who reject Christ. By His one sacrifice, Jesus did all that is or ever will be necessary to provide forgiveness and to achieve the perfection of human character. In this life, no one is free from all sin, but ultimately our perfection will be achieved and revealed.

It may be difficult for believers today, who are centuries and cultures removed from animal sacrifices, to adequately appreciate the weight of this message. For 1<sup>st</sup>-century believers, however, their entire life experience would have been affected, for all Jewish life revolved around the annual calendar of sacrifices. When Jesus made atonement for sin, the entire sacrificial system was rendered obsolete. Jewish Christians, therefore, were released from any obligation to the Old Testament sacrificial system. This would produce great relief. But, the loss of what was familiar could also produce a yearning for the “old way” and thus endanger faith.

**PERSONALIZE** this lesson. It's normal to monitor growth. So, it's not surprising that we try to measure our spiritual growth—usually in terms of our feelings. But the New Testament deals little with how we *feel* and mostly with how we *behave*. Jesus pleased His Father by saying, “*I have come to do Your will, O God*” (10:7). We can please Him the very same way. Why not ask your heavenly Father—right now, in whatever circumstances you find yourself—to help you to act in line with the things you believe to be true about Him?

### REVIEW: CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK

13. Which verse or verses do you believe to be the key to this lesson? Why?