

SESSION TWENTY-TWO

THE FINALITY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

Heb 10:1-18

I. INTRODUCTION

Heb 10:1-18 represents the final exposition of the author about Christ's sacrifice for sins before giving the readers his exhortation in 10:19-39. His exposition of Christ's priestly sacrifice began in Heb 8:1. In this final section, we see a recapitulation of two elements from chapter 8. His reference to Christ having sat down (8:1) is picked up again in 10:12-13. Also, his quotation of Jer 31 in chapter 8 is brought up again in 10:15-17.

In chapter nine, the author showed that the ministry of the high priest (particularly on the Day of Atonement) was but a mere foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ. The reality (to which the earthly sacrificial system pointed) was the sacrifice of Christ in the heavenly tabernacle. Hence, the author concluded in Heb 9:12 that "through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." This is echoed in 9:26, "now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

This emphasis upon the "once for all" nature of Christ's sacrifice will carry over into chapter 10, where in 10:1-18 the author will drive home the point that only a perfect "once for all" sacrifice is capable of providing an assured forgiveness of sins. In verses 1-4 the author emphasizes the "year by year" nature of the Old Covenant sacrifice (repeated in verses one and three). This sets the stage for the contrast to Christ's sacrifice which is "once for all." Note how the finality of Christ's sacrifice is brought out in verses 5-18 dealing with the accomplishment of Christ. We see the words "once for all" in vs 10, and repeated in verses 12 and 14 are the words "for all time."

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF 10:1-18

The author's argument in 10:1-18 is developed in four paragraphs. Lane (II:258) points out the symmetrical arrangement:

- A The inadequacy of the provisions of the law for repeated sacrifices (10:1-4)
- B The repeated sacrifices have been superseded by the one sacrifice of Christ in conformity to the will of God (10:5-10)
- B' The Levitical priests have been superseded by the one priest enthroned at God's right hand (10:11-14)
- A' The adequacy of the provisions of the new covenant, which render a sacrifice for sins no longer necessary (10:15-18)

A. The Repetitious Cycle of Sacrifices Under the Law (10:1-4)

In the first four verses of the chapter, the author points out that the year-by-year sacrifices under the Law could never make the worshipers perfect. [This is, to perfectly cleanse their conscience of their guilt; see 9:9, 14]. He reminds us at the beginning of verse one that the Law was only "a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things." This echoes what he had said earlier in 8:4-5. This reflects the fact that the cultic purpose of the Law was to point forward to greater realities. Most likely, the author is thinking primarily of the Day of Atonement, for it was on that occasion (once a year) that the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies and present the blood of the animal sacrifice. Although the act of the high priest entering the Holy of Holies typifies the entrance of Christ into the heavenly Holy Place, the fact that the Law demanded this be done every year (hence, year-by-year) reflected the inferiority of the sacrifices done according to the Law.

Furthermore, these sacrifices could not "make perfect" the worshipers (recall 9:9). Hodges (803) notes,

"By 'make perfect' the writer did not mean sinless perfection. As the following discussion shows, he was concerned with that definitive removal of guilt which makes free access to God possible for worshipers who trust in the sufficiency of the Cross."

Under the Law, the worshipers continued to have "consciousness of sins" (συνείδησιν ἁμαρτιῶν). Lane (II:261) notes, "This expression connotes the Hebrew sense of a burdened, smitten heart, which became most pronounced on the Day of Atonement when it was necessary to confront the holiness of God." Since these sacrifices were offered "continually" (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές; *NIV* "repeated endlessly"), there never seemed to be an end to it. That is, they never got to the point where they could say that sacrifices had been enough . . . where confidence could be had that a perfect sacrifice had been made.

There is only one logical conclusion that can be drawn, which the author offers in verse four: "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." This sums up his first point of chapter ten that began with verse one. The coherence of verses 1-4 can be seen in the links of verse four with verse one, as Lane points out (II:261):

"The two verses are linked together by the explanatory clause ἀδύνατοι γάρ, 'for it is impossible,' which resumes the οὐδέποτε δύναται, 'can never,' of v 1, and by the expression αἷμα τάυρων καὶ τράγων, 'the blood of bulls and goats,' which corresponds to ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις, 'the same sacrifices,' in v 1."

B. The Prophetic Anticipation of a Replacement to the Sacrifices (10:5-10)

In verses 5-10, the author quotes from an Old Testament passage which anticipated that someone was coming who would provide something better than the Old Covenant sacrifices. In Heb 10:5-7, he first quotes from Ps 40:6-8a (Eng), and then expounds the implications for the readers in Heb 10:8-10.

1. The Quotation (Heb 10:5-7)

In the Hebrew text, the passage occurs in Ps 40:7-9a, whereas in the LXX it is found in Ps 39:7-9a. The author essentially follows the LXX, although several textual variants need to be noted. The most significant difference is the phrase "a body Thou hast prepared for Me," in contrast to the Hebrew text which has "my ears Thou hast dug."

NT Greek Text
Heb 10:5-7

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν
οὐκ ἠθέλησας,
σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι·
όλοκαυτώματα¹ καὶ περὶ
ἀμαρτίας οὐκ εὐδόκησας.
τότε εἶπον· ἰδοὺ ἤκω,
ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου
γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ,
τοῦ ποιῆσαι
ὁ θεὸς τὸ θέλημά σου.

Sacrifice and offering
You have not desired,
but a body You have prepared
for me.
Whole burnt offerings and
[sacrifices] for sin You have
not delighted in.
Then I said, 'Behold I come,
in the scroll of the book
it is written about Me,
to do,
O God, your will.'

¹Mss p⁴⁶, D, 1881 vg^{ms}
and sa^{MS} have ὀλοκαύτωμα. The
℣℥ also has ὀλοκαυτώματα, as
does the NA²⁶ text.

The word ὀλοκ. is only used here
in the NT. The -ματα form is
commonly used in the LXX, but
the -μα form is also common. It
seems that the ματα form is used
for the acc. plural, while the -μα
form is used for the acc. singular.
The Hebrew text in Ps 40 uses
the singular עֲלֵהּ.

Rahlfs's Ed. of the LXX
Ps 39:7-9

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν
οὐκ ἠθέλησας,
ὥτια² δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι,
όλοκαύτωμα³ καὶ περὶ
ἀμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας.⁴
τότε εἶπον· Ἰδοὺ ἤκω,
ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου
γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ,
τοῦ ποιῆσαι
τὸ θέλημά σου, ὁ θεός μου.

Sacrifice and offering
You have not desired,
ears You have prepared
for me.
Whole burnt offerings and
[sacrifices] for sin You have
not required.
Then I said, 'Behold I come,
in the scroll of the book
it is written about Me,
to do
your will, My God.'

²Although the reading
ὥτια is found in Rahlfs's edition,
the manuscript evidence is
Psalterium Gallicum. The major
manuscripts (A, B, ℣) have the
reading σῶμα as found in the NT.

³The reading
όλοκαυτώματα (as in NT) is
found in manuscript A, though
others (incl. B) have
όλοκαύτωμα.

⁴Rahlfs's edition follows
B with ἤτησας (Aorist Ind. of
αἰτέω), but mss A and ℣ have
εξητησας (Aorist of ἐξαιτέω).

Hebrew Text
Ps 40:7-9

זָבַח וּמִנְחָהוּ
לֹא־הִפְצֵתָּ
אָזְנוֹיִם כְּרִיתָ לִּי
עוֹלָה נִחַשְׁתָּהּ
לֹא שָׁאַלְתָּ:
אֵן אָמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה־בְּאָזְנִי
בְּמִגְלַת סֵפֶר
כְּתוּב עָלַי:
לַעֲשׂוֹת־
רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהֵי

Sacrifice and offering
You have not desired,
ears You have dug for me.
Whole burnt offerings and
sin offerings
You have not required.
Then I said, 'Behold, I come,
in the scroll of the book
it is written about Me,
to do
Your will, My God.'

In examining the manuscripts, the author of Hebrews did not just *create* the reading of "body" (σῶμα). Despite the text in Rahlfs's edition of the Septuagint, most of the major LXX manuscripts do have this reading rather than "ears" (ὠτία). Of course, the Hebrew text certainly has "ears," and the verse reads in the MT: "ears you have dug for me." Thus, the author of Hebrews was not "fudging" with the text to suit his purposes. He most likely did have a copy of the Septuagint before him with the reading σῶμα. Yet, how are we to explain the shift from the MT "ears You have dug" to "a body You have prepared"?

The answer is probably to be explained as a combination of two figures of speech, and the LXX translators were apparently trying to render "the sense" of the text rather than literally translating the words. The word "dug" involves a metonymy. God bore out these holes in our head . . . these ears. What the psalmist means is that God put the apparatus in our head to hear His Word—that He might communicate His Word to us (cf. Jer 6:10). The word "ears," on the other hand, involves a synecdoche of part for the whole. The psalmist uses a part of the body (the ears) to represent the whole body. If God has our ear, He has our whole being, i.e., our body. Thus God "bore the ears" (for hearing) with the intention that the person (in body) would be completely disposed to doing His will.

The author of Hebrews seems to make a deliberate switch from the LXX's οὐκ ἤτησας ("you have not asked") to οὐκ εὐδόκησας ("you have taken no delight in"). There seems to be no manuscript basis for such a change. The explanation seems to stem from the author's broader understanding of God's attitude to sacrifices in the Psalms. The word εὐδοκέω is used in the LXX in Ps 50:19 (Eng 51:19), speaking about the sacrifices God will be pleased with. This is in contrast to 50:16 (Eng 51:16) which mentions sacrifices God is not pleased with. So, he quotes Ps 40, but his mind is so steeped in the terminology of God's pleasure (or lack thereof) with sacrifices in the OT psalms, that he readily substitutes a word he was familiar with in similar concerns within the Psalter (εὐδοκέω was used 13x in the Psalms). Ps 40:6-8 (Eng) and Ps 51:16,19 (Eng) share three words in common: θυσια, ολοκαυτωμα and εὐδοκεω. If εὐδοκέω is being used under the influence of Ps 50 (LXX), then this may also explain why ολοκαυτωματα (acc. pl.) is being used rather than the singular. The plural form is used twice in Ps 50 (LXX, vv 18, 21). It would be appropriate for other reasons for our author of Hebrews to have had Ps 50 (LXX) in mind. In Heb 9, the author had been concerned about the cleansing from sin, especially from an OT viewpoint. In Ps 51:2 (Eng), David cried out "wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from sin" (cf. vv 7,10). Like Ps 40, Ps 51 is concerned about what can cleanse him, knowing that animal sacrifices are not enough.

2. Implications of Ps 40 (Heb 10:8-10)

In verses 8-10, the author expounds the implications of the quotation from Ps 40.

Whereas "the body" became a way for the LXX translators to capture the point of the Hebrew text ("ears You have dug"), the author of Hebrews seizes the rendering to identify Christ as the perfect fulfillment. He is the "body" that has *come* (via His

incarnation), and with the sacrifice of His body, He has superseded the Levitical sacrifices. On the basis of Ps 40:6-8, the author of Hebrews draws to the attention of his readers that even the OT anticipated something superior to Levitical offerings, and that was a surrendered will . . . a body (a person) completely given to doing the will of God. Then the author goes even further to show that this has been most fully realized with Jesus. In Him alone is this objective literally fulfilled, for He alone has perfectly done the Father's will. The fact that this body (of the One who perfectly obeyed the Father) is then itself given up as a sacrifice makes the Levitical offerings pale in comparison.

For the author of Hebrew's, the fact that Ps 40 makes a negative comment about God's view of *their performance* with the sacrificial system in the words "sacrifice and offering You have not desired," and then follows this with the declaration "Behold, I have come to do your will," is quite significant. The latter is superior to the former. This is what he means when he says "He takes away the first to establish the second."¹ Christ's coming to do the Father's will is superior to the Old Covenant sacrificial system.

When he says that we have been "sanctified" through the offering of this body once for all, he is not thinking about "progressive sanctification" (note the *NIV*, "by that will, we have been made holy"). His use of the term "sanctified" is functionally equivalent to the NT concept "justification." This is how the author used *ἀγιάζω* in chapter two. Through our faith in Christ and His shed blood on our behalf, we have been given a "righteous standing" before God once and for all!

C. The Significance of Christ Having Sat Down (Heb 10:11-14)

In Ps 110:1, David's Lord was told to "sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Your feet." Several times in the epistle, the author has referred to the fact that the Son has now been made to sit at the right hand of the Father, thus showing His exalted status (Heb 1:3; 8:1). The author of Hebrews now wants to draw out an additional significance to this. In this case, the issue is not the exalted status to which He has been elevated, but the fact that He sits (rather than "stands").

Under the Old Covenant, priests did not sit in their priestly ministry. They were always standing, since they had to be *on their feet* in their task of carrying out the sacrifices. The high priest of the New Covenant, in contrast, sits. He can sit in His priestly ministry, because He does not need to offer more sacrifices. The one sacrifice of Himself was sufficient.

Furthermore, He sits in anticipation of what is coming. The words of Ps 110:1, "until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet," implied that He Himself must wait for the full benefit of what God intends for Him. He has been made to "sit" (by virtue of His resurrection and

¹ Lane (II:264) points out that the "contrast between the old and the new arrangement is accentuated by the solemn cadence and chiasmic construction of v 9b:"

ἀναρῆϊ	τὸ πρῶτον	ἵνα	τὸ δεύτερον	στήσῃ
A	B		B'	A'

ascension), but His enemies have not been fully subjugated. At some future point, they will be. Undoubtedly, this will be the time when He comes again (the Second Coming) for *salvation*. When all enemies have been made subject to Him, then He will take up His rule in the Millennial Kingdom.

Though He is waiting for His rule over enemies to be made complete, for us it is significant that He sits. He sits (no need to rise up and offer any other sacrifice), since the offering of Himself was sufficient to "perfect" us (contrast 10:1) for all time.

D. The New Covenant's Assurance of Forgiveness (Heb 10:15-18)

In the final paragraph of this section, the author returns again to the Jeremiah 31 passage announcing the New Covenant. He had quoted this at length in chapter 8, but now he is more selective, choosing to highlight that part which mentioned that God would remember their sins and lawless deeds no more. Lane (II:268) points out the difference between the two quotations from Jeremiah 31:

"The perspective at that point was the time of Jeremiah: the reference to a new covenant implied that the old covenant was outdated and would soon disappear (8:13). The perspective in 10:15-18 is different. . . .

. . . two blessings of the new covenant are underscored: God will inscribe his laws on the hearts and minds of his people, and he will no longer remember their sins and misdeeds."

His selective quotation is given in verses 15-17, and this is followed in verse 18 by the implication he wants to convey to his readers. If God says that He will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more, this obviously implies an *assured forgiveness* for those who participate in this New Covenant. But if this is an eternal forgiveness (and it is!), then this would imply that further sacrifices would not be necessary. Hence, the author concludes, "Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin."

His point is simply this: since the New Covenant announcement in Jer 31 included the promise of forgiveness (and it is an *eternal forgiveness* since God said He would remember their sins "no more"), we would expect that ongoing sacrifices would not be needed once this New Covenant came into operation. This is the confirming argument that the sacrifice of Christ is the once and for all payment of our sins by which believers have been "perfected" for all time. For the readers to turn back to the Levitical system with its unending demand of animal sacrifices would be to deny what we were rightfully made to expect by the announcement in Jer 31 of the New Covenant.