

Shadows And Substance

Hebrews 10:1-10

Introduction

The writer of Hebrews offers to the Christian a better a better Savior (chapters 3:1-8:8); we have a better sanctuary (chapter 9:1-12); we have a better sacrifice (9:13-10:39). Both Jew and Gentile who have come to Christ are born with a heavenly birth (Jn. 1:13); we are seated in Heavenly places (Eph. 2:6); we are blessed with heavenly blessings (Eph. 1:3); we are called with a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1); we are kept for a heavenly inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4) we have obtained a heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20); we are represented by a heavenly High Priest (Heb. 9:24).

In the book of Hebrews and the last several chapters the writer has contrasted the human high priest and our High Priest—Jesus Christ the Lord. Human priests offered sacrifices for themselves; Jesus did not offer a sacrifice for Himself—He was without sin. While human priests offered sacrifices for the sin of the people, the sacrifice of bulls and goats, they served simply as an earthly copy or the shadow of the real sanctuary (8:5). They served under an old covenant; and the sacrifices were insufficient to accomplish the removal of sin (9:9; 10:11). The Lord Jesus continually intercedes for His people; He has been made a priest forever; and serves under a new and better covenant; and the sacrifice of His own blood is able to completely remove sin (9:14; 10:14). The writer gives three reasons why Christ's sacrifice is superior to those described in the OT; the sacrifice of Jesus takes away sin (vv. 1-4); the sacrifice of Jesus is effective (vv. 5-20); and the sacrifice of Jesus need never be repeated (vv. 11-18). The chapter begins with a comparison—between the blood of earthly lambs and the heavenly lamb—and ends with a challenge—the challenge is the form of a four-fold exhortation—we can approach the throne of God; we can be kind and helpful and therefore advance the people of God; we avoid the judgment of God and we acknowledge of the faithfulness of God (see vv. 19-39).

In this section (vv. 1-10) the writer of Hebrews declares the inferiority of earthly lambs with the superiority of the heavenly lamb. He points to the frequency of the sacrifices of the earthly lambs (vv. 1-3) and the failure of those lambs to permanently take away sin (v. 4). The writer contrasts that with the purpose of Jesus—to offer Himself (vv. 5-10).

Types And Shadows (vv. 1-4)

Hebrews 10:1 (NKJV) 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.

What exactly did the Old Testament Sacrifices do? The burnt offerings and the grain offering and the peace offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering—were filled with powerful imagery and meaning. The burnt offering suggested total surrender to God; and the grain offerings were made together with burnt offerings as sacrifices of thanksgiving and devotion to

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God. The peace offering represents right relationship with God and was celebrated at a fellowship meal. The sin offering was required for unintentional sin (Lev.4:2); and the trespass offering was required for unintentional sin against the Lord and against holy things and against neighbors (Lev.5:15,17; and again Lev. 6:2-3).

John Phillips: “In the Old Testament era, the Israelites had only shadows. The substance is in Christ. The shadow of a key cannot unlock a prison door; the shadow of a meal cannot satisfy a hungry man; the shadow of Calvary cannot take away sin” (*Exploring Hebrews Revised* p.121).

2For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

What does the author mean by “no more consciousness of sins?” He means no longer disturbed by sin or no longer disturbed in conscience. The presence of guilt remained. The presence of shame remained.

3But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

The animal sacrifices did not remove sin—but served as a constant reminder that sin remained!

John Phillips says “All the Levitical sacrifices did was lash the offerer’s disturbed conscience” (p.121).

4For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

The types and symbols were instructive—yes—illustrative—yes—effective—no.

Imagine going to a bank and asking for a loan. You explain why you want the money—the profit you hope to make and the plan to repay the debt. The bank agrees but asks for a co-signer—someone who will obligate himself or herself to repay your debt in the event your plans do not come to fruition. A contract is drafted—a promissory note made—the rate of interest is agreed upon—and the date of repayment set. The bank signs the note—your friend signs the note.

But your plans fail. You ask for more time. The bank agrees and extends the terms and the repayment plan. The loan gets larger and the debt grows. Every year the debt increases and grows. The only thing that keeps the loan solvent is the agreement on the part of your friend to satisfy the debt. This exactly what happened in the Old Testament. The animal sacrifices were merely promises to pay—and by bring them to the alter the Hebrews acknowledged the accumulation of the debt of sin. Each sacrifice carried with it the endorsement of the Son of God—who guaranteed full payment for all the debts and liabilities incurred by the sinner. The time

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would come—of course—when those debts would have to be discharged—where payment must be made.

When the Hebrew person—rejects the Lord Jesus they are in fact repudiating the only source of remuneration—and are in fact embracing their own guilt and liability. The person who rejects Jesus assumes the full weight and payment for their sin. What a foolish thing—to return to the shadow—when we have the substance. What a foolish thing—to return to debt—when we have received payment in full.

What exactly did the Old Testament sacrifices do? They postponed payment.

The Teaching And Testimony Of God (vv.5-8)

5Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.

Who came into the world? Jesus. Payment has arrived. Our first great certainty is that a real Jesus was born into this real world.

The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 40:6-8. “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the Book it is written of me. I delight to do your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.”

The expression “my ears You have opened is the Hebrew way of saying—“I’m listening—in order to obey.” Some Bible writers equate this with the Old Testament practice of piercing the ear as a sign of voluntary and perpetual service (Ex. 21:6). David knows that God is not content with mere service and obedience—God wants David’s heart. David is in effect saying—I am here to do what the Law requires and I mean to do it from my heart.

How does the writer of Hebrews interpret this passage? He invites us to consider God the Father and God the Son in conversation. They are discussing the details of the incarnation. The plan is to provide a body—Jesus will be born on earth in a virgin’s womb. The sacrifices and offerings are no longer needed—and they were never pleasant. There is a better solution to the problem of human rebellion and sin!

6In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.

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7Then I said, 'Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.' ”

The Jewish people were the people of a book. The writer argues the Jewish people should have known and understood God's plan. The truth is found in a Book. The writer is still appealing to Psalm 40—The Law—The Prophets—point to Jesus. The life of Jesus and the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus are controlled by this book.

John Phillips; “In type and shadow, in precept and principle, in prophetic vision and direct utterance, the Old Testament was full of the theme. What possible excuse could there be for a person familiar with the Book to turn his back upon the reality in Christ? This is equally true today for a person living in a land where there is an open Bible. We, too have the Book” (p.123).

8Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law),

The Plan And Purpose Of Christ's Coming (vv.9-10)

9then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

10By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

What is the author telling the Hebrew Christians? The coming of Jesus was foretold. The cross of Jesus was foretold. The prophet and King David—hints that the Levitical system of sacrifice—a thousand years before the coming of Jesus—anticipates a final sacrifice.

Jesus said in John 6:38; “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (39) “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. (v.40) “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

What does the sacrifice of Jesus do? Like the burnt offering—Jesus surrenders to God on behalf of the sinner (believer—see Hebrews 12:2-3) and He empties Himself to become sin for the sinner (2 Cor. 5:21). Believers enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, their eternal Peace

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Offering (Rom.5:1). In His death Jesus bears the believer's sin in His own body in place of the sinner (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus is the only remaining sacrifice for all sin and trespass (Rom.8:3-4)

Conclusion