

## XXII. Once for All

October 23/24/25, 2018

Hebrews 10:5-18

**Aim:** To grasp that the sacrificial system of the old covenant has once for all been fulfilled in the perfect new covenant sacrifice of Christ, never again to be repeated or reinstated.

### A. The Obedience of Christ's Sacrifice (Hebrews 10:5-10)

*Schreiner:* The author continues to contrast the inadequacy of the OT sacrifices over against the sacrifices of Christ. The substance of his case in chapter 9 is that Christ truly brings believers into God's presence by His blood over against OT sacrifices. In 10:1-4 the inability of the law and its sacrifices to purge sins is featured. Hence, 10:5-10 explains why the death of Christ was absolutely necessary, using Psalm 40 to support the case.

#### 1. What Christ Said (10:5-7)

*Bruce:* For a biblical statement of the sacrifice which *could* take away sins our author goes back to the Psalter, and in Ps. 40:6-8 he finds a prophetic utterance which he recognizes as appropriate to the Son of God at the time of His incarnation.

*Phillips:* Hebrews 10:5-7 also makes a point about the insufficiency of the Old Testament sacrifices to achieve God's will. Once again, the writer draws from the Psalms, this time from Psalm 40.

*Schreiner:* The use of Psalm 40 here is most interesting. Psalm 40 is a lament psalm where David asks the Lord to rescue him from his enemies (vv. 11-17). In the first part of the psalm, David remembers past instances of God's deliverance when he was in desperate straits (vv. 1-5). In the middle of the psalm, we have the verses appropriated by Hebrews (vv. 6-8) and the reminder that David has proclaimed the Lord's righteousness, faithfulness, and salvation among the people of God (vv. 9-10). What role do verses 6-8 play in the psalm? It seems that David gives another reason God should deliver him. David is not merely offering sacrifices and offerings. He has given himself and the entirety of his life to God. He has pledged himself to God's will, and God in His righteousness will deliver and rescue the one who belongs to Him.

#### a) *The Incarnation of Christ (10:5a)*

<sup>5</sup>*Consequently, when Christ came into the world...*

*Schreiner:* The word 'therefore' reaches back to the previous paragraph. Since the law and its sacrifices can't perfect worshipers and cleanse the conscience of sins and since animal sacrifices can't atone for sins, 'therefore' Jesus did not come into the world to offer animal sacrifices but to give of Himself. The coming of Christ into the world refers to the incarnation.

*Bruce:* 'You have fashioned a body for me' suggests to our author the incarnation of the Son of God, and the whole passage from Ps. 40 is understood as spoken by Him 'at His coming into the world. His incarnation itself is viewed as an act of submission to God's will and, as such, an anticipation of His supreme submission to that will in death.

#### b) *The Body of Christ (10:5b-6)*

*...he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup>in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.*

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

### (1) Christ

*Hughes:* Christ's words here were a quotation from King David taken from the Septuagint version of Psalm 40:6-8. David had spoken it one thousand years earlier, but Christ in Heaven took it and reapplied it, so as to describe His own inner thinking and dialogue with the Father when He came into the world

*Bruce:* The title of the psalm marks it as Davidic. The author may have argued that the words of this psalm could not refer to David in his own person (since David did offer sacrifices), and that therefore they should be understood as referring to 'great David's greater Son.'

*Phillips:* There are several ways we can look at the assertion that this psalm came from the mouth of Jesus. For one, we might observe that Psalm 40 was spoken by King David, who was a major type of Christ in the Old Testament. The point here is that David's statements in Psalm 40 could not really be made by David himself: 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.' It is hard to see how that applies to David, a man under the old covenant. Therefore, this must have been a statement that anticipated the mission of Christ, whose shadow is found in these verses. This is the view of John Calvin, who sees Psalm 40 as a foretelling of Christ's coming to fulfill the law. Another reason Psalm 40 can be attributed to the lips of Jesus is that its content corresponds to the incarnation. The writer of Hebrews says, 'When Christ came into the world, He said,...'a body have you prepared for Me.'

*Schreiner:* How can the author of Hebrews relate this psalm to Jesus when in its historical context it isn't an evident prophecy? It doesn't refer to Jesus as the Messiah in any direct way. Indeed, David admits his many sins in the psalm (40:12). Nor is it evident in reading the psalm that it teaches the setting aside of the sacrificial system of the OT. Certainly neither David himself nor other Jews understood the psalm in this way. Several things can be said in reply. First, NT writers read the psalms in light of the fulfillment realized in Jesus Christ. They didn't believe the psalms should only be read historically. They also thought they should be read christologically and eschatologically.

*Schreiner:* Second, what the psalms say about David points to the greater David, Jesus the Christ. Psalms about David do not merely concern David as a historical person, for David was the king, and David had received the promise that his dynasty would never end (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17; Psalm 89, 132; etc.) Hence, psalms about David were read typologically and eschatologically and messianically. What was said about David anticipate the coming of the Christ. Typologically also usually includes escalation, so Jesus is the greater David. Hence, the reference to David's sins doesn't preclude the notion that the psalm points to Jesus. It was easily recognized that Jesus was greater than David, that David's faults were not replicated in the life of Jesus.

*Schreiner:* Third, how do we explain the author seeing here support from the setting aside of the sacrificial system? David continued to offer sacrifices! The author of Hebrews, however, reads the psalm in the light of the Christ event. Jesus is the greater, indeed the greatest, Davidic king. Hence the words of the psalm are uttered by Jesus Himself as He addresses the Lord. The Lord did not desire from Jesus sacrifices and offerings. Instead he asked for Jesus to give of Himself, to give of His own body in sacrifice. Hebrews understands the words of the psalm literally insofar as they relate to Jesus Christ.

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

### (2) Body

*Schreiner:* The author introduces Psalm 40, beginning with verse 6, to support his argument. According to Hebrews, the words of the psalmist are the words of Jesus at His incarnation. Christ realized upon coming into the world that God did not desire sacrifices or offerings. He was not being asked to make the offerings mandated in the OT. Instead, God had prepared a ‘body’ for Jesus. In other words, Jesus was being asked to give Himself as a sacrifice to God.

*MacArthur:* Christ’s sacrifice was effective because it was God’s will all along. In the mind of God, before the world was ever created, He knew that the old system would be ineffective. From the beginning He had planned that Jesus would come and die. When Christ was ready to be incarnated, standing on the edge of heaven, as it were, talking to His Father, He acknowledged that His own body was to be the sacrifice that would please God.

*Phillips:* It is significant that the writer of Hebrews links Christ’s incarnation with His sacrificial death: ‘A body you have prepared for Me.’ Because God desires obedience, He prepared a body for His Son, the eternal Word—a body in which He could live in the world, honor God, and die in obedience to His command.

*Schreiner:* Interestingly, Hebrews, which follows closely the LXX and MT here, diverges from both of them. The meaning of the MT is: ‘You open my ears to listen’ (Ps. 40:6). In other words, the Lord worked in David so that he was obedient and compliant to God’s will. In Hebrews, however, the word ‘body’ (σῶμα, *sōma*) is substituted for the notion of opening the ear. What we have here is the part (ears) standing for the whole (the body). Actually the meaning of the verse remains largely the same. God didn’t ask Jesus to give sacrifices and offerings but instead desired obedience. More specifically, however, He called upon Jesus to give His body in sacrifice, and hence the word ‘body’ fits nicely with the focus on Jesus’ sacrificial death in the letter.

*Bruce:* The author quotes the Septuagint version, in which the Masoretic reading ‘ears has thou digged for me’ is replaced by the clause ‘you have fashioned a body for me.’ The Greek version cannot well be explained as representing a variant or corrupted Hebrew reading; it is rather an interpretive paraphrase of the Hebrew text. The ‘digging’ or hollowing out of the ears is part of the total work of fashioning a human body. Accordingly, the translator rendered it in terms which express *totum pro parte*. The body which was ‘fashioned’ for the speaker by God is given back to God as a ‘living sacrifice,’ to be employed in obedient service to Him.

*Hughes:* Interestingly, the Hebrew of Psalm 40:6 literally reads, ‘ears you have dug for me,’ but the Greek paraphrase of it that Christ and the author quoted in Hebrews is, ‘a body have you prepared for Me.’ This may be because the Greek translator regarded the creation of ears as part of fashioning a whole human body.

### (3) Sacrifice

*Hughes:* Christ said in essence, ‘My Father, the Old Testament sacrifices have proven unsatisfactory, so you have prepared a body for Me, that I might become a pleasing sacrifice.’

*Bruce:* Wholehearted obedience is the sacrifice which God really desires, the sacrifice which He received in perfection from His Servant-Son when He came into the world. As for the other kinds of sacrifice enumerated in the psalm, they had religious worth only insofar as they were the tangible expression of a devoted and obedient heart; the great prophets never tired of insisting that God did not desire them for their own sake.

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

*Bruce:* It is probable that the four terms which the psalmist uses for sacrifice are intended to cover all the main types of offering prescribed in the Levitical ritual. ‘Sacrifice,’ while capable of referring to any kind of animal sacrifice, is used in the Old Testament with more special reference to the peace offering; ‘offering,’ while used in a general sense, is restricted in the Levitical terminology to the ‘cereal offering’ (Lev. 2:1ff.); while the burnt offering and sin offering are specifically provided for by name in the Levitical legislation. The spiritual principles which underlay these various types of sacrifice are fulfilled and transcended in the perfect self-offering of Christ. Our author’s contrast is not between sacrifice and obedience, but between the involuntary sacrifice of dumb animals and sacrifice into which obedience enters, the sacrifice of a rational and spiritual being, which is not passive in death, but in dying makes the will of God its own.

### c) *The Obedience of Christ (10:7)*

*7Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”*

*Schreiner:* The author continues to quote Psalm 40 (here vv. 7-8). Jesus’ mission isn’t to bring animal sacrifices to the altar but to do something profoundly different. He announces the mission and purpose of His life: He has come to do the will of God. The words ‘I have come’ point to Jesus’ incarnation and His mission, matching the phrase ‘coming into the world’ in verse 5.

*Bruce:* The psalmist’s words, ‘I have come to do your will, O God,’ sum up the whole tenor of our Lord’s life and ministry, and express the essence of that true sacrifice which God desires.

*MacArthur:* Jesus’ supreme mission on earth was to do His Father’s will. Over and over again in the gospels, Jesus speaks of His having come to do the Father’s will and only the Father’s will. His was the perfect sacrifice because it was offered in perfect obedience to God.

*Hughes:* Having verbalized what the Father wanted—Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death—our Lord now states His joyous resolve. On the verge of the Incarnation, the Lord Jesus stopped to pay tribute to the Old Testament Scripture and to proclaim that what He was about to do had been fully written of in advance in the scroll. The great emphasis here, one we must not miss, is Christ’s exuberant determination and eagerness to *obey* the Father—‘Then I said, “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.”’ Our Lord did not obey the Father grudgingly or under duress but with joy! Later, in 12:2, the writer tells us that Jesus endured the cross ‘for the joy that was set before Him.’

*Schreiner:* The most intriguing phrase in the verse is the reference to ‘the volume of the scroll.’ What writing does the author of Hebrews have in mind? It is difficult to be certain. The inclusion of the phrase indicates that Jesus’ coming to do God’s will was His destiny. His submission to the divine will accords with what has been written. Perhaps the author of Hebrews has the entire OT in view.

*Bruce:* The meaning of this phrase is clarified by the clause which immediately follows the clauses which are quoted here: ‘Your law is within my heart.’ ‘The scroll of the book’ is the written *torah* of God; what was written there the speaker recognized to be written concerning *Him*, to be God’s prescription for *Him*. His life would accordingly be the active counterpart of the written law; the will of God, which was set down in the ‘scroll of the book,’ would be equally manifested in His obedience. Yet it was not simply that He found His duty set down plainly in the written record and set Himself to carry it out: it was at the same time the dearest

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

desire of His heart to fulfill that special service which was His Father's will for Him. While indeed it was His Father's will, it was also His spontaneous choice. And therefore His undertaking and fulfilling it constituted a sacrifice utterly acceptable to God.

### 2. What Christ Meant (10:8-10)

#### a) *He Describes the Old Covenant (10:8)*

<sup>8</sup>*When 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)...*

*Schreiner:* The author now provides an explanation of the verses cited from Psalm 40, summoning the readers to what was written above (vv. 5-6). God did not desire or take pleasure in the sacrifices of the Levitical cult, which included whole burnt offerings and sin offerings. The author then offers his comment on such sacrifices: they were 'offered according to the law.' The sacrifices in which God did not delight stemmed from the old covenant. God's not delighting in them doesn't mean the sacrifices during the old covenant era were contrary to God's will. The point is that such sacrifices are provisional instead of permanent. They did not truly and finally atone for sin, demonstrating the inadequacy of the old covenant. A greater sacrifice must be coming since God did not delight in what was offered according to the law.

*Hughes:* The author notes that the Father was not pleased with the sacrifices, although they were 'offered according to the law.' The fact was, though God had instituted blood animal sacrifices (Ex. 24), He had never been pleased with and did not see them as ends. He had established them as object lessons to instruct His people about the sinfulness of their hearts, His hatred of sin, the fact that sin leads to death, the need of an atonement, and His delight in those whose hearts were clean and obedient and faithful. But there was nothing appealing to Him in the sight of a dying animal. God had no pleasure in the moans and death-throes of lambs and bulls. What He did find pleasure in was those who offered a sacrifice with a contrite, obedient heart.

*Phillips:* Hebrews 10:5-7 employs a contrast between that which God does not desire and that which He does. God does not desire sacrifices and offerings, but rather the doing of His will. In what sense, however, can we say that God does not desire sacrifices and offerings, when He was the One who established these very ordinances as the way to draw near to Him in the old covenant? One way to resolve this difficulty is to recall the many prophetic passages expressing God's displeasure with sacrificial ritual. These warnings do not condemn the sacrifices themselves, but the hypocrisy of those who simply went through the motions without any heart involvement (cp. Ps. 51:16-17). The same might be said today about people who just go through the motions of worship.

*Phillips:* But there is a more fundamental point being made (see 1 Sam. 15:22). Samuel's point, and the point of our passage, is that even though God established the sacrifice of animals, these were not God's true desire. They were not a statement of the solution, but of the problem. What God desires from us is obedience, not sacrifices to cover our disobedience. The sacrifices showed the constant presence and horrid nature of sin. Every time a lamb's breast was opened and blood flowed down the altar, this point was made. This was not what God desired; this was hardly an expression of what makes His holy heart glad! No, what gladdens God is heart-obedience from His people bought with His love.

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

### b) *He Establishes the New Covenant (10:9)*

...<sup>9</sup>then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second.

*Phillips*: Obedience pleases God. He is satisfied by a heart eager to do His will, by a life expressing the character of God set forth in the Ten Commandments (cp. also Mt. 22:37-39). This is what God wants, and only this satisfies Him.

*Hughes*: What is the application for us? Jesus joyous resolve to obediently do God’s will is the essence of the true sacrifice and worship that God desires. Jesus does what God desired from every worshiper in the old covenant. God did not want animal sacrifices. What He wanted and still wants is obedience! That is the *only* sacrifice that is acceptable to God. Everything is in ashes if we are not living in conscious obedience to God.

*Schreiner*: Hebrews pays close attention to the wording of the text, particularly to the sequence implied in the text. He sees a setting aside of animal sacrifices that are replaced by (or perhaps better ‘fulfilled by’) the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The ‘then’ in the text is important, showing that the doing of God’s will by Jesus is subsequent to the era of the law where OT sacrifices were required. God’s will for Jesus consisted in the offering of His body, the giving up of His life.

*Schreiner*: We return here to the sequence Hebrews discerns in the text: the ‘first’ is taken away, i.e., the sacrifices and offerings mandated in the law. The ‘first covenant’ (8:7, 113; 9:1, 15, 18) and the ‘first tabernacle’ (9:8) and the ‘first’ sacrifices have given way to the ‘second’ covenant (8:7), the heavenly tabernacle, and the final and definitive sacrifice. That which is second and later is ‘better’ and superior. The ‘first’ anticipates and points to the second, but once the second has come, believers should not revert to the first.

*Bruce*: In these words of Psalm 40, then, interpreted as our Lord’s declaration at His entry into the world, our author sees the abrogation of the old sacrificial cultus announced. The sacrifices in which God is said to take no pleasure are the sacrifices prescribed by the ancient cultic law of Israel; now that cultic law is to be superseded by a new order, inaugurated by Christ’s perfect obedience to the will of God. The declaration falls into two parts: in the first part (which is said ‘above’) the old order is abolished; in the second the new is established. ‘I have come to do your will’ is written over the whole record of our Lord’s life; this was His attitude from first to last.

*MacArthur*: In his commentary on Psalm 40:6-8, the writer points out that God took away ‘the first,’ that is, the old sacrifices, to make way for ‘the second,’ the new sacrifice. His point was to show the Jewish readers—again—that the Old Covenant was not then, never had been, and never could have been satisfactory. 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, the perfect covenant. And that second covenant has now come in Jesus Christ. ‘You cannot be under two covenants at the same time,’ they are being told, ‘and now that the second has come, the first has got to go.’ Whatever purpose and validity the first one had are now past. It no longer has any purpose or validity. God has forever set it aside. All this repeated emphasis reveals a pleading heart, calling the readers to salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### c) *He Sanctifies New Covenant Believers (10:10)*

<sup>10</sup>And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

*Schreiner:* Jesus did the will of God by giving His whole person, His body and soul, so to speak, over to death as an offering to God. God's will was that Jesus Himself would be the final and effective sacrifice. His sacrifice is the second, the better, the new sacrifice which inaugurates the new covenant. His sacrifice was effective and definitive, for He was sinless, without spot and blemish. Hence His sacrifice is 'once and for all.' It was the definitive and final sacrifice so that no further sacrifices are needed. It would be folly to revert to animal sacrifices now that the Davidic king, the Son of God, and the high priest has given His life as an atonement for sinners.

*Bruce:* His fulfillment of God's will to the uttermost involved the 'offering' once for all of His body—that body prepared for Him at His incarnation. The offering of His body is simply the offering of Himself; if here sanctification and access to God are made available through His body, in vv. 19 and 29 they are made available through His blood. Whether our author speaks of His body or His blood, it is His incarnate life that is meant, yielded to God in an obedience which was maintained even to death. So perfect a sacrifice was our Lord's presentation of His life to God that no repetition of it is either necessary or possible; it was offered 'once for all.'

*Hughes:* Jesus' sacrifice 'once for all' is emphatic, and the writer wants us to see that its results are equally final, for the phrase 'we have been sanctified' refers to an enduring, continuous state (perfect tense). Our salvation is a completed thing—a 'done deal.'

*Bruce:* And it is by His fulfilling the will of God to the uttermost that He has 'sanctified' His people and provided the 'perfection' which was unattainable on the basis of the ancient sacrifices. The sanctification which His people receive in consequence is their inward cleansing from sin and their being made fit for the presence of God, so that henceforth they can offer Him acceptable worship. It is a sanctification which has taken place once for all; in this sense it is as unrepeatable as the sacrifice which effects it.

*MacArthur:* The new sacrifice is effective because it sanctifies the believer, makes him holy. The old system had no way of making a man holy. To be sanctified, or made holy (*hagiazō*), basically means to be set apart. When the word is used in Scripture of men, it always refers to being set apart *by God for God*. From this same Greek word group we also get *saint*. In biblical terms, a saint is a person whom God has set apart for Himself. The Greek verb form in verse 10 ('we have been sanctified') is a perfect participle with a finite verb, which shows in the strongest way the believer's continuing permanent salvation. Our positional standing before God and our practical standing are, of course, quite different things. If we are in Christ, we will forever be in Christ. This position before the Father will not be modified an iota throughout eternity. But our practical holiness, as we all know, is all too changeable. It is positional holiness that is in mind in Hebrews 10:10, for the holiness here is an accomplished fact—'we have been sanctified.' Regardless of how holy our walk may be, in our *standing* we are completely and permanently set apart unto God.

*Schreiner:* The author emphasizes here that believers 'have been sanctified' through Jesus' self-offering. Sanctification here is positional, something true of believers upon conversion. The author does not have in mind progressive sanctification by which believers become more like Jesus Christ. Believers, on account of Jesus' sacrifice, are now in the realm of the holy. They are not unclean or defiled before God but holy before Him because of the work of Jesus Christ. Since believers stand before God as holy and clean by virtue of Christ's sacrificial offering, they don't need to offer any other sacrifices to obtain forgiveness of sins.

### B. The Superiority of Christ's Sacrifice (Hebrews 10:11-18)

*Phillips:* The central doctrinal section of Hebrews began in chapter 7. In this lengthy exposition the writer has compared Christ and His priestly work to the whole sacrificial system of the old covenant. He showed that Christ is superior as priest to Aaron and his successors and better when compared to Melchizedek, who came before. He showed in chapter 8 that Christ's covenant is better than the old one in Moses, and in chapter 9 that Christ's blood is better than that of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. In concluding this great argument, our present verses drive home the lesson the writer has been hoping to teach, namely, that while the old covenant offered no real solution for sin, Christ's priestly work in the new covenant successfully and sufficiently solves this great problem of all mankind.

*Phillips:* Hebrews 10:11-18 is not only a conclusion, but also a transitional passage, setting the stage for the outstanding applications that follow in the rest of this epistle. The phrase 'made perfect' occurs in verse 14 for the seventh out of nine times in the Book of Hebrews: 'By a single offering He has *perfected* for all time those who are being sanctified. In earlier chapters it mainly referred to Jesus Christ (e.g., 2:10). The point is not that Jesus was ever less than perfect in His person, but rather that the experiences of His life and death perfected Him—prepared Him or qualified Him—for His office and work as Redeemer.

*Phillips:* These statements regarding the perfecting of Jesus Christ present the main doctrinal point of Hebrews, namely, His perfect and unique fitness to put away our sins, both as perfect sacrifice and as perfect priest. Once this point has been made, the writer of Hebrews then uses the same phrase, 'made perfect,' in reference to what God intends for believers. Indeed, the last four uses of this expression, beginning in chapter 10, all refer to believers (cp. 10:1, 14). Later on we will consider the great statement of Christian worship that is found in 12:18-24, in which believers in heaven are described as 'the spirits of the righteous made perfect' (12:23). This is what unfolds in the flow of Hebrews. Christ was made perfect in His role as Savior and High Priest for the church in order to sit at God's right hand—this is the first half—so that we would be made perfect in Him for our role as worshiping priests in heaven before the very throne of God—this is the second half. This is the macrostructure of redemption as taught in the Book of Hebrews.

#### 1. The Fulfillment of the New Covenant Sacrifice (10:11-14)

*Phillips:* These verses may not have all the eloquence of Romans 8, or the soaring prose of Paul's doxology in Romans 11, but they deliver the most wonderful good news ever heard by the ears of men. Hebrews 10:11-14 proclaims the one true sacrifice that takes away our sins and makes us holy.

*Phillips:* The primary purpose that motivated this letter was to warn the Hebrew Christians not to fall back into the ways of the old covenant. They were experiencing persecution—either from the Jewish community of the Roman authorities, or both—and the pressure made denial of Christ in favor of Judaism a tempting thought. But these verses sum up the whole of his revulsion at such a thought. What? he might say, return to a religion, a priesthood, a covenant, that despite all the labor, all the activity, all the blood and sweat and tears 'can never take away sins' (v. 11)? It is unimaginable folly, despite the worldly pain of persecution for the sake of Christ, to go from forgiveness and peace and real access to God, back to the old situation of sin and its dreadful alienation. By His one and finished sacrifice, Christ has put away sin and made holy all who

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

hold fast to Him. No earthly prize is of such value; no worldly sacrifice is too great for such gain.

*Phillips:* What do verses 11-14 tell us, but that in Christ we have not mere religion, but salvation? We do not have ritual and tradition, but spiritual reality and power. We have not warm sentiments, not moral self-help, but the forgiveness of our sins by the work of the Savior, and power for holiness from a heavenly Lord. Here is the great statement that makes this a great conclusion: Jesus Christ has done upon the cross what no priest of Israel could ever have done, and what no worldly religion can ever achieve today. For both the Hebrew Christian in danger of abandoning Christ and today's fence-sitting doubter in danger of passing by the one and true salvation, these verses sound a clanging gospel bell: there are a true sacrifice for our forgiveness and a priest reigning in heaven to make us into what we were created to be.

### a) *The Futility of Old Testament Sacrifices (10:11)*

<sup>11</sup>*And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*

*Schreiner:* Every priest under the old covenant stands (cp. Dt. 10:8; 18:7). They stand because their work is never completed, because they must continue to offer sacrifices. The burnt offering, which is offered in part to obtain forgiveness (Lev. 1:4), must be offered every day (Ex. 29:38; Num. 28:3). The author can't be much more emphatic about the inadequacy of such sacrifices, for the priests stand 'day after day.' Nor does their work progress so that they move on to new tasks. They offer 'the same sacrifices' and they do so 'repeatedly' (*πολλακις*, *pollakis*), which illustrates the futility of their ministry. If the same sacrifices are offered, they are obviously not securing final and definitive forgiveness.

*Bruce:* The Aaronic priests never sat down in the sanctuary; they remained standing throughout the whole performance of their sacred duties. In this our author sees a token of the fact that their sacred duties were never done, that their sacrifices had always to be repeated. In v. 1, the repetition of the ritual of the Day of Atonement 'year by year' was mentioned; here, as in 7:28, the reference is to those sacrifices which were offered 'day by day.' But whether the repetition was annual or daily, the main point is that repetition was necessary; not one of those sacrifices could remove sin or cleanse the conscience with permanent effect.

*Hughes:* Significantly, there were no chairs in the tabernacle—no provision whatsoever to sit down. Priests stood or kept moving, because their imperfect work was never over.

*Phillips:* There in all his futility stands the priest of the old covenant, day after day offering the same sacrifices over and over, reminding us of, but unable to repair, the terrible problem of sin. Hebrews 10:11 sounds the familiar refrain that the old priests and their sacrifices 'can never take away sins.' The entire picture is one of futility, fatigue, and frustration. The greatest possible contrast is presented when we consider the effectual work of the true high priest, Jesus Christ.

*MacArthur:* Verses 11 and 12 are a series of contrasts—the many priests with the one Priest, the continual standing of the old priests with the sitting down of the new, the repeated offerings with the once-for-all offering, and the ineffective sacrifices that only covered sin with the effective sacrifice that completely removes sin. The Levitical system had twenty four orders, in each of which were hundreds of priests who took turns serving at the altar. This system did not lack for priests, but it did lack effectiveness. All the priests together could not make an effective sacrifice

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

for sin. Christ was but one priest, yet His work was perfectly and permanently effective. The Levitical priests always stood because their ministry was never finished. Christ, after His sacrifice ‘sat down at the right Hand of God,’ because *His* work was finished. The Levitical sacrifices, with all their priests and all their repetitions, could never take away sins. Christ’s sacrifice took away the sins of believers for all time.

### b) *The Finality of Christ’s Sacrifice (10:12-13)*

#### (1) He Sat Down (10:12)

<sup>12</sup>*But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...*

*Bruce:* The unrepeatable character of the sacrifice of Christ, by contrast with the sacrifices of the old order, is underlined by an appeal to the language of Ps. 110. The introductory oracle of this psalm, in which the Messiah is invited by God to sit at His right hand, has already been quoted by our author (1:13) and has influenced his phraseology in 1:3; 8:1; but only now does he draw out its full significance.

*Schreiner:* The effectiveness of Christ’s sacrifice and priesthood stands in stark contrast to the sacrifices offered by the priests under the old covenant. They offer ‘many sacrifices,’ but He offered ‘one sacrifice.’ His one sacrifice was ‘for sins’ (*υπερ αμαρτιων, hyper amartiōn*), i.e., it cleansed human beings of their sins. The benefits of the sacrifice never end, for it secures forgiveness ‘forever’ (*εις το διηνεκες, eis to diēnekes*), whereas the priestly sacrifices of the old covenant ‘never’ (*ουδεποτε, oudepote*) removed sins (v. 11). The author’s favorite psalm now surfaces. Since Jesus’ sacrifice achieved its goal, His work is finished. And since His work is finished, He has no need like the priests of the old covenant to keep standing (v. 11). Rather, He sat down at God’s right hand (Ps. 110:1), since as a priest-king He triumphed over sin and death. Jesus’ sitting at God’s right hand, sharing the rule of God, indicates His deity and confirms that His work is completed.

*Hughes:* But Jesus, in exact fulfillment of the Melchizedekian prophecies in Psalm 110:1, sat down forever at the right hand of honor and power (cp. 1:3, 13: 8:1). Jesus rests. Our salvation, as we have said, is a ‘done deal.’ Our perfection is accomplished. And in the timelessness of eternity our holiness will go on and on.

*Bruce:* It was equally in keeping with the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice of Himself that, when He had presented it to God, He sat down. No further sacrificial service can be required of the priest who appeared on earth in the fullness of time to put away sin and sanctify His people once for all. A seated priest is the guarantee of a finished work and an accepted sacrifice. The heavenly high priest has indeed a continual ministry to discharge on His people’s behalf at the Father’s right hand; but that is the ministry of intercession on the basis of the sacrifice presented and accepted once for all; it is not the constant or repeated offering of His sacrifice. Christ, then, has taken His seat in token that His sacrificial work is finished; but more, the worth of His sacrifice and the dignity of His person are further indicated in that He has taken His seat not merely in the presence of God, but at ‘God’s right hand.’ From the shame of the cross He has been exalted to the place of highest glory.

*Phillips:* Christ’s sacrifice was not offered over and over, but once for all, and in this we see the sufficiency of His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The resulting situation could not stand in greater contrast with that of the old covenant priests. William Barclay writes: ‘The priests

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

stand offering sacrifice; Christ sits at the right hand of God. Theirs is the position of a servant; His is the position of a monarch. Jesus is the king come home, His task accomplished and His victory won.’ Christ is seated in the heavens. His work is accomplished, established, inevitable. Our author is wrapping up all His great ideas, here returning to the theme in chapter 1, that Christ has been exalted with almighty power as He rules over the history for the church.

### (2) He Waits for the End (10:13)

...<sup>13</sup> *waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.*

*Schreiner:* Since Jesus’ sacrificial work is finished; He sits triumphantly at God’s right hand. As the risen Lord, He now waits for the last act in the drama of redemption. The verse echoes 9:28 where we are told that Jesus’ one sacrifice atones for the sins of many, thus believers now await (*απεκδεχομενοις, apekdechomenois*) the completion of their salvation when Jesus appears on earth again. The parallel to 9:28 is evident in 10:13, for Jesus is waiting (*εκδεχομενος, ekdechomenos*) for His enemies to be subjugated before returning again to complete His saving work. The author clearly alludes to his favorite psalm (110:1) in speaking of the domestication and removal of Jesus’ enemies (cp. Mt. 22:44; 1 Cor. 15:25).

*Bruce:* Our author continues to give the substance of Ps. 110:1 by adding the words: ‘waiting thenceforward for His enemies to be placed as a footstool for His feet.’ He offers no exegesis of these words. There may be an implied warning here to his readers not to let themselves be numbered among the enemies of the exalted Christ, but rather to be reckoned as His friends and companions by preserving their fidelity to the end (cp. 3:14). Paul has more to say about the eventual subjection of all the enemies of Christ (‘principalities and powers’) beneath His feet in 1 Cor. 15:24-28, where he gives a combined exegesis of Ps. 110:1 and Ps. 8:6.

*MacArthur:* Christ’s sacrifice was effective because it conquered His enemies. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament did nothing to get rid of Satan. They had absolutely no effect on him at all, nor on the godless demons and people who served him. But when Jesus died on the cross, He dealt a death-blow to all His enemies. He is now only waiting until all ‘His enemies be made a footstool,’ that is, until they acknowledge His lordship by bowing at His feet (Phil. 2:10). Jesus Christ will stand above all those who were His enemies. He won the victory over them at the cross. There, all the enemies of God throughout the ages gathered together to inflict on Him their worst, which was death. But Jesus conquered death just as He conquered the other enemies. He went in one side of death and out the other. Not only that, but He conquered death for all who ever have and ever will believe in God. Jesus Christ turned Satan’s worst into God’s best.

*Phillips:* Christ is seated and enthroned, in a position of rest like that of God on the seventh day of creation. It is a rest of sovereignty, of omnipotent rule, control, and confidence. This has the most horrible implications for Christ’s enemies: for the devil and the demons, and also for every sinner who rejects His claims. He is ‘waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet.’ Unbelievers may deny Him, mock Him, and exult in their apparent freedom from His lordly rule. But all the while He sits enthroned, with history racing toward the judgment over which He will reign supreme.

### c) *The Fullness of Christ’s Sacrifice (10:14)*

<sup>14</sup>*For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

*Bruce:* Christ, then, by His self-oblation has accomplished once for all what generations of Levitical sacrifices had never done. After hundreds of years those sacrifices were no nearer the attainment of their aim than they had at the beginning. Nor can this contrast between them and the death of Christ be dismissed as an apt conceit of our author's, elaborated here for apologetic purposes.

*Schreiner:* The reason Jesus' work is finished is set forth in one of the most famous sentences of the letter. The 'one offering' of Jesus, the offering of his body (vv. 5, 10), the shedding of His blood (9:14), has perfected believers forever. The word 'perfected' (*τετελειωκεν, teteleiōken*) is a favorite of the author. The law and its sacrifices didn't bring perfection (7:19; 10:1; cp. 7:11), since they can't perfect the conscience (9:9). Perfection in Hebrews has the idea that sins are cleansed and removed, so that the conscience is no longer defiled by guilt. Believers, by virtue of Christ's sacrifice, can now enter God's presence freely and boldly. The work of perfection is objective and has been accomplished 'forever' (*εις το διηνεκες, eis to diēnekes*). Here the author emphasizes the present consequences the perfecting work accomplished, but this doesn't preclude the future, for perfection will only be achieved finally and fully when believers enter the heavenly city.

*Phillips:* Hebrews 10:11-18 is not only a conclusion, but also a transitional passage, setting the stage for the outstanding applications that follow in the rest of this epistle. The phrase 'made perfect' occurs in verse 14 for the seventh out of nine times in the Book of Hebrews: 'By a single offering He has *perfected* for all time those who are being sanctified. In earlier chapters it mainly referred to Jesus Christ (e.g., 2:10). The point is not that Jesus was ever less than perfect in His person, but rather that the experiences of His life and death perfected Him—prepared Him or qualified Him—for His office and work as Redeemer.

*Phillips:* The Greek word translated as 'made perfect' (*teteleiōken*) might also be rendered as 'made complete,' 'finished,' or 'made fitting.' This is how it was used in reference to Jesus. When applied to us, it is used almost synonymous with the idea of sanctification. We see this conjunction of ideas in v. 14, where believers are 'made perfect' and 'are being made holy.'

*Phillips:* The basic meaning of holiness is 'set apart.' Things that are made holy are taken out of a profane category and placed into a sacred or holy category. This was undoubtedly on the writer's mind because of the priestly context. Just as the vessels of the temple were holy, set apart for sacred service, so too believers are set apart for the service of God. In this sense, holiness emphasizes status or position. It is not our character, not our intrinsic holiness that sets us apart for God and to God. Far from it! Verse 10 emphasizes that we 'have been sanctified' or 'made holy' by the cross. We have received this status and holy position by the work of Christ. But holiness also carries the idea of conformity to God's character. Holy things are to be kept pure; their purity is fitting for their holy status. If we, therefore, have been made holy by Christ, God's purpose is that we will now conform to His holy character.

*Phillips:* Verse 14 tells us the effect of Christ's work and uses a difference tense, the perfect tense: 'By a single offering He has perfected' us. The perfect tense signifies a completed past action that has an ongoing effect into the present and future. Something of vital significance has happened, and its effects continue now and forever. Here the effect is that we have been made perfect. Finally we have a present participle: 'those who are being sanctified.' This signifies a present activity that continues into the future. The present tense is vital to Christianity as to no other religion. No other faith rests upon the present power of past events, namely, the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Christianity alone is good

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

news. It is a gospel because it presents news of great events that changed everything once and for all. What has happened to Christ makes our salvation possible and real. If Christ's death has not happened, we are damned in our sins; but if it has happened—and it has!—we who believe are saved with great joy, secure in Him forever.

*Schreiner*: The perfecting work has been accomplished for 'those who are sanctified' (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους, *tous hagiazomenous*). Hebrews doesn't use the language of justification (but cp. 10:38; 11:7), but the terms *perfection* and *sanctification* are akin to the way Paul speaks of justification. Believers are perfected because of the work of Jesus Christ, which includes His death, resurrection, and exaltation. Perfection, then, isn't fundamentally a subjective reality but an objective one, denoting God's saving work in the lives of those who belong to Jesus.

### 2. The Fulfillment of the New Covenant Promises (10:15-18)

*Bruce*: In Hebrews 8 the oracle of Jer. 31:31-34 was quoted in order to prove the obsolescence of the old economy: now it is quoted again in order to establish the permanence of the era of 'perfection' inaugurated under the new covenant. 'God has spoken in His Son'; and He has no word to speak beyond Him.

*Bruce*: That the 'perfection' of which our author speaks is bound up with the new covenant is made plain by his repetition of the words of Jer. 31:33-34, and his application of them to the effect of the sacrifice of Christ. These words, spoken by the prophet under inspiration, are naturally quoted as the words of the Holy Spirit, and they are viewed as the Holy Spirit's confirmation of the conclusion to which our author's argument has just led him. The new covenant, according to Jeremiah's prophecy, not only involved the implanting of God's laws, together with the will and power to carry them out, in the hearts of His people; it also conveyed the assurance that their past sins and iniquities would be eternally blotted out from God's record, never to be brought up in evidence against them. Here is something far beyond what the sacrificial law of Old Testament times could provide: in that law there was an annual 'reminder of sins' (v. 3), whereas in the new covenant there is no more remembrance of them.

*Phillips*: Hebrews 10:15-17 looks back on the new covenant, already examined in chapter 8, to highlight both the external and the internal, the objective and the subjective aspects of our salvation. God has forgiven our sins (v. 17)—this relates to justification. It is external and objective. He has put His law in our hearts and written it upon our minds (v. 16)—this is sanctification, and it is internal and subjective. Salvation is a definitive act of God whereby He forgives our sins forever and accepts us in Christ. But it is also a lifelong process of deliverance from the power of sin and the coming of new life.

*Hughes*: The preacher to the Hebrews finishes this great section with a brief recap of two perfections of the new covenant from Jeremiah 31 that were mentioned earlier in 8:10-12—namely, empowerment and forgiveness.

*MacArthur*: Finally, the new sacrifice of Christ is effective because it fulfills the promise of a New Covenant. In other words, the new sacrifice had to be made and had to be effective because God promised it would be. The new sacrifice was central to the New Covenant, which God said would put 'His laws upon their heart, and upon their mind,' and which would cause Him to forget 'their sins and lawless deeds.' The new sacrifice was effective, therefore, because it *had* to accomplish these things (prophesied in Jeremiah 31:33-34) in order for God to fulfill His promises, which cannot be broken.

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

### a) *The Knowledge of God (10:15-16)*

<sup>15</sup>And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, <sup>16</sup>“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds” ...

*Schreiner:* That the definitive and final sacrifice has been offered is confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks through the words of OT prophecy, particularly here in Jer. 31:33-34. Earlier, the author cited Jer. 31:31-34 (8:8-12). The text is cited again, though in this case the author is more selective. Instead of the covenant being made ‘with the house of Israel’ (Jer. 31:33), it was made ‘with them’ (v. 16), which presumably refers to the recipients of the letter, suggesting that the readers are conceived of as the new Israel. The covenant in Jeremiah 31 is a ‘new covenant’ (Jer. 31:31), and God takes the initiative in establishing the covenant. The newness of the covenant is confirmed by the words ‘after those days,’ signifying that the new covenant succeeds the old, for it is a new arrangement and dispensation and economy for the people of God. The sovereign grace of God is featured in the covenant. He inscribes His law on the hearts and minds of His people. The desire to obey doesn’t come from human beings but is ascribed to the power of God. The author probably has in mind especially the great commandments to love God and neighbor (Dt. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18).

*Hughes:* As to empowerment, instead of putting His laws on stone tablets, they are placed in the very center of the believer’s being, so that there is an inner impulse that both delights in knowing His law and doing His will.

### b) *The Forgiveness of Sins (10:17-18)*

#### (1) No Remembrance of Sin (10:17)

<sup>17</sup>...then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

*Schreiner:* The author then skips several lines from Jer. 31:33-34, which he cited earlier (8:10-11), concluding with the words that speak of the forgiveness of sins. The Lord will write His law on their hearts, and He will no longer remember their sins and lawless deeds. The word ‘remember’ (*μνησθῆσονται*, *mensthēsomai*) is often used in the OT to indicate that God cares for His people, acting on their behalf (Gen. 8:1; 30:22; 1 Sam. 1:19; Neh. 5:19; 13:14; Jer. 15:15). In a number of texts, it is joined together with the notion that God acts on their behalf because of His covenant with them (cp. Gen. 9:15-16, 29; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; 32:13; 26:14, 45; Dt. 9:27; Ps. 74:2; 105:8, 42; 106:45; 111:5; Jer. 14:21; Lam. 5:1; Ez. 16:60). More particularly, it can be used to denote forgiveness of sins (Ps. 25:7; 79:8; Is. 43:25; 64:9; Ez. 18:22). What is distinctive about the new covenant, then, is the forgiveness of sins.

#### (2) No More Sin Offering (10:18)

<sup>18</sup>Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

*Schreiner:* The author draws a ringing conclusion from the new covenant promise of Jeremiah, focusing especially on the promise that God will no longer remember the sins of His people. He has already shown previously that the promise of forgiveness belongs to the new covenant rather than to the old (8:7-13). Hence, what is said here can’t be applied to old covenant sacrifices. It only applies to the new covenant sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Since the new covenant pronounces forgiveness, there is no longer a need for any other offering. Final and full forgiveness has been achieved in the offering of Jesus Christ. Nothing else should be done or needs to be done for

## Hebrews – Lesson 22

sins to be wiped away. Since God doesn't remember our sins any longer, believers should enjoy the forgiveness that has been given freely to them.

*Hughes:* The other perfection of the new covenant mentioned here is forgiveness. Note the air of finality here—a completed sacrifice and complete forgiveness. Forgiveness follows belief.

*MacArthur:* The work of sacrifice is done. There will be no more. Forgiveness is already provided for those who trust in this one perfect sacrifice. Why would anyone want to go back to the old sacrifices, which were never finished and never effective? To reject is to have no other hope of forgiveness—ever.

*Phillips:* Where sins have been forgiven, 'there is no longer any offering for sin.' There is no longer any labor for the Savior, and no longer any threat to the salvation of those who look to Him in faith. Jesus can rest enthroned, waiting for the day of His final triumph; we, too, can rest through faith in Him, as we await His return in glory.

*Phillips:* This is the great conclusion to the main doctrinal instruction of the Book of Hebrews. From here we will move forward to the wealth of applications in the final chapters, including the examples of faith in chapter 11. We are far from finished with the Book of Hebrews. Yet here we stand at the conclusion of this great doctrinal teaching. How then shall we conclude our own reflections on these matters? There can be only one answer, and that is to draw our thoughts and our hearts, our whole spiritual orientation, upward to where Jesus Christ sits now enthroned, reigning with power for our salvation, having accomplished everything needed for us to be saved. He is at the center of it all, above it all; He is the meaning of everything we have considered in the Book of Hebrews. The tabernacle and temple were about Him and His work. The priests and the rituals of the Old Testament served only to point to Him. The blood that was shed year after year and day after day spoke only of His blood, shed once for all upon the cross. The veil that was torn invites our gaze into the heavens, where now our Savior sits at rest, reigning for His own, securing us for Himself forever, and ruling our hearts by the Spirit He sends. Everything points to Him; everything is found in and with Him; everything for us comes from Him and draws us to Him as His people, His own reward for obedience to the will of the Father. This is the great conclusion we must draw from the teaching of Hebrews. It must be the profession of our faith. And Christ must be the great affection of our hearts. To know Him and serve Him, to grow in His likeness, must become the great ambition of all our lives.

For next time: Read Hebrews 10:19-31.