

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 10, Verses 1 - 18
Notes From Class on February 9, 2010
Last Revised on (February 15, 2010)

Good evening everyone!

Welcome to our continuing study of the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

Tonight you will need a Bible and a song book. Please keep the song book with you until the end of class, because we may wish to sing once or twice later in the evening.

If you are using an English translation of the Bible other than the English Standard Version ("ESV") then you may also wish to have the handout we have prepared, which has the ESV text of Hebrews,

There is one additional handout tonight. It has the ESV text for portions of Psalm 40 and Jeremiah 31 and the corresponding citations in Hebrews, Chapter 10. Please do get a copy of that handout, as I will be referring to it.

There is coffee and tea at the back.

Please get what you want and, then, let's get started.

Introduction

In this class, as you know, we are studying the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

Last week we completed Chapter 9.

Tonight we will begin reading Chapter 10

But first let's begin, as usual, with a very short review of what we have studied so far.

Review

As we have continually noted,

Hebrews appears to be the text of a **sermon**,

written around the end of the **First Century**, A.D,

to be delivered to a group of **Christians**

at least some of whom were in danger of "**falling away**"

and needed to be encouraged to "**hold fast.**"

The preacher reminds them of the **unqualified** supremacy of Christ **(1:1 - 3:6)**.

He then touches on the sad history of Israel and urges that they not repeat the same mistakes **(3:7 - 4:13)**.

The preacher introduces the idea that Jesus is like our great **high priest**. **(4:14 - 5:10)**

He warns that to reject Jesus is finally to reject **all** hope of salvation. **(5:11 - 6:20)**

The **priesthood** and the **law** have been replaced by something better **(7:1 - 8:7)**.

The **Old** Covenant has been replaced by a New Covenant **(8:8-8:13)**.

All of the **ceremonies** and rituals of the Old Covenant are obsolete. **(Chapter 9)**

That is a very quick review of what we have studied so far, in the first **nine** Chapters of Hebrews.

Before we read on, does anyone have any questions? Any **comments**?

Heberews, Chapter 10, Verses 1-4

O.K., then, would someone please read the first **four** verses of Hebrews Chapter 10 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

1 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?

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

4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Thank you.

At the end of Chapter 9 (please look) the preacher said that we live at the **end** of the ages!

Jesus has appeared, and sacrificed himself, once for all, and put sin away.

Jesus will come a **second** time, to save all who eagerly await him.

But the second coming will **not** be to deal with our sin.

Jesus has **already** done that.

So we live in a time --- shall we say the Christian era? --- when the sins of those who are being sanctified, those who eagerly await the return of Jesus, have already been forgiven,

and so the reason for the sacrifices of the Old Covenant has ceased.

Chapter 10 continues this thought.

(Verse 1)

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Here "the good things to come" are, I believe, understood to include the second coming of Christ and the consummation of his kingdom, which we, who are Christians, eagerly await.

But I agree with those who would say that we who eagerly await the return of our Lord already enjoy some foretaste of the kingdom that is coming.

We are told, here in Verse 1, that the law has a shadow of these good things, but not the true form.

I understand this to mean not so much that the law is an imperfect version of the good things to come but, rather, that the law is evidence of, a sign pointing forward to, the good things to come.

The law cannot finally save people from their sin or make them stop sinning, but it suggests that such a thing may somehow be possible in the future.

In any case the author of Hebrews means to say that nobody will ever be saved by the law.

Q. How do we know that this is true? i.e. that the law cannot perfect anyone?

A. The answer is given in verse 2, in the form of a rhetorical question.

(Verse 2)

Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?

The preacher means to say that thes ceremonies have been continuing for centuries precisely **because** worshipers recognize that they are never made fully and permanently clean by them.

Why do we bathe regularly?

Because we understand that we need to.

Our habit of regular bathing is a kind of reminder to us that we are constantly getting dirty again.

Likewise the legal requirement to atone for sin regularly was a reminder that men constantly sin.

That seems, to me, to be the sense of Verse 3

(Verse 3)

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

The Law acknowledges and reminds the people of their sin, while offering no lasting solution.

It simply commands us to **stop** sinning, but we cannot.

No matter how many second chances the law might give us, we **will** sin again.

Thus the Law makes it plain that our **nature** is to sin.

(n.b. the same is true of the gospel, which admits that nothing can save man except for a gracious act of God!)

Until Christ shall come again, we are all, indeed, sinners saved by grace.

Verse 4 reads:

(Verse 4)

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

This is simply true and everyone knows it.

How could animal blood revise history and erase past sins?

How could animal blood transform our natural tendency to disobey God?

It simply can't. Therefore the Law has never saved anybody and never will.

Only God can do that.

And it will necessarily need to be a gracious act of God, not something we could ever accomplish or deserve.

Because what we **deserve**, is death, or something worse than death.

Our salvation requires that God forgive our past sins and change us so that we no longer sin in the future.

This is fairly obvious.

And men have always known it.

Which leads us into the next passage

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 5 - 10

Would someone please read **Verses 5 - 10** of Hebrews Chapter 10, in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;

6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

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

8 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),

9 then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second.

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

Thank you.

There is some literary complexity here, that I will try to deal with near the end of class, or next week.

But before getting lost in that, I think we should make sure we are getting the simple message here.

The sense of this passage is clear, isn't it?

The passage we just read begins with the word "consequently."

Q. What does that (i.e. the word "consequently") mean?

A. It means that what follows the word "consequently" is the result or consequence of what went before.

Q. And what went before?

A. The observation that the sacrifices and offerings, and indeed the whole Law, served to remind people of sin, but without ever being able to put sin away.

Law points to the very great problem of sin but not to any workable solution.

Then in Verse 5 we read,

(Verse 5)

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;"

So, because it was always impossible for the Law to put away sin, when Christ came into the world, he said something like the words attributed to him in Verse 5.

Q. So **who** speaks the words following the quotation marks?

A. Jesus. And he spoke those words "when he came into the world."

Q. To whom does Jesus speak these words?

A. God, the Father.

So "**consequently**" (i.e. because the Law is not ever going to save anyone) Jesus having entered the world said to God, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me."

Without any doubt, Jesus understood that God did **not** desire sacrifices and offerings.

And this is something that almost all of the Old Testament prophets understood

and which most of the Jews in later times agreed with.

Even most of the Pharisees of Jesus day would have agreed with this basic theological point (i.e. that our God is not a God who could ever be satisfied with sacrifices and offerings or find pleasure in them).

This helps to explain why the Jews were not more devastated when the temple was torn down in 70 AD and it was no longer possible to perform these sacrifices and offerings.

Their religion survives to this day, without any of the sacrifices and offerings that were made while the temple was standing or, centuries earlier, in the Tabernacle.

Although it leaves them in considerable doubt regarding the mechanism for the atonement for sin!

In any case everyone has always known that animal sacrifices and grain offerings and the like could not put away sin, or satisfy the holy God who created and sustains the universe.

Q. But weren't these ceremonies ordered by YHVH in the first place?

A. Yes.

Q. Why?

A. As shadows of the good things to come.

A. As symbols of deep and eternal spiritual truth.

A. As reminders of the seriousness and pervasiveness of sin.

A. As a picture of man's separation from God.

A. As an indication of the desperate need for something, someone, who could put away sin.

A. As marks of the obedience (and disobedience) of Israel to the commands of her God

A. As protections against idolatry, until a better protection should come.

The Law did all of these things, and more, until the time of Christ, who would do perfectly all such things.

The Law was, as some bright person said last week, a kind of a placeholder for Jesus.

So it was always Christ and never the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Law which God desired, and the latter served only the preparation for the former.

Jesus of Nazareth is the body that God prepared for his eternal Son, in whom all of these things would be accomplished perfectly and, therefore, the sacrifices no longer have a place.

Certainly God never took any **pleasure** in the burnt offerings or the sin offerings, in and of themselves, as we read in verse 6

(Verse 6)

in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Although I daresay that God sometimes did take great pleasure in such offerings when they were offered, as was sometimes the case, by men as solemn and sincere acts of obedience and contrition and worship.

But then, too, God's pleasure would have derived from the work of Christ that such offerings presaged.

And this eternal work of Christ was and is and ever shall be before God's eyes.

This is why we, sinners that we are, continue to exist, because Christ intercedes for us.

And Jesus, our Lord, was clearly aware of the work that he had been sent to do.

In Verse 7 we hear him say:

(Verse 7)

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

Not only did the great prophets understand that God did not desire animal sacrifices and ceremonies,

they also understood that One would come whose sacrifice God **did** desire.

And Jesus **understood** that he was this One foretold.

And He understood that with his coming, and with his obedient self-sacrifice, there would be no further purpose for the sacrifice of dumb animals or the other offerings and ceremonies of the Old Covenant.

At least it seems to me that this is what the author of Hebrews is saying in Verses 8 and 9

(Verses 8 and 9)

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), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second.

And so, in essence, we have the testimony of **Christ** as to discontinuation of the sacrifices and offerings set forth in the Law.

Q. And what **was** the will of God that Jesus came to do?

A. The answer is given in verse 10

(Verse 10)

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

This was God's **eternal** will, that **we** would be **sanctified**,

through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The "**offering of the body of Jesus Christ**" certainly includes his death on the cross of calvary.

But it also includes (as someone has said) the whole arc of his birth, life, death, and resurrection.

We rightly spend a lifetime pondering and praising the triune God for what happened in Christ!

Almost all of which now stands **behind** us in human history.

Notice the verb tense in Verse 10: "we **have been** sanctified"

And note again also that this sanctification is "**once for all**"

Whomever has been, is, or ever shall be saved, has **already** been saved by Jesus.

Some years ago, when the great theologian Karl Barth, as an old man, paid his first visit to the United States, he traveled around to various places, churches and seminaries and universities mostly, making speeches and answering questions.

At one point someone asked him, "When were you saved?"

His answer: "nearly 2000 years ago on the cross at Calvary!"

This is when **everyone** who is saved was saved!

Of course, when we examine ourselves, as Pastor Dennis asked us all to do in his sermon this past Sunday, we discover that we are not yet perfectly or fully sanctified --- far from it!!

But sanctification is a **process**, a work of the Holy Spirit, that has most certainly begun and is actively ongoing in all true believers and one that is certainly completed successfully at the second coming of Christ, but not before!

So no matter where we look, until Christ comes again, we will never find any "good Christians."

And certainly we should be afraid if we ever start believing **ourselves** to be "good Christians!"

But never fear: when God sees us, he sees us not as we are, but as we will be, and as we are to him eternally: Holy like Christ because of what Christ has accomplished for us and in accomplishing in us.

And because this is something that Christ accomplishes in accordance with God's eternal will, there is not the slightest chance that it can fail! Indeed it has already succeeded!!

(Sing "Blessed Assurance" and "It is Well With My Soul)

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 11-18

Would someone please read **Verses 11 - 18** of Hebrews Chapter 10, in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

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

12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

16 "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,"

17 then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Thank you.

Under the Old Covenant, there were many priests who were constantly busy, as we read in Verse 11

(Verse 11)

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

This stands in contrast to the way things are with Christ, under the New Covenant.

We read in verse 12:

(Verse 12)

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

Even in the earthly temple, made with human hands, none of the priests, not even the High Priest, ever sat down.

There wasn't even one chair in there.

Yet, Jesus, having finished his work, sat down.

And this was not in any earthly tent or temple, but in the very presence of God, and at his right hand.

By this we are instructed, that there is nothing further to be done about sin.

At least there is nothing further to be done to atone for sins, even those which have not yet been committed!

(n.b. church ceremonies which seem to do something to make atonement for sin, such as the Roman Catholic Mass, for example, are therefore questionable. It is at least important that such ceremonies NOT be understood as making repeated atonement for sin. Jesus did that once for all on the cross. Period.)

However Jesus does continue to make **intercession** for us with the Father,

as the Holy Spirit works in us, making us realize how sinful we are, and how much we need the salvation that can only be found in Christ, and as He gradually conforms us to his likeness.

As has been said before (9:28) Christ will come a second time to save those who are eagerly waiting for him, but not to atone for their sins, which he has already done, once for all.

But now, we read in verse 13, is a time of waiting

(Verse 13)

waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

Q. And who are his enemies?

A. Satan and all who serve him.

A. Everyone who opposes God and rejects the salvation and reconciliation offered through Christ.

A. Everything that is opposed to the eternal will of God, including sin and death.

At the perfect time appointed, Christ shall come to sweep away all of these things and save those of us who belong to him, all who are eagerly waiting for him.

And we shall enjoy a blessed eternal life together with him.

Again, Verse 14 summarizes

(Verse 14)

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

The victory is sure.

We have (already) been perfected by what Christ has accomplished

all of us who are (still) being sanctified.

At the moment, the Kingdom of Christ is "already but not yet" come.

We live on the seam of history, where the age which has passed away is connected to the coming age.

We live in the time when the prophecy of Jeremiah has (already) been and is (still) being fulfilled.

The preacher again supports this idea with a quotation from scripture,

which is what he means to say in Verse 15

(Verse 15)

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

This introduces the same words of the prophet Jeremiah, which were quoted once before, in Hebrews, Chapter 8,

and our author always understands the words of the prophets as the words of God, the Holy Spirit, who inspired the prophets to speak them.

We read:

(Verses 16 and 17)

"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," 17 then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

When God says that he "will not remember" our sins and lawless deeds, he means to say (at least) that because of what Christ has done on our behalf, those who belong to Christ need no longer need to be concerned that God will act against their past sins and lawless deeds.

But this notion (expressed in verse 17) is **added** to what is said before (in verse 16)

Under the New Covenant the Lord puts his laws on our hearts and writes them on our minds,

meaning, I think, that we who are in Christ are made to understand and to agree with God regarding the way that things should be, and to grieve when things are not that way, particularly within ourselves, and in the church.

and so we are joined in the battle against the enemies of Christ

and we wait eagerly for Christ to appear to save us and announce the final victory.

It is, in a peculiar way, I think, a great blessing that Christ allows us to share in his suffering.

Somehow the things we suffer for Christ are of great importance to God in eternity.

And it must be remembered that we, the Church, suffer these things together.

Today's lesson ends in Verse 18, which reads

(Verse 18)

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

The sacrifices and offerings of the Old Covenant were reminders of sin.

Under the New Covenant there are no sacrifices and offerings,

because the sins of God's people have been completely forgiven.

We know what is right and wrong --- it is being written in our hearts and minds.

We desire what is right and lament what is wrong --- we are being conformed to his likeness.

We battle against the enemies of Christ (within and without) until He comes.

And we eagerly await his coming.

Amen.

(n.b. This is where we stopped on February 9. The following "Additional Material" was not covered.)

Additional Material

In tonight's lesson (Hebrews 10:1-18) the author cites Old Testament scripture at least twice.

Please have a look at the handout I have prepared.

Concerning the Use of Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10

The first citation appears in Hebrews 10:5-7

We read, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book."

The author of Hebrews says, in the introductory clause of verse 5, that these words were said by Christ when he came into the world. (Do you see it?)

Certainly these words are consistent with the teaching of Christ and all the prophets and apostles.

But we must note that the author of Hebrews is citing Psalm 40, verses 6 through 8, as highlighted in yellow on the handout.

As always, the author of Hebrews is basing his citation on the Greek Old Testament,

whereas our modern translations of Psalm 40 are based on the Hebrew version.

This explains most of the differences you see on the handout between Psalm 40 and Hebrews 10.

The biggest difference is that in verse 6 of Psalm 40 (following the Hebrew text) the speaker says "but you have given me an open ear"

whereas in Hebrews 10 5 (following the Greek) the speaker says "but a body you have prepared for me."

In both cases God is said to have prepared something for his son: an "open ear" in the Hebrew version and a "body" in the Greek.

The best way of thinking of this, I conclude, is that when the Greek text speaks of an "open ear" it means to refer to the whole person.

But either version is equally fitting. Unlike the dumb animals which were sacrificed and offered under the Old Covenant, the speaker was a man, in God's image and likeness, with an ear open to God's words.

The speaker was capable of hearing and obeying God's will, as the dumb animals were not.

In any case, the more significant issue here is that, whether we read this psalm in the Hebrew or the Greek, it is inscribed as a "Psalm of David."

And the voice that is speaking to God is, in the first instance, the voice of a poet, probably King David.

Yet here and elsewhere the author of Hebrews hears in the voice of David the voice of Christ.

And he is not alone in this.

So do the other New Testament authors.

So did Jesus Himself.

They all understood David as a "type" of Christ and

and his speech at many points to be inspired and prophetic.

The words that we read here, spoken by David, could have been spoken rightly with respect to David himself.

Quite clearly David did understand that God preferred the obedience and willing self sacrifice of his people to the sacrifice of dumb animals.

And to some extent David might rightly say that he understood God's will and that he, himself, fulfilled ancient prophecy.

David was very great.

But it was his greater son Jesus about whom these things could be most fittingly said.

I hope this is clear.

Concerning the Use of Jeremiah 31 in Hebrews 10

The second citation of Old Testament scripture in today's reading (please look at the other side of your handout) was in Hebrews 10:16-17 where the citation is from Jeremiah 31:33-34.

We have studied this before, when we read Hebrews 8:8-12, where the author quotes more expansively from Jeremiah 31:31-34

As you can see from looking at the handout, there are no significant differences between the original passage in Jeremiah and the two citations of it which appear Hebrews.

In every case, the point is the same, and it is clear: God always intended to create a people who would know him and love him and willingly obey him.

We understand this to be the church that is gathered, and redeemed, and sanctified by Christ.

Questions?