

## **The Necessity of Jesus’s New Sacrificial Work: A Sermon on Hebrews 10:1–18**

Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

Sovereign Joy Baptist Church, 12/22/24

Merry Christmas. We’ve chosen to carry our study of Hebrews throughout Advent because the author clearly and repeatedly articulates that the purpose of Christ’s coming, the purpose of Christmas was to bring us to Easter and beyond. So, for example, Hebrews 2:8–9, declares, “At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” In this verse we see fused both Christmas and Easter: In his advent Jesus became human, being made a little lower than the angels, so that he might taste death for us and through this to be crowned with glory and honor. In celebrating Christ’s coming, we celebrate with hope what he would accomplish. One of my prayers today is that God would let you leave here readied to celebrate Christmas with proper hope. To that end, pray with me....

Turn to Hebrews 10:1–18. Since chapter 8 the author has been arguing for the superiority of Christ’s new covenant priestly work, especially in relation to the patterns set in place by Moses. 8:6: “Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.” 9:11–12: “When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent ... he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”

The author is nearly ready to turn his book toward application. But first he seeks to press home the ineffectiveness of the whole old priestly system and to highlight the absolute necessity of Jesus’s new sacrificial work. Beginning in 10:1, follow along as I read....

The main idea of Hebrews 10:1–18 is this: The inability of the Law to mature worshipers necessitated Jesus’s new sacrificial work, which destroys the first order, sanctifies worshipers, addresses sins once for all, and secures his present and future supremacy. The passage has two parts, which will shape the two parts of my sermon: (1) The Need for Jesus’s Sacrificial Work (10:1–4); (2) The Nature of Jesus’s Sacrificial Work (10:5–18). As we walk through the passage, keep in mind that the purpose of Jesus’s coming at Christmas was the cross and

through the cross his exaltation that you and I could be saved. The king was born to die that you and I might live.

### **The Need for Jesus’s Sacrificial Work (10:1–4)**

Our passage opens with the conjunction “for” that signals what follows provides an additional reason why Jesus needed to come as a better high priest. The ESV breaks up the syntax, but the main answer in verse 1 is this: “The Law ... can never ... make perfect those who draw near” (cf. 7:11, 19). We must remember that Hebrews was written at the start of the overlap of the ages where the new age, new creation, and new covenant had intruded upon the old age, old creation, and old covenant. Jesus had come at the fullness of time, at the climax of redemptive history, to fulfill what was promised, to give the substance of what was foreshadowed, and to realize what was only anticipated. Yet the systems of worship that were in place for centuries were not easily set aside, and many were questioning how Christians should relate to old covenant laws and temple worship. Why was Jesus’s coming necessary, and how did his saving work change the *status quo*? The author of Hebrews is going out of his way to clarify the weaknesses of the old order and the need for Jesus to bring something new.

10:1 says, “the Law ... can never ... make perfect those who draw near.” “Those drawing near” were the assembled covenant members of Israel who were seeking to enjoy God’s holy presence without dying (Exod 16:9; 34:32; Lev 9:5; Num 10:3–4; cf. Lev 10:3–4). “Continually ... every year” these old covenant worshipers offered “the same sacrifices.” The annual cycle refers to the Day of Atonement, which marked the start of the Israelite new year and a fresh beginning in every covenant member’s relationship with God. On this one day a year, the high priest as representative of the people brought sacrificial substitutionary blood into the Holy of Holies, the divine throne-room, and by this and the other required duties symbolically displayed to God and the world that the defiling sins of the priests, people, and sanctuary had been temporarily addressed (Lev 16:21, 34).

Next, we learn that the various annual sacrifices were but a “shadow of good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.” There is a difference between a shadow and its substance. A shadow tells us something about the true form but is itself not that form; and once we follow the shadow to its reality, we no longer need to focus on the shadow. The sacrifices, priesthood, and temple of Moses’s day were merely “a copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (8:5), and these “heavenly things” were “the good things to come” (10:1).

Back in 9:11–12 we learned that these “good things ... have come” “when Christ appeared as a high priest,” having “entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus

securing an eternal redemption.” The “good things” to come, therefore, relate to the true cleansing of our consciences from sin (9:14, 22) and our true hope of eternal salvation in the presence of the living God (9:28)—things that were not possible through the old covenant rituals themselves. People in the old covenant like Moses and Rahab, Hanna and Jeremiah, could enjoy forgiveness and right standing with God but only because Jesus would ultimately come. The Law by itself “can never ... make perfect those who draw near” (10:1).

This is why the author now adds in verses 2–4 proof of his claim. How do we know that the Law can’t perfect worshipers? Verse 2 says, “Would [the sacrifices] not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” In the old era, the continual cycle of sacrifices reminded both God and people that sin in all its forms was serious and that, ultimately, “it is impossible for blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (10:4). They needed a better substitute, a better sacrifice.

### **The Nature of Jesus’s Sacrificial Work (10:5–18)**

“Consequently....” With this inferential particle, the argument shifts from the need for Jesus’s sacrificial work to describe the nature of this work. The unit is divided into three parts related to Jesus’s saving work: its timing (10:5a–b), its announcement (10:5c–7), and its explanation (10:8–18).

#### **The Timing of Jesus’s New Sacrificial Work: Advent (10:5a–b)**

We start with the timing. It relates to advent and Jesus’s incarnation, when the second person of the Trinity took on flesh and became human. Verse 5 says that redemptive history shifts and shadow gives rise to substance and the new order triumphs over the old “when Christ came into the world....”

In the days of Herod, king of Judea ... the angel Gabriel was sent from God to ... Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgins name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you! ... Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:5, 26–28, 30–33)

An angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her

is from the Holy spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matt 1:20–21)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.... And Joseph went up from ... Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, ... [and] said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:1–14)

Thus, old gave rise to the new and all redemptive history reached its climax, never to be the same. It happened “when Christ came into the world (Heb 10:5).

### **The Announcement of Jesus’s New Sacrificial Work (10:5c–7)**

We now see Christ himself announce his new sacrificial work. He cites Psalm 40:6–8: “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.’” Jesus assumes that he is the actor or main voice in Psalm 40. He highlights how Yahweh, the God of Israel, took no pleasure in the sacrifices and offerings of the people. Here he does not tell us why, but other prophets highlight how it was because the offerings themselves were empty when not given with true repentance (e.g., Isa 1:10–17; 66:3–4; Mic 6:6–8). Jesus then says that he comes to fulfill God’s will, just as it is written “in the scroll of the book,” which likely refers to the Book of Moses, the Pentateuch (cf. John 5:46). Consider some of the predictions that Moses makes about Jesus and his saving work.

To the serpent God said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15). Thus, a male descendant of Eve would strike a death blow to the serpent while being struck himself.

Later, God’s provision to Abraham of a ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac resulted in both him and Moses recognizing how that event pointed to a future deliverance: “So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The LORD will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided’” (22:14). Yahweh then immediately prophesies about the coming one: “And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (22:17–18).

Next, Jacob declares, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (49:10). Genesis then notes, “He has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes,” suggesting that his victory comes at the cost of blood. As we move into Exodus, the Passover lamb highlights the need for a substitute sacrifice if the firstborn was to live, and all the tabernacle’s sacrifices for sin equally foreshadow the need for God to provide pardon. With just this short list we start to get a sense for what Jesus meant when he referred to doing God’s will as it was written “in the scroll of the book.”

Already in Hebrews similar things have been stated regarding God’s purpose for Jesus’s coming. 2:10: “It was fitting that [God], for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Or 2:14: “Since therefore the children [God would give Jesus] share in flesh and blood, [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” And 2:17: “[Jesus] had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” These are all purpose statements that clarify God’s will and that indicate what Jesus meant in Gethsemane when he declared, “Not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

### **The Explanation of Jesus’s New Sacrificial Work (10:8–18)**

The author now reflects on the significance of Jesus’s words, giving two explanations. First, Jesus’s one sacrifice destroys the first order and sanctifies worshipers. Look with me at verses 8–10. “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’ (10:8–9b). At this, the author adds, “He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:9c–10). When he refers to the first and second he’s talking about a shift in epoch’s from the age of sacrifices to the single sacrifice of Christ. The language is similar to 8:13, where

the author said, “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete.” Jesus fulfills his Father’s will by offering his own body as a sacrifice, and the author now says that through this, “we have been sanctified ... once for all.” Here sanctification is treated as an accomplished fact with lasting results.

What was needed for worshipers like us to enter before the presence of the holy God was that we would ourselves be holy. Yet this was impossible due to the scars of sin. Within the old covenant, the only answer was to rely on God’s provision of an unblemished animal substitute. The animal’s symbolic perfection was counted as the worshiper’s, and the animal itself symbolically took on the worshiper’s sins and was slaughtered in his stead (cf. Lev 9:3–5). Yet in Hebrews 9:13 we learned that “the blood of goats and bulls” could only “sanctify for the purification of the flesh.” Indeed, as it said in 10:4, “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” The animal sacrifices could not effect inward, spiritual cleansing. An unblemished beast could not ultimately take the place of the need for a perfect human. And the slaying of an animal could not ultimately satisfy God’s wrath against human sin. So, as highlighted in 9:14, only “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God,” can “purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” As one who was not only 100% God but also 100% man, Jesus’s perfections were able to be counted as ours, and he was able justly to bear God’s wrath against human sin. As such, the author now celebrates in 10:10 that “we have been sanctified,” and through this holiness we have access to God’s presence.

In saying that “we have been sanctified,” he declares that God views all who are in Christ as having become perfect; in his eyes we are fully mature (10:1, 14), having purified “our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (9:14; cf. 10:2). If you are Christ’s, all your lusts and pride, your lies and anger, your prejudice and laziness have been punished and forgiven. The result is “no condemnation” (Rom 8:1). And this was God’s will—his purpose that he set forth in Christ before time began (Eph 1:9–10). Amazing grace! God willed that Jesus Christ would offer his body to make us holy before God.

Unlike old covenant sacrifices, which were continual, Jesus’s single sacrifice was “once for all” (Heb 10:10). 7:27 says, “[Jesus] has no need, like those high priests [of old], to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this *once for all* when he offered up himself.” And 9:12 says, “He entered *once for all* into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” So, the first way the author explains Jesus’s new sacrificial work is that Jesus’s one sacrifice destroys the first order and sanctifies worshipers.

Next, he tells us that Jesus’s one sacrifice addresses sins for all time and secures his present and future supremacy (10:11–18). Look first at 10:11–14:

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

The focus now is not on the annual Day of Atonement sacrifice but on the daily sacrifices that the priests would offer on behalf of themselves and the people. That the priests are standing adds to the sense that their work was never done (cf. Deut 18:5), and the reason was that, as in 10:4, these repeated sacrifices “can never take away sins” (10:11).

But things are different with Jesus, for “when this one had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (10:12). That Jesus is sitting highlights the finished nature of what he accomplished. That he is at God’s right hand clarifies that Jesus succeeded in what he set out to do and is now reigning with the Majesty on High (cf. 1:3; 8:1–2). The contrasts here are many:

1. The old covenant had many priests, but Jesus operates alone, and the Greek stresses this at the beginning of verse 12 by saying “this one” had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.”
2. The many priests stand, whereas Jesus sits.
3. The old covenant priests offer many sacrifices, but Jesus offered himself.
4. They offer sacrifices repeatedly but he offers himself once for all time (cf. 9:25–28; 10:1–3, 10).
5. The priests’ sacrifices were not able to take away sins, but Jesus’s sacrifice perfects and sanctifies completely, thus securing our lasting access to God.

The author’s wording in verses 12–13 recalls Psalm 110 regarding Jesus as the promised king-priest. He sits at God’s right hand as he awaits the day when his enemies will be fully destroyed. Jesus’s present and future supremacy are sure. How do we know? Verses 14–18 tell us why.

Verse 14 initially states that we know Christ’s present and future victory is sure because “by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” Neither the old covenant priesthood (7:11), nor the law (7:19), nor the sacrifices (9:9; 10:1) were able to perfect or mature people in a way that allowed them to enjoy God’s presence. Yet Jesus’s single offering does just this. To say that Jesus perfects those who are sanctified means that in Christ God regards us as perfect, thus allowing us to have 24/7 access to his presence. As it says in 4:16, we can now “with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive

mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Through this hope we draw near to God (7:19) with cleansed consciences (9:9, 13–14), certain that we will enjoy the promised eternal inheritance (9:15) among the saints (12:23; cf. 11:40).

Finally, in 10:15–18, the author now restates these truths by highlighting that they fulfill the predictions of Jer 31:31–33. Notice that in saying Jeremiah’s words come from the Holy Spirit, the author is recognizing that Jeremiah’s book is the very word of God.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, “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,” then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (Heb 10:15–18)

10:3 said that the repeated sacrifices of the old covenant supplied an annual “reminder of sins.” But now verses 17–18 say that the single sacrifice of Christ provides a way for God to “remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” And “where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.” To say that God forgets our sins is a legal claim. It means not that he stops being all knowing but that he stops counting our sins against us and starts working for us.

In conclusion, friends, the inability of the Law to mature worshipers necessitated Jesus’s new sacrificial work, which destroys the first order, sanctifies worshipers, addresses sins once for all, and secures his present and future supremacy. Today, all the grace you need, all the help you want, all the hope you long for has been secured through Christ’s single sacrifice. To fulfill God’s will, Jesus came at Christmas and died and rose at Easter, thus securing our full redemption. He can fully sympathize with our weaknesses, for he was tempted as we are, yet without sin (4:15). Because of his victory, “he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25). Even now, this moment, he is appearing “in the presence of God on our behalf” (9:24). So, whatever your need, whatever your cares, “with confidence draw near to throne of grace” for you will “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (4:16). Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift. What a Christmas!