

The Sacrificial Death of Jesus Christ: Hebrews 10:5-14

People make many sacrifices for a variety of different reasons. And this memorial weekend we remember the sacrifices of so many of our military men and women who have died giving their lives in defending our nation and our freedoms. God instituted a sacrificial system in the Old Testament with the sacrifices of grain and animals for a variety of situations whereby the people of God could express their devotion, their thankfulness, their worship, their commitment, their repentance, their confession, and their trust. God accepted their sacrifices if it came from their hearts. Those sacrifices, however, could never really accomplish the cleansing of our consciences from sin, according to the writer of Hebrews. That is why those sacrifices continued every day. God provided the greatest sacrifice to which the entire sacrificial system pointed toward. A once for all sacrifice that would initiate the New Covenant and bring about the complete forgiveness of sin. That sacrifice is the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is hinted at and foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Jesus taught about it in the gospels. The sermons in the book of Acts emphasize it. The letters of Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John, including the book of Revelation all acknowledge it and teach of its implications and results. The book of Hebrews is explicit on the necessity and the results of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the greatest sacrifice bringing about the initiation of the New Covenant, the forgiveness of our sin, and eternal life. I would like to focus on what the writer of Hebrews emphasizes in Hebrews 10:5-14.

⁵Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;

⁶with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷Then I

said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, O God.’”⁸ First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made).⁹ Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second.¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy¹

I. Done According to God’s Will

The first point I want to emphasize is that the sacrificial death of Jesus was done according to God’s will. The death of Jesus was not some accident or tragedy. It was God’s will and God’s plan to rescue creation. We have a problem called sin. Thankfully, God acted by sending Jesus Christ into the world to make things right. David Peterson writes that “The author is about to explore the significance of an important biblical passage, revealing God’s plan to set aside the sacrificial system and establish his will ‘through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all’. Remarkably, however, this ancient text is put into the mouth of the Son of God ‘as he comes into the world’. This is a way of speaking about the purpose of his incarnation. The incarnate Son is represented

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Heb 10:5–14.

as addressing his Father in the words of Psalm 40:6–8 and expressing his intention to do his Father’s will.”² This is why the eternal Son of God became human, lived and died on this earth. Thomas Lea notes that “When Christ came, he willingly committed his life to the plan of God. Doing God’s will was his supreme goal. The scroll probably referred to what was written in the Old Testament Scriptures. Christ came to fulfill the promises of Scripture. In Psalm 40 the words appearing after the reference to the “scroll” describe someone who desires to do God’s will because the divine law is in his heart. Surely these words describe the attitude of Christ. Christ came to earth with the passion of doing the will of God.”³ Jesus demonstrated his complete willingness and obedience to sacrifice himself to pay the penalty of our sins. He took the judgment we deserve.

Leon Morris reminds us that “We should see the statement concerning the necessity of sacrifice as another illustration of the attitude consistently maintained by the author that the OT system is divinely inspired but preliminary. He holds it to be effective but only within its own limited scope. The sacrifices were commanded in God’s law and therefore must be offered. But they were not God’s final will nor God’s answer to the problem of sin. They were partial and they pointed the way. Even though they came as part of the law we are to recognize their

² David G. Peterson, [*Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London; Downers Grove, IL: IVP; IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 224–225.

³ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 183.

limitation.”⁴ However, there is no limitation when it comes to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ who came to fulfill God’s will.

2. Establishes the New Covenant

The second point that I want to make about the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is that it establishes the New Covenant. Verse 9 states that in doing the Father’s will, Jesus has set aside the first covenant, the Law of Moses, with its sacrificial system by establishing the second, the new covenant. Later in this chapter quoting from Jeremiah 31:33-34, Hebrews 10:16-18 says, “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”¹⁷ Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.”⁵ The sacrificial death of Jesus has provided complete forgiveness for all our sins for all time. Yes, we continue to deal with sin as a power against which we struggle because the sinful nature still resides within us. We need to remember how the sacrificial death of Jesus has dealt decisively with our sins. Clinton Arnold writes that “Hebrews proclaims that new covenant believers no longer have a “consciousness of sin,” meaning an awareness of sin as prohibitive of our relationship with God. Rather, we have free entrance into the Most Holy Place by virtue of our high priest, Jesus. This is a cause for great celebration. Our sins past and present have already been paid for by one sacrifice, a sacrifice so effective that it never

⁴ Leon Morris, [“Hebrews,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 99.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Heb 10:16–18.

needs to be repeated.”⁶ The sacrificial death of Jesus establishes that new covenant in which we now live.

3. Atonement for our sin

The third point that I want to make about the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is his death is the atonement for our sin. Our sin separates us from God, and we need reconciliation and restoration for a relationship with God. Atonement is the act through which God makes possible the restoration of a relationship of harmony and unity between God and sinful humans. According to 1st John 2:2 Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and for the sins of the entire world. *Nelson’s Illustrated New Bible Dictionary* says that “Although Old Testament believers were truly forgiven and received genuine atonement through animal sacrifice, the New Testament clearly states that during the Old Testament period God’s justice was not served: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). Atonement was possible “because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Rom. 3:25). However, God’s justice was served in the death of Jesus Christ as a substitute: “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). “And for this reason, He is the Mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 9:15).”⁷ By establishing that new covenant he brings atonement.

⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#), vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 63.

⁷ Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., [*Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

Clinton Arnold writes that “Hebrews 10:12 alludes to Psalm 110:1. As used here in 10:12 the psalm verse emphasizes the finality and decisive nature of Christ’s sacrifice for sins. For Hebrews, that the Son has sat down in his place of authority until the end of the age when all his enemies will be dealt their final blow shows that his sacrifice was completely sufficient for the forgiveness of sins. The new covenant people have been made whole, complete, and perfectly suited for entrance into the presence of the Father.”⁸ N.T. Wright says “What was wrong was that the old sacrifices needed to be done over and over again, thus demonstrating that they hadn’t really dealt with the problem. If I have to take my car back to the mechanic every week with the same problem, that’s a fair indication that he hasn’t succeeded in fixing it.”⁹ The sacrificial death of Jesus fixes our problem and atones for our sin.

4. Triumph over sin, death, and grave

The fourth point that I want to make about the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is that it triumphs over sin, death, and the grave. The death of Jesus on the cross is victory. The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2:13-15 “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross, and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public

⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#), vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 63.

⁹ Tom Wright, [*Hebrews for Everyone*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 107.

spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” The writer of Hebrews uses Psalm 110 to express the triumph and victory of Jesus Christ. Thomas Lea writes that “The present era is a waiting period as Christ anticipates a final victory over his enemies. We have been living in this era since the time of Jesus’ exaltation to heaven. Christ has already won the victory, but we do not yet see the complete defeat of Christ’s spiritual enemies. Rather than complaining about the delay, we should see this time as a day of grace to allow outsiders to experience God’s mercy and forgiveness. We have no doubt or question about the ultimate outcome.”¹⁰ We need to share our faith with others so that they too can share in the triumph of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

5. Holy-it presents us holy before God

The fifth point that I want to make about the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is that it makes us holy and presents us holy before God. George Guthrie says, “It was by God’s will, expressed in the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, that believers have been made holy.”¹¹ David Peterson writes that “Sanctification in these verses refers to a new covenant relationship with God made possible by the sacrifice of his Son. It is a status that is given to those who believe the gospel and approach the Father trusting in the sufficiency of the Son’s atoning

¹⁰ Thomas D. Lea, [Hebrews, James](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 184.

¹¹ George Guthrie, [Hebrews](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 328.

work.”¹² The Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 1:21-22 “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.” There is no way that any of us can say that we can be presented before God without blemish and free from accusation on our own merit. We need the sacrificial death of Jesus to make us holy. Thomas Lea reminds us that “On the cross Christ has already made a single offering so that in generation after generation he is continually making holy all who respond in faith. To become perfect did not promise sinless perfection, but it promised believers the full realization of God’s saving purpose.”¹³ The sacrificial death of Jesus makes us holy.

We must never forget the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. His sinless life, his resurrection and ascension demonstrate and prove the effectiveness and sufficiency of his once for all sacrificial death. He makes us holy and wants us to reflect that holiness in the lives that we live and how we treat others. Think of how God desires us to treat others. Our sins are forgiven so we do not need to live in guilt. It is true that the Holy Spirit will convict us when we sin, but we do not need to live in guilt over our sins. Confess and repent of our sins and live and walk in that forgiveness while extending forgiveness to others. It is a freedom we enjoy because of the sacrificial death of Jesus. We live and

¹² David G. Peterson, [*Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London; Downers Grove, IL: IVP; IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 228.

¹³ Thomas D. Lea, [*Hebrews, James*](#), vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 184–185.

share in his victory through faith in the grace of God expressed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.