

# The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא  
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה  
אַחֲ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה  
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמְצָה  
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה  
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



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# Outline of Hebrews

## “Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)**

# Outline of Hebrews

## IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)

- A. Jesus Was Appointed By God to Be Our Compassionate But Sinless High Priest (4:14–5:10)
- B. Jesus Is Better – Don't Apostatize (5:11-6:20)
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- D. Jesus Is the Mediator of a **New** Covenant That Is ***Far Superior*** to the ***Old*** Covenant (8:1-13)
- E. Jesus' Sacrifice Is Better Than the Temple Sacrifices (9:1-10:18)

# Outline of Hebrews

- A. Jesus' Sacrifice Is Better Than the Temple Sacrifices **(9:1-10:18)**
  - 1. Ministry Under the Old Covenant. **(9:1-10)**
  - 2. Ministry Under the New Covenant **(9:11-14)**
  - 3. Further Reflections on the New Covenant **(9:15-10:18)**
    - a. The Need for the Death of the Covenant Ratifier **(9:15-22)**
    - b. The Need for the Ultimate to Replace the Type **(9:23-28)**
    - c. The Repetition of the OT Sacrifices Shows Their Inadequacy **(10:1-4)**
    - d. Jesus' Once-for-All Sacrifice Cancelled the Old System **(10:5-10)**
    - e. Jesus' Completed Sacrifice **(10:11-14)**
    - f. Final Forgiveness Promised in the New Covenant Realized **(10:15-18)**

# The Repetition of the OT Sacrifices Shows Their Inadequacy (10:1-4)

*<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? <sup>3</sup> But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. <sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

# Introduction

- Many of the arguments of the preceding two chapters are restated in this section (10:1-18), bringing the *central* argument of the letter, namely, the imperfection of the old covenant and the perfection of the new covenant, to a conclusion.
- The author begins this *first* section by focusing on the repetitious character of the levitical sacrifices, and further develops his argument by pointing out that the *repetition* involved in these sacrifices *shows* their *inadequacy*.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- The author has already made the point (back in chapter 8) that the old covenant **tabernacle** was a “**shadow**” of greater, heavenly realities (Heb 8:5)
- He now applies this **same** description to “**the law**” itself.
- As with the old covenant tabernacle, the law’s sacrificial system can only be seen as an **imperfect copy** of what God ultimately had in mind.
- Calling the OT law a “**shadow**” suggests that the earthly system mimics **enough** of the original to point God’s people to greater, heavenly “**realities**”.
- But at the same time, the perpetual need for “**sacrifices that are continually offered every year**”, demonstrates its **inadequacy**.

<sup>1</sup> 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.**

- What concerns the author most is the law's inability to “**make perfect those who draw near**” to worship God.
- The “perfection” he has in mind is a right relationship with God, in which the worshipers are once and for all cleansed from sin and delivered from a nagging sense of guilt.
- The fact that the old covenant system could not deliver in this regard, as demonstrated by offerings made “**every year**”, shows the need for a better system.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- In Col 2:17 Paul uses an expression **similar** to what we find in this verse, declaring that the **Sabbath** day observance was “*a shadow of the things to come*”.
- The author strongly warns his readers that they must not turn back from “*the good things*” (that we have in Christ and his new covenant) to the “*shadow*” (the OT law and the old covenant of which it was a part).

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- What is striking about this verse is how **emphatic** the language is to underscore the law's **inferiority**.
- Temporal words are piled up to express the idea:
  - The law "**can never**" perfect those who draw near
  - Sacrifices under the old covenant "**are continually offered**" but true forgiveness is not obtained.
  - The "**same sacrifices**" are brought "**every year**"
- He doesn't go so far as to call the law **evil**, but at the same time the author shows us there is a **futility** and **frustration** in "**the law**" and its sacrifices, because it's like a merry-go-round that never stops.

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

- So, according to verse 1, the law and its sacrifices can never perfect those drawing near to God.
- Now in verse 2 the author makes a case that the law doesn't bring ***cleansing from sin***.
- If cleansing from sin had ***truly*** been achieved, the sacrifices would have ***ceased*** – there would no longer be a ***need*** for them.
- The nub of the issue is addressed here: if the sacrifices were effective, the worshippers, having “***been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins***”.
- They would be assured that full and final forgiveness had been accomplished and would be ***free*** from the defiling guilt of sin.

<sup>2</sup> *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 content of this verse is remarkably similar to Heb 9:14, though there the author speaks **positively** of the **effectiveness** of **Christ's** sacrifice: *“how much more will the blood of Christ... purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”* – Christ's blood cleanses (or purifies – the same root word in the Greek) our **“conscience”** so that we can serve God.
- Old Testament sacrifices, on the other hand, **“cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper”** (Heb 9:9)

<sup>3</sup> *But in these sacrifices there is a **reminder** of sins every year.* <sup>4</sup> *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

- The law's sacrificial system, rather than *delivering* worshipers from guilt, actually has the effect of **reminding** them of their sinfulness and, therefore, their constant separation from God
- Why is this the case under the old covenant? Because the sacrifices of that system – “*the blood of bulls and goats*” – do not have the **ability** to remove sins.

<sup>3</sup> *But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.* <sup>4</sup> *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

- Earlier in the letter, the author said that the old testament sacrifices could “*sanctify*” or “*purify*” (Heb 9:13, 23) people, but here, significantly, he uses a word translated “*take away*”, a word used with reference to sin in only **one** other place in the New Testament:
  - In Romans 11:26-27 Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah saying, “*The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.*”

<sup>3</sup> *But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.* <sup>4</sup> *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

- Here, as in the Romans passage, the idea of **taking away** sin speaks of the burden sin placed on the worshiper's conscience being lifted in a decisive, perpetually effective cleansing, which establishes one's status before God.
- This is what the old covenant sacrifices were **unable** to do, which is why sin remained a detrimental force that permanently prevented a right relationship between God and his people.

# Outline of Hebrews

- A. Jesus' Sacrifice Is Better Than the Temple Sacrifices **(9:1-10:18)**
  - 1. Ministry Under the Old Covenant. **(9:1-10)**
  - 2. Ministry Under the New Covenant **(9:11-14)**
  - 3. Further Reflections on the New Covenant **(9:15-10:18)**
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    - d. Jesus' Once-for-All Sacrifice Cancelled the Old System **(10:5-10)**
    - e. Jesus' Completed Sacrifice **(10:11-14)**
    - f. Final Forgiveness Promised in the New Covenant Realized **(10:15-18)**

# **Jesus' Once-for-All Sacrifice Cancelled the Old System (10:5-10)**

<sup>5</sup> *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.’” [Psalm 40:6-8]*

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

<sup>5</sup> **Consequently**, when *Christ came into the world*, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.’” [Psalm 40:6-8]

- The word “*consequently*” shows the connection of thought between what has come before and what now follows, the inability of the law’s sacrificial system being set in stark contrast to the ministry of Christ.
- Here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, the author uses the phrase “*Christ came into the world*” to refer to the Incarnation (e.g., John 1:9; 6:14; 11:27).

<sup>5</sup> *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'*" [Psalm 40:6-8]

- The author cites Psalm 40:6-8 from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), as is his practice.
- This text has two primary components in which the author shows special interest:
  - God's dissatisfaction with the old covenant sacrificial offerings
  - The willing obedience of the speaker, whom our author understands to be Christ.

<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.’” [Psalm 40:6-8]

- English readers who compare Psalm 40:6 to its citation in Hebrews 10:5 will notice a **significant** difference in the wording of one particular phrase:
  - The author of Hebrews, following the wording reflected in Psalm 40:6 of the *Septuagint*, writes, “**a body have you prepared for me**”
  - But the **Hebrew** of Psalm 40:6 translates something like this: “**You have given me an open ear**”.

<sup>5</sup> *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'"* [Psalm 40:6-8]

- So, how did the Septuagint get:
  - From (the Hebrew): "*you have given me an open ear*"
  - To: "*a body have you prepared for me*."
- Somebody made this change when translating the Greek Septuagint from the original Hebrew. Why?
- There's not enough evidence to be totally sure, but DA Carson has made what I believe to be a very plausible suggestion as to what happened.

<sup>5</sup> *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'"* [Psalm 40:6-8]

- Anybody who is fluent in two or more languages knows that there are certain kinds of things that just don't translate well from one language to another.
- For example, In English we say, "I've got a frog in my throat."
- Someone who speaks French would find this to be a very odd expression.
- Do you know what the French say? They say, "I have a cat in the throat."
- You might think it's a bit odd to have a cat in your throat. They think it's a bit odd to have a frog in your throat!

<sup>5</sup> *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'"* [Psalm 40:6-8]

- Now suppose you're translating something from English into French and the expression in English includes, "I've got a frog in my throat." How do you translate it into French?
- Probably you change it to cat if it's just a free idiom. But suppose there's something deeply theological connected with the word frog? Then you've got a really difficult choice to make in your translation.
- Translation work often involves making these kinds of choices.

<sup>5</sup> *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.’” [Psalm 40:6-8]*

- Carson’s suggestion is that when the Septuagint translator came to this line, “*you have given me an open ear*” (so that I might hear what you have said and obey you), the translator thought, “If I put that in literally, nobody’s going to understand it. That is just so out of keeping with how we would say it in Greek.”
- So he put down a ***paraphrase***: “I’m yours. My body is yours. You prepared a body for me so that I might give myself up in service to you,” which essentially is what the original Hebrew is saying.

<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*)...

- The author now provides an explanation of the verse that he cited from Psalm 40, drawing the reader’s attention to what was written “*above*” (which he cited in Heb 10:5-6).
- God had “*neither desired nor taken pleasure*” in the Levitical “*sacrifices*”, which included the whole “*burnt offerings*” and “*sin offerings*.”
- The author then offers his comment on such sacrifices: they were “*offered according to the law*.”

<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**)...

- The “*sacrifices and offerings*” 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*”.

<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**.

- Hebrews pays close attention to the wording of the text, particularly to the **sequence** implied by the text.
- The author sees a setting aside of the animal sacrifices that are replaced by (or perhaps better “fulfilled by”) the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- The word “*then*” is important, showing that God’s “*will*” for Jesus was the offering of his body, the giving up of his life.
- The author discerns a **sequence** in the text of Psalm 40: the “*first*” is taken away, i.e., the sacrifices and offerings mandated in the law.
- The “*first covenant*” (8:7,13; 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.

<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**.*

- The “*first*” **anticipates** and **points** to the “*second*”, but once the second has come, believers should not revert to the first.
- Now that the Servant of the Lord has given himself as an offering for the people, there is no going back.
- OT sacrifices will never be reinstated now that the great and final forgiveness has come in Jesus Christ.

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

- The superiority of the second and final sacrifice is explained further.
- Jesus did the “*will*” of God by the giving of his “*body*” 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 or blemish.
- And, as noted earlier in this letter, Christ was a *willing* victim, in *contrast* to the animals who were *forced* to give up their lives and who had no idea why they were being slain.

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

- Jesus, on the other hand, gave himself **willingly** and **voluntarily** so that others could be cleansed and forgiven.
- And **his** sacrifice is “*once for all*.”
- It was the definitive and final sacrifice so that no further sacrifices were 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.

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

- The author emphasizes here that believers “*have been sanctified*” through Jesus’ self-offering.
- 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.
- 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.

# Class Discussion Time



## \*Class Discussion Time

- The New International translation of the Bible has often been criticized for using a method of translation they call “dynamic equivalence”:
  - *Dynamic equivalence is a method of Bible translation that seeks to reproduce the original text of Scripture using modern language and expression to communicate the message of the Bible. In translating a verse, dynamic equivalent translation is less concerned with providing an exact English word for each word of the original text as it is with communicating the basic message of that verse. Considering the original context, culture, figures of speech, and other effects on language, dynamic equivalence seeks for today's Bible readers to understand the text in the same way (or with the closest similarity in meaning as possible) as those to whom it was first addressed.*
- In light of the author of Hebrews using a dynamic equivalent phrase in the Septuagint translation, do you think this gives some support to the NIV’s approach to biblical translation?

## \*Class Discussion Time

- Are you surprised at the OT law being called a “*shadow*” of the good things to come by the author of Hebrews and then to see that the apostle Paul likewise in Col 2:17 also refers to the Sabbath observance, a part of the OT law and, in fact, one of the Ten Commandments, as “*a shadow of the things to come*” and therefore telling his Colossian readers “*let no one pass judgment on you*” regarding the observation of such laws?
- Does this view of the OT law (and even the Ten Commandments) have implications for us when we consider whether we should consider those laws to be binding on us?
- Are we under obligation to observe all OT laws? Why or why not?