

School of the Word
HEBREWS
Kieran J. O'Mahony
www.tarsus.ie

HEBREWS 10:1-18

Sequence

- Hebrews 10:1-18
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Hebrew 10:1-18

Heb 10:1 For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship.¹ **2** For otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers would have been purified once for all and so have² no further consciousness of sin? **3** But in those sacrifices³ there is a reminder of sins year after year. **4** For the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.⁴ **5** So when he came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.

6 *“Whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings you took no delight in.*

7 *“Then I said, ‘Here I am.’⁵ I have come — it is written of me in the scroll of the book — to do your will, O God.”⁶*

Heb 10:8 When he says above, *“Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings you did not desire nor did you take delight in them”⁷* (which are offered according to the law), **9** then he says, *“Here I am: I have come to do your will.”⁸* He does away with⁹ the first to establish the second. **10** By his will¹⁰ we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. **11** And every priest stands day after day¹¹ serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again — sacrifices that can never take away sins. **12** But when this priest¹² had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, *he sat down at the right hand¹³* of God, **13** where he is now waiting¹⁴ *until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.*¹⁵ **14** For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy. **15** And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after saying,¹⁶ **16** *“This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put¹⁷ my laws on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds,”¹⁸* **17** then he says,¹⁹ *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer.”²⁰* **18** Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Within the letter

III: B 8:1-9:28 — Jesus the perfect high priest

- 8:1-6: The Son is mediator of a new covenant
- 8:7-13: The promise of a new covenant
- 9:1-10: The worship of the old covenant
- 9:11-28: Christ’s worship in heaven

III: C. 10:1-18 — Jesus high priest cause of eternal salvation

Immediate context

- The once-for-all sacrifice (10:1–18)
 - A shadow of the coming good things (10:1)
 - A reminder of sins (10:2–4)
 - I have come to do your will (10:5–10)
 - Perfected forever (10:11–18)

Hebrews 10:1

Heb 10:1 For the law possesses a shadow (*skian*) of the good things to come but not the reality (*eikōna*) itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship.

- The consistent comparison is taken up again.
- Repetition = imperfection.
- Imperfect and *therefore* unable to perfect us.
- Year after year = Day of Atonement / Yom Kippur.
- Partly: Platonic
- Partly: Eschatological, contrasting not just two realities, but two times.

“To perfect” in the letter to the Hebrews

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the pioneer of their salvation **perfect** through sufferings.

Heb 5:9 And by being **perfected** in this way, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

Heb 7:19 for the law made nothing **perfect**. On the other hand a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

Heb 7:28 For the law appoints as high priests men subject to weakness, but the word of solemn affirmation that came after the law appoints a son made **perfect** forever.

Heb 9:9 This was a symbol for the time then present, when gifts and sacrifices were

Hebrews 10:2-4

Heb 10:2 For otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers would have been purified once for all (*hapax*) and so have no further consciousness (*synesis*) of sin? **3** But in those sacrifices there is a reminder (*anamnesis*) of sins year after year. **4** For the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.

- Ineffectiveness made clear.
- *Hapax*: a very important word across the letter (Heb 6:4; 9:7, 26–28; 10:2; 12:26–27).
- For the author, as for Philo of Alexandria (*Works* 146), the conscience is the judge of one’s acts of unrighteousness.
- Thus a *reminder* of sin rather than its *removal*.
- V. 4 is a kind of maxim.
- The author is not against Judaism as such but against all alternatives to Jesus’ offering.

Hebrew 10:5-7

Heb 10:5 So when he came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.

6 “Whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings you took no delight in.

7 “Then I said, ‘Here I am: I have come—it is written of me in the scroll of the book—to do your will, O God.’”

- V. 5 is the start of a *midrash* on Psalm 40:6-8.
- Originally, Ps 40 was a thanksgiving for recovery from illness.
- Instead of a thanksgiving offering, the person praying offers an open ear.
- In this context, Jesus speaks the Psalm.
- The writer uses the LXX (Greek OT) rather than the MT (Hebrew)

offered that could not **perfect** the conscience of the worshiper.

Heb 10:1 For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to **perfect** those who come to worship.

Heb 10:14 For by one offering he has **perfected** for all time those who are made holy.

Heb 11:40 For God had provided something better for us, so that they would be made **perfect** together with us.

Heb 12:23 and congregation of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous, who have been made **perfect**,

Psalm 40 (Masoretic Text)	Psalm 39 (Septuagint)
<p>Ps 40:6 Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear.</p> <p>Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.</p> <p>7 Then I said, “Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. 8 I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”</p>	<p>Ps 39:7 (6) Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but a <u>body</u> you fashioned for me. (<i>only in Codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus</i>)</p> <p>Whole burnt offering and one for sin you did not request.</p> <p>8 (7) Then I said, “Look, I have come; in a scroll of a book it is written of me. 9 (8) To do your will, O my God, I desired— and your law, within my belly.”</p>

- “Body” picks up the author’s earlier “in the days of his flesh.”
- Body, then, refers to the crucifixion of Jesus.
- Thus, Jesus’ offering has replaced all the sacrifices of the Temple cult.
- At the heart of it is not a blood sacrifice (= atonement) but Jesus’ obedience, openness to the will of God.

Hebrews 10:9

Heb 10:9 then he says, “*Here I am: I have come to do your will.*” He does away with the first to establish the second.

- At the centre is Jesus’ “yes” to God’s will.
- Just as the new covenant replaces the old covenants, the death of Jesus replaces the offering under the previous covenant.

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partners in a heavenly calling, take note of Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess, **2** who is **faithful** to the one who appointed him, as Moses was also in God’s house. **3** For he has come to deserve greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house deserves greater honour than the house itself! **4** For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. **5** Now Moses was *faithful in all God’s house* as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken.

Heb 5:7 During his earthly life Christ offered both requests and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death and he was **heard** because of his devotion. **8** Although he was a son, he **learned obedience** through the things he suffered. **9** And by being perfected in this way, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, **10** and he was designated by God as high priest *in the order of Melchizedek*.

Hebrews 10:10

Heb 10:10 By his will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

- The author then moves to the first person plural to register the benefit for believers.
- “Once for all” (hapax) means that does not need to be repeated. It is not a repeated reminder of sin but a once for all removal of sin.
- The word “body” repeats to pick up the hint from Psalm 39.

Hebrew 10:11

Heb 10:11 And every priest stands day after day serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again—sacrifices that can never take away sins.

- A final comparison (*synkrisis*) begins.
- Heb 5:1 For every high priest is taken from among the people and appointed to represent them before God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

- Heb 8:3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer.
- Again, repetition = imperfection.

Hebrews 10:12-14

Heb 10:12 But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, *he sat down at the right hand* of God, **13** where he is now waiting *until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet*. **14** For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.

- Right hand = the position for priests (1 Kgs 8:11; 13:1; 2 Chron 29:11; 1 Esd 1:2, 5, 10).
- Psalm 110:1a = the exaltation of Christ.
- Heb 1:3 The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word, and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, **he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high**.
- Heb 8:1 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, **one who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven**,
- Psalm 110:1b = the continued exaltation of Christ, as he waits for final victory.
- The community too waits:
- Heb 10:36 For you need endurance in order to do God's will and so receive what is promised. 37 For just a little longer and he who is coming will arrive and not delay. 38 But my righteous one will live by faith, and if he shrinks back, I take no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not among those who shrink back and thus perish, but are among those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Hebrew 10:15-18

Heb 10:15 And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after saying, **16** *"This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds,"* **17** then he says, *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer."* **18** Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

- Finally, a reiteration of Jere 31:33 (cf. Heb 8:7-13).
- Thus, Jesus' death, once for all, is perfect and because it is perfect sin is now taken away.
- The death of Jesus was an act of solidarity on the part of the one who was "like his brothers in every respect" (2:17). With his "loud cries and tears" (5:7) he shared the human situation. His suffering was the path to perfection (2:10; 5:9).
- Because Jesus was a human being, his offering can really help us his brothers and sisters.

Conversation

- Jesus' death is an act of solidarity with all humanity.
- Jesus' faithfulness / obedience is the key.
- In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to know the will of God and to be able to carry it out.
- By perfect obedience and faithfulness, he broke through to God in a unique way.
- "But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land," says the Lord. "I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people. (Jer 31:33)
- Jesus' death did not conform to the Levitical cult: he was not a priest; his death was not in a sacred place; it was not itself a ritually pure act (Deut 22:22-23); it did not take place on the Day of Atonement.
- Yet, he fulfilled an older, more mysterious, messianic priesthood, that of Melchizedek.
- Paradoxically, the cross fulfilled the previous Temple cult at the same time *and set it aside*.
- It is not, therefore, the *exterior* offering of blood but what the blood stood for: the *interior* being of Jesus.