

Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice



Week Nine

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Hebrews 9, 10

THE MOTIF OF THE CROSS

The idea that a man found guilty and executed on a cross should be worshiped as God was offensive to the ancient mind. Sparse reference to the cross in Roman literature shows their aversion to the idea. For the Jews, the law declared that a man hung on a tree was cursed by God (Deut. 21:23).

Thus, the first motifs that we find in the Christian paintings of the catacombs were the peacock (supposedly symbolizing immortality), a dove, the athlete's victory palm, and the fish. Later, other themes appeared: Noah's ark, Abraham sacrificing the ram instead of Isaac, Daniel in the lions' den, Jonah being spit out by the fish, a shepherd carrying a lamb, or depictions of miracles like the healing of the paralytic and the raising of Lazarus. These were symbols of salvation, victory, and care. The cross, on the other hand, conveyed a sense of defeat and shame. Yet, it was the cross that became the emblem of Christianity. In fact, Paul simply called the gospel "the word of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18, ESV).

This week we will look at the cross as it appears in the book of Hebrews.



inScribe

Write out Hebrews 9 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Hebrews 9:23–28 and 10:14. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.

inGest



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Hebrews 9. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How can we see here why the law is so central to the gospel message?

How do each of these different sacrifices make Jesus' sacrifice resonate personally with you?



Read more at www.inverseible.org/heb09-3

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SACRIFICES

Hebrews 9:15 explains that the death of Jesus as a sacrifice had the purpose of providing “redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant,” in order that the people of God might “receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (NASB).

In the ancient Near East, a covenant between two persons or nations was a serious matter. It involved an exchange of promises under oath. It implied the assumption that the gods would punish those who broke the oath. Often, these covenants were ratified through the sacrifice of an animal.

For example, when God made a covenant with Abraham, the ceremony involved cutting animals in half (Gen. 15:6–21). The parties would walk between the parts as an acknowledgment that those animals represented the fate of the party who broke the covenant. Significantly, only God walked between the animals, for the purpose of communicating to Abraham that He will not break His promise.

The covenant with God gave Israel access to the Promised Land as their inheritance. It involved, however, commandments and sprinkling of blood on an altar. This sprinkling implied the destiny of the party who broke the covenant. This is why Hebrews says that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission [of sins]” (Heb. 9:22).

When Israel broke the covenant, God faced a painful dilemma. The covenant demanded the death of the transgressors, but God loved His people. If God should simply look the other way or refuse to punish the transgressors, His commandments would never be enforceable, and this world would descend into chaos.

The Son of God, however, offered Himself as a Substitute. He died in our place so that we “may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15, 26, ESV; Rom. 3:21–26). That is, He was going to uphold the sanctity of His law while at the same time saving those who broke that law. And He could do this only through the cross.

Jesus' death provided forgiveness, or remission, for our sins. The remission of our sins, however, involves much more than the cancellation of the penalty for our transgression of the covenant. It involves other elements just as important. That is why the Israelite sacrificial system had five different kinds of sacrifices. Each was necessary to express the richness of the meaning of the Cross of Christ.

The *holocaust offering* (or burnt offering) required that the whole animal be consumed on the altar (Leviticus 1). It represented Jesus, whose life was consumed for us. Expiation required Jesus' total commitment to us. Even though He was equal with God, Jesus “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:5–8, ESV).

The *grain offering* was a gift of gratitude for God's provision of sustenance for His people (Leviticus 2). It also represented Jesus, “the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48), through whom we have eternal life.

The *peace or fellowship offering* implied a communal meal with friends and family to celebrate the well-being provided by God (Leviticus 3). It represented Christ, whose sacrifice provided peace for us (Isa. 53:5; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14). It also emphasizes that we need to participate in Jesus' sacrifice metaphorically (John 6:51–56).

The sin or purification offering provided expiation for sins (Lev. 4:1–5:13). This sacrifice emphasized the role of the blood of the animal—which represented its life—to provide redemption from sins (Lev. 17:11) and pointed forward to the blood of Jesus who redeems us from our sins (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:14).

The *guilt or reparation offering* (Lev. 5:14–6:7) provided forgiveness in cases where reparation or restitution was possible. It tells us that God's forgiveness does not free us from the responsibility to provide reparation or restitution, where possible, to those whom we have wronged.

The sanctuary sacrifices teach us that experience of salvation is more than just accepting Jesus as our Substitute. We also need to “feed” on Him, share His benefits with others, and provide reparation to those whom we have wronged.

THE CROSS AND THE COST OF FORGIVENESS

The Levitical priests—who were “many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office” (Heb. 7:23, ESV)—are contrasted with Jesus, who lives forever and has an eternal priesthood (Heb. 7:24, 25). Levitical priests “daily” (Heb. 7:27) and “every year” (Heb. 9:25) offered gifts and sacrifices “that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper” (Heb. 9:9, ESV; 10:1–4).

Jesus, however, offered Himself “once for all,” a “single sacrifice” (Heb. 10:10, 12–14, ESV) that cleanses our consciences (Heb. 9:14; 10:1–10) and puts away sin (Heb. 9:26). Jesus’ sacrifice is superior to the sacrifice of animals because Jesus was the Son of God (Heb. 7:26–28), who perfectly fulfilled God’s will (Heb. 10:5–10).

Jesus’ “once for all” sacrifice has several important implications.

First, Jesus’ sacrifice is perfectly effective and never to be surpassed. (Heb. 10:2, ESV). Second, all the different kinds of sacrifices of the Old Testament found their fulfillment at the cross. Thus, Jesus not only cleanses us from sin (Heb. 9:14), He also provides sanctification (Heb. 10:10–14) by putting sin away from our lives (Heb. 9:26). Jesus’ sacrifice cleanses us and consecrates us (Heb. 10:10–14) so that we may approach God with confidence (Heb. 10:19–23) and serve Him as “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 9:14).

Finally, Jesus’ sacrifice also provides nourishment for our spiritual life. It provides an example that we need to observe and follow. Thus, Hebrews invites us to fix our eyes upon Jesus, especially the events of the cross, and follow His lead (Heb. 12:1–4; 13:12, 13).

The idea that the heavenly sanctuary needs cleansing makes sense in the context of the Old Testament sanctuary. The sanctuary is a symbol of God’s government (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2), and the way God deals with the sin of His people affects the public perception of the righteousness of His government (Ps. 97:2). As ruler, God is the Judge of His people, and He is expected to be fair, vindicating the innocent and condemning the guilty. Thus, when God forgives the sinner, He carries judicial responsibility. The sanctuary, which represents God’s character and administration, is contaminated. This explains why God bears our sins when He forgives (Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:17–19; the original Hebrew for “forgiving” [*nōšē*] in these verses means “carrying, bearing”).

The system of sacrifices in the Israelite sanctuary illustrated this point. When a person sought forgiveness, he brought an animal as a sacrifice in his behalf, confessed his sins over it, and slaughtered it. The blood of the animal was daubed upon the horns of the altar or sprinkled before the veil in the temple in the first apartment. Thus, the sin was symbolically transferred into the sanctuary. God took the sins of the people and bore them Himself.

In the Israelite system, cleansing from or atonement for sins occurred in two phases. During the year, repentant sinners brought sacrifices to the sanctuary, which cleansed them from their sin but transferred the sin to the sanctuary, to God Himself. At the end of the year, on the Day of Atonement, which was the day of judgment, God would cleanse the sanctuary by means of the Lord’s goat, the blood of which was pure and uncontaminated because no sins were confessed over it. This ritual, symbolized God’s ultimate clearing of Himself from any judicial responsibility for sin by transferring the sins from the sanctuary to the scapegoat, Azazel, who represented Satan (Lev. 16:15–22).

This two-phase system, represented by the two apartments in the earthly sanctuary, which were a pattern of the heavenly sanctuary (Exod. 25:9; Heb. 8:5), permitted God to show mercy and justice at the same time. Those who confessed their sins during the year showed loyalty to God by observing a solemn rest and afflicting themselves on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29–31). Those who did not show loyalty would be “cut off” (Lev. 23:27–32).



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

What would you face if you had to face the just punishment for your sins?

How should that truth help you understand what Christ has done for you?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/heb09-4

inSpect



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Genesis 15:6–21

Jeremiah 34:8–22

Ephesians 3:14–19

Daniel 7:9–14; 8:13, 14

Leviticus 16:29–34

Romans 3:21–26

John 12:47, 48; 3:18–21

1 John 4:17–19



What other verses come to mind in connection with the Judgment?

Review your memorized verse from Hebrews 9.

JUDGMENT AND THE CHARACTER OF GOD

The forgiveness of our sins implies two phases in Jesus' mediation in the two apartments of the heavenly sanctuary. First, Jesus removed our sins and carried them Himself on the cross to provide forgiveness to everyone who believes in Him (Acts 2:38; 5:31). On the cross Jesus won the right to forgive anyone who believes in Him because He has carried their sin. He has also inaugurated a new covenant, which allows Him to put God's law in the heart of believers through the Holy Spirit (Heb. 8:10-12; Ezek. 36:25-27). After dying on the cross, Jesus ascended to the first heavenly apartment to commence the work of continual intercession (and continuing into the second phase), typified by the ministry in the Holy Place and Old Testament daily sacrifices.

A second phase in the ministry of Jesus, as typified by the second apartment Most Holy Place, consists of a judgment, the pre-Advent judgment, which was still future from the point of view of Hebrews (Heb. 2:1-4; 6:2; 9:27, 28; 10:25). This judgment begins with God's people and is described in Daniel 7:9-27, Matthew 22:1-14, and Revelation 14:7. Its purpose is to show the righteousness of God in forgiving His people. In this judgment the records of their lives will be open for the universe to see. God will show what happened in the hearts of believers and how they embraced Jesus as their Savior and accepted His Spirit in their lives.

Professor Jiří Moskala has explained the nature of this pre-Advent judgment. God "is not there in order to display my sins like in a shop window. He will, on the contrary, point first of all to His amazing transforming powerful grace, and in front of the whole universe He, as the true Witness of my entire life, will explain my attitude toward God, my inner motives, my thinking, my deeds, my orientation and direction of life. He will demonstrate it all. Jesus will testify that I made many mistakes, that I transgressed His holy law, but also that I repented, asked for forgiveness, and was changed by His grace. He will proclaim: 'My blood is sufficient for the sinner, his orientation of life is on Me, his attitude toward Me and other people is warm and unselfish, he is trustworthy, he is My good and faithful servant.'" ("Toward a Biblical Theology of God's Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universal Judgment," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 1 (2004): 155.)



inVite

Where do you see Jesus in Hebrews 9?



What is He saying to you through these texts?

How would you explain what Jesus is doing in the heavenly sanctuary now and why is this work necessary before His second coming?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/heb09-6

inSight



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

—————→
After this week's study of
the passage, what are real
applications to your life?

What are applications that can be
made in other public spheres of
your life?

SCIENCE AND SONG

“Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man. . . .

“But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1882), 470, 471.)

“When the loud cry, ‘It is finished,’ came from the lips of Christ, the priests were officiating in the temple. It was the hour of the evening sacrifice. The lamb representing Christ had been brought to be slain. Clothed in his significant and beautiful dress, the priest stood with lifted knife, as did Abraham when he was about to slay his son. With intense interest the people were looking on. But the earth trembles and quakes; for the Lord Himself draws near. With a rending noise the inner veil of the temple is torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand, throwing open to the gaze of the multitude a place once filled with the presence of God. In this place the Shekinah had dwelt. Here God had manifested His glory above the mercy seat. No one but the high priest ever lifted the veil separating this apartment from the rest of the temple. He entered in once a year to make an atonement for the sins of the people. But lo, this veil is rent in twain. The most holy place of the earthly sanctuary is no longer sacred.

“Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which ‘seeketh not her own’ has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.” (White, *The Desire of Ages*, 19.)

For further reading, read the chapter entitled “Facing Life's Record” in Ellen White's *The Great Controversy*.



Read more inSight from the
Spirit of Prophecy at
www.inverseible.org/heb09-7



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



What did Paul mean by glorying in the cross and what might that look like in our life?

How should the system of sacrifices be considered in the light of Jesus' sacrifice and the assertion of Scripture that the cross has put an end to it (Dan. 9:27; Heb. 10:18)? What is the role of sacrifice in the life of the believer?

What did Jesus mean when He said that we need to take our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24)?

What did the apostle Paul mean when he said that we should offer our bodies as "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1, ESV)?

How can we better experience the Cross-given benefits in Christ?

Why is the two-phase ministry of Jesus so important for you today?