

HEBREWS CHAPTER TEN

The hard water in our city leaves ugly mineral traces behind on facets, tile, porcelain, and glass. The worst is the shower door which always looks so smeared and cloudy. Over the years, I have tried many cleaning products that claim to cut through hard water deposits and leave bathroom fixtures “sparkling clean.” But I have not found one that truly performs exactly like it promises. How many times have you bought a product or service, because it promised to do something specific, only to be disappointed?

Jesus Christ claims to be the only way to the Father. Jesus Christ claims that His blood covers all sin. Jesus Christ claims that He lives forever to intercede for us. Jesus Christ claims that His sacrifice is sufficient for our complete forgiveness and holiness. Believer, we can firmly stand on every one of Jesus’ claims! He is our superior High Priest who offered the once-for-all, superior sacrifice on our behalf. The blood of bull and goats could not take away our sins, but the sacrificial blood of Christ accomplished it!

The Author’s discourse on the superiority of the High Priesthood of Christ, which he began in chapter four, comes to a crashing crescendo in chapter ten. As a superior priest, Jesus presents to God a superior offering. This offering establishes a superior covenant and completely cleanses the guilt of God’s people. No other sacrifice will ever be needed.

One Sacrifice for all Time

Read Hebrews 10:1-10.

List all the evidence you can find in verses 1-4 that the law, and therefore the Old Covenant, is inadequate.

Based on the inadequacies, what would you say is the goal of the New Covenant?

Because the sacrificial system constantly reminded the people of their sinfulness, it also pointed to their separation from God. The sacrifices made them outwardly clean (see 9:13), but their sin remained. The New Covenant, instituted by Christ’s sacrifice, doesn’t simply cover sin, it removes sin and its burden. Thus, Christ’s death accomplished what centuries of animal sacrifice never could – right relationship between God and His people.

Although God Himself prescribed animal sacrifice as a temporary means for relating to His people, ultimately this system did not “please” Him. The Levitical system could not make God’s people holy. Numerous passages in the Bible contrast the sacrifices that please God with those that don’t. Let’s take a closer look at the difference between sacrifices God accepts and those He does not.

Read the Scripture passages and fill out the table below.

Scripture	Unacceptable Sacrifices	Acceptable Sacrifices
Hebrews 10:5-10		
1 Samuel 15:22		
Psalms 51:16-17		
Hosea 6:6		

Reflect on the quality of your worship, on your “sacrifice of praise.” Is it acceptable to God?

The obedient death of Christ was the one perfect sacrifice, acceptable and pleasing to God. His death was effective and final. It is through the sacrifice of Christ, the new covenant, that one can

find the means for forgiveness from sin. Because of this forgiveness we can be declared “holy” and can now begin a relationship with God, in His presence.

Read Hebrews 10:11-18

List all the characteristics/facts of the old sacrificial system you can find in verse 11.

Based on verse 12, how is Jesus’ sacrifice different?

Is it significant that Christ is “seated?” Why?

Eight different kinds of sacrifices and offerings are prescribed by God in the book of Leviticus. Some, like the “peace offering” and the “praise offering,” were used as a means of worship or to offer thanksgiving to God. Others, specifically the “sin offering” and the “guilt offering” were given to seek God’s forgiveness. These were required to remain in fellowship with Yahweh.

The priests were required to offer certain sacrifices for the nation *every* morning and evening. Other sacrifices were made on special days of the year. Plus, individuals brought sacrifices to offer on their own behalf. *(Note: If you would like to learn more about the specific sacrifices and their purpose, read Leviticus 1-7.)*

Just imagine the constant activity at the tabernacle! The sacrifices never ended. Day after day, year after year, a continual parade of animals came to the altar of sacrifice. Each sin dictated another death sentence for an unblemished animal. But Christ’s sacrifice put an end to all that once and for all.

Reread Hebrews 10:14 and compare with 10:10. What effect does Jesus’ sacrifice have on the people of God?

When we trust in Jesus and His death for our eternal salvation, our sins are forgiven. God declares us “holy” and “perfect.” We are restored into relationship with God. However, God desires more for our life. He wants us to be conformed to the image of Christ. (See Romans 10:29.) Christians refer to this ongoing process as “sanctification.”

Read Romans 6:18-22. Describe what God wants for the life of every Christian.

How is this kind of life possible? Read Romans 8:9-11 to help you with your answer.

The presence of the Holy Spirit changes everything. The law of the Old Covenant was external and impossible to keep because mankind’s very nature is sinful. But the New Covenant is internalized. God’s own Spirit takes up residence inside His people giving us the desire and the power to obey. The author of Hebrews emphasizes this truth because it is essential to the superior nature of the New Covenant. We see it again in this chapter when the author quotes the prophet Jeremiah (10:16-17). Jeremiah looked forward to the day when God would write His law on the hearts of His people.

Encouragement to Persevere

Read Hebrews 10:19-25.

The author has concluded his formal teaching on the superior nature of the role and sacrifice of Christ. Now, like any good teacher, he moves into some purposeful application for his students. Remember, they have been stagnate and lazy about spiritual growth. Fear of persecution has also tempted them to shrink back in their commitment to Christ. The author now gives them - and us - clear direction about how to put his teaching and their faith into action.

List at least three “exhortations” or calls to action found in verses 22-25. (Hint: Watch for the “let us” phrase.)

He begins with encouragement to “draw near to God.” Before Jesus’ crucifixion God’s people could not enter into His presence. Access to God was granted only to the high priest on their behalf. But as we’ve seen in previous lessons, the New Covenant, established by the sacrifice and blood of Christ, allows believers to enter God’s presence with confidence.

Read Luke 23:44-45. Compare this passage to Hebrews 10:20. What historical event pictured this spiritual reality?

The author encourages his readers to confidently draw near to God. Keep in mind the reason for our “confidence” (vs. 19) to enter the Holy of Holies. We can freely and boldly approach God’s throne of grace in prayer because of Christ and His sacrifice, not because we are worthy. The blood of Jesus has won our entrance into God’s presence.

Based on verse 22, in what manner or with what attitude should we “draw near to God?”

The author also urged his readers to “hold unswervingly to the hope” they professed. In 6:19, he described this hope as an “anchor for the soul.” Many were discouraged and considering leaving their faith behind. These persecuted Christians needed a firm and stable place to stand.

Earlier today an 8.9 magnitude earthquake rocked Japan. The resulting tsunami multiplied the devastation in that country. Now the wave screams toward the western coast of the United States threatening life and property. We need an anchor, a point of stability and security, in a chaotic world.

Read Hebrews 13:8. What significance should the truth of this verse have for you, especially when the circumstances of life are shaky?

The giant redwood trees of the western United States are some of the largest trees known to man. Amazingly, they have relatively shallow roots systems. Their enormous weight is supported, in part, by the interlocking of a tree's roots with those around it. A single redwood is vulnerable in extreme weather, but by relying on the trees around it, it can stay standing.

Christians need interlocking roots. God never intends Christians to attempt to follow Jesus on their own. When God saves us, He saves into His family. God's design is for each Christian to be a vital, active part of a local church.

What specific actions does the author encourage regarding our responsibility to the church and the church's responsibility to us? ("One another" implies a reciprocal relationship.)

How have you spiritually benefitted from this kind of connection to a local church?

Pray and ask God for specific ways you can encourage specific people. Write a prayer of commitment.

The author's challenge to "not give up meeting together," has to do with consistent involvement in the life of the church rather than frenetic activity in all the programs of the church. There are God-given functions of the church in which every believer should participate. Acts 2:42, which is often referenced to show these primary functions, includes the following:

- Worship
- Prayer
- Learning the Word
- Serving
- Fellowship

Are you involved in each of these functions in some way? If not, why not? Prayerfully ask God what your role should be in all these areas.

Warning and Praise

Read Hebrews 10:26-39.

The author has balanced harsh warnings with gentle reminders of past success throughout the book. However, verses 26-31 undoubtedly include the harshest warning in the entire book of Hebrews. Some of the same questions we addressed in chapter six are applicable here, so refer back to our discussion there if needed. Several important things can be drawn from this passage.

- God's judgment is real and severe for those who rebelliously reject Christ in favor of a deliberate sinful lifestyle.
- Only the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to completely and eternally forgive sin. If this sacrifice is rejected, no hope remains.
- Anyone outside the sanctifying blood of Christ is an enemy of God and will face His judgment.

We sinners often require double motivation. God's love woos and calls us to "draw near to God." But sometimes our stubborn, hard hearts also need to be reminded of God's holiness and justice. Keeping both God's love and holiness in view fosters obedience. The original audience needed this kind of double motivation.

List the things found in verses 32-34, faced by these first century Christians, that might tempt them to shrink back in their faith.

Now list how they responded to those challenges in the "earlier days."

What encouragement/reasons for standing firm does the author give them in verses 35-39?

As we close this lesson, consider how the promise of Jesus' return should affect your daily life. Are you living in eager expectation of His appearing? Ask God to give you an eternal perspective and a longing for Christ to come again.