

The writer of Hebrews is now continuing to show us that the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on the cross and offered in the heavenly tabernacle is superior to the sacrifices made under the Levitical system. The writer demonstrates that God is replacing the Levitical system with the sacrifice of His Own Son, which is the only thing that can permanently take away our sin (v. 14).

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4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

In verses 1-3, the writer repeats the truth that the sacrifices and other practices required by the law could only foreshadow the sacrifice that Christ would give us by His death on the cross. As shadows of what was to come they were were not the genuine article and therefore insufficient to take away our sin. If they had been able to take away sin then the sacrifices would have come to an end and the worshipers would never have to be concerned with sin again. Instead, sin became the central theme every year on the Day of Atonement because an atonement was still necessary. The writer now states the reason that the sacrifices had to be repeated: it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away our sins. The blood of those animals was insufficient to truly deal with the problem of sin because it could not purify anyone spiritually, only physically. **Heb. 9:13** “*For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.*”

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5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

**“Wherefore when he cometh into the world”** – The writer is referring to the time when Christ came into the world as God incarnate in human flesh.

**“he saith”** – Verses 5-7 are a quotation from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) version of Psalm 40:6-8. The writer applies the thoughts from that psalm to Jesus Christ, indicating that the ideas expressed by the psalmist were were also Christ’s attitude while in human flesh.

**“Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not”** – The idea is not that God did not want sacrifices, but that He found them pointless when they were not offered sincerely. There are many OT examples of God rejecting sacrifices and offerings because they were not accompanied by obedience or a sincere love for Him (Psalm 51:17; Isa. 1:11; Jer. 6:20; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-25). Merely going through the motions of worship when it does not come from a sincere and obedient heart is hypocritical and a waste of time. Another reason for God being dissatisfied with the OT sacrifices and offerings was because they could not take away sin.

**“but a body hast thou prepared me”** – Knowing that Israel was offering sacrifices without obedience and that these sacrifices would ultimately not take away their sin, the LORD chose another path to redeem His people. He created a body for Jesus so that He could come to earth in the flesh in order to accomplish our redemption through the sacrifice of Himself on the cross.

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6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

**“In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure”** – A rephrasing of the statement in v. 5. God is not pleased with burnt offerings and sacrifices if they are not accompanied by repentance. The offerings were not a license to sin by providing the means to avoid punishment. They were to be a means to obtain forgiveness for those who sincerely repent of their sin and seek to obey God.

**“Then said I, Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God”** – Skipping temporarily the parenthetical statement, we see what the psalmist is saying: he is not offering sacrifices merely to avoid punishment but his intent is to obey the will of God. This attitude reflects the desire of Jesus Christ when He walked on this earth because His desire was to obey His Father. **John 6:38** “*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*” **Matt. 26:39** “*And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*”

**“(in the volume of the book it is written of me,)”** – The psalmist David was originally writing this of himself and he likely was referring to the OT commandments concerning Israelite kings (Deut. 17:14-20). However, the prophetic meaning that the writer of Hebrews is invoking likely refers to the many OT prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David.

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8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

**“Above when he said”** – The writer now offers his commentary on the passage he just quoted from Psalm 40:6-8.

**“Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God”** – The writer quotes the pertinent portions of the passage with some commentary sprinkled in. He says “which are offered by the law” to point out that the sacrifices and offerings that did not please God pertained to the Mosaic Law. He then slightly rephrases a portion of the quotation as “then said he” to emphasize that this is Christ Who is coming to do God’s will. He is comparing the OT offerings and sacrifices prescribed by the law (which God no longer had pleasure in due to Israel’s disobedience) to the obedience of Christ, Who came to obey God’s will.

**“He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second”** – The writer is using the passage from Psalms to show that God is replacing the Levitical system with a new covenant based on the sacrifice of His Son. The “first” (the OT offerings and sacrifices) are being replaced by the “second” (Jesus Christ’s obedience to His Father in sacrificing Himself for our sins).

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10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

Christ came to do God's will ("Lo I come to do thy will, O God"), and God's will is that we be sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ as our sin offering. This offering only had to be done once because it was sufficient to permanently atone for all our sins.

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11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

The writer is contrasting the Levitical priests with Jesus Christ as our high priest. In this verse he states several truths about the Levitical priests and then in v. 12 he will contrast these truths against what is true about Jesus Christ.

**"And every priest standeth daily ministering"** – This line points out two facts about the Levitical priests: (1) The whole time the Levitical priests are inside the tabernacle/temple they must stand because the design of the earthly tabernacle that God gave Moses provided no place for the priests to sit. The reason they were never able to sit is because their job was never complete. There were always more sins for which sacrifices needed to be offered. (2) The priests had to minister daily because every day there were always new sins that needed a sin offering, either the people's or their own.

**"and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices"** – Different types of sin required different sacrifices and often sacrifices had to be made for the same type of sin, either for another person or perhaps the same person. The writer is pointing out the repetition under the Levitical system where sacrifices were made every day and some sacrifices were often repeated during the course of the day.

**"which can never take away sins"** – Despite the number of sacrifices that were made over the many years the Levitical system was in effect, not one sin was ever "taken away." The flesh of the one for whom the sacrifice was made was purified (Heb. 9:13) but their heart remained unchanged. The OT sacrifices looked forward in faith to the time when Christ would be the One to take away sin.

**John 1:29** "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

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12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

**"But this man"** – The writer turns our attention from the Levitical priesthood to Jesus Christ in order to show how Christ's ministry was different.

**"after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever"** – In contrast with the Levitical priests who were continually offering countless sacrifices every day, Christ only needed to offer one sacrifice (Himself) for our sins and that sacrifice is sufficient to eternally take away our sins. He will never need to offer another sacrifice.

**"sat down on the right hand of God"** – The Levitical priests could never sit because their job was never complete, but Jesus Christ was able to sit after offering His sacrifice because His offering completed the atonement for our sins. He will never need to stand up again in order to make another sacrifice for our sin. He is also sitting on the right hand of God, the position of power, glory and honor.

**"From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool"** – This is a reference to Psalm 110:1, which is a Messianic psalm. The writer of Hebrews mentioned this verse in Heb. 1:13 while making the point that Christ is superior to the angels because God had never made the quoted promise to any of them. However, the writer now states that Christ's atonement for sin is complete and now He takes His rightful place sitting on the right hand of His Father to await the fulfillment of His Father's promise to Him as the Messiah. Thus the writer is stating again that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ).

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14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

**"For by one offering"** – Christ is seated because His single offering is sufficient and will never need to be repeated.

**"he hath perfected [made complete] for ever"** – As sinners, we are incomplete and lacking before God because we owe a debt for our sin. However, the sinner that looks to Christ in faith is made "perfect" (complete) and this state of completion is an eternal one.

**"them that are sanctified [to purify; to set apart for God]"** – Those who have placed their faith in Christ have been purified and set apart for God. It is these that Christ has made eternally complete through His one offering.