

Hebrews Book Study
Lesson Thirty-Two
Hebrews 10:1-4

Introduction/Review

Christ Jesus secured the payment for sin by shedding His own blood and now stands before God on our behalf. And let me say that we need Christ standing on our behalf. For the Jews, the sacrifice of Jesus also eliminated the need to observe the Day of Atonement (vs. 25). And the best news of all is that Jesus is coming again! We are to be encouraged by that truth and we are to be on the lookout for His coming!

Chapter synopsis: As the central doctrinal section of Hebrews draws to a close, the writer continues to explain the benefits of the new covenant. Once again he forcefully outlines the limitations of the law and its provisions for approaching God in vss. 1-4. **Ps. 40:6–8** is then used to establish that the whole sacrificial system is replaced by the perfectly obedient self-offering of Christ (5–10). In contrast with the priests of the old covenant, who stand daily at the altar to offer repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, Jesus sits at God's right hand, his sacrificial work completed (11–14). The result of this for believers is that we have been made holy and he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy. These terms are used to describe the sort of relationship with God predicted in Je. 31:33–34. The writer quotes these verses in abbreviated form (15–18), to signal that the argument begun in ch. 8 has come to an end. Since Christ's sacrifice is so effective, there is no need for any other sacrifice for sin. The forgiveness promised by Jeremiah is available, making possible the renewal of heart and mind that is fundamental to the new covenant.

Vss. 1–2 When the writer describes the law of Moses as only a shadow of good things that are coming, he means that it foreshadowed the blessings of the new covenant that Jesus would bring. The ritual of the law pointed to the need for the ultimate realities of Christ's high-priestly ministry. There is a sense in which we still wait to enjoy the complete salvation that has been achieved for us. Nevertheless, many of its benefits can be experienced in advance. The inadequacy of the OT ritual is highlighted by the fact that the same sacrifices were repeated endlessly year after year. As noted in 7:11, 19 and 9:9, the law could never make perfect those who draw near to God in that way. The perfecting of believers has to do with the cleansing of their consciences from the guilt of sin, so that they might be wholeheartedly consecrated to God and his service. If the sacrifices of the first covenant had achieved this end, would they not have stopped being offered? However, the worshippers continued to have 'a consciousness of sin'. They were not cleansed once for all, as one may be through trusting in the effectiveness of Jesus' sacrifice.

Vss. 3-4 Although the Day of Atonement ritual assured Israel that the Lord could forgive sins, the ceremony had to be repeated year after year. The effect of this was to provide an annual reminder of sins—a reminder that sin is a hindrance to fellowship with God and brings his

judgment. By contrast, God himself promises that under the new covenant, 'their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more'. Sin was not dealt with decisively until Jesus died on the cross, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. God required animal sacrifices to teach Israel to look to him for cleansing and to show the need for a penalty to be paid for sin (**Lv. 17:11**). But it was the destiny of the Messiah to pay that penalty by means of his death and so provide salvation, even for those who sinned in OT times.