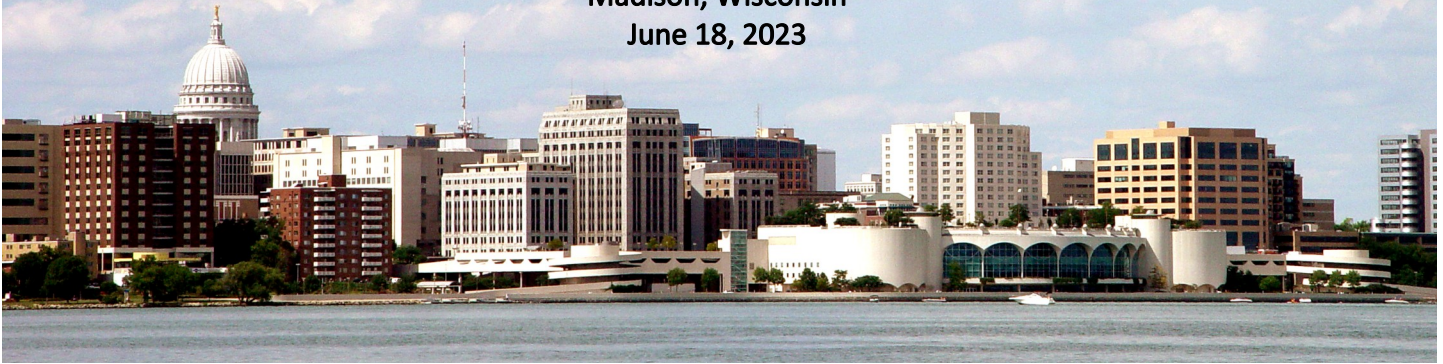


# A Better Sacrifice

Hebrews: Jesus is Better • Hebrews 10:1-18

Baxter T. Exum (#1695)  
Four Lakes Church of Christ  
Madison, Wisconsin  
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It is good to see you this morning, and if you are visiting with us today (either here in person or online), we are glad to have you with us, and we would invite you to fill out an online visitor card by using the QR code on the front of the bulletin or by going to our website at [fourlakeschurch.org/visitor](http://fourlakeschurch.org/visitor). Or, you can use the cards in the pews this morning – not just if you are visiting with us, but also for special questions and prayer concerns. You can put those in the box on the wall in the entryway or give your card to me on your way out this morning.

After worship today, I am heading about three hours north to spend a week at Beaver Creek Bible Camp! Jordan (from here at Four Lakes) is also helping out this week. I think this will be her first time serving on staff. And this will be my first time in 24 years NOT serving as Director. Pray for me this week! I don't want to get in the way. The new director is Clint Nieman, one of the deacons up in Spencer, Wisconsin. The new and past directors happened to run into each other at the FHU lectures back in February. This will also be the first year for the church in Spencer to be responsible for the camp. I'll be teaching two classes, leading some hikes, and they are letting me start the campfires this week – one in the morning and one in the evening! Earlier this year, they asked if I would come to camp to be available to give advice as needed, and then they asked me: If you come back, what's your dream job? And I said, "Make me the fire chief!" And they have consented to that. I just hope to serve, and stay out of the way, and be a blessing up there.

We are here this morning to preach the good news concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. We obey the good news by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by confessing our faith that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with him in baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And we've had a number of examples this week, starting with an update from the Lord's church in Nolanville, Texas. They say, "Congratulations to our new sister in Christ. Essie Voss (97 years old) put the Lord on in baptism today after morning service."

We also have an update from the Lord's church in Tanzania. They say that "The Kilimanjaro congregation was able to participate in a campaign at the Lerai church of Christ this week, along with brethren from various local congregations and visitors from the States. The kingdom gained 3 new souls on Thursday!

This next update comes to us Olu Shabaaz, who says that “The church of Christ in Harlem welcomes a new brother into Christ baptized for the remission of his sins in the morning worship (June 11, 2023). Welcome brother Damon Leonard.”

And this last one comes to us from Josh McKibben, who preaches in Nashville, Tennessee. He says, “Proud of this dude right here. As soon as I ended the sermon this morning, he came down front and said that the words that were spoken were ‘persecuting’ him. That’s not a common way of describing the effects of preaching, but he meant it in the best way possible because he wanted to be baptized into Christ right away. [We are] thankful for the gospel of Christ that still has *‘power’* (Romans 1:16) to work in people’s hearts today. Pray for our brother, Dylan, as he seeks to continue pleasing God throughout his life.” As our tradition has been, we share these pictures and these stories to encourage and to show exactly what it means to obey the gospel. And if you have not yet obeyed the gospel yourself, we invite you to get in touch. Pull me aside after worship today or reach out using the contact information on the website or on the bulletin, and we would love to study together.

This morning we return to our study of Hebrews, and today we come to the end of the middle section of this book, where we’ve been in the *“meat”* of this series of lessons. We’ve been sailing in deep water, so to speak, over the past month or so, but we are heading toward the more practical conclusion. After this morning, we’ll take a break from Hebrews for a few weeks and get back to the rest of Hebrews 10 in mid-July. But over the past few weeks, we’ve looked at Jesus as being from a BETTER PRIESTHOOD (based on the priesthood of Melchizedek, in Chapter 7). We’ve looked at Jesus as being the mediator of a BETTER COVENANT (in Chapter 8). We’ve looked at Jesus as a priest who serves in a BETTER SANCTUARY (in Chapter 9). And today we are looking at the first part of Hebrews 10, where we have the emphasis on Jesus himself being a BETTER SACRIFICE. And in a sense, this is almost the climax, or the conclusion, and really a summary of this middle section of the book. There’s some repetition here, there isn’t much we haven’t dealt with in some way or another over the past few weeks, so I think we can move rather quickly this morning. And I don’t know what you are thinking, but I’m a little bit relieved to be at the end of this section. This has been difficult – not just difficult to understand, but obviously difficult to preach as well. But it has been encouraging, and I hope it has been to you also.

As we’ve done for most of this middle section, I’d like to take it a paragraph at a time. We’ll look at the INADEQUACIES OF THE OLD (in verses 1-4), we’ll look at the fact that JESUS IS THE SOLUTION (in verses 5-9), and then we’ll close today by noting some of the BLESSINGS OF THE NEW COVENANT (in verses 10-18).

**I. But let’s start today with verses 1-4. As the author summarizes the past few chapters, he emphasizes the INADEQUACY OF THE OLD COVENANT.**

So let’s start with Hebrews 10:1-4,

*<sup>1</sup> For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? <sup>3</sup> But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. <sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

So, this is the summary: If you're tempted to turn back, you need to know that the Old Covenant is completely inadequate. It cannot do what we need it to do! And he starts in verse 1 by describing the Law of Moses as only being a *"shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things."* The Law is a *"shadow."* Sometimes, we can tell what something is by looking at its shadow. But the shadow is two dimensional, the shadow doesn't have any detail in it, the shadow has no substance. The shadow of a house is not a house. I don't want to be living in the shadow of a house; I want to live in the house itself. But in this illustration, the Law of Moses is described as a *"shadow."* There's a value to it, you can tell something about God by looking at it, there is a connection of some kind between the shadow and the object making the shadow, but a shadow is not the object. In the same way, the Old Law was merely a shadow of *"the good things to come."*

And the main reason, the big difference is that unlike Jesus, the Law could never make people perfect, even though they offered those sacrifices year after year. Can't we sense the frustration in this paragraph? We have constant sacrifices, year after year, one sacrifice after another, but those sacrifices never made people perfect. If the sacrifices had made people perfect, they could have stopped! But those sacrifices never made people perfect, so they had to keep on sacrificing, over and over and over again.

And not only that, but in verse 3, the sacrifices were just a reminder! So, not only did the sacrifices fail to truly fix anything, but they kept coming, and the reminder was: You've failed, you've failed, you've failed! They could never get away from the constant reminders that they were sinners. Those reminders kept coming. We might compare it to making a monthly payment on a loan. It may feel good to make a payment and make some progress, but a month later I get another notice, reminding me that there is more to pay. Or, this week, I think about taxes. For those of us who pay quarterly, this past Thursday (June 15) was tax day, and like we do at least four times a year, we sent in yet another check to the IRS (15.something percent of my income), and it never stops. It's like taking out the trash, or doing laundry, or doing the dishes, or brushing our teeth. It never ends. Well, so also with sin (under the Old Law), the sacrifices never stop! Sin and sacrifice, sin and sacrifice, sin and sacrifice!

And the reason for this? According to verse 4, *"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."* The blood of animals is inadequate. And the reason is: The penalty for sin is death. My blood has to be shed, and the blood of a goat just isn't the same. Maybe you could imagine me deliberately smashing your brand new i-Phone. To make that right, I would owe you a brand new i-Phone. I can't go digging in my closet and give you a 20-year old Nokia. They aren't worth the same. It would be like me trying to pay my taxes with Monopoly money. There's no equivalent. The same goes for a payment for sin. And with sin, we need somebody to stand in, a human, but someone who is not guilty of sin himself. And we have that, in Jesus! We'll get back to Jesus in just a moment, but the author is making the point here: If you turn back, you are turning your back on the one sacrifice that really matters, and you are turning back to a never-ending series of sacrifices that never really deal with sin permanently. Continuing the cell phone metaphor, I think we got our first cell phone back around the year 2000. And you know what that phone did? It made phone calls! No internet access, no texting, no maps, no camera, no video, no calendar, no weather, just phone calls. It served its purpose at the time, but I sure would hate to go back. I'd be giving up so much. In the same way, the Old Law was inadequate; so, do not turn back!

## II. And this leads us to the fact that JESUS IS THE SOLUTION TO THE SIN PROBLEM. **\*\*PPT\*\***

We continue with Hebrews 10:5-9, where, referring to Jesus, the author says,

<sup>5</sup> *Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME;"* <sup>6</sup> *IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE.* <sup>7</sup> *"THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'"* <sup>8</sup> *After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law),* <sup>9</sup> *then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second.*

What the Old Covenant's sacrifices failed to do, Jesus did. And due to our limited space up here, I didn't set this aside in verse format like it is in most of our modern translations, but I have left the quote from Psalm 40 in all caps. And this, by the way, is the only time Psalm 40 is quoted anywhere in the New Testament. And he actually quotes not from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was widely used at the time), and there's a slight variation between the two. I can share some good resources on this if you're interested, but the issue in Psalm 40 is that David has just been delivered by God from some close call with death, he wants to express his appreciation to God, and he's struggling: How do you thank God for saving you? Well, there are times when a mere sacrifice seems so inadequate, and David realizes that what God really wants is for us to do his will; he wants our submission. So, he starts off with this shocking statement, *"Sacrifice and offering you have not desired."* That doesn't make sense, does it? God doesn't desire sacrifices and offerings? God wrote the Law DEMANDING sacrifices and offerings! Has God changed his mind? No. Sacrifices are NECESSARY (due to sin), but what God really desires is that we not sin in the first place! Sacrifices were never a SOLUTION to sin; sacrifices were God's way of shining a light on the PROBLEM. What God really desires, then, is not a sacrifice (Woohoo! Somebody gave me another dead goat!) No! What God really wants is our OBEDIENCE.

This is a lesson King Saul had learned the hard way back in 1 Samuel 15. You may remember how God wanted King Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites (kill everything), but King Saul disobeyed the command, saving the Amalekite king along with some of the livestock, and he brings these things back, planning on making a sacrifice to God. And just to summarize the rest of that chapter, God basically says, "I don't want your sacrifice; I want your obedience." Heart-felt submission to God, then, is better than sacrifice. So, in this quote from Psalm 40, David gets it; David understands. What God really wants is for us to do his will.

Well, the author of Hebrews applies this to Jesus. Where David fails, Jesus succeeds. Jesus came into this world to do God's will, to obey. And he did obey, perfectly! According to Philippians 2:8, *"Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."* Jesus, then, didn't just avoid sin, but he also obeyed from the heart. He enjoyed doing what his Father asked him to do. We might try to illustrate with marriage. We'd much rather have a spouse who truly enjoys making us happy as opposed to having this person apologize to us all the time. Sacrifices are the apology. It's much better to never NEED an apology! Yesterday, I dropped my wife off at the airport at around 5 a.m., and I came here to the building to study for a few hours before mowing. I waited until around 7 a.m. to do some edging and weed-whacking with the battery operated equipment, and as I was about to start the lawnmower, I had my earplugs in and heard someone calling out to me. It was a woman from a nearby home, and she said, "You're not going to start that mower, are you? You woke up my baby." Uh-oh! The city allows noise after 7 a.m. (which it was), but I apologized, put the mower away, and went home. It was appropriate to apologize (although I could have insisted that I was within the law), but you know what's better than an apology? Not waking up the baby! In the same way, God doesn't want the apology (the sacrifices), he wants us to obey him in the first place!

I know it's not a perfect illustration, but isn't there a huge value in getting to know another person and trying new things and doing things that make them happy, and then those things also make us happy? Not just not making the other person mad, but truly enjoying what they enjoy. We went out on date night this week to the new Texas Roadhouse in the Walmart parking lot over on the southwest side. And when it came time to order, I ended up ordering my salad just like hers, with ranch and french on the side. Growing up, I could have never imagined such an exotic combination, but here I am, 30 years later, enjoying what she enjoys. So also, the goal is that we enjoy what God enjoys, that we delight to do his will. This is what Jesus has done; this is why Jesus is the solution to the sin problem.

And we end this paragraph with that statement (in verse 9), ***“He takes away the first in order to establish the second.”*** This is the practical result of Jesus being a better sacrifice. Because he has done the will of his Father perfectly, there is no more Old Law to go back to. Don't turn back, because there's nothing there. Jesus is better.

### III. Let's close today by looking at the last paragraph in Hebrews 10, where the author wraps everything up by summarizing **THE BENEFITS OF THE NEW COVENANT OVER THE OLD.**

Let's look at Hebrews 10:10-18,

***<sup>10</sup> By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. <sup>11</sup> Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; <sup>12</sup> but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. <sup>14</sup> For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. <sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,***

***<sup>16</sup> “THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:  
I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART,  
AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,”***

***He then says,***

***<sup>17</sup> “AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS  
I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.”***

***<sup>18</sup> Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.***

If I could summarize, Jesus sanctifies once for all (in verses 10-16), and he refuses to hold our sins against us (in verses 17-18). Concerning his sacrifice dealing with sin once for all (in verses 10-16), **\*\*PPT\*\*** the author once again quotes from Psalm 110 (the most-quoted Psalm anywhere in scripture), and it's a Psalm about the consequences of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Christ has defeated sin permanently. In that sense, his work is done. He has now ***“sat down at the right hand of God.”*** We looked at this a few weeks ago, and we noted that the Old Testament priests could never say this. They offered those sacrifices continually. There were no chairs in the temple, because their work was never done. I think of that old commercial, “Time to make the donuts!” Those sacrifices keep coming. Jesus, though, having offered himself once for all, now sits at God's right hand. He has perfected us. That doesn't mean we don't have work to do, but in terms of our relationship with God, we are perfect.

Concerning the fact that he refuses to hold our sins against us (in verses 17-18), **\*\*PPT\*\*** we have another quote from Jeremiah. During a dark time in Israel's history, Jeremiah was looking to the future, to a time when



God would refuse to hold his people's sins against them. Those sins would be forgotten, not in the sense that God can't remember, but in the sense that God would not allow those past sins to affect the relationship. And where this kind of forgiveness happens, there is no longer a need for sacrifice, there is no longer any offering for sin. That offering has already been made. This is such a blessing, but in a sense, it's also a warning: If we turn away from his sacrifice, there is truly nowhere else to turn.

### Conclusion:

**\*\*PPT\*\*** This morning, we finally come to the end of the *"meat"* section of Hebrews. Jesus is truly a better sacrifice. The Old Covenant has always been inadequate, but Jesus now solves the problem of sin, and he's done this by offering himself as a sacrifice for us. He sanctifies us once for all, and he refuses to hold our sins against us. Next week, I hope to be back from camp, and we plan on taking a little break from Hebrews by taking a look at a very relevant sermon request that came in from one of our members a while back. Then I'm heading out on vacation, and we will have two guest preachers over the next two weeks – Hans will be preaching on July 2, and somebody from the Richter family will be preaching on July 9 (hopefully Caleb's dad, Ken, who preaches in Oklahoma, but Caleb is the backup). But we hope to return to a new section in Hebrews on Sunday, July 16, if the Lord wills. It gets a lot more practical from here on out. I don't know whether you've looked ahead, but the next word in Hebrews 10:19 is *"therefore."* We are about to get to what everything up to this point really means for us personally and very practically.

Before Michael leads us in a song to prepare us for the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

Thank you for your Book and for this message we've studied today from Hebrews. We are so thankful for Jesus and for what he's done for us – by coming in human form, by living a perfect life, by offering himself on the cross, and now, by interceding for us in heaven, at your right hand. We are thankful for the reminder today that the New Covenant is far superior to everything that came before it. Thank you, Father, for making us a part of your family, the church. We pray for those still to be rescued from the domain of darkness, for those still to be born into your kingdom. We pray for those who have fallen. We pray for wisdom as we teach and encourage and strengthen.

We come to you today through Jesus, who gave himself in our place. Lord, come quickly!  
AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)