



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 10:1-10

“The Shadow and the Reality”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, again, we ask Thy blessing upon us as we study the Scriptures. We thank Thee again for all that this great epistle teaches us and we thank Thee for the great emphasis of it upon the sacrifice and the covenant, the priesthood. And we pray that the reality of these things may continue to become significant for us and grip us so that in our daily lives we may take advantage of all that our Lord has done and is now continuing to do at Thy right hand in Heaven. We thank Thee for such a provision made for us and ask, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to learn how to take advantage of all that we have in Christ. We pray that Thou wilt be with each one present here. We again pray for our country. We pray for the whole church. We pray for Believers Chapel. We ask Thy blessing especially upon the individuals, who have out of the desire to have the fellowship of the saints, who have asked us to pray for them, with their trials and difficulties and problems. We do pray for them, Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon each one of them. Bless the ministry here and, particularly, this coming weekend.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, the message this evening is one that in one sense I don't think I would have given for the simple reason that it's one that I gave not too long ago. One of

the few disadvantages of preaching through the books of the Bible is that we go through all of the passages of the books that we are studying and, occasionally, if you are also giving some doctrinal messages, some of the same things reappear.

Now, I'm counting on the fact that you did not pay close attention to what I said a year or so ago and I'm going to tell you exactly what the duplication is so maybe it will stir up your pure minds by remembrance, so that as we go through tonight you will say, “Oh, I do remember that.” And it will impress upon your mind what we are talking about. But when we were studying the series on the purpose of God and the nation Israel, the divine purpose in history and prophecy, in dealing with the question of the atonement, I took this passage in Hebrews chapter 10, as the one passage that we would devote to that subject. So, I know, some of you are going to remember some of the things that I said. I hope that at least a few other things that will be a little different will gain your attention so that you will get something out of what I am going to be talking about. But I want to warn you ahead of time that what I am talking about we have already discussed in the past months.

Now, tonight, our subject is “The Shadow and the Reality” or the un-repeatability of Christ's offering. Now, many times we have said that the Epistle to the Hebrews hangs on three great Old Testament passages, perhaps four, but these three are the most important. Psalm 110, which says that there is now a new priesthood; the Aaronic has been done away with. The Melchizedekian priesthood has taken its place. Jeremiah 31, which unfolds details concerning the New Covenant, which our Lord ratified on the night of the Last Supper, when He took the bread and the wine and said, “This cup is the New Covenant in my blood which is shed for the remission of the sins of many.” And then, the third passage is Psalm 40.

Now, the new priesthood, the new covenant and the new sacrifice make up the principle points that the author makes with regard to his soteriology and in the case of Psalm 110, we've had numerous reference to it, particularly in chapter 7. In chapter 8 and

chapter 9, we've had references to the new covenant and we will again have reference to it later on. But here, in chapter 10, we come to the new sacrifice, and the passage that the author uses in order to make that point is Psalm 40. For there, the new sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is alluded to.

Now, I don't guess I should apologize for repetitions. Mr. Spurgeon has a marvelous little paragraph and I'm going to read it to you, partially as an excuse for me, and then to make the point that he makes. When he's talking on this same passage, he said, “We shall have this morning to repeat a truth, which has sounded forth from this pulpit many hundreds of times, but we shall offer no apology for our repetitions.” I didn't follow his advice. Maybe, if I had gone through with no apology, you would never have noticed that I was repeating a message.

But, he goes on to say, “Seeing that the truth to be preached is one, which cannot too often be proclaimed. If you lift up your eyes at night to the stars, what a wonderful variety of celestial scenery is there. The astronomer can turn his telescope first to one quarter of the heavens, and then to another and find an endless change in the sublimities which meet his gaze. Such are the doctrines of the Gospel; they are full of variety and beauty and glory. But, yet, in the heavens, one or two conspicuous constellations are more often regarded by the human eye than all the rest put together. The mariner looks for the Great Bear, the Pointers, and the Pole Star. Or, if he should cross the equator, he gazes on the Southern Cross. Though these stars have been often looked upon, it is never thought to be superfluous that practical men should still observe them. Night by night they have their watches; for by them, ten thousand sails are steered.

I should suppose that in those days, now happily past, when slavery reigned in the Southern States of America, the Negro, if he desired liberty for his boy would be sure what ever else of the stars he did not teach him, to point out to him the star of liberty. Know well, my child, those friendly stars which point to the Lone Star of liberty. Follow that light, till it leads you to a land where fetters no longer clank on human limbs. Even

so, it seems to me that certain doctrines, and especially the doctrines of atonement and justification by faith, are like these guiding stars. And we ought frequently to point them out. Make sure that our children know them and that all who listen to us, whatever else they may be mistaken about, are clear about these; the guides of men to the haven of freedom and eternal rest. I believe if I should preach to you the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ every Sabbath day and that twice and nothing else, my ministry would not be unprofitable. Perhaps, it might be more profitable than it is. So, we are coming to the same truth, which we handled last Sabbath evening.” And I like this last comment. “Many dishes are put upon the table at intervals, but bread and salt are always placed there and so, we will have the atonement again and again and again for this is the bread and salt of the Gospel feast.”

Well, we’re going to read a couple of passages and I’d like to read the passage in Psalm 40 first. We’ll read the first 8 verses of Psalm 40. And then, I’ll read the first 10 verses of Hebrews chapter 10. When I gave the message previously, I dealt with the 18 verses that are found in the first part of chapter 10 of Hebrews, but we will, this time, just do the first ten verses. So the message, after all, is a little different. Chapter 40, verse 1 through verse 8 of the Psalms. David writes.

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth, praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord.”

Now, these are the verses that become very important.

“Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are your wonderful works

which you have done; and your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to you in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; my ears you have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering you did not require. Then I said, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do your will, O my God, and your law is within my heart.”

Notice, particularly, verse 6 through verse 8. Now, let’s turn over to Hebrews chapter 10. We’ll read the first 10 verses. The author writes.

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.”

Actually, the Greek text says simply “conscience of sins” and, I know, there’s a little debate over this; in fact, it’s still going on. The latest books are still debating the point. But if we say “no more consciousness of sins,” I would doubt that in the Old Testament or the New Testament, according to human experience, that that would ever be true. “No more consciousness of sins.”

I can understand, however, “conscience of sins” in the sense of sin upon ones mind as guilt. In that case, I can see how “no more conscience of sins” would be more suitable. And so I take it that way. But then there are some who like to make it “consciousness of sins” and the version I’m reading, of course, has taken it that way.

Verse 3.

“But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said.”

Who said? When He came into the world He said. What did He say? And who is the He?

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of me to do your will, O God.’”

Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them which are offered according to the law. Then he said, “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.”

He takes away the first that he may establish the second.

“By that will.”

The Original Text says simply “in that will” probably could be rendered, “By that will.”

“By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Now, one of the things that we need to bear in mind at the beginning is to remember these three things: Priesthood, covenant, and sacrifice; each one of them is

final. That is, there can be no replacement of priesthood because the Melchizedekian priesthood is an eternal priesthood. There can be no newer covenant, because this one is called an everlasting covenant. And there can be no new sacrifice because this is the sacrifice that is made once and for all. So these are eternal things. There can be no replacement of them.

Now, the author now lays special attention upon the third, upon sacrifice. Now, of course, he's talked about sacrifice previously, even in the preceding chapter, near the end of the chapter he's laid stress on it. But now, he's going to lay even stronger stress upon it. It's extremely important for us to realize, of course, that there is just one unrepeatable sacrifice. It's important for two reasons. It's important for us who have believed in Christ because we rest our eternal salvation upon that one sacrifice. Do we not? Suppose that we were to find out that there is another sacrifice and our salvation is related to that, also? Well, of course, for all of you in this room, that would be very, very damaging to your faith because you don't know anything about another sacrifice. Nor do I. And so if someone were to say there is another sacrifice that would be very disturbing.

We know there is one sacrifice and we know that that one sacrifice is sufficient for all of our sins. And so we rejoice in the fact that our Lord Jesus has suffered once and for all. Everything has been accomplished for a solid foundation for the forgiveness of our sins. So it's important, extremely, for our sense of security.

Now, it's, if I may underline that salvation thing a little bit more, there is, of course, a large religious organization that tells us that there is no such thing as one, once for all, sacrifice, that is no longer being accomplished. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, tells us in its teaching that there is no such thing as a once for all completed sacrifice. Well, if you were to refer them to passages such as this, you might ask the question, “Well, what do they say with reference to these passages in which our Lord is said to have suffered once and for all?”

Well, that raises the question of the Mass in the Roman Catholic Church. What is the relation of the Mass to the sacrifice of the Cross, according to Rome? Well, the victim is the same. The sacrifice is the same. The manner of the offering alone is different. In the case of the Roman Mass, the offering is an un-bloody offering. In the case of Christianity, as we understand it, it's a bloody offering; it's a violent death of our Lord.

Well, how does the Church of Rome try to avoid the charge of repeating the Lord's sacrifice. Well, they say simply, among other things, of course, they say simply this that by saying the Mass does not repeat the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; it only continues the Lord's sacrifice. But the contrast in Hebrews is between continued sacrifices of the Old Testament and a sacrifice offered once and for all. The priest is said to offer continually the same sacrifices that is, the Old Testament ones. But this one is one that is said to be forever. So the idea of continuation is ruled out by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In fact, he denies specifically that point, the continued offerings of the Old Testament, the once for all offering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Liguori, doctor and saint of the Church of Rome, in a dogmatic work on the Council of Trent, quotes another Roman scholar as stating that there were no priests ordained to sacrifice in the Mass before the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, a transubstantiation about which we are referring in part, was first an article of faith and the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. So the idea of the Mass, as it is taught today, is something that it would be very, very difficult to find even in earlier Christian history and surely is not found in the Bible.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, of course, is seeking to talk to people who had been Jewish people, primarily, and they had come to make a confession of faith in Christ and now they're wavering. And so the epistle is designed to strengthen them. That's why he quotes the Old Testament. If he were Gentiles who were wavering, quoting the Old Testament would have no specific regard for them because if they are wavering, they are wavering on the Bible, too. But the individuals to whom he is writing,

evidently, believe the Scriptures, but now they are wavering on the interpretation of the Scriptures, their Scriptures, Hebrew Scriptures that they had, at least, publicly confessed.

So our author is trying to avoid the apostasy of these individuals who are in danger of going back. So he wants to remind them that the Old Testament sacrifices were sacrifices that have reached their fulfillment in the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm reading a new two-volume commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. It's very technical and it's not easy reading because it's very technical. And, fortunately, it's written by a person who is sound in the faith, so far as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But, I've also been looking at another commentary, also two volumes, but much simpler, written by Kent Hughes, a friend of mine, who is the pastor of the College Church in Wheaton. Pastor Hughes is a good student of the word of God. I believe he is a graduate of Talbot Seminary out on the coast and these are the messages that he has delivered to the College Church in Wheaton. He's a man who, incidentally, is on the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and so he's a thoughtful man with regard to the relationships of men and women as well, and a good student of the word, as I say.

He begins with this particular section with an interesting illustration. He says that when he was in college, I believe it was in college, he was introduced to his wife. And he said, it was something like love at first sight. And it was a few days afterwards that he got a picture of her which was a black and white picture, framed picture, and he took that picture and he put it on his desk. And he studied and he did other things with the picture of that young lady there on his desk. And he said it wasn't long before they finally had reached the decision that they would get married. Then, with all of their families and friends they went through the wedding ceremony and he discovered then, of course, that the person in the picture now has become his living, life loving, laughing wife. He means just all of those human things that a wife is and he finally now has the real thing, not the picture, but he has the real thing.

Then he says, suppose I were to go in to her after we have been married for awhile and take my old picture in with me and say, and I've forgotten what he said her name was whether it was Barbara I'll say it was Barbara, and he said, “Barbara, I've been thinking about our relationship and to tell you the honest truth, I really am in love with this picture, more than I am with you. And I just want you to understand that I am going to have to change our relationship.’ And he takes the picture and pulls it to his breast and speaks about love for the picture and turns and leaves the room. And then he said, “What do you think,” you in the audience, he's preaching to the audience, “What do you think if your pastor had done something like that?” We'd call for the men in white to come take him away and it would convince you that what they say about preachers is probably true. How ridiculous that is! He has the real thing, but now he's decided to go back to the picture, the framed picture, the colorless picture, with the mat and everything.

He said, “Well, that's really something like those who to whom the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote his letter,” because that is what they are in danger of doing. They're going back to the picture. Going back to the shadows, when they have the real thing. They have the thing of which the Old Testament Scriptures speak, the ministry of the great High Priest, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Well now, we're going to just go right down through this epistle and I want to spend a little time on our author's use of Psalm 40, because it's very interesting.

Notice the first word of chapter 10, “For.” Now, this makes the connection, carrying on from verse 26 of chapter 9, where he said, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world, but now once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, for” to further explain, “the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.”

In other words, the Old Testament presents us with an in-eficacious system of salvation. Now, one might ask, “Since he has just said in verse 26, ‘That He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, once at the end of the ages,’ why does the author go over this?” And say the same thing in chapter 10, verse 1 through verse 4, essentially, that what he seems to be saying.

Well, I could take my place behind that and say the author is repeating his message, and so I’m repeating my message to you tonight, but that isn’t precisely the sense. If you’ll notice carefully, chapter 9, and we don’t have time to do it, and you don’t have time to study it either while I’m speaking because I want you to pay attention to what I’m saying now, but, anyway, you’ll note in chapter 9, when he talks about the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, he talks about the objective benefits of the Cross of Christ, primarily. But, in chapter 10, now, verse 1 through verse 18, he emphasizes the subjective effects of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like verse 10, “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Verse 14, “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

In other words, the stress in chapter 10, is on the benefits that are ours whereas in chapter 9, the stress is on the objective benefits of what Christ has done. But the insufficiency of the Mosaic sacrifices is stated first of all. “The law having a shadow of good things to come.” Coming events cast their shadow before them, is one of our modern sayings and here we have an illustration of it, because in the Old Testament Law and the types of the Old Testament are designed to cast their shadow before them so that we would see the Lord Jesus Christ when he did come and recognize him.

The expression shadow means the outline, the silhouette, the law having the outline of the good things to come, the silhouette of the good things to come. We read the Old Testament in that way. We read through the Old Testament and we, on the authority of the New Testament, we look for the things that remind us of the things that

we know have come to pass and further explain it. That’s one of the great benefits of reading the Bible.

Some one tonight accused me of bragging about reading through the Bible or boasting, and I wasn’t talking about someone who is not a member of my family, but one a member of my family, who likes and I say to her every night, “I’m now in such and such,” she’ll say, “Boasting again!” But, one of the benefits of the reading of the word of God is to just notice these shadows of the Old Testament and how they do portray the coming ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, he said, “the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things,” that word in this particular context refers to the actual form that casts the shadow. In other words, the Law has a shadow of the good things to come, but it’s not the reality. It’s not the very form of those things. The very form of those things is set forth for us in the New Testament.

Now, having said that, in verse 2 and verse 3, he clarifies what he is talking about by an appeal to experience. Notice how he does it. “For then would they not have ceased to be offered?” If they were sacrifices that really did cleanse us from our sin, they wouldn’t have to be repeated. They are repeated over and over again. Particularly, he’s talking about the Day of Atonement, which every year had to be repeated.

Now, if the Day of Atonement was a sacrifice for Israel, which removed their sins, why does it have to be repeated? Well, for the simple reason that in the meantime they have also been sinning and it is necessary again for the atonement sacrifices to be made in order that Israel may remain in good standing with the covenant of the Old Testament. So just appealing to experience would or should have taught Israel and should have taught anyone else that there is no definitive cleansing in the Old Testament sacrifices.

You can see it in so many ways. I remember in one year, many years ago, I had an automobile that I had some difficulty with after I’d purchased it. And I remember taking it back to the dealer and having him fix it. And then, after I’d had it for a few

more days I had to take it back again. It was a Dodge, I remember, and the name of the company was Nichols Brothers. And I gave advice to a lot of people don't buy one from that company because I had to keep taking it back. The very fact that I took it back a couple of times was evidence that they hadn't fixed what they said they were fixing.

Well, this is like our author's argument here. He says, “For then would they not have ceased to be offered?” For then, would I not have ceased having to take that automobile back to Nichols Brothers, if they had fixed it the first time? “For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more conscience sense of guilt for sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.” So every time I drove it back to Nichols Brothers, it was a reminder to anyone who knew the facts that Nichols Brothers had not fixed that car.

Now, in the 4<sup>th</sup> verse, he goes on to talk about the reason. He says, simply, this, “The blood of bulls and goats cannot possibly take away sins.” That's the reason. So what do we need? We don't need any more animal sacrifices. They cannot take away sins. They cannot accomplish a definitive cleansing from sin.

So now, at this point, you might expect him to just simply talk about Christ. He's already talked about Christ, but here he engages in what the New Testament writers love to do. They appeal to the Old Testament itself to show that the Old Testament itself gave that particular indication. So he says, in verse 5, “Therefore, for this reason, when He came into the world, He said, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You [Capital Y] You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do Your will O God.’”

Have you ever heard, in your discussion of spiritual things, the use of the term Midrash? It's a Hebrew term. It means exposition, essentially. What we have here is a homiletical midrash. In other words, an exposition in which the author is using a text of Scripture to make a point. Just what you and I do when we have discussions with

people, we frequently in the midst of our arguments to prove our points or to support something that we've said, we will appeal to Scripture. We will cite Scripture. We talk about the love of God, we may appeal to passages like John 3:16, or 1 John being a man of the word of God. If you read through the Bible often, I'm sure.

Now, cites Psalm 40, and Psalm 40, which we have read is just, in this case, an exposition designed to support his point. What is his point? Well, his point is this; that God grants superior status to what kind of offering? The offering of a human body. Not animal sacrifices, but the offering of a human body. Superior status! That's obvious! These sacrifices, he says, of bulls and goats, they cannot take away sin. What about the sacrifice of a human being? So that's one of the first things that we note; he's referred to a sacrifice of a human being, and we at least know, from what he goes on to say that God grants a superior status, a superior place, to a human body as the means of the accomplishment of his will. “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.”

Now, this psalm, if you just read Psalm 40, you might have some questions about whether this psalm referred to the Lord Jesus Christ. I think, anyone reading through it would, for the first time, might ask the question of it himself, how does this psalm refer to the Lord Jesus Christ? His name is not mentioned? The Messiah's name is not mentioned. There isn't any thing specifically that you could put your finger on and say, “That's Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” But we know, from the study of the word of God that the writers of the New Testament believed in and were very skillful in finding typology, illustrations of God's dealings with us in the Old Testament. Over and over in the New Testament, they cite passages in this way.

Now, this is a typical psalm. That is, it's a psalm that illustrates the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He recognizes it. And the psalm itself would cause you to think of that if you were thinking scriptural things because of the way it appears here, in the midst of the context.

Now, what is the context about? Let me just state what it is. David, evidently, had had an experience that was very, very significant. He says, “I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me, he heard my cry.” So David had an experience in which he needed help from God. It was such an experience that he cried out to God. “He brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.”

These are figurative ways of expressing the fact that he has been given a singular deliverance by the Lord God; in fact, you can, in reading and pondering it, you can realize that this is a deliverance that could easily be said to be from the jaws of death itself. So what would you as a believing person, like David, what would you think, when God has marvelously reached down to you and brought you up out of a miry pit, set your feet upon a rock, established your steps, put a new song in your mouth of praise to God? What would you say?

Well, I believe I know you in this audience, you'd say, “Thank you, Lord!” Wouldn't you? Well, that's a very simple way you'd respond. You'd respond much more, much more deeply than simply saying, “Thank you, Lord!” I have a hunch that if it were a serious, deep experience, there may be some tears flowing down your face, and you'd be giving thanksgiving for God reaching down into the midst of this terrible situation, in the miry pit, and setting your feet upon a rock, establishing your goings and supplying all of your needs.

Well in the Old Testament, what would you do? If it was something you'd done wrong, of course, you could bring a sacrifice. But in the Old Testament, in more than one place, Israel was told that sacrifices are, ultimately, of no value in decisively dealing with sin. And in many of passages, we don't have time to talk about them, 1 Samuel chapter 15, I think it's verse 22; Isaiah chapter 1; Amos has a passage; Hosea has a passage that says the same thing. Over and over again, in the Old Testament, those points are made. So here, David reasons in verse 6, “Sacrifice and offering You did not

desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.’”

What is the one thing that David could possibly do? The will of God! Do God’s will! Not bring sacrifices! That’s like the person who attends church, to salve his conscience. Attending church doesn’t salve your conscience. Sit at the Lord’s Table. It’s no way to deal with your sin, if you have not confessed your sin and dealt with it. All of the religious experiences, through which we go, even prayer, when we get down on our knees and pray in prayer around the problem, we’re not helping the problem at all. We’re not dealing with the problem. Doing the will of God is what David sees. The sacrifices are of no value if only sacrifices. What God is interested in, is not simply the sacrifices, but the sacrifices given in faith by a person who has trust in the Lord. Real trust in the Lord! Inner trust! In his heart! Then the sacrifices have merit in Old Testament times.

So that’s what he’s saying. And so, in effect, he has said what God is interested in is doing the will of God. But poor David! You can’t do the will of God. You cannot do the will of God, David. You cannot do the will of God. I cannot do the will of God, apart from divine enablement. “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of Me to do Your will O my God.’”

Well, what happens to David is, he’s caught up by the Holy Spirit, and now as an anticipatory incident in which he reflects the Lord Jesus Christ, the words that he uses are words that only apply to Christ. No one could say, “Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of Me to do Your will O God,” in the perfect sense. Only Christ! So the psalm is a typical psalm. David is expressing what’s in his mind, and he sees sacrifices, offerings don’t do the job. But, caught up by the Holy Spirit, he utters words

that are applicable only, ultimately, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only he can do the will of God. Ultimately, that is precisely what he does! He comes as the infinite Son of God; the infinitely perfect Son of God, by the incarnation, enters into our life, and accomplishes the will of God, precisely. Lives his life according to the word of God and goes to Calvary, to make it even more significant, in the volume of the book it is written of him, in carrying the promises of the word of God with him, as having been fulfilled, he hangs upon Calvary's Cross as the sacrifice for sins. He does God's will and he does it perfectly.

So the Psalmist's words are fulfilled, ultimately, in Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, even the words themselves fit very well with the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity and the ultimate doing of the will of God. Notice how they begin, verse 5, “Therefore when He came into the world.” What has the author of the Psalm done by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Well, he has said that these words are words that are written of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are words in which David speaks of him, and they are ultimately fulfilled only in our Lord. And so he pictures our Lord as the speaker. He said, “Therefore when He came into the world, He said, ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; but a body You have prepared for Me.’”

The body? The body of the incarnation, the Son of God. So the language is the language of the incarnation by which the will of God is accomplished. He said, “In the volume of the book it is written of Me to do Your will, O God.” The doing of the will of God is explained as, ultimately, the taking of the body, and the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross.

So, as I say, it's the language of the incarnation by which the purpose of God is fulfilled, and so our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who has come with written instructions “In the volume of the book,” to do His Father's will. And it's in that work that all of the sacrifices of the Old Testament find their reality. All of them were shadows, silhouettes of that one work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the body, human body, the human body of the divine Son.

Now, let me just make a few points because we're near the end of verses 8 through 10. It would be interesting to spend a much longer time on these verses and go back and talk about how the Old Testament Hebrew text writes this statement, for the Old Testament Hebrew text has a slightly different rendering, rather than “A body You have prepared for Me,” it has “Mine ears You have digged.” Seems rather strange. It's possible there is some confusion in copyists but I'm taking this to be genuine. But “A body You have prepared for Me,” is found in the Septuagint and I'm taking the “body” as being a genuine rendering or genuine text. And so “The body You have prepared for Me,” is a reference as we say, to the body of our Lord. “Previously,” he's going to talk about the legal sacrifices now. “Previously saying,” he's arguing about the psalm, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them.” Now, notice this last clause, “Which are offered according to the law.”

Now, you can tell from this that the author regards the law as having been abrogated, the way he puts it in. They are offered according to the law. They are not for us today, they are offered according to the law.

Now, in verses 9 and 10, “Then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” Now, this is the superior status accorded the sacrifice of the human body. That is, the body of the divine person, the Lord Jesus Christ. “Behold, I have come.” In other words that psalm anticipates our Lord's coming, so the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says. He says, “Behold I come,” is something that ultimately that Jesus Christ, himself has stated. In fact, Psalm 40, verse 6 through 8, is seen as being in the mouth of Christ, at His incarnation. Notice how he puts it, “Therefore when He came into the world, He said, ‘Behold I have come.’”

That's one of the favorite expressions of our Lord. His coming into the world; John chapter 6, verse 38, and other passages make that point. “To do Thy will.” What is the will? Well, the will of God is the divine purpose for the saints.

One of the commentators, one of the real good commentators, has said that, “The will is the divine purpose for the human family.” And then he cites chapter 2, verse 10, verse 14, and verse 17. So take a look back there, quickly. Chapter 2, verse 14, says, “In as much as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He, Himself, likewise, shared in the same that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the Devil.” But now, it’s not the human family, but it’s the children, isn’t it?

Look at verse 10, “For it was fitting for Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Family? Sons! The whole family of the human race? No. Sons! Sons! He calls them brethren. Verse 17, “Therefore in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.” No, the will of God is the divine purpose of the Lord God in Heaven, for His saints and our Lord comes to accomplish that. Not for the human family as a whole, but specifically directed toward the family of God, is the point.

Now he says, also, verse 9, “He takes away the first that He may validate the second.” Now, that’s a very interesting comment. This is one of the truly, some one has said, “One of the epical formulations of the New Testament.” He takes away the first, that is, the Old Testament legal system, sacrifices, offerings, continually offered, in order that he may validate the second. What’s the second? The one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is one of the most significant statements of this book. “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” The Old Testament law is done away with in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. And verse 10, “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body.” Not sacrifices! Animal sacrifices! But by “the body” of our Lord Jesus Christ! Do you see the point?

Now, I’m not going to say, “Do you get it?” I might get a response. But maybe I better just say, I hope you recognize the point. He’s saying, it’s not the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings, but it is the one sacrifice of the body of the divine Son on

Calvary's Cross that is the ground of our salvation. It's the means. It's the source of our consecration to the service of the Son of God, by the will by which he accomplished the will of God, we have been set apart through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all. We, representatively in him have been set apart for the service of God by the offering of the body. And that makes explicit what it means “To do Your will” in verse 7 and verse 9. It's what Christ has done that expresses and accomplishes that.

One final thing because we have three minutes. “Once for all,” we've talked about that enough. We don't have to talk about that any more. I like what Kent Hughes says about “once for all.” He says, “That means it's a done deal!” Well, that is true. It means it's a done deal! It's one sacrifice. It has been done. But think of the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he was carrying out his work, realizing as he did, because when he came into the world he said, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, a body You have prepared for Me.” Think of the joy our Lord had in the accomplishment of the will of God?

Now, that joy that our Lord Jesus had in the accomplishing of the will of God is the supreme joy, of course. But it's not only the supreme joy, it's a pattern of the joy that you and I should have in doing the will of God. We're not going to do this will; that he's talking about. Of course, that's done once and for all! But there are many other things that spell out the details of what it means to be sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

We have been set apart for the service of the Lord, for the worship of the Lord, he says, in another place. Think of the opportunities for joy and Christian satisfaction in obedience to the word of God. I don't think we should read this without realizing what that must have meant to our Lord and what he would desire it to be for you and for me. The obedient response to the truth of God. May God enable us, in our measure, at least, to do his will.

Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the ministry of the truth to us through the kings and the apostles and prophets, but above all from our Lord Himself, we thank Thee for the assurance that the sacrifice has been accomplished, not only that, but that that sacrifice has benefits for us, subjective benefits, we have been set apart for Thy service. Lord, enable us by Thy grace to serve Thee obediently.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.