



Two Scenes, but the Same Story

Hebrews 9:8–10:23

Today is Palm Sunday and we are looking toward Good Friday. Do we really understand what was going on that week? It's important for us to understand because it is foundational to our study of Acts 15, to the Jerusalem Council, to the reason for their letter to the Gentiles, and to Paul's letter to the Galatians.

You know, when you read about them quickly, Palm Sunday and Good Friday seem like opposites. First on Palm Sunday, Jesus is celebrated as Messiah, King of Israel, and then on Good Friday he is crucified as a rebel. Those two scenes don't seem to belong together. One is glorious and the other is very bloody. What is it with all that blood in the Bible?!

Yes, those two stories don't go together at all unless we understand what was going on behind the scenes. So today I'd like to peek back there at the unseen world behind the curtain.

Last week, we read that the Jerusalem council wrote a letter from the Jewish church in Jerusalem to the Gentile church in Antioch telling them not to eat meat from strangled animals because then they would be eating blood and offending the Jews among them, breaking the unity of the church. We learned why they thought that was important.

"Abstain from food offered to idols"
"Abstain from sexual immorality."
"Abstain from meat of strangled animals."
"Abstain from blood."



Then, we read the Law in Leviticus that forbade the eating of blood. It was because God had appointed blood as the symbol for life and it was used to atone for sin. The writer of Hebrews explains the mystery of how a cursed and crucified rebel could have become the Messiah, the king of Kings and Lord of Lords.



He shows the real story of Palm Sunday and Good Friday. He explains it in Hebrews 9:8–10:23 (HCSB). He will tell us what's going on behind the scenes and why all that blood is in the Bible.

This will take a lot of thought to follow, so you might want to follow along in your Bibles. We'll start reading in verse 8 of chapter 9, and, as we read, I will stop to point out what's going on.

...9:8 "The Holy Spirit was making it clear that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed while the first tabernacle was still standing. This is a symbol for the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the worshiper's conscience. They are physical regulations and only deal with food, drink, and various washings imposed until the time of restoration."

In 9:8 he explains the problem with the Jewish worship rituals in the tabernacle. He isn't talking about Herod's temple, but the original tabernacle where Israel worshipped as they traveled in wilderness. The writer says, "The Holy Spirit was making it clear that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed while the first tabernacle was still standing.

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So now in verse 11, we come to Palm Sunday and the entrance of Messiah King of Israel, "But the Messiah has appeared, high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation),"

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...12 "He entered the most holy place once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

And then in verse 12 and following, atonement by the blood of Jesus takes place on Good Friday,

"He entered the most holy place once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God?"

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15 ... "Therefore, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant."

And so, starting in 9:15, we see why Jesus' had to offer the sacrifice of his own blood under God's first Covenant with Moses.

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... "Where a will exists, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will is valid only when people die, since it is never in force while the one who made it is living. That is why even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood.

Then in verse 16, the writer uses a common illustration of the death of someone leaving a will to explain what he means,

"Where a will exists, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will is valid only when people die, since it is never in force while the one who made it is living. That is why even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood.

... For when every command had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll itself and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded for you.

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... In the same way, he sprinkled the tabernacle and all the articles of worship with blood. According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves to be purified with better sacrifices than these.

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24. "For the Messiah did not enter a sanctuary made with hands (only a model of the true one) but into heaven itself, so that He might now appear in the presence of God for us. He did not do this to offer Himself many times, as the high priest enters the sanctuary yearly with the blood of another.

Now in verse 24, we see behind the curtain in heaven about what was going on with all these bloody ceremonies in the tabernacle. He shows how it was different with Jesus' sacrifice.

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...28 "so also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him."

And, so, in verse 28, being our high priest because of Good Friday, he was also designated High King Messiah on Palm Sunday.

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Why was the first Covenant not good enough to do the same thing as the Messiah did?

Why couldn't it save people from their sins?

The point of all those bloody sacrifices was salvation, right?

The point was to atone for the sins of the nation wasn't it?

So, why did the Messiah Jesus have to die on the cross where he shed his blood?

Hebrews continues in chapter 10 to explain what is going on behind the curtain...

"Since the law was only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the actual form of those realities, it can never perfect the worshipers by the same sacrifices they continually offer year after year. Otherwise, wouldn't they have stopped being offered, since the worshipers, once purified, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?"

10:1... "Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the actual form of those realities, it can never perfect the worshipers by the same sacrifices they continually offer year after year. Otherwise, wouldn't they have stopped being offered, since the worshipers, once purified, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?"

But in the sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, as He was coming into the world, He said: You did not want sacrifice and offering, but You prepared a body for Me."

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Did you hear that? "You prepared a body for me."

That was the baby Jesus, now the grown human man, Jesus, hanging on the cross.

Hebrews continues the quote in 10:6,

"You did not delight in whole burnt offerings and sin offerings. Then [Jesus] said, "See— it is written about Me in the volume of the scroll— I have come to do Your will, God!" After He says above, You did not want or delight in sacrifices and offerings, whole burnt offerings and sin offerings (which are offered according to the law), He then says, See, I have come to do Your will.

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Then starting in 10:11, the writer goes back to the tabernacle sacrifices to explain who Jesus has become because of his blood sacrifice.

"Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins. But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. He is now waiting until His enemies are made His footstool.

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For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. For after He says: This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws on their hearts and write them on their minds, He adds: I will never again remember their sins and their lawless acts."

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Now, in verse 18, the writer brings it home to us.

It's a huge conclusion!

He opens the curtains to reveal the climax of the whole week that has been in progress behind the curtain!

...10:18 "Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way He has opened for us through the curtain (that is, His flesh),

"Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way He has opened for us through the curtain (that is, His flesh),

and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."

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I said I wanted to look behind the curtains to see what is really going on Easter week. The writer of Hebrews reveals that the curtain is our flesh! As Jesus said in, "John 6:63 (HCSB), "The Spirit is the One who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

But our flesh hides what is behind it all;
our flesh hides the spiritual side of the world!
To us our flesh, to our senses,
what we can experience seems to be everything there is.
Everything is material stuff; there is nothing else.
It seems kind of silly when put that way! Yet so many people believe it!
But the Bible says our flesh is just the curtain!



Jesus has passed through the curtain of our flesh
and entered into the true holy place,
the presence of God.
There, he advocates on the basis that he himself paid for all our sin
under the first covenant
And the Gospels revealed that he could do it because he is, in fact, God himself!
And because he shed his human blood for us, there remains no penalty for our sin;
it has all been atoned for before God. The first covenant had been fulfilled.
That's what Jesus meant when he shouted, "It is finished!" before dying on the cross.

The New Covenant means we can live in the presence of God.
Even closer a relationship than Moses who was called "a friend of God."
Even closer than Moses through whom God instituted the first Covenant of blood.
The reason blood was so important was that it had to be shed on the cross
because God appointed it to atone for our sin.



As Moses quoted God in Leviticus 17:11 (HCSB), "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement."



So, to satisfy the requirement of the first covenant Jesus had to die
in such a way that his blood would be shed to atone for the sin of humanity.
Here's how he was able to get himself crucified on the cross.
He entered Jerusalem as Israel's high king,
so he had to be convicted as a rebel against Caesar.
And rebels are crucified.
It was Jesus' idea all along!

He also had to die in such a way that would fulfill the prophecies about him.
So he was not stoned,
which was supposed to be the penalty for blasphemy.
No, he had to be condemned as a rebel against Rome
and crucified so his blood would be spilled.
And he had to be hung on a "tree" in order to receive the curse of the law.

So we see why all that blood was needed in the Bible.
It was appointed by God for the purpose of atonement for sin.

And we see why Jesus had to die on the cross,
It was because by shedding his blood there,
 he fulfilled the first Covenant,
 so it could no longer condemn people.
So he shouted "It is finished!"
The curse of the first covenant is finished!
It's fulfilled!



Now we that we have peeked behind the curtain of his flesh we can see
 that he has become the eternal high priest
 of the new covenant for permanent forgiveness of our sin.
Humans can now live in the presence of God
 because Jesus our human representative is there right now.
His blood sacrifice on our behalf is our advocate.

We also see that in addition to becoming our permanent high priest,
 he will also become the high king, Messiah,
 of a New Heaven and and New Earth.
He is the exalted human who is also God.

And that is why we need both Palm Sunday and Good Friday!
Our Messiah atoned for our sins against God!
So we are righteous before him!
And we will be like him because we will see him as he is.
Easter is coming!

Thank you Jesus!
All Hail King Jesus!
All Hail Immanuel!
King of Kings!
Lord of Lords!
Bright Morning Star!