

Hebrews 10:5-10 **When Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll--I have come to do your will, O God.'" ⁸ First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). ⁹ Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

Dear Christians ready to celebrate Christ's birth:

A teacher was lecturing her students about the importance of doing their assignments completely and thoroughly. She said, "*Remember the wise old saying: A job well done need not be done again!*" After a brief pause, and student's voice from the back of the classroom said, "*Well, what about mowing the lawn?*"

Good point! There are some things you can do perfectly well and, sure enough, you just have to keep doing them again. Jesus, however, did his job so perfectly it need not -- in fact cannot -- be done again!

The author of the letter to the Hebrews tells today about what happened "**When Christ Came Into the World**" (1) ***He became the final sacrifice***, and (2) ***He made you perfectly holy***.

1

Our text begins: "***When Christ came into the world...***" Let's not pass that statement by! What did it take for that to happen? God got an umbilical cord and as a baby depended on a human woman to sustain his life -- a woman he himself created! Why would God do something like this? To suffer and die. His whole life was a winding path to the cross. While you and I have no clue about our futures, Jesus knew exactly what would happen. And even though he knew the horrible demise that lay ahead, he *willingly* did what he was born to do: to be a Lamb of sacrifice. He didn't check his calendar to see if he had that Friday open to die for us. It was his great plan all along. Jesus is the greatest volunteer. Hopefully we, the recipients of his volunteer work, will follow in his footsteps and use our lives (time and talents) to serve others!

So why are we talking about Jesus' Good Friday work at Christmas? The truth is, we won't understand the significance of Jesus' birth unless we see his death. Christ's cradle sat in the shadow of the cross. Look at the stained glass windows to the west. In the middle is depicted the 3-year gospel ministry of Jesus. But the bookend windows are the manger and the cross. Even the wooden beams are reminders that the manger/cross connection is inseparable.

The author writes, "***First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.***" The point Hebrew's author is making is that OT believers were saved "on credit." In effect, they received a promissory note. To remind them of this, they saw sacrifices being made day after day, year after year. God commanded them. But rivers of animal blood and mountains of animal carcasses paid for zero sins. Those slaughtered bulls and goats were vivid pictures of sin's horror. They were also reminders to the Israelites that God made a promise to do the same to his Son. In spite of our rebellion and continual disobedience, the Son was willing to be slaughtered to save us.

I read a story about a boy who continually came home late. He received many warnings, but didn't listen. One night he came home late for supper. He sat down, looked at his plate, and there was a slice of bread and some water. He looked at his father's plate. It was filled with meat and potatoes and gravy. The boy was crushed. The father waited for the impact to sink in, then quietly took his son's plate and put in front of himself. He took his own full plate and gave it to his son...and looked into his eyes and smiled. When that boy grew to be a man, he said, "*All my life I've had a picture of what God is like by what my father did that night.*" Unselfish, sacrificial giving: that's what our Sav-

ior is all about. Taking from us what we deserved; giving to us what we don't deserve. That's grace: undeserved love.

The sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, his life for ours, only had to be done once. Over the years, millions of animals died in Israel; but only *one* Jesus. ***“We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*** So Jesus ***“set aside the first to establish the second.”*** In other words, we don't put animals on altars anymore. That's done. Jesus' sacrifice ended it all. Every sin is wiped away and paid for.

2

The result? ***“We have been made holy.”*** Holy means spotless; not one shred of contamination clings to our souls. Not one sin or even evidence of sin will be brought forward on Judgment Day to condemn you.

If you ever watch *America's Got Talent*, the judge can give you an “X” buzzer of disapproval and send you off the stage. The judge can also decide to give you the “golden buzzer” to send you through to the finals. Our Judge is Jesus -- the same Jesus who loved you and has qualified you for heaven! So guess what? You get the golden buzzer -- not based on our performance, but simply by his grace.

Jesus' sacrifice has made you a **“saint.”** A saint isn't someone so good he can earn his way to heaven. A saint isn't someone you pray to to keep your car from going into the ditch. We aren't told to pray to dead people. No, a saint is every believer in Christ who has been made holy through his precious blood.

The holiness we have as saints is more than skin deep. It's made you holy from head to foot, inside and out. We aren't like Christmas ornaments: all shiny on the outside but hollow and dark on the inside. Jesus once called the Pharisees, who opposed salvation by grace, ***“whitewashed sepulchers.”*** They looked all spiffy on the outside, but on the inside they were rotting corpses who loved themselves and their own opinions more than they loved God and his Word of saving grace.

(1) ***“When Christ came into the world”*** -- he became the **final** sacrifice for all sins, the fulfillment and completion of all the OT laws. (2) And ***“when Christ came into the world”*** he made you as holy as he himself is holy! A job well done. It need not be done again.

Is there any wonder we so joyfully celebrate his birth?

Amen.