

Born to Die: FOR YOU

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Psalm 40 Hebrews 10:1-14 Matthew 1:18-25

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When you think of the Book of Psalms, you probably think of the *comforting* Psalms that have given you strength throughout your life, your favorites, ones that you have probably memorized to some degree, such as:

- ⇒ **Psalm 23** *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want he make it me to lie down in green pastures he leadeth me beside the still waters*
- ⇒ **Psalm 27** *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear; The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?*
- ⇒ **Psalm 34** *The Lord is close to the broken hearted; He saves those who are crushed in Spirit*
- ⇒ **Psalm 51** *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*
- ⇒ **Psalm 103** *Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.*
- ⇒ **Psalm 121** *I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

These Psalms, and many more like them¹, are *precious gifts* the Lord has given us; they are the *power of God* at work within you.

But there is another whole set of Psalms that specifically teach us about the Messiah. They are called *Messianic Psalms*; and are used in the New Testament and are often on the lips of the Messiah Himself². **Psalm 40** is one of those *Messianic Psalms*.

¹ Here are some additional comforting Psalms that you may remember: Psalm 46, 62, 91, 139, 150. Perhaps spend some time this week reading and meditating on these comforting Psalms! (And do some memorizing!! ☺)

² These Messianic Psalms are often quoted in the NT and teach us about Jesus. Besides Psalm 40, here are some more examples: Psalm 2, 8, 22, 110, 118.

As we continue our Advent series “*The Meaning Of Christmas In The Book Of Hebrews*,” **Psalm 40** will help us understand why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Here is how the Holy Spirit quotes **Psalm 40** in the book of Hebrews³:

When Christ came into the world, He said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.'" Hebrews 10:5-7

The Christ, the Son of God, *became flesh*, He took on a **human body**. The perfect Son of God is also a perfect Man. This is the “Incarnation” – God ‘in flesh’. The reason the Messiah became Man is to offer the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

A perfect sacrifice had never been done before; nor could any of us ever achieve it.

The comparison is to the Old Testament times. God had prescribed many sacrifices for His people to obey. For instance, there was the

- ⇒ **Passover sacrifice:** Where a lamb was slaughtered each year to remember the Passover -- where the blood of the lamb was put on the doors of the Israelites, and death passed over them. Exodus 14
- ⇒ **The Day of Atonement sacrifices:** there were two sacrifices on the Day of Atonement; one sacrifice was killed and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant; and the other sacrifice lived, the *scapegoat*, as the sins of the people were laid on that sacrifice and it was taken out into the desert never to be seen again. Leviticus 16
- ⇒ **The Morning and Evening sacrifices:** 2x day, sacrifices were offered on behalf of all the people of Israel. Every day -- for centuries -- throughout the OT times these sacrifices were made. Exodus 29

We learn in the New Testament, specifically in the book of Hebrews, that these sacrifices could **NEVER** take away the sins of the world. "*Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired . . . in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.*" Hebrews 10:5-6 and *It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats*

³ This is one of the fascinating things that happens in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit uses the Greek translation of Psalm 40 called the Septuagint (LXX) in Hebrews 10:5 rather than the original Hebrew wording of the Old Testament. Compare Psalm 40:6 “you have given me an open ear” to Hebrews 10:5 “you have given me a body.” In Hebrews, Christ Himself speaks these words, and is referring to His incarnation!

to take away sins ^{Hebrews 10:4}. Animal sacrifices cannot remove sins --> **Rather every single sacrifice in the Old Testament pointed forward to the Son of God and His sacrifice^{4,5}.**

Jesus was born in Bethlehem; He was given a body in order to perfectly obey the will of God the Father⁶ and make us righteous.

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
With burnt offerings and sin offerings, You were not pleased.

But a Body You prepared for Me

'Behold, **I have come to do your will**, O God,
as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.'

With His body, born in Bethlehem, the Son of God perfectly obeys the will of God the Father. He fully obeys the 10 commandments at every point; in thought, word, and deed; every moment of every day of His life. His perfect and obedient life is credited to you through faith, and God now considers you perfect and obedient; you are holy and righteous in His eyes! *Jesus is given a body, born in Bethlehem, so He can live a perfect life for us!*

With His body, born in Bethlehem, the Son of God perfectly obeys the will of God the Father. The Father's will is that His Son will make atonement for the sins of the world. God the Father gave His Only Begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have everlasting life. God the Father provides the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. *Jesus is given a body, born in Bethlehem, so He can die for us in Jerusalem.*

⁴ The Old Testament is Christ-centered. See John 5:39, Luke 24:44, and Acts 10:43. The faithful priests and Levites throughout Old Testament times would have been teaching this to the Israelites. With every sacrifice, they would have been pointing the people forward to the coming Messiah who would take their sins away and cleanse their consciences. Although most of the Israelites rejected God, His Word, His Prophets, and His Messiah; some believed and they are referred to as the "remnant."

⁵ Note also the significance of Hebrews 10:9: the Old (Testament) is "done away with", and the New (Testament) is "established"! Jesus fulfills all the OT sacrifices (along with all the other prophecies and types); we now approach God through Him, and Him alone, and not through OT worship rites, including sacrificial animals. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Him! Jesus as the "way" to the Father is the NEW Testament; the OLD Testament way of animal, priests, temple, etc is "done away with."

⁶ This is the doctrine of Christ's Perfect Obedience: His *active* obedience (living a perfect life for us) and His *passive* obedience (dying a perfect death for us). He was our substitute (sacrifice) in both His life and His death. As conservative Lutherans, we summarize this with the phrase "Christ alone!". It is 100% His work (His Obedience to the Father) that saves us -- His life and His death - and not a single thing we ourselves do.

His sacrifice on the cross pays the penalty for your sin. Our sin is deep and dark, wicked and evil; it leads us to disobey God and His commandments; it leads us to hurt and harm our neighbor with our thoughts, words, and actions. Sin is a poison that destroys you; it is a prison that you cannot escape from; guilt and shame crushes you; and eternal death and final condemnation loom over you. There is absolutely nothing you can do to escape this; nothing you can do to make up for your sin and make things right with God.

So the Son of God does it for you. God the Father sent His Son, given a body in Bethlehem, to be the Sacrifice for your sin. Jesus sheds His blood as a sacrifice; a death has occurred on your behalf and for your sin. The blood of Jesus *covers over* your sins; they are *atoned* for. God the Father sees the blood of His Son for you, and He *forgives* you. He will *never ever remember* your sin again. *Always, every day, without ceasing* He forgives you.

You can have *confidence and assurance* today because the work of salvation that is accomplished by the Son of God, *His life and His death*. The work is complete and it is perfect. God the Father accepts the work of His Son and proves it to you by raising His Son from the dead on the Third Day! The greatest miracle of all, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is meant to **assure you** that your sins are forgiven and that you have peace with God. The work of salvation is complete and it is perfect!

As we continue our Advent preparation today, we might paraphrase Psalm 40 like this:

*God the Father did not desire animal sacrifices and offerings
He's not pleased with burnt offerings or sin offerings of the Old Testament;
In the New Testament, He prepared a body for His Son,
our Savior Jesus Christ
who was born in Bethlehem to do the will of the Father:
that is, to save us from our sins
By His perfect life; and His perfect death.*

The book of Hebrews uses **Psalm 40** to teach us the meaning of Christmas!

Amen!

Psalms 40:6-8

Christ speaking to God the Father about His Incarnation

Quoted and explained in Hebrews 10:5-10

This is the reason for the Incarnation: to make atonement for us

"Sacrifice and offering
You did **NOT** desire,
with burnt offerings and sin offerings
You were **NOT** pleased.

Animal sacrifices cannot remove sins: impossible in Heb 10:4
These are from OT, and "set aside" Heb 10:9 (10:1-4 reviewed them)

but a **Body** You prepared for Me;

Purpose of Incarnation : "in flesh" (= in a body!)
His bodily sacrifice will be effective: animal bodies were not sufficient

Then I said, 'Here I am—
it is written about Me in the **SCROLL**.—

The whole OT and its prophecies and types

I have come to do **Your Will, O God.** "

Jesus' life and His work is God's Will
Voluntarily came into the world for the once and for all sacrifice for our sin
This includes both Christ's active & passive obedience
Christ incarnation leads to His Atonement through His body!
Part of God's will was that the OT is set aside: fulfilled and ended (Heb 10:9)
The NT is now established with Christ's once and for all sacrifice (Heb 10:9)
Now you are made holy and remain holy (Heb 10:10) (= "saints") (= "sanctified")