

The Shadows Are Gone!

Michael Woody | Hebrews 10:1–10

The pictures and prophecies of the Old Covenant have found their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

TEXT: HEBREWS 10:1-10

WHY THIS TEXT?

1. Today we are looking at the fact that the shadows are gone!
2. The passage prior dealt with the fact that our Lord is returning to save His people and he now brings this to a radical result to the readers.
3. My points today are
 - a. The Old Covenant was the shadow of good things to come
 - b. The New Covenant is the fullness of good things that came
4. F.F. Bruce says, The “good things which were to come” have now come (9:11); they embrace the unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ and his present high-priestly ministry, which carry with them eternal redemption and uninhibited access to worship the living God. They are the only absolutely “good” things, because they comprise the “perfection” which the old order was incapable of supplying

THE OLD COVENANT WAS THE SHADOW OF GOOD THINGS TO COME (HEBREWS 10:1-4)

1. Two words are of special note in verse 1: shadow and image.

- a. The shadow is but a shadow; the “image” (*eikōn*)—especially “the very image”—is an exact replica, “not an imperfect, partial reproduction, but a manifestation adequate to the reality itself.”
 - i. One Greek scholar makes the point that an artist draws an outline (σκιά, our word for shadow) before he produces the finished portrait (εἰκών, the very image), and that a similar relation exists in our author’s mind between the Levitical ceremonial as the preliminary sketch and the high-priestly work of Christ as the completed masterpiece.
 - ii. The “image” is thus something superior to the “copies” or “patterns” of 9:23f.
 - b. The Old Covenant could never bring those who worshiped under it to a state of perfection; this was plain enough from the fact that the same sacrifices had to be repeated over and over again; a clear reference to the greatest of the sacrifices, the Day of Atonement.
2. Verse 2, the logical implication of the question “Otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered?” is that the sacrificial ritual was still practiced in the temple at Jerusalem.
 - a. The Old Covenant lacked the inherent ability to cleanse the conscience; this is evident because the worshipers did not enjoyed unrestricted communion with God.
 - b. F. F. Bruce notes, It is the presence of sin in the conscience that hinders such communion; “if I had cherished iniquity in my heart,” said the psalmist, “the Lord would not have listened” (Ps. 66:18).
 3. In verse 3 we have this reminder again of the fact that Old Covenant saints maintained a consciousness of their sins under that covenant.
 4. In verse 4 we receive the clearest statement of the inability of the Old Covenant: For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

So what do we say about the Old Covenant and its purpose?

- i. The Mosaic system was divinely instituted
- ii. Its nature preparatory showing in particular the seriousness of sin, the reality of the righteousness of God, and the necessity for atonement.
- iii. In spite of these benefits it was inherently incapable of achieving the reconciliation which it showed, by its typical forms in association with the promises of the new covenant it pointed forward to the achievement of a full and final expiation through the Lamb which God would provide.
- iv. The Old Testament era was one of expectancy rather than arrival, which verses 5-10 trumpet out in great clarity.

THE NEW COVENANT IS THE FULLNESS OF GOOD THINGS THAT CAME (HEBREWS 10:5-10)

1. Verses 5-7 sum up what God has always desired from mankind, which Jesus met perfectly, obedience.
 - a. The author in verse 5 quotes Psalm 40:6-8 in reference to a sacrifice that could take away sins.
 - b. This passage tells us what sacrifice God actually required - obedience.
 - c. F.F. Bruce has some excellent thoughts on this, Wholehearted obedience is the sacrifice which God really desires, the sacrifice which he received in perfection from his Servant-Son when he came into the world. As for the other kinds of sacrifice enumerated in the psalm, they had religious worth only insofar as they were the tangible expression of a devoted and obedient heart; the great prophets never tired of insisting that God did not desire them for their own sake.
 - d. This quote from Psalm 40 would seem to speak of the incarnation of Christ (his coming into the world); this act was an act of submission to God's will even unto death.

2. Verses 8-9 announce when the Old Covenant died - it was when Jesus was incarnate.
 - a. The promise had given way to reality and the picture gave way to the actual.
 - b. Just as the Aaronic priesthood had faded into the past because a new High Priest had come there was no reason for the Old Covenant sacrifices because the reality that they pointed to had now come.
 - c. This is captured very simply, He takes away the first in order to establish the second.
 - d. F. F. Bruce says, The terms of the new covenant include the provision that God's law will henceforth be engraved in his people's hearts; and it was supremely fitting that this should be preeminently true of him through whose obedience and blood the new covenant has been ratified. "I have come to do your will" is written over the whole record of our Lord's life; this was his attitude from first to last.
3. Verse 10 - sums up the finality of this argument, it takes the person of Christ and it brings to His people the benefits of all that He accomplished.
 - a. Whose will? The person of Jesus Christ - it is clearly within the verse. (Romans 5:19)
 - b. What has happened? We have been sanctified, separated unto holiness. (present active indicative).
 - c. How did this happen? When he offered up His body once for all - that same body that was incarnate, walked among men, was crucified and bodily risen again. The firstfruits of the resurrection.
 - d. By this Man's single act He has sanctified His people and provided the perfection unattainable by the Old Covenant sacrifices.
 - e. One commentator wrote on the death of Christ, "It is the Atonement which explains the Incarnation: the Incarnation takes place in order that the sin of

the world may be put away by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.” [J. Denney, *Death of Christ*, p. 234.]

- f. The offering of the body and blood (v. 19, 29) of Jesus Christ were an offering yielded to God in an obedience even unto death. So perfect a sacrifice was our Lord’s presentation of his life to God that no repetition of it is either necessary or possible: it was offered “once for all.” [in the Greek it is emphatic by its position at the end of the text.]
- g. Again, Bruce, the sanctification which his people receive in consequence is their inward cleansing from sin and their being made fit for the presence of God, so that henceforth they can offer him acceptable worship. It is a sanctification which has taken place once for all; in this sense it is as unrepeatable as the sacrifice which effects it.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

1. It is because of this one and singular purpose that God would redeem man through His choice - we see it simply in Genesis 3:15 but it does not remain there.
2. God gives a promise to Noah, and Abraham, and through Jacob that He is bringing One who will accomplish all that He required.
3. He gives them a daily reminder of the seriousness of their sin, the need for atonement, and the need for a High Priest.
4. Finally, enters Jesus Christ, not to pomp and fanfare but humbly born in a feeding trough. He lived a perfect life and died a sinners death and it is for our redemption.

Spurgeon Commentary: Hebrews Exposition

Does the divine law require for our acceptance perfect submission to the will of the Lord? He has rendered it. Does it ask complete obedience to its precepts? He has presented the same. Does the fulfilled will of the Lord call for abject suffering, a sweat of blood, pangs unknown, and death itself? Christ has presented it all,

whatever that “all” may be. Just as, when God created, His word effected all His will, so when God redeemed His blessed and incarnate Word has done all His will. In every point, as God looked on each day’s work and said “It is good,” so, as He looks upon each part of the work of His dear Son, He can say of it, “It is good.” The Father joins in the verdict of His Son that it is finished; all the will of God for the sanctification of His people is accomplished.