

## Jesus, Our Sacrifice and Salvation



### *Sabbath Afternoon*

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 9 and 10.

**MEMORY TEXT:** “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14, NRSV).

**KEY THOUGHT:** Voluntarily, Jesus laid down His life and became the Supreme Sacrifice in order to save us. His sacrifice made superfluous all other sacrifices.

**H**E [JESUS] **BEGAN HIS MINISTRY** by being hungry, yet He is the Bread of Life. Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty, yet He is the Living Water. Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest. Jesus paid tribute, yet He is the King. Jesus was accused of having a demon, yet He cast out demons. Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeemed the world. Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd. Jesus died, yet by His death He destroyed the power of death.” —Gregory of Nazianzus, A.D. 381 (article, “Jesus” [cited 28 January 2000], from [www.sermonillustrations.com](http://www.sermonillustrations.com)). Let us look closely at some concepts found in Hebrews regarding His sacrifice.

**THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:** What role does blood play in Hebrews? What did Christ accomplish with His death? Why does Hebrews stress the once-and-for-all nature of Christ's death? How are we cleansed and purified of sin?

\*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 6.

**Sunday**

**August 31**

**THE CENTRALITY OF BLOOD.**

**“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4).**

**Why do you think that the blood of animals, even those used in the earthly sacrificial system (instituted by God Himself), was unable to “take away” sins?**

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**T**he Greek term for “blood” appears twenty-one times in Hebrews, the highest concentration occurring in Hebrews 9. The theme of blood, introduced in Hebrews 9:7, becomes central in these verses and recurs constantly from verse 18 to the end of the chapter. In addition, a unique phrase is used in Hebrews 9:22, the “shedding of blood.”

**Read the following texts: Hebrews 9:7, 18-22; 10:29; 12:24; 13:20. What’s the point they are making in regard to the blood? Why is blood deemed so important?**

The old covenant and the new covenant were ratified by blood. Whereas “the blood of the covenant” in Hebrews 9 refers to the old covenant, in Hebrews 10–13 the focus is on the blood of Jesus and the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:7, 18, and 22 contain the word *without*. The high priest of the old system entered the Most Holy Place not *without* blood. The old covenant was not inaugurated *without* blood. There is no forgiveness *without* the shedding of blood. Blood is essential.

Hebrews 9:7-14, 25 contrasts the application of animal blood with the application of the blood of Jesus, thus showing the limits of the old system. Hebrews 9:18-21 emphasizes the importance of blood with regard to the covenant and the inauguration of the Old Testament sanctuary. Finally, Hebrews 9:22 contains the basic principle and forms a climax: Forgiveness of sin is possible only by shedding of blood; that is, the blood of Jesus, which alone has the ultimate power to purify and cleanse from sin.

**Read Hebrews 9:22. Why can there be no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood? Whose blood? Hint: See Leviticus 17:11.**

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

**Key Text: Hebrews 10:22.**

**Teachers Aims:**

1. To explore the role of sacrificial blood in Hebrews and what Christ accomplished with His death.
2. To illustrate why Hebrews stresses the singularity of Christ's death.
3. To define how His death cleanses and purifies us of sin.

**Lesson Outline:**

**I. The Role of Blood in the Covenants.**

- A. Under the old covenant, animal blood was symbolic of Christ's sacrifice.
- B. Only Christ's blood can save humanity.

**II. The Effects of Christ's Blood.**

- A. Christ's blood allowed Him entrance to the heavenly sanctuary.
- B. Christ offers us the only way to be purged of our sins.
- C. We are sanctified by His blood.

**III. The Perfection of Christ's Sacrifice.**

- A. Christ lived as one of humanity yet was sinless.
- B. He bore the punishment and death we deserve.
- C. He is the epitome of what humanity was intended to be, and His sacrifice was more than sufficient to cover humanity's sin.

**Summary:** Our imperfection and dark, sinful natures are such that only through divine intervention could we hope to regain favor in God's sight. Knowing this, God asked His only Son to substitute His perfect nature for our imperfection.

**Commentary.**

In the previous lesson, we saw how Jesus, our High Priest, had access to the throne of God in the heavenly sanctuary and became our Intercessor to the Father.

The teaching already emphasized in the earlier part of chapter 10 is now repeated; namely, that under the old system there is a ceaseless sequence of sacrifices, involving the repetition of the same sacrifices.

**Monday**

**September 1**

**THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S SHED BLOOD.**

**W**e often tend to think of blood in very negative terms: It reminds us of violence, death, and war. In the book of Hebrews, however, blood means something quite positive.

**What did Jesus accomplish by His blood being shed?**

**Heb. 9:12** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 9:14** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 9:22** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 10:19** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 13:12** \_\_\_\_\_

**Take what you've written on these verses and summarize the gist of what they say Christ's blood has accomplished. What do these accomplishments mean for us personally?**

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“The blood of Christ is life-giving and hope-giving, accomplishing fully the eternal purpose of God to rescue man from the predicament of sin. . . . No book of the New Testament so exalts the place of Calvary as does Hebrews. It sets out its message of the finality and all-sufficiency of the blood of Christ in such striking and contrasting terms with the Old Testament that every believer may indeed find absolute confidence.”—Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, pp. 112, 114.

**Read Hebrews 10:29. How would you explain this text in the context of all the hopes presented in Hebrews?**

The blood of Jesus purifies. It cleanses the sinner and the sanctuary (Heb. 9:14, 23); it also brings salvation. But if it can do all those things for those who accept it, then those who reject it must face the consequence, and that is—condemnation. Jesus does not want us to fall away from Him, the Source of eternal life. Hebrews is nothing, if not an exhortation to stay faithful.

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

Moreover, the logic of the situation and the sacrifices is that it can never take away sin.

Only Jesus, who alone is equal to the Father, can provide what is needed to deal with the sin problem. Thus, Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient for our salvation. Whatever the priest did in the earthly sanctuary did not accomplish what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross of Calvary. As mentioned before, Christ, by His self-sacrifice, has accomplished once for all what generations of sacrifices had never done.

The sacrifice of Christ has purified His people from the moral defilement of sin and assured them permanent maintenance in a right relation with God.

As the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ bore the sins of the world (John 3:16). All the accumulated sins of humanity were placed upon Him. He is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe in Him. Jesus' sacrifice could not be, and was not, limited only to those who should finally accept Him. It included all humanity in its provision. The key, of course, is that only those who accept what Christ has provided for them, only those who claim it by faith, are justified and receive the ultimate benefits of that provision; that is, eternal life. There is no universal justification; the provision was universal in that it was sufficient to cover the sins of all humanity; but justification itself comes only to those who claim it by faith.

The great news is that Jesus bore the sins of humankind, of Caiaphas, of Judas, of those who nailed Him to the cross. But He bore them efficaciously only for those who would finally accept Him. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12, NJKV).

But even those who reject the offer of salvation have been the beneficiaries of Jesus' atonement. No sinners have any inherent right to life, and their continued existence and opportunity of accepting salvation is provided for them only by the sacrifice on the cross.

Probationary time is granted them in which to make their decision. When at last they finally and irrevocably decide they will not accept life on the conditions on which it is offered, the die is cast, and they must bear the consequences.

God can do no more for them. Salvation has been offered them again and again, and they have rejected it. But for sinners who repent and cast themselves upon the mercy of God, Jesus Christ takes their sins, bears them, for He has suffered and died for them, and sinners are set free.

Jesus Christ pays the penalty due to sins, and redemption is accomplished. Sinners are restored completely to the love and favor of God and stand before God as though they have never sinned.

"Christ's work encompasses more than His ministry on behalf of humanity. Through His death He reconciled to God 'all things, whether on earth or in heaven' (Col. 1:20). This cosmic reconciliation will reach its consummation at the end of the great controversy, before the destruction of the evil powers, when every creature in heaven and on

**Tuesday**

**September 2**

**THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST (Heb. 10:12).**

**W**hile the concept of blood dominates Hebrews 9, the terms *sacrifice*, *offering*, and *to offer* find their highest concentration in Hebrews 10. The first part of Hebrews 10 discusses the inadequacy of the sacrifices of the old covenant. Starting with verse 10, the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus is contrasted with the services in the old tabernacle (see Heb. 10:10-18).

As mentioned earlier, but worth repeating (since the apostle does the same): Christ’s sacrifice was once and for all. That sacrifice did not need to be repeated, over and over, as in the Old Testament system.

**Why do you think Hebrews emphasizes the fact that Christ had to die only once? Why is it not repeatable? What is it about its once-and-for-all nature that makes it better than the Old Testament system? What point is the author trying to make by stressing the uniqueness of this sacrifice? Keep in mind the general theme of Hebrews as you dwell on your answer. See also Hebrews 10:18.**

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Jesus offered up Himself, once and for all, as a sacrifice; this means that He took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved for our sins. He was sacrificed in our behalf. Sin brings death; but, out of His love for us, He faced that death in our stead. He bore the punishment that we deserve. This is the essence of His sacrifice.

Although it is said that He had been offered (Heb. 9:28), other texts perceive the initiative originating with Him. Hebrews 9:14: Jesus “through the eternal Spirit offered himself” (see 10:12). These texts seem to express that Jesus voluntarily accepted suffering and death, including humiliation.

The point is that His sacrifice is all sufficient. It is one sacrifice offered once for all. Its results are that people *are* sanctified and perfected and experience forgiveness (Heb. 10:10, 14, 18).

**Is it fair that Jesus, being innocent, should suffer and die for the guilty? But do we want fairness? If we got fairness—in other words, if we got what we deserved—what would we get?**

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

earth will ‘confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’ (Phil. 2:10, 11). Meanwhile, through Christ God preserves the universe and keeps it together (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

“God revealed Himself in a unique way in Christ (John 1:14). Through the Son God speaks (Heb. 1:2) and reveals His will to the Christian community (Heb. 12:25). His speaking also takes the form of a blessing. Through Christ God has blessed believers ‘with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places’ (Eph. 1:3; cf. Gal. 3:14).

“Through Christ’s sacrificial death human beings are brought to God and continue to have access to Him (Eph. 2:18; 1 Peter 3:18). Christ appeared before God in the heavenly sanctuary as our forerunner; thus we are free to approach God in full confidence through Him (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:20).

## INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

**Texts for Discovery: Romans 4:3, 6:23, Ephesians 2:1-5, Hebrews 9:14, 9:28, 11:26, 2 Peter 3:9.**

1. Hebrews emphasizes again and again that sin cannot be forgiven without the shedding of blood. What does this tell us about the nature of sin? Why do you think sin is regarded as so serious that only the death of something or Someone can erase it?
2. We often talk about God’s grace being “free,” if not cheap. How might all this talk about the shedding of blood modify our thinking on this point? What does it say to us about the reality of this sacrifice and its consequences?
3. The blood spoken of by the author of Hebrews is not just any blood but (of course) Christ’s blood. Why is that so? Why could only Christ atone for the sins of the world? Who was Jesus that He would be able to do that for us? Discuss.
4. According to Hebrews, Jesus sacrificed Himself “once for all” (10:10). If His sacrifice atoned (in theory) for all people, why will not everyone be saved? If God wants us to be saved, why can’t He just will that to be so? Does this mean God is limiting His own power in some way?
5. Is there any way we can be worthy of the sacrifice Christ has made for us? What (if any) is our part in the whole plan of salvation?

*Wednesday*

*September 3*

**THE CONCEPT OF PURIFICATION (Heb. 10:22).**

**T**here are different ways to describe God’s saving activity. The Bible uses a variety of images and terms such as “justification,” “redemption,” “atonement,” “ransom,” and being “in Christ” to describe the same outcome. Another one of these words is “purification,” a concept heavily emphasized in Hebrews.

**Look up Hebrews 1:3; 9:13, 14, 22, 23; 10:2, 22. In what ways do they show not only the idea of defilement but also of purification? What things are defiled? What things need to be purified, or cleansed? How do you understand what this cleansing means?**

Justification pictures a legal process in which someone is declared just. Redemption is a picture explaining how something is being “bought back.” Forgiveness implies the cancellation of a debt. But purification alludes to the removal of uncleanness and defilement. And Hebrews teaches that humanity needs purification.

The first use of the concept of “cleanse, purify” occurs in the prologue of Hebrews. After Jesus has been introduced as the Creator, His achievements are mentioned, the first being that He “purged our sins” (Heb. 1:3). Thus, the tone is set for the rest of the epistle. Jesus has made purification of sins.

“By His atonement Christ accomplished both the cleansing of sin in general—which work was made possible by the sacrifice on the cross and will at last issue in the purification of the universe from sin—and the cleansing of the individual from sin. This latter work, also made possible by the cross, is still in progress and will not be finished till the last soul is saved.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 397.

“One is not *redeemed* from defilement, just as one is not *forgiven* it, *reconciled* to it, or *justified* in spite of it. If one is defiled, he must be made clean—the stain, the corruption must be taken away. And, argues the author of Hebrews, the means of that purifying and purification is blood, the blood of Christ Himself, the purifying agent par excellence.”—William Johnsson, *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), p. 89.

**Hebrews 9:13, 14 tells us that through Christ’s blood even our conscience can be purified. What do you think that means? How can our knowledge that Christ paid, in full, the penalty for all our sins and that we can stand faultless before God help “purge” or “cleanse” us from “dead works”?**



## TEACHERS COMMENTS

“Forgiveness is mediated from God to humanity through Christ (Eph. 4:32). Through Christ repentance reaches the human heart (Acts 5:31). Even after conversion, sin besets Christians, making it possible for them to fall. In such cases there is an Advocate who can represent the sinner before God and through whom one can be forgiven (1 John 2:1, 2).

“Uncleanness is the natural condition of the human heart. In order to restore unity between God and humanity, cleansing is necessary. This cleansing, necessary whenever believers sin (Heb. 9:14), is available through Christ (1 John 1:9). Believers were once sanctified through the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:29), but Christ continues to establish their hearts in holiness (1 Thess. 3:13). They are called, like ancient Israel, to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:15, 16). But that holiness reaches Christians through the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.”—Angel Rodriguez, “The Sanctuary,” in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, p. 393.

## WITNESSING

Thirty-eight U.S. states currently allow capital punishment, the legal infliction of death for certain criminal acts. There is much controversy and debate among nations worldwide over the death penalty. Those opposed to capital punishment believe it is brutal and degrading. Supporters believe it to be necessary and very effective.

Throughout earth’s history, death has been the penalty for many crimes and antisocial behaviors. In Exodus 21:12 we read, “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.” Both in the Old and New Testaments we find that those found committing adultery were to be stoned to death. Death causes our

hearts to grieve. But we rejoice over the death of Jesus on the cross. Because of His sacrifice, our sins have been blotted out. But we must not forget the seriousness of this event.

As witnesses, it is our job to inform every lost soul we all must appear before the judgment seat of God. We have been charged with a serious crime, the criminal act of transgressing the law of God. And we know we are guilty. But Jesus, our Lawyer, has pleaded our case, and we have been acquitted. Now we can stand with boldness before the heavenly court, and when asked “How do you plead?” our divine Attorney will cry out in our behalf “*Not Guilty!*”

**Thursday**

**September 4**

**JESUS, OUR AUTHOR AND FINISHER.**

**“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).**

**R**ead for today Hebrews 12:1-4. Notice that it comes right after the famous Hebrews 11, which gives a litany of loyal followers of the Lord who lived by faith. Chapter 12 begins by referring back to those people as examples for the Hebrews to follow.

**In Hebrews 12:1, he talks about the Christian life as a “race.” How do you understand the meaning of that term in the context of living by faith?**

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Though pointing them first to various biblical figures, the author of Hebrews then points them to Jesus, whom he calls the “author and finisher of our faith.” The word for “author” there also can mean “originator,” “founder,” “pioneer,” “finisher,” and “perfecter.” What this tells us is that everything we need for salvation, for faith, for assurance, and for personal holiness comes from Jesus. He began the process of our salvation, and He will end it. It all rests in Him; and the work that He has accomplished for us, He will finish *in* us. Jesus is our salvation. In Him our redemption was completed. Our part is to cling to Him in faith, to live by faith, and to endure in His strength.

Yet, at the same time, it’s clear by the whole context of the passage, and in the message of the whole book of Hebrews, that He can work in us only as long as we allow Him to. It takes our cooperation, our surrender, our willingness to live by faith, to remain steadfast and unwavering, even amid great trial and tribulation.

**Read carefully Hebrews 12:2-4. What is the author saying to the readers here? Not only is he pointing us to Jesus; he’s telling us to focus on a specific aspect of Christ’s life and ministry. What aspect is that, and what’s the specific point he’s trying to make in these passages?**

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## TEACHERS COMMENTS

### *LIFE-APPLICATION APPROACH*

**Icebreaker:** Longfellow could take a worthless piece of paper, write a poem on it, and instantly make it worth thousands of dollars—and it's called genius. Rockefeller could sign his name to a piece of paper and make it worth millions of dollars—and it's called riches. A mechanic can take material worth five dollars and turn it into something worth five hundred—and it's called skill. An artist can take an inexpensive piece of canvas, paint a picture on it, and make it worth thousands of dollars—and it's called art. Jesus Christ can take a worthless, sinful life, wash it in His blood, put His Spirit in it, and make it valuable to God—and that's called sanctification. The Lord is in the business of taking rough, raw material and using it—transforming men by His power.—Adapted from *Parson's Bible Illustrator CD-Rom*.

#### **Thought Questions:**

1. What are some of the rough edges of sinful humans God is willing to transform? As created beings, we, too, have the ability to create and re-create. Armed with the power of the Holy Spirit, what can God expect from His “transformed” children?
2. The Old Testament Hebrew word that is translated as “atonement” literally means “to cover.” The animal sacrifices “covered” your confessed sins. In the New Testament, however, the word *expiate*, denoting “atoning sacrifice,” literally means “to put away.” Jesus’ blood does not merely cover up your confessed sin; it puts that sin away as though it had never been committed.

#### **Application Questions:**

1. While the Holy Spirit touches lives and the process of sanctification takes place, is there a part for Christians to play? What do you think is your responsibility in the process of discipleship? Consider a new member in your church. List three specific things your Sabbath School class can do to nurture and disciple this new member.
2. In the New Testament, the sacrifice of Jesus was voluntary. In the Old Testament, however, the animal’s life was taken from it. Jesus gave His life willingly. Obedience can be voluntary, out of love—or forced, out of fear. In parallel, why should our obedience as Christians be voluntary, not forced?

**Friday**

**September 5**

**FURTHER STUDY:** Take a concordance and look up the terms *to save*, *salvation*, and *savior* or investigate the topic on salvation in the book of Romans: chapters 5:9, 10; 8:24; 9:27; 10:9, 13; 11:14, 26.

**Note:** “Our Saviour is in the sanctuary. . . . He is our interceding High Priest, making an atoning sacrifice for us, pleading in our behalf the efficacy of His blood. Parents should seek to represent this Saviour to their children to establish in their minds the plan of salvation. . . . The fact that the only-begotten Son of God gave His life because of man’s transgression, to satisfy justice and to vindicate the honor of God’s law, should be constantly kept before the minds of children and youth. . . . Christ suffered in order that through faith in Him our sins might be pardoned. He became man’s substitute and surety, Himself taking the punishment, though all undeserving, that we who deserved it might be free, and return to our allegiance to God. . . . He is our only hope of salvation. . . . Man repents, becomes contrite in heart, believes in Christ as His atoning sacrifice, and realizes that God is reconciled to him.”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 369.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- 1. Read Hebrews 2:10; 5:7, 9; and 9:28. How do they show the work of both the Father and Son in the plan of salvation?**
- 2. Hebrews talks about us being purified or cleansed from sin. How do we experience this purification and cleansing in our lives? God doesn’t do this without our cooperation. What must we do, as Christians, to allow this process to take place?**
- 3. Read Hebrews 12:4. What is the apostle saying here to us about the battle against sin? What do his words imply about the struggle involved in that battle?**

**SUMMARY:** Someone has written: “If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.”—Author unknown ([cited 28 January 2000] from [www.sermonillustrations.com](http://www.sermonillustrations.com)). And the book of Hebrews, by stressing the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ, gives us a wonderful view of just what our Savior has done for us.