

FROM RITUAL TO REALITY

MESSIAH SPEAKS FROM THE FEEDING TROUGH

Christmas Special - Hebrews 10:4-10

December 20 & 23, 2015

Introduction:

The Book of Hebrews was written in 67 A.D. as Palestine neared the end of its dispensation. It was during that year that the siege of Judah began under the command of Vespasian \ve-spā'-zhē-an\. Vespasian conducted two campaigns against Judah in 67 and 68 winning almost all of Judea except the city of Jerusalem.

In June of 68, Nero died leaving a power vacuum in Rome which was temporarily filled by Galba who was murdered on January 15, 69. He was succeeded by Otho \Ō'-thō\ who just three months later on April 16, committed suicide. This void was filled by Vespasian on July 1.

Important changes were made in the East, where Vespasian replaced the single army in Syria with three armies, with a total of six legions, in Cappadocia, Syria, and Judaea. Titus effectively ended the Jewish war with the capture of Jerusalem in August 70.¹

It was in this environment that Hebrews was introduced into the canon of the New Testament. It is written in a mixture of Classical and Koine Greek, a mixture called Patristic Greek. This is not typical of the other writings of Paul's so it is concluded by textual critics that he did not write this epistle. It remains anonymous.

¹ Guy Edward Farquhar Chilver, "Vespasian," in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010), 12:335.

Whoever wrote Hebrews was inspired by the Holy Spirit to compose a dissertation on the failure of the Jews to stay loyal to the spiritual life revealed by the feast days and rituals of the Mosaic Law. They were designed to reveal the Messiah by means of significant and precisely executed prophecies that revealed His identity.

Beyond Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah Himself gave clear details about the horrors that were about to engulf Jerusalem in:

Luke 21:20 - “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

v. 21 - “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;

v. 22 - because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

v. 23 - “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be a great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

v. 24 - and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled.”

Hebrews is designed to review the details of the spiritual life of Israel by comparing it to what the writer refers to as “better things” available through Christ.

There are seven passages that reveal these “better things” in Hebrews 1:4; 7:19; 8:6 (2); 9:23; 10:34; and 11:35.

Jesus was functional throughout the dispensations of the Gentiles and of Israel. He was the source of the miracles that were performed on behalf of the Patriarchs and the nation of Israel.

It was Jesus through theophanies that guided the Jews in the wilderness, in fact, He was the Shekinah Glory Who dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and later in the temple.

In Hebrews 10:4-10 we will learn how shadows in the Old Testament become reality in the New in the presence of the prophesied Savior who was born in Bethlehem, swaddled in burial clothes, and placed in a wooden feeding trough which prophesied His mission and His sacrifice. Our emphasis will be on the Lord's commentary from the manger as He, from His undiminished deity, addresses the Father.

From Ritual to Reality:

Hebrews 10:4 - For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (NASB)

1. The word "impossible" is the neuter adjective **ἀδύνατος (adúnatos)**. In the neuter it means "impossible."
2. This is followed by citing two animals – bulls and goats without blemish – that were used in burnt offerings as a type that points to salvation through the sacrifice of the prophesied Messiah.
3. The High Priest's duty was to take the blood of the animals and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies on Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Atonement.
4. The verse makes the initial point that, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats ..."
5. What was impossible for their blood to do comes next: "to take away sins." This is the present active infinitive of **ἀφαιρέω (aphairéō)**.
6. The present tense is customary which describes an action that occurs regularly and habitually. The burnt offerings are repeatedly carried out several times during the year.

7. The active voice indicates that the rituals produce actions that cannot remove sins, only forecast their removal by Messiah.
8. The infinitive points back to the adjective *adúnatos* which confirms that the action of the sacrifices is *impossible* to remove sins.
9. Hebrews 10:3 points out that this process served as a “reminder of sins year by year.” It was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to “remove sins.”
10. The principle that emerges from this verse is that in Jewish history the fulfillment of the Levitical sacrifices never removed sins. What they did was point to David’s greater Son Who would eternally remove sin by His sacrifice on the cross.

Hebrews 10:4 - Therefore, it is impossible for the habitually performed burnt offerings of bulls and goats to remove sins. (EXT)

Hebrews 10:5 - Therefore, when He comes into [εἰσέρχομαι (*eisérchomai*)] the world, He [**Jesus**] says, “Sacrifice and offering You [**God the Father**] have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me; (NASB)

1. This verse begins with inferential conjunction **διό** (*dió*): Translated “therefore,” it indicates what follows is extremely important.
2. What follows is the present active participle of the verb *eisérchomai*: “entering.” This is a profound moment in the history of the world. This is a game changer in the saga of the angelic conflict.
3. The deity of Jesus Christ resided in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, the temple of Israel, and ultimately in the millennial kingdom.
4. The contest between the combatants of good vs. evil has now moved into its intensified stage. The prophesied Messiah’s arrival is now a historic reality.

5. *Eisérchomai* is correctly translated by the word “entering.” In the Septuagint it is used for Jesus Christ entering the millennial temple’s Holy of Holies:

In the Septuagint it is used for 19 Hebrew words. But the most significant use is the cultic and sacral. God’s glory comes into the temple in Ezekiel 43:4: “And the glory of the Lord came into [eisérchomai] the house [temple].²

6. With the historic present tense of *eisérchomai*, the writer of Hebrews looks back in time to the Incarnation of Messiah, but views it as a present occurrence.
7. Jesus, as undiminished deity, left the Holy of Holies in heaven and took on the essence of true humanity.
8. The active voice certifies that Jesus Christ is the One that produced the action at the virgin birth.
9. The participle is temporal, therefore use of the word “when.” This introduces the Incarnation of Jesus: “Therefore, when Messiah entered into the world.”
10. PRINCIPLE: At the moment of the virgin birth, the Christ Child in the feeding trough continues to fulfill the responsibility of holding the universe together by means of His undiminished deity:

Colossians 1:17 - He Himself is before all things [eternal life] and all things [τὰ πάντα (tá pánta): a totality of the whole, visible & invisible] are held together [present active indicative of the verb συνίστημι (sunístēmi): continue to exist] in Him. (NET)

11. The intensive perfect tense of *sunístēmi* emphasizes that “all things” continue to exist. The active voice confirms that the Lord produces this action. The indicative mood certifies it is as an existing fact.

² Johannes Schneider, “εἰσέρχομαι,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 2:676.

12. At the virgin birth, the Lord's undiminished deity came into union with true humanity creating the hypostatic union.

13. The hypostatic union may be so defined:

In the Person of the incarnate Christ are two natures, divine and human, inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. The two natures of Christ maintain their complete identity though being joined in personal union forever. The attributes of His human and divine nature belong to their corresponding natures though the attributes of either nature belong to the one person of Christ. It is impossible to transfer an attribute of one nature to the other nature without destroying that nature. It is correct to refer to Christ as a theanthropic person (the God-Man).³

14. At the moment of the virgin birth, the Christ Child arrived on earth and in doing so entered into the devil's world.

15. At which point the writer informs us that, "He says." This is the present active indicative of the verb λέγω (*légō*) which introduces documentation from the mouth of the newly born Messiah.

16. As an infant, Jesus could not speak, but His deity could. When the Lord spoke, he quoted from the Septuagint's Greek translation of Psalm 40:6-8.

17. It must be understood that quotations from the Tanakh cited in the New Testament often are not word for word as is explained by Cyrus Scofield:

The Holy Spirit who inspired the Old Testament was free to reword a quotation just as a human author may restate his own writings in other words without negating the accuracy of the original statement. The doctrine of complete inspiration only requires that revelation be expressed without error.⁴

18. The Lord begins by certifying that the Levitical offerings were rituals pointing toward His reality.

³ "Theánthrōpos (θεάνθρωπος): God-man; rendered into the Latin as *Deus-homo*" (Richard A. Miller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985], 298

⁴ C. I. Scofield, ed., "Hebrews," in *The Scofield Study Bible: NASB*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1680fn10:5-7 (7).

19. What the Jews viewed as a means of salvation, Jesus will supplant by His substitutionary work on the cross. At this point, He speaks:

Hebrews 10:5b - “Sacrifice and offering You [God the Father] did not desire [οὐκ + θέλω (*ouk + thélō*): sacrifices are permanently retired from service], but a body [σώμα (*sōma*): *Homo sapiens*; man] You prepared [καταρτίζω (*katartízō*): equipped to execute Operation Reconciliation] for Me. (EXT)