

# Give God Your 'Awl'

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Good Friday 2009

When was the last time you brought a lamb to church to be sacrificed?

**Never!** And that's exactly the way it should be because animal sacrifices were always intended to be a temporary shadow until the real-deal appeared.

Jesus was the real-deal. He was the substance that the shadow represented. He was God's final sacrificial lamb.

Some of His own thoughts on this are captured for us in verses five through ten of Hebrews ten. It's as if we are listening to Jesus talk to His Father before coming to the earth.

Hebrews 10:5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU DID NOT DESIRE, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME.

Hebrews 10:6 IN BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES FOR SIN YOU HAD NO PLEASURE.

Hebrews 10:7 THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME - IN THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME - TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.' "

Who "came into the world?" Jesus. These are His words prior to His coming.

From our perspective Jesus was quoting from Psalm forty. That psalm is a prophecy that the Savior would "come" to be God's final sacrifice instead of, and in fulfillment of, all the animal sacrifices. He would come in a "body... prepared" for Him. We call this the incarnation. God became flesh and dwelt among us.

J.I. Packer said of the incarnation,

Here are two mysteries for the price of one - the plurality of persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation.

The various offerings mentioned in our verses - “burnt offerings” and “sin” offerings - could never remove sin or else they would have ceased to be offered. They were shadows. They prefigured and pointed to one final sacrifice.

The phrase “volume of the book” literally refers to the knob on the end of the roller of the manuscripts of Scripture. **The whole Bible is about Jesus!**

- The entire Old Testament is about Him. He’s there in prophecy, in poetry, in types, in metaphors – in every conceivable way.
- In the New Testament He comes out of shadows and is revealed in substance.

Hebrews 10:8 Previously saying, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING, BURNT OFFERINGS, AND OFFERINGS FOR SIN YOU DID NOT DESIRE, NOR HAD PLEASURE IN THEM" (which are offered according to the law),

Hebrews 10:9 then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

Hebrews 10:10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

This should have been no surprise to a Jew or to the Hebrew Christians. The Old Testament often declared God’s displeasure with animal sacrifices (Isaiah 1:11; Jeremiah 6:20; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21,22). God was seeking the heart of the worshipper, not the blood of the beast. He always wanted relationship and not ritual. Now that the relationship was established, it was ridiculous to return to ritual.

The Jews and Hebrew Christians hearing these verses would notice something we might not immediately recognize. By the time a first century Jew was an adult he knew most of the Scriptures by heart. If someone recited a passage the audience would know whether it was quoted accurately or not.<sup>1</sup>

The original audience for which this letter was written would notice that Psalm forty is quoted differently from the way they all memorized it as children.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pottershouseschool.org/Brix?pageID=3399&article=4832>

Here, again, is how it reads in Hebrews ten: “SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU DID NOT DESIRE, **BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME.**”

Here is how it reads in Psalm forty: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; **My ears You have opened.**”

What is meant by “My ears you have opened?” We need some background.

The phrase has to do with slaves. Slavery was recognized by Hebrew law and regulated for the protection of the individuals.

The circumstances under which a Hebrew might be reduced to slavery were these:

- Poverty. A man who had mortgaged his property, and was unable to support his family, might sell himself to another Hebrew with a view both to obtain maintenance and possibly a surplus sufficient to redeem his property.
- Theft rendered a person liable to servitude whenever restitution could not be made on the scale prescribed by the law. The thief was bound to work out the value of his restitution money in the service of him on whom the theft had been committed.
- A parent could sell a daughter of tender age to be a maidservant with the goal of her becoming the concubine of the purchaser.

Slavery could be terminated in a variety of ways. For example: Six years after you became a slave you were required to be set free.

There were many slaves, however, who determined to stay and serve their master perpetually rather than be set free.

If a slave chose to stay and serve he was to signify his intention in a formal ceremony before the judges (or more exactly *at the place of judgment*), and then the master was to take him to the door-post and to bore his ear through with an awl, driving the awl into or “unto the door” and thus fixing the servant to it. A servant who had submitted to this operation remained, according to the words of the law, a servant “forever.”

Exodus 21:6 then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

Deuteronomy 15:17 then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise.

The “awl” is mentioned only in conjunction with the custom of boring a hole in the ear of a slave. The ear was pierced as the organ of hearing, thereby signifying the servant’s perpetual promise of obedience. He was temporarily pinned to a doorpost to symbolize his continual connection to the masters household.

Back, now, to the difference between Psalm forty and its quote in Hebrews ten. If you read the quote with the original side-by-side you’ll see that the original phrase, “My ears you have opened,” is replaced by “a body you have prepared for Me.”

**The writer to the Hebrews, under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, is telling you that your Savior, Jesus Christ, voluntarily took the place of a slave to do His Father’s will. Instead of having His ear pierced, the second Person of the tri-une God took upon Himself a human body. He lived; He died; He rose from the dead. Forever Jesus will be God in human flesh, albeit now in a glorified human body.**

For most people it is obvious that Jesus will be God forever. But for some reason it escapes a lot of us that Jesus will also be *man* forever.

- Jesus rose physically from the dead in the same body that had died (Luke 24:39) and then ascended into heaven as a man, in His physical body (Acts 1:9; Luke 24:50-51).
- Almost thirty years after the ascension, the apostle Paul could write that in Christ "all the fulness of deity *dwells* in bodily form." Paul did not say *dwelt* (past tense), but *dwells* (present tense). The ascended and exalted Christ is still man in heaven, with His body.

This Good Friday, as we look at the Cross and see God in human flesh, I’d like to suggest four results of the incarnation to you.

1. Jesus is God in human flesh to reveal God to you. You can know something of the presence and power of God from creation. You can know something of the righteousness of God from conscience. But you can only truly see and know God by looking at Jesus. He said that He and His Father were one. He said that if you've seen Him, you've seen the Father. Today we "see" Jesus through studying His life as recorded in the volume of the Book. Because Jesus was and is God, the revelation He gives is true. Because Jesus was and is man, the revelation He gives is personal.
2. Jesus is God in human flesh to provide an example of what it means to be human. The earthly life of Jesus is that of a Spirit-filled man. Though He was always fully God, He always acted as a man led by God. Because Jesus was and is God, He provides us the power to follow His example. Because Jesus was and is man, we can be certain He can sympathize with our every plight and circumstance.
3. Jesus is God in human flesh to fulfill the promises made to the patriarchs of Israel, especially David. The angel Gabriel promised Mary that her son would reign on the throne of David forever. This is not fulfilled simply by God ruling over the universe. There must be a human on David's throne. But to reign forever, He must also be God. Thus we expect the Lord to return in His Second Coming to establish God's kingdom on the earth - first for one thousand years and then forever after this world is dissolved and He creates a new Heaven and a new earth.
4. Jesus is God in human flesh to provide an effective sacrifice for sin. Sin requires death for its payment. God does not and cannot die. So the Savior must be a man in order to be able to die. **But He cannot be just any man!** Only God can satisfy His own standards of holiness. If there is to be a Savior from sin, He **must** be both God and man.

On Good Friday we see Jesus on the Cross. There He is, the God-man in the body prepared for Him. It's the body He chose of His own free will in order to serve His Father. It's the body He gave for us so that we might live forever with Him.

The first century believers understood all this and applied it thusly to their own lives. They considered themselves slaves in the sense of willingly submitting to the authority of Jesus in all things.

A good meditation for us on Good Friday 2009 is to check to see if there are any areas of our lives in which, pardon the pun, we haven't given Jesus our 'awl.'

If there are any such areas, go to the doorpost, so to speak, and let Him pierce your ear so you are ready to hear and obey.