

- ***Read Matthew 11:2-11*** After Jesus answers questions from the disciples of John concerning whether He actually is the prophesied Messiah of God, He takes a moment to speak to the multitudes about John. He is very complementary of John. He speaks of John's high place as one of the greatest prophets that there ever was because he came to prepare the way for the Messiah. "No one born of woman is greater than John the Baptist" Jesus proclaims. However, our Lord quickly follows that up by stating that even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. How is this possible? How does this make any sense? How is the least in the Kingdom greater than mighty John the Baptist?
- Let me suggest that this all has to do with Jesus and the Kingdom that He was working to establish while here on earth. This Kingdom was not something that John was ever going to be able to experience here on this earth because just a couple chapters after this text we find where Herod has put John to death. So how is it that John isn't as great as the least in the Kingdom? It is because those who are in the Kingdom of Heaven through faith in Jesus Christ are a part of the greatest Kingdom that has ever existed. And this Kingdom is a result of the work that Jesus accomplished on earth, more specifically it is a result of the sacrifice of Jesus. We are able to say that we are greater than John because we are able to know and experience the benefits of sacrifice. Where could we go to better understand this sacrifice of Jesus? I can't think of any better place than the **Letter to the Hebrews**. This letter is a treasure trove of information concerning the better sacrifice of Jesus and how it truly is better than anything that was contained within the Law of Moses (LoM) Some desired to go back to that first covenant, but the Hebrew Writer excellently shows the fallacy of those desires. Just as those people should have been, we ought to be thankful that we are able to live under the better and greater surface and covenant of Jesus. With these things in mind, let's consider this sacrifice of Jesus and how it is greater than any sacrifice that every came before it.

7 Reasons The Sacrifice Of Jesus Is Greater

I. Jesus Was Only Offered Once

- A. Under the LoM, animal sacrifices were required to continually be offered year after year on behalf of the offerer. **(9:25; 10:11)**
- B. The high priest would have to enter the holy place and offer sacrifice after sacrifice for the individual Israelite, but the great sacrifice of Jesus would put an end to the continual animal sacrifices that were required under the Law.
- C. The greater sacrifice of Jesus was powerful enough to only need to be offered once and not year after year. **(9:11,12; 24ff)**

II. Jesus Was Offered For All People

- A. Under the Law, individual Israelites were required to collect the best of their flocks to offer on their behalf. **(Lev. 1:2; Mal. 1:6-14)**
- B. Each individual had a personal responsibility to make sure that he put forth the effort to make sure that his required sacrifices were fulfilled. **(10:1 "sacrifices for those")**
- C. The sacrifice of Jesus greatly surpassed the sacrifices of the LoM because He tasted death for many. **(2:9)** Instead of many animals being sacrificed for many people. Jesus entered the holy place as our High Priest for all people. **(9:12)** No longer was there a need for continual sacrifices by the individuals, but Jesus's greater sacrifice took that responsibility off of us.

III. Jesus Gave Up More

- A. Another greater characteristic of the sacrifice of Jesus is the fact that Jesus Himself gave up more as our sacrifice. Sure, animals lost their lives as a result of man's sin, but in the grand scheme of things the lives of the animals held little to no significance. There is so much more value in the sacrifice of Jesus because so much more was given up.
- B. However, back in **2:9** we read where the Hebrew writer says that Jesus was made a little more than the angels when He suffered death upon the cross.
- C. We could also go to a well known text to us in **Phil. 2:4-8** to learn just how much Jesus gave up in order to come to earth and die for mankind. He gave up being in the form of God. He gave up heaven. He came in the form of a man. He came in the form of a bondservant. He came to die on the cross. The level of sacrifice on the behalf of Jesus in come surely shows us the superiority of Jesus's sacrifice over those of the LoM.

IV. Jesus's Blood Cleanses Fully

- A. In **8:7**, we learn that there was fault contained within the LoM. This is not to say that God was inadequate in creating the LoM, but it was not designed to be the end all be all of God's plan for man's salvation. The priest offered the sacrifices for the people, but they weren't for the true taking away of sin. **(10:11)**
- B. **The Letter to the Hebrews** is very clear in stating that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins and this is why they had to be offered year after year. **(10:1-4,18)** But the same letter says that the blood of bulls and goats was profitable for the sanctifying of the flesh. **(9:13,14)** So what role did they play? The best way I can describe it is to say that played the role of a placeholder. The reminder of sin **(10:3)** was there because of the fact that animal blood couldn't perfectly cleanse sins.
- C. Contrasted with the blood of the animals is the blood of Jesus Christ. The letter opens with the writer stating that it was Jesus who made possible the purification of sins. **(1:3)** It is through His sacrifice that all people have the ability to obtain eternal redemption. **(9:12)** He put away sin by sacrificing Himself. **(9:26)**
- D. The power of Jesus's sacrifice and the role of the animal sacrifices is best summed up by what is written in **10:11-14**. The sacrifice of Jesus cleanses perfectly the sins of all those who trusted in God through faithful animal sacrifice or faith in Jesus Christ.

V. Jesus's Sacrifice Gives Confidence

- A. The sacrifice of Jesus not only cleanses us of our sins, but it also instills confidence within us that we can draw near to God. **(4:16)** We are able to look to Jesus as our High Priest who sacrificed Himself to cleanse us, and bring us into the family of God.
- B. As children of God we are able to go to God and gain strength in times of temptation. We are able to look to Him for strength when we are tempted and tried in this life. **(6:16-20)** We are able to do all of these things and into the holy place by the blood of Jesus that was shed on Calvary. **(10:19-22)**
- C. We must be sure to not throw away our confidence because in Jesus we have a great reward promised to those who are part of the body of Christ in the New Covenant that He established by His sacrifice. **(10:35)**

VI. Jesus's Sacrifice Established New Covenant

- A. Jesus's sacrifice ushered in a better covenant that contains better promises. **(8:6)**
- B. Under the LoM, the people were constantly looking forward to the Messiah that was promised by God. This new Covenant of Christ is the fulfillment of everything that was every promised under the LoM. In **Jeremiah 31:34, (10:16,17)** the Holy Spirit prophesies of this new covenant that would cause God to no longer remember the sins and lawless deeds of the people. That promise was in the future for the Jew of that time, but was made a reality once Christ came and gave His life.
- C. When we put together the teachings of Hebrews with that of **Galatians 3:23-25** I believe that we can truly come to better understand the plan of God for man's salvation. He gave the LoM to teach His people about the need for atonement for sin through the giving of blood. He taught them about the serious nature of sin. He taught the people what sin actually was through the giving of the Law. **(Romans 7:7)**
- D. The LoM played a key role in God's plan, but His eternal plan was fulfilled through the sacrifice of Jesus **(Eph. 1:3-6)** and the establishing of the covenant that was established through His blood. **(9:15-17)**

VII. Jesus Rose From The Grave

- A. Whereas the bulls and goats who were sacrificed remained dead and did nothing further for the follower of God, Jesus did not remain dead, but was raised and continues to aid the person who puts his/her faith in Him and His power.
- B. The writer pens in **7:25** that Jesus continues to live and continues to make intercession for us. The confidence that we talked about earlier is strongly rooted in the fact that our Savior is not dead, but that He lives on continues to make intercession for us.
- C. Not only this, but the fact that Jesus rose gives us confidence that we too can raise from the dead. We could look to Abraham and his faith that God can raise the dead. Just like Abraham knew that God could raise Isaac if need be **(11:19)**, we must also look to God raising Jesus from the dead and know that He can raise us in the last day, as well!
- D. Of course, this is Paul's argumentation in **I Corinthians 15**. If Jesus is raised, then we too shall be raised by faith and trust in Him and the power of God. There was no hope of resurrection through the sacrifice of animals, but in the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus there is much hope for our eternal life.

For the greatness that was John the Baptist, we today are able to enjoy the benefits and blessings of sometime that he was never able to see. We are able to reap the benefits of faith in Jesus Christ through His sacrifice on the cross. Some in the first century desired to go back to the LoM, but we have seen this morning that Jesus is so much better. He is greater and far superior to that first covenant. May we appreciate His sacrifice and the blessings that are afforded to us through it. May we live each day to honor that sacrifice and show our appreciation through faithful service to God and the keeping of our covenant with Him and His Son.