

Image: The cross in our society today. Nice, neat, cliché, maybe even chic. [Pictures]

Need: Think we're in danger of minimizing the cross? The blood? You bet. Evangelicals all over the world are beginning to think about the crucifixion as something other than a substitutionary atonement whereby the blood of Christ actually satisfies wrath incurred by sin. Do we think about the cross more in terms of some ornament that we hang around our necks or in our churches than we do as some bloody instrument of execution that was used to exact a punishment that we deserved?

Context: We're coming in to the climactic section of Hebrews. He's about to nail his argument and his audience. Jesus sacrifice is the best because it fully accomplished what the Law, the Old Covenant couldn't. It was made in a better place, with better blood, and once for all.

Question: Why the Cross? Why did Jesus have to die? Why all the blood? Wasn't there some other way? How are we, as 21st century "civilized" Christians supposed to understand this event?

- I. The access available wasn't the best (*hospital visiting hours*)
 - A. Remember that Law was temporary (fulfilled later in Christ). Temporary, but not useless.
 1. It provided a type of formal, national, limited access to God
 - a. The Law was given first in Exodus. Leviticus outlines the ceremonial rites necessary to maintain a relationship with God when the people disobeyed Exodus.
 - b. This is a great illustration of the grace of God. He knew that the people would sin, and yet He provided a way that, in spite of their sin, they could still have some access to Him. Don't badmouth the Law. It is flawed and incomplete, yes. But it was good, from God, and a picture of His grace and love.
 2. So through the Law, the people of God, as a community, could remain ceremonially attached to God's favor, and yet also left longing for more.
 - a. Messy sacrifices, bloody, signified the terribly high penalty for sin...something had to die violently for my sin.
 - b. They looked forward to the final in that they had to be constantly repeated
 - B. The ultimate flaw with the Law was that it couldn't fix the root problem of sin...it couldn't "**cleanse the conscious.**" [DEV. INDUCTIVELY, B.2.]
 1. The purpose of the ceremonies were to temporarily appease God's wrath because of sin. To turn His attention from their sin to the victim.
 - a. **Physical setting (1-5):** Tabernacle temporal in and of itself.
 - i. holy place: lampstand, table of showbread (every 7 days, consecrated, 12 loaves, eaten by priests when replaced).
 - ii. Most Holy Place: Altar of incense (probably at edge, HP offers incense before entering MHP for Day of Atonement sacrifice), Ark, cherubim...picture of God looking down on sin.
 - b. **Praxis:** Kill bull for himself and family, incense would fill MHP and HP, enters and slays goat and sprinkles blood on mercy seat, leaves and pronounces sins of people on the scapegoat which is banished to wilderness. (*Yom Kippur*)
 2. The flaw was that it couldn't fix the root problem of sin in the people's hearts.
 - a. The ritual's required repetition highlights the problem. (8-9a)
 - b. There is no direct access because the ritual can't deal with the root problem, a sin scarred conscience (9b-10). Only surface.
- II. Christ died bc forgiveness precedes access. We needed to be cleansed before we could approach.
 - A. He brought this cleansing through the bloody, heavenly, and once for all sacrifice of Himself on the cross (11-12 offers the summary of his thought).
 1. The sacrifice of Christ was made with better blood (13-22).
 - a. "How much more" argument. If blood of animals offered a conditional, limited, appeasement and access, how much more the blood of a perfect Lamb?
 - i. **Servant Song, Is. 42:1 ("my Spirit upon Him).** It was the Spirit that enabled Christ to make this offering.
 - ii. "**Unblemished**" technical phrase for animals approved for sacrifice.

- b. This blood didn't just cleanse the surface temporarily, it went to the root. It dealt with a guilty heart. *Roundup weed killer.*
- c. And so, He became the inauguration of the New Covenant, the testament of God that was put into effect when He died (16-22).
 - i. All the benefits of the NC are realized in Christ's death.
 - ii. Just as Moses made things pure through the sprinkling of blood, so we are made pure through blood...the blood of a perfect substitute.
- 2. The sacrifice of Christ was made in, and prepared for us a better place (23-24).
 - a. Copies on earth, bc of sin of man, had to be cleansed with blood. *Red Heifer blood*
 - b. So also, if humans are to enter God's presence, we must be cleansed. Even to the point of speaking of the cleansing of the better tabernacle He went to.
- 3. The sacrifice of Christ was made once for all (25-28).
 - a. It was never to be repeated because it didn't need to be repeated.
 - i. It dealt finally and completely with sin. It forever accomplished what needed to be accomplished (25-26).
 - 01. This doesn't seem to fit the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist. That it is Christ's repeated sacrifice of Himself. Once!
 - 02. 4 instances of the word "sat" in Hebrews in contrast to the repeated sacrifices of earthly priests (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). He made one sacrifice and then sat because there were no more to make.
 - ii. He died once in the same way we die once (27-28).
 - 01. We die once, then are judged.
 - 02. Christ died once to sin. He'll come again, but not for sin.
 - b. The permanence of our salvation dependent on the quality of the sacrifice that secured it.
 - i. Christ is still unblemished.
 - ii. Christ's blood is eternal.

III. Why the Cross? Because we needed eternal rest, perfect access, and hope for the next life.

- A. Because we needed rest from our fruitless works, God gave us complete forgiveness.
 - 1. We couldn't do enough to pay for our sin and still live.
 - 2. So Christ had to die, so that we could rest in His work.
- B. Because we needed the help that comes from His presence, he gave us confident access.
 - 1. We are weak and need help...we can't do this life on our own.
 - 2. So Christ had to die, so that we could be confident to approach God.
- C. Because we needed the hope in next life that gives joy in this one, God gave us new life in Him.
 - 1. We need something to look forward to in hope in this distressing world.
 - 2. Christ died so that we might rejoice in the hope of His coming again (28).
 - a. Israelites awaited expectantly for their HP to return out of the MHP on the DoA (not always certain, tied a rope to him just in case). When He appeared, it meant God had accepted their sacrifice and they sang songs of joy.
 - b. How much more for us when our HP emerges victoriously! What joy...what hope. Rejoice!

Conc.: The Atonement did for us what we could never do on our own...what no system could do. It dealt with sin, thus securing forever perfect access to God's throne. All through the heavenly, bloody, and once for all sacrifice of Christ.

The cross is bloody. It's bloody because it had to be. No cross, no blood, no forgiveness, no access, no help, no hope. But because there was a cross, there was blood, forgiveness, access, help, hope.