

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

LOOK TO JESUS

ONLY A SHADOW | HEBREWS 10:1-10

In the final book installment of the Chronicles of Narnia, Aslan describes the reality the children had experienced before their return to Narnia as the “Shadowlands.” In the Shadowlands, the children along with their parents had perished in a train wreck, and while the experience was real enough it was far from ultimate reality.

Shadowlands became a favorite descriptor of Lewis for the world we live in. Because we are created in the image of God and the world around is the work of his hands we can experience love, beauty, grace, goodness and mercy. But because we live in a fallen world, we also experience pain, hatred, evil, brokenness and loss.

“Through the Shadowlands” was the title of a popular movie that recounts Lewis’ tragic love affair with American poet, Joy Davidman, and how her slow and excruciating death from cancer challenged the core of his faith. In the movie, Lewis describes the Shadowlands “as those places where the sun does not shine as brightly as it does in other places.”

Lewis’ shadowlands remind us of Paul’s observation, “For now we see through a glass darkly... (1 Corinthians 13:12).”

In Hebrews 10, the writer of the Hebrews tells us, “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.” In verse 1-4 he describes the shadow; in verses 5-10 he describes the reality we find in Christ.

THE SHADOW (vv. 1-4)

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.

For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

² Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. ⁴ It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

1. The writer of Hebrews describes the law as “a shadow of the good things that are coming.” Paul uses similar language in his letter to the Colossians.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

What do you think these authors mean by “a shadow?”

2. From the perspective of the Old Testament the law was “only a shadow of the good things that are coming.” From our perspective they have already come but we have yet to experience them in their fullness
 - a. What are the good things we currently enjoy?
 - b. How will these be eclipsed by the good things we will one day enjoy?
3. Why does the writer of Hebrews emphasize the repetitive nature of the sacrifices prescribed by the Law?
4. What are some of the positive effects of the Law?
5. According to the writer of Hebrews what are some of the things the Law could never accomplish?

THE REALITY (vv. 5-10)

⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, my God.’”

⁸ First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law.

⁹ Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second.

¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

1. As he is prone to do, the writer of Hebrews applies the words of David directly to Jesus. As imperfect as he was, David became the model for a future king who would embody the heart and character of God and reign with equity and justice. The writer of Hebrews modifies the text a bit to fit its Messianic context. He is quoting Psalms 40.

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire— but my ears you have opened — burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. ⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. ⁸ I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart Psalm 40:6-8).

- a. What are some of the differences between Psalm 40 and Hebrews 10:5-6?
 - b. What is significant about these differences?
2. The Psalmist emphasizes the Lord requires so much more of this people than simply marching into the temple and offering a few sacrifices. This is a refrain that is echoed throughout the Psalms and Prophets.
 - a. What was the Lord looking for in addition to sacrifice?
 - b. What happens when we allow our devotion to the Lord to slip into a dull religious routine?
 - c. What more does the Lord require of us than simply going through the motions in our relationship with him?
3. What has Christ accomplished for us that could never be realized through the Law?
4. How does Christ’s sacrifice make us holy (sanctify us)?
5. How should Christ’s sacrifice motivate our worship?
6. How does Christ’s sacrifice radically change the nature of our worship?