

Heaven's Perspective on the Cross: Sacrifice

Scripture: Hebrews 9:14

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One of the most frequently perverted and abused aspects of the life of Christ is His death. The world can tolerate Him as a human martyr, but that view undermines and ignores the real significance of His death.

Even in the church, we often tend to think of the cross only in terms of what it accomplished *for us*. We begin to see ourselves as the focus of Jesus' death, assuming He died for our salvation and our eternal glory—to rescue us from judgment and hell.

And while all of that is accomplished by the death of Christ, it's only a by-product. It's all secondary to the fact that in the end, Christ died *for God*. And to understand the full meaning and purpose of Christ's death, we need to look at His cross from heaven's perspective.

To begin with, Christ's death was a *sacrifice*.

A look at the Old Testament reveals the specific system of sacrifices the Lord put in place to deal with the sins of His people. In those sacrifices, God provided a way through which the sinner could come before Him and temporarily have his sin dealt with. The guilty party would bring an animal to the priest at the tabernacle, and later, the temple. The sinner would lay his hands on the animal as a symbol of transferring his sin and guilt onto the animal. The animal would then be killed and its blood poured out over the altar.

The purpose of the sacrificial system was to emphasize that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and that God's wrath can be satisfied through a sacrifice (Hebrews 9:22). But animal sacrifices only provided temporary covering for sin (Hebrews 10:4), so they had to be repeated again and again. Instead of providing permanent forgiveness, the sacrificial system pointed forward to God's final sacrifice: His Son.

Christ was the only completely acceptable sacrifice to God, the only truly spotless Lamb who could be offered for the cleansing of sins. The author of Hebrews points out that Christ served as both sacrifice and priest in His death.

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. (Hebrews 7:26-27)

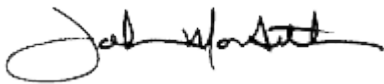
And unlike all the ineffective and incomplete sacrifices that preceded Him, Christ was able to fully

satisfy the wrath of God.

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:26-28)

And to whom was Christ offered? Hebrews 9:14 tells us the answer. It says Christ “offered Himself without blemish *to God*” (emphasis added).

It’s true that we reap the eternal benefits of Jesus’ sacrifice, but it was ultimately a sacrifice *to God*. We can’t mistake the death of Christ for something less.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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