

Youth Teaching Resources

December 23, 2018



Advent: Someone's Coming (December 2-23)

Luke 21:25-36 – “Coming to Reign”

Malachi 3:1-4 – “Coming to Judge”

Isaiah 12:1-6 (RCL 12:2-6) – “Coming to Save”

Hebrews 10:1-10 (RCL 10:5-10) – “Coming to Sanctify”

Christmas (December 30)

Colossians 3:1-17 – “All in the Name of Jesus”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Coming to Sanctify

Hebrews 10:1-10 (RCL 10:5-10)

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

We want a better life for our kids than we have had for ourselves. I think our parents thought the same thing, and their parents before them. But, this doesn't mean that we do everything for our students or take every road bump out of their way. Part of "growing up" means taking ownership; helping them to figure out what they want to do versus what they need to do. It will mean more to the students if they have some stake in what is going on; some sacrifice of their own to make it happen.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip "Jonathan's Sacrifice Scene" from *Man of Steel*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why did he go back and help people?
- 2) Why didn't he leave in time to run to cover?
- 3) Why doesn't he want Clarke to come and save him?
- 4) Why is sacrifice such a popular movie plot?
- 5) How does your faith help you filter ideas about sacrifice?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Hebrews 10:1-10. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why weren't the sacrifices of humans enough?
- 2) Why did offerings and sacrifices of humans do nothing about the sin itself?
- 3) Does the author of Hebrews correctly quote Psalm 40:6-8? Why do you think he quotes this psalm?
- 4) How does this discussion of sacrifice influence how you see the sacrifice of Jesus? What sacrifices does Jesus make?
- 5) Why should we continue to sacrifice if Jesus sacrificed once and for all?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Who wrote Hebrews?
- 2) When did the idea of animal sacrifice not being pleasing to God begin?
- 3) What is Jesus' idea of sacrificial service?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Did Jesus really say these words?

Transformation

During the season of Advent, use this time of transformation to prepare for the realization of Jesus Christ in our world by lighting the candle(s) of an Advent wreath. Light the appropriate candle(s) for the week, say something like the following words in italics, and then lead your group through the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* focusing on each week's theme. After you have led the group through *Lectio Divina*, allow the group to share how they heard "peace" in the passage. To get the group started, say something like the following:

"Each week, during Advent, we will light a candle to represent the theme of Advent for the week. Each theme will be part of the larger theme of Advent: preparing our lives for the realization of Jesus Christ in our world. This week our theme is peace. As we listen to the reading of our scripture passage, what is God revealing to you about peace in this passage?"

Close with a prayer of peace for your community and world.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The text—The lectionary reading for the day comprises only Hebrews 10:5-10, but the first four verses of the chapter (which continues an argument from the previous chapter) are needed for context.

Who wrote Hebrews?—Neither the audience, author, or date of Hebrews can be determined with certainty. Fortunately, our understanding of the book’s basic message does not hinge on being able to identify either of the three. That doesn’t mean, however, that it’s not worth making some educated guesses.

The book was written anonymously. Paul always identified himself clearly in his letters, but there is no self-identification here. The *author* is clearly Christian, but with a strong Old Testament background and some apparent affinities with ideas common among Christian teachers in Alexandria, a city in northern Egypt that was home to a thriving Christian community by the late first century.

As early as 180 CE, some leaders of the Eastern churches claimed Paul as the author of Hebrews, arguing that it was written to the Christians in Alexandria. The Western church did not claim Pauline authorship until the fourth century. Indeed, the book was slow to be accepted as scripture in the western churches, largely because of its lack of attribution to a known and respected author.

Several factors mitigate against Pauline authorship, the most notable being that the book is written in excellent Greek, comparable only to Luke-Acts in the New Testament, and clearly different from the more prosaic style of writing in Paul’s letters.

The Greek of Hebrews is of an elevated, classical sort with beautifully composed sentences. Edgar V. McKnight described the language as so uncommon that “The original readers’ reaction to the classical Greek of Hebrews would be comparable to modern readers hearing or reading a sermon in the language of Shakespeare or the language of the King James Version” (“Hebrews,” in *Hebrews-James*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2004], 11).

The themes explored in the book have some relation to Pauline thought, but also show notable differences. For example, the writer spends a great deal of time discussing the obscure Old Testament character of Melchizedek as a forerunner of Christ, a subject that Paul does not address. Charles Trentham suggested that the writer is both “more Jewish than Paul on the one hand, and more Greek than Paul on the other” (“Hebrews,” in the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972], 5).

Digging Deeper *continued*

Apollos is frequently mentioned as a possible author, as he was known for his eloquence (Acts 18:24). Joint authorship by Priscilla and Aquilla has some support. Other early believers such as Barnabas or Silas have also been mentioned, but none convincingly. Apparently, the writer did not find it important to identify himself or herself, which provides a clue as to how much time we should spend in worrying about the matter.

The efficacy of animal sacrifices—A belief that animal sacrifices were not the best way to please God was not a New Testament era phenomenon. After the first temple was destroyed, Israel's exiles had no place to offer sacrifices, but they did not believe this should prevent them from worshiping.

The editors responsible for Joshua through 2 Kings (with the exception of Ruth) recognized that other things were more important than sacrifice. They included a story in which Samuel excoriated Saul for feigning sacrificial intentions after disobeying his commands: "Has the LORD as great delight in sacrifices, as in obeying the word of the LORD? Surely to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

A number of the psalms reflect a movement away from animal sacrifices or other offerings as a means of pleasing God (51:16-17, 69:30-31, 50:8-15), reflecting a prophetic emphasis on obedience as superior to sacrifice. The author of Psalm 51 wrote: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me . . . O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give you a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (vv. 10, 15-17).

The prophet Isaiah made a similar argument: "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?" says the LORD; "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats" (Isa. 1:11). For Isaiah, forgiveness comes not through a bloody ritual, but through the kind of repentance that results in changed behavior and ethical living (1:12-20, see also Isa. 66:1ff; Jer. 7:21ff; Hos. 6:6, 14:2; Amos 5:21ff; and Mic. 6:6ff).

Ears, and bodies—As noted in the lesson, the Hebrew and Greek versions of Psalm 40:6-8 are somewhat different (if you want to look it up in the Septuagint, the parallel text is numbered as Ps. 39:7-9) in the LXX).

The Hebrew version of v. 6a, which is probably closer to the original, says "Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me *an open ear*" (NRSV). Literally, this translates the idiomatic expression "an ear you have dug for me," and it suggests that the psalmist's ear was open to hearing (and obeying) the will of God.

Though some ancient Greek copies follow the Hebrew text, others appeared to assume that the engraving of an ear was one part of God's creation of the human body. So, taking the part as representative of the whole, they went from "an ear you have dug for me" to "a body you have prepared for me."

Digging Deeper *continued*

Sacrificial service—Jesus expected his disciples to sacrifice for the sake of others: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34, see also Matt. 10:38, 16:24 and Luke 9:23, 14:27). Jesus walked a road of suffering and self-sacrifice for others, and it follows that those who follow him may walk a similar road.

Paul likewise used sacrificial terminology when he spoke of his own service to God, and of the efforts made by his friends in Philippi: “but even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. . .” (Phil. 2:17). Paul found joy in doing the work of Christ – even when it cost him something – even when the only appropriate word to describe it was *sacrifice*.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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Did Jesus really say these words?

It may seem an interpretive stretch for us to see how the author of Hebrews takes a text from the psalms, excises it completely from its context, and attributes the same words to Christ.

Did Jesus say these words, or not? If so, how are we to understand them?

Did the pre-existent Christ inspire the psalmist to recite these words, unaware that the thoughts he expressed were same words God the Son had spoken to God the Father?

We must keep in mind that the psalmist was entirely unaware of modern Trinitarian categories, of the idea that one aspect of the Godhead could speak to another. While he was quite familiar with the notion of multiple gods, he could not have envisioned one God whose deity is expressed in three “persons.”

The writer of Hebrews was practicing a method of exegesis that was common in the first century, practiced regularly by the rabbis and adopted by some early Christian exegetes. They apparently assumed that any text could be taken from its context and, looked at from a different angle, applied to new situations with an explanatory “midrash.”

The author of Hebrews apparently believed the psalms were inspired by God, and the words of Psalm 40 so perfectly expressed the point he wanted to make that he attributed them to the pre-existent Christ.

While the psalmist intended only to declare his belief that God desires obedience more than sacrifice, he could never have imagined that a later writer would interpret his words (including a partial mistranslation) as none other than a declaration of the pre-existent Christ.

For the writer of Hebrews, however, any Old Testament text that appeared to be a foreshadowing of Christ was considered fair game for exposition.

Was there a time when Christ literally spoke these words? We have no way of knowing, but we can appreciate the author’s desire to highlight them, if only metaphorically, as a way of emphasizing his understanding of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice who voluntarily came to save us from our sins.