

### **Hebrews 10:5-10**

**Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, O God.’” First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

Dear brothers and sisters in our God, our Savior, and our brother, Jesus Christ,

When someone comes to me and wants to know more about Jesus, I usually take them through a basic presentation about sin and grace. Through this basic presentation of our sinfulness and God's grace, we want the Holy Spirit to begin to make changes in the hearts of these unbelievers. One of the questions that I ask someone who hasn't heard about Jesus before and I want them to think a little more seriously about where their spiritual condition is, *“If you were to die tonight, are you sure that you would have eternal life? Or, to put it another way, if you were to die tonight and find yourself standing before God and he were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” what would you say?”* The purpose of the questions is to prompt people to think about where they stand with God and why. The purpose of the presentation that follows is to show people where they stand with God and why. There isn't going to be a short answer test with God when you die. Where you go after you die is determined by your relationship with God before you die. But the question is still useful insofar as it prompts us to think about we stand with God and why, so I'm going to ask it of you, too: *If you were to stand before God right now and he were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” what would you say?*

Maybe it sounds like an untimely question on a day like today, when we're putting the finishing touches on our preparations to celebrate Jesus' birthday. At the Christmas Eve service tomorrow the children are going to be telling the story of a little baby laid in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn and shepherds living out in the fields nearby keeping watch over their flocks at night and heavenly hosts singing in the sky and Mary treasuring up all these things and pondering them in her heart. Being so close to Christmas Eve, Is this really the day to be talking about heaven and hell and where we stand with God? Law and gospel, sin and grace, heaven and hell, where you stand with your God in heaven has everything to do with Christmas.

The answer is yes! Today and every day is a day to talk about sin and grace. But today of all days is very important. Sin and grace is the backdrop behind all that happened on Christmas. They are what brought the baby into the manger and the angels to the sky and shepherds bowing coming to worship. Christ came at Christmas to set a ruined relationship with God right again, to give you heaven instead of hell, to drown your sin in God's grace, to set free with the gospel we who were pronounced guilty by the law. Christ came so that you could answer your God with boldness and confidence were he to ask you, *Why should I let you into my heaven?* Christ came at Christmas to those things for you. Or, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us,

### **Sermon Theme: Jesus Came To Do His Father's Will**

- 1. As the fulfillment of prophecy**
- 2. As the fulfillment of sacrifices**
- 3. As the substitute for sinners**

Jesus came to do God's will as the fulfillment of prophecy. That is, when God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son, he did not do so unannounced. Jesus did not come as an unexpected

surprise. God had been telling his people for years, thousands of years, that he would send an offspring of Eve to crush the head of the serpent who tempted her; then that all nations would be blessed through the offspring of Abraham; then that the Savior would be born of a virgin, that he would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, that he would die but his body would not see decay because he would rise from the dead. And as the time grew closer for this Savior to come the details God gave became even more specific. The Old Testament prophet Micah, for example, even gives the specifics that he would be born in Bethlehem of Judah and would bring peace to his people.

The writer to the Hebrews quotes Jesus speaking through King David in the Old Testament, “**Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.**” Here I am, just like the rolled-up books of the Old Testament said, I have come to do what you want me to do, God. A little, helpless baby lying in a manger, Jesus wasn’t forming words with his lips on Christmas day, but that was his attitude from his birth to his death. As you promised God, I’ve come to do your holy will in order to save this sinful world. At Christmas, Jesus came to do God’s will as the fulfillment of prophesy.

## 2. As the fulfillment of sacrifices

And Jesus came to do God’s will as the fulfillment of sacrifices. Part of God’s will that Jesus came at Christmas to do was to offer himself as a sacrifice. Jesus was born to die. To help us better understand this section from Hebrews I’m going to start with the verse immediately preceding it: **It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, O God.’”**

From the time of Moses on, at every dusk and dawn and all throughout the day, at community festivals and individual celebrations, at the ordinations of priests and dedications of buildings God’s people sacrifice cattle and goats and sheep. These animals were brought to the place of worship, sins would be confessed with one’s hands placed on the head of the animal, the animal would be slaughtered, the blood drained, and the body burned on the altar. Millions of animals over hundreds of years, every one teaching the Israelites a stark lesson through all five senses — “**The wages of sin is death,**” and somebody has to pay. But even though those sacrifices were mandated by God — “**the law required them to be made**” — they could not take away sins. Not even a million animals could pay down one sin in God’s book. “**It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**”

Their job wasn’t to forgive. Their job was to point. To point out to the people that God does not think lightly of sin — that “**the wages of sin is death.**” That where there is sin there must be punishment. And to point the people to another sacrifice — not of a bull or a goat or a sheep—but of the Son of God, “**the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**” Because the blood of bulls and goats couldn’t take away sins, “**when Christ came into the world he said: A body you prepared for me...Here I am, I have come to do your will, O God.**” And God’s will was that the sins of the world be literally placed on him, just as the sins of the Israelites were symbolically placed onto the animals, and that he bleed and suffer God’s wrath and die to take them away. At Christmas, Jesus came to do God’s will as the fulfillment of sacrifices.

## 3. As the substitute of sinners

And, finally, Jesus came at Christmas to do God’s will as the substitute of sinners. Allow me to ask the questions again: *If you were to die tonight, are you sure that you would have eternal life? Or, to put it another way, if you were to die tonight and find yourself standing before God and he were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” what would you say?* That self-righteous part of you that makes you think so highly of yourself, that makes you want to reply in one way or another, *Well, God, because I deserve it,* let that be silenced by God’s words, “**The wages of sin is death**”, that echoed for so many hundreds of years through the slaughter and sacrifice of so many millions of animals that died

because of sin. Let any notion that you can in any way earn your way into God's favor be wiped out of your mind because if you have any sin you deserve death and there is no way that you can do this or that to change that. Pretty good, even really good, isn't good enough for God but only absolutely perfect and we aren't that.

If God were to ask the question, *Why should I let you into my heaven?* think twice about any answer that begins with you as the subject because you haven't done God's will perfectly. But you have a substitute that did. When Christ came into the world and said, "**Here I am, I have come to do your will**", he did that as your substitute. And when Jesus in fact always did God's will — both in being absolutely perfect from the cradle to the grave and by offering himself as the fulfillment of sacrifices with his death on the cross, he did that as your substitute. As your substitute, Jesus took the wages of your sin — death and hell. As your substitute, Jesus gave you the wages of his absolute perfection and holiness—life and heaven.

If God were to ask the question, *Why should I let you into my heaven?* don't begin your reply with *Because I...*, but point God to the little baby in a manger who came to do God's will for you. Point him to the baby in the manger who came to earth to give you his holiness and take away your sin.

Why will God let you into heaven? Because Jesus came to do God's will for you. As this section concludes: "**And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**" Through the sacrifice of his perfect, sinless, human body in which he was clothed at Christmas, Jesus has made you holy. He has made you ready to meet your maker and to see his face shining on you with favor.

One of my professors at the seminary made a comment that I think about every time I write a sermon. He said, *Your God-given goal as a preacher of Christ is that your hearers walk away from your sermon saying to themselves, "My God is a God who saves."* That's the message of the Bible. That's the message of Hebrews 10. That's the message of Christmas. At Christmas, Christ came to do God's will: As the fulfillment of prophecy; As the fulfillment of sacrifices; and As the substitute of sinners. At Christmas, your God came to save you. Amen.