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THE THINGS OF HIGHEST VALUE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
NUMBER 74
HEBREWS 10:1-4

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People are always saying--"What is it worth? How much does it cost? What is its true value?" We are always facing questions of value. We somehow have the idea if something is expensive it must be good. We have all developed our own scale of values. Some things are more important to us than other things.

Bible Doctrine of Highest Value

As a member of the royal family of God, Bible doctrine must become of highest value if we are ever to advance to the super grace life. The reason why Bible doctrine is of the highest value for the believer is not hard to understand. For the first few thousand years of the human race, there was no written Canon of Scripture. No written word from God. When Abraham left Ur to come into Canaan, there was not a word of the Canon of Scripture in writing. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were all guided by the Word God spoke to them. The Word came through dreams and visions and from trances and by angelic teaching. Also Jesus Christ taught many people directly and we read of this in Scripture as "The Angel Of Jehovah."

Specifications for Shadows

No one ever had anything in writing from God until it became necessary to have specifications for shadows. God also wanted to write down his scale of values and we learn this from the doctrine of divine decrees. All that was written in Scripture was pointing to the one thing of highest value which is the cross. In the mind of God the highest value of all was the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. So those who do not accept the sacrifice of Christ on the cross miss the thing of highest value in the mind of God. Now why did God give Moses these specifications for these shadows? And these specifications were extremely exact and accurate.

Very Expensive Shadows

Since God pictured the thing of highest value (the Cross) by these shadows he always saw to it that they were very costly. God told Moses to have a golden lampstand constructed. In today's value it would be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. All those various articles in the Tabernacle were exceedingly expensive. It wasn't just any old tent and some junk thrown in there. It was the most expensive of all. Think of the cost of the multiplied thousands of animals that were sacrificed every year. And this went on for 1500 years. In our value today this would run into millions of dollars. God commanded that the High Priest be dressed in the most expensive kind of clothing. The material had to be the best. GOD ALWAYS BELIEVED IN GOING FIRST CLASS IN EVERYTHING. The animals to be used had to be the best animals in all the flock.

God's Scale Of Values

This was God's way of saying, "I have a scale of values and everything that speaks of my Son's death on the cross must be of the highest value." GOD CONSIDERED HIS SON'S DEATH ON THE CROSS THE MOST PRECIOUS THING IN ALL THE WORLD.

Things Of Value Have Been Destroyed

All the treasurers that were plundered in the Trojan wars have been destroyed. Everything in the Tabernacle and the Tabernacle itself have long since vanished from the earth. Nothing from Solomon's beautiful temple remains until this day. No museum in the earth can show you one thing from Solomon's Temple. Today the cup from which Christ drank in the upper room would bring millions of dollars, but no one can produce it. In fictional literature it is called "The Holy Grail" and the wealthiest men on earth would give their whole fortunes if they could just possess it. But it has vanished from the earth. It is the figment of the imagination and it does not exist today. Certain things like the brass serpent Moses erected in the desert had to be destroyed because God knew that people would come and fall down and worship there. (I went to the grave of Mahatma Gandhi in Calcutta and they were there from all over India falling down and worshipping him.)

The worship of art objects in the name of God is almost ludicrous for us to contemplate. Nothing from the cross of Christ has survived. The wood, the nails, the clothes he wore are all gone. People in America and throughout the world got all sentimental and excited over the book "The Robe" and then it was made into a moving picture. People imagined if they could just touch that robe, it would transform them. This is an attempt to make some mystery out of something that does not exist. If any museum had that robe, people would come from all over the world just to touch it. And today people go to Jerusalem and bring back little Bibles bound in olive wood. The tragedy of those Bibles are that most of them are never opened, much less studied.

God Ordained A Book

What is ordained of God to be the thing of highest value? God has ordained a book. This book will survive no matter how much Satan will do to destroy it. The content of that book will center in one thing-- the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross. That book is a memorial to the fact that the most important thing in the universe happened at the conjunction of the dispensations. God has given to us the written word and he is asking you and me to transfer the written word from that book into our minds. When the Bible lifts up this eternal truth and transfers it into your mind, the thing of greatest value has been accomplished. So take the crosses you have as trinkets and all the other religious gadgets you have and lift up their meaning and deposit it in your mind. Paul didn't wear a gold cross around his neck but he did say, "For me to live is Christ."

Do you agree with God?

Do you agree with God concerning the thing of greatest value? I'll tell you when you first agree with God about what is of real value. The moment you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then in that moment, you agree with God concerning the thing of highest value. Now God the Father knew we would never have the capacity and capability and good common judgment to fully realize the worth of Christ's death on the cross. So, in order to help us, he made it possible to believe in this thing of greatest value in a simple grace way. It is God's great non-meritorious way called faith. This simple, costless (to us) way is the way to lead us right into the riches of God's amazing provision. One moment we were penniless and the next moment by faith in Christ we were heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. That little key of faith unlocked the door and we walked right in and looked around and we were actually inside the family of God and were there to stay for all eternity.

Living In The Holy Of Holies

The Holy of Holies was off limits to the Jews. It never occurred to them that God had prepared that place for us to live in. Jesus Christ lived there and they called it the Shekinah glory and they saw the cloud by day and the fire by night. Their representative went there once a year and cared for their sins. But God was just leading them up to something. God was getting the whole world ready for something, and when that thing of highest value came into reality, that veil was ripped open and from that Holy of Holies, we hear God say, "Whosoever will let him come!"

THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS THE THING OF HIGHEST VALUE TO GOD.

That is why we studied it so closely last Sunday--"For you see, the Mosaic Law keeps on having a shadow of the good things about to come, and not the real image of the events of the cross."

Next we have "Can never" and this is the present, active, indicative of dunamai plus the negative adverb oudepote and it means "never being able." There is never any way the Mosaic Law can do anything permanent. A new covenant to the Church and a new covenant to Israel is necessary.

Next we have "with those sacrifices" and it should read "by means of those sacrifices." So, thus far, we have "Never being able by means of those sacrifices." Every animal sacrifice, every feast, every holy day, and every single ritual in the temple worship pointed to the one fact that nothing is as important or has as high a value as the death of Christ on the cross. Therefore, God says to make you realize what I am talking about I will take the best animals you have and I demand them as a sacrifice. I demand an animal without spot and without blemish. Without spot means no old sin nature and none of the imputed sin of Adam. No blemish means no act of sin during his earthly life.

Next we have "Which they offer" and this is hos meaning "which" and "they offered" is the present, active, indicative of prosphero. So, it really means which they continually offer day by day and year by year. We have kata eniautos and it means year after year after year. To give it more emphasis they add "continually" from eis dienekes and it means again, and again and again.

Stay With It

One of the sad things in the church is to see how many "on-again, off-again" people we have. They are hot today and cold tomorrow. God understands the importance of repetition. (I have given 1 John 1:9 a thousand times in this church and not half of the people in the church can even quote it yet.) This word "continually" means perpetually. So we have "Never able by means of those sacrifices which they offer year after year perpetually."

The Final Result

Now we come to the final result of it all. In English we have "Make the comers thereunto perfect." This is technical language so what does it mean? "Make perfect" is the aorist, active, infinitive of teleioo. Here it means "salvation." The moment you are saved you are perfect, positionally. You won't reach this position until the day you die and get a resurrection body, but this is your position in Christ. Now those sacrifices never once brought salvation. So, the words "Causing perfection" mean causing salvation, causing completion.

"The comers" are mentioned here and this is a present, active, participle of proserchomai and this meant those who approached the altar to offer a sacrifice. For us it means those who approach the cross to believe in Christ.

Now a correct translation of this verse--

"For the law possessing a shadow of the coming good things (Things pertaining to salvation) not the real image of the events of the cross; that is, the law, is never able by means of those sacrifices which they offer year after year perpetually to cause perfection to those who approach the altar for sacrifice."

Summary

1. The Mosaic Law cannot provide salvation. It can only picture and point to salvation which is in Jesus Christ. (Romans 3:20, Gal. 2:16, Rom. 3:28)
2. Coming to perfection in this verse is a technical name for salvation. Salvation is described in terms of perfection when you look at it from God's viewpoint. His provision is perfect. GOD AND GOD'S WORD ARE THE ONLY PERFECT THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE AND THE CROSS IS THE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S PERFECTION.
3. Shadows can picture reality but they cannot be reality.
4. The animal sacrifices authorized by the law were shadows. But Christ was, is and always will be reality.
5. The Levitical priesthood was authorized to deal with shadows. The royal priesthood is authorized to deal with reality. The reason is that we have a different authorizing agency. The new covenant to the church is the authorizing agency for our priesthood.
6. This reality for us is so valuable that God gave us the picture of this event by allowing the High Priest to go in once a year and make atonement. But he let his Son go in once for all and do all that was necessary and that sacrifice is acceptable to God forever. JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOCAL POINT OF ALL HISTORY. HE IS THE CROSSROADS OF THE CENTURIES. HE IS GOD'S HIGHEST VALUE.

The Holy Spirit puts us behind the torn veil in the Holy of Holies and that is God's way of saying that the cross is the most important thing in the world.

(You remember this--Those who reject the cross of Christ and what he did to take away our sins on that cross are going to be in the lake of fire forever. No one will ever escape once they are there. They can't be prayed out, bought out, or pulled out.) Those who attach no importance to the blood of Christ and to his death on the cross are sentenced forever to the lake of fire.

Don't Let Emotion Blind You

When we believe in Christ and are saved the most important thing in the world has happened to us. But emotion gets in the way. Emotional

response closes off our understanding. It is so easy to get hung up on emotion and lose sight of the whole thing. (The Apostle Paul didn't make this mistake on the Damascus Road. He kept the facts in proper perspective.)

Suppose you had been a Levitical priest offering one sacrifice after the other, or trimming the golden lampstand day after day? It would have been ever so easy to get involved in the ritual and lose the reality. You can almost hear a priest say, "I've got to go and sacrifice again today." The only thing that will keep us from going overboard on emotion, or in the other direction going overboard on complacency, is Bible doctrine in the mind.

HEBREWS 10:2 "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." Many greek scholars say this is the most difficult verse in the Bible to translate correctly. In this verse we have the inadequacies of the shadows. They have translated epei "For then." It should be translated "since." It introduces a second class condition, meaning the statement is not true. In other words, if a sacrifice did the job and actually brought salvation, you wouldn't keep on offering sacrifice after sacrifice. But they did and that in itself shows that it didn't bring salvation. Now one day there would come a sacrifice that would end all sacrifices, and that is exactly what Jesus did on the cross.

We have the aorist, middle, indicative of pauo and the present, passive, participle of prosphero and it means "then they would not cease to be offered." In other words, if the blood of an animal could save just once, then that would have been enough and you would never have needed to have another sacrifice. But it didn't save, never did and never could. So they repeated it and repeated it. But one day John would say, "Behold the Lamb of God" and once that Lamb was slain, then that blood did have the power to save and the blood offering would be made only once.

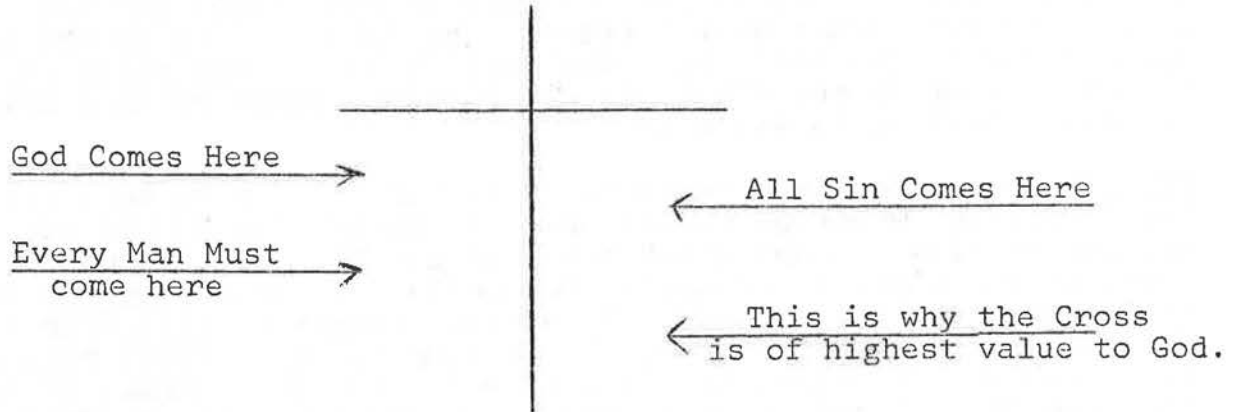
To understand this sentence you have to add the word "worshippers." It means the ones coming to worship by offering their sacrifices.

So look at a corrected translation of this mixed up verse--
 "Since, if they really did become saved (perfect) but they didn't, they would not have ceased being offered. Why? Because the worshippers having been once and for all cleansed, not one no longer would be having a conscience of sins."

1. Shadows can teach the fact of reality, but they cannot do the work of reality. Animal sacrifices taught the reality. Jesus Christ did the reality on the cross. That is why we are not required to do the worship they did in Old Testament times. We are just to learn from it.
 We learn from the shadows but we do not do the shadows.
 That is why you do not ever need to offer an animal sacrifice.
 You do not ever need to observe a Holy Day or worship on Saturday.
 You are grown up now and you don't have to go back to act like you did when you were a baby.
2. Shadows can teach salvation but they cannot save.
3. The Levitical offerings were to teach salvation and to be a memorial to Christ.

4. Those worshippers who offered those shadows were not saved by those shadows.
5. Christ himself could save and did save.

SO HERE IS THE CROSSROADS OF THE CROSS



The reason it is the crossroads is this--God comes here for he must be propitiated. All sins come here for they must be atoned for. All men come here for they must be reconciled to God. This is the meeting place of God and man and sin and Christ cared for all three.

An Empty Bowl

That High Priest would go in once a year and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat, once for himself and once for the people. But when he came out the bowl was empty. God did it once and the bowl contained enough blood to care for the sins of all the human race to the end of time. That bowl is never empty once Christ is the supplier. Jesus said, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." They offered sacrifices for 1500 years and it never put one man and God together. But once Christ died he made it possible for every man in the world to be with God forever and forever.

HEBREWS 10:3 "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." Now we are back to animal sacrifices again. "But" is from alla. Next we have en autos meaning "in those." Next we have anamnesis and it means remembrances over and over again. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" and that is mnesis. But this is anamnesis and it means they had to remember again and again and again. They had to remember again and again for the crossroads had not yet come. From then on we will have one remembrance.

HEBREWS 10:4 "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." The word for "for" is gar plus the adjective adunatos and it means "impossible." Next we have the present, active, infinitive of aphaireo means "to take away" sins. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins. They had fifteen hundred years of sacrifices that could not take away sins--but in three hours David's greater Son did what they could not do in fifteen hundred years.