

THE DECLARATION OF ETERNAL PEACE.

Hebrews 10:1-18.

Because of my heritage, September the first never passes without my thinking of the outbreak of world war two in Europe on that fateful day in 1939 with its enormous consequences for my family and millions of others, of course.

Today, however, I'm not intending that our attention dwell either on the outbreak of war or its prosecution but rather its conclusion in a message I've entitled the Declaration of Eternal Peace.

Since my conversion to Christ, I have found the truths taught in this section of Hebrews personally liberating and Spiritually uplifting as i've grappled with the question, can I be sure *my* sins are really forgiven and I pray you will find it helpful as we come to the Lord's Table today, also!

It follows on from our review of God's Appointment of animal-blood sacrifices we made in last week's brief tour of the Old Testament.

Could the blood of a lamb cleanse from sin? If not why was the law of such sacrifices established? What about the Blood of Jesus shed on the cross? In what sense and to what extent does it cleanse?

As we come to the Lord's Table, these questions are answered in these verses from Hebrews.

(1) The Revealed System of Sacrifices - given to God's People under the law v1-4, 11.

Military conflict is a manifestation of human sin whether motivated by greed, a lust for increased power, jealousy for another's possessions or success whatever sin. Rarely have motives of promoting honour and truth led to the starting of wars since Cain murdered Abel his brother.

Throughout history, most people have felt a need to approach the unseen yet real God in worship. In the OT, as we have seen, God Instructed the people on how to do this the right way in The Law.

However, these sacrifices of bulls and goats even offered with genuine faith could never take away sins as verse four says. They were offered regularly and repeatedly, reminding people of their guilt. It's so sad that many—even many professing Christians—still seem to think that the elements given at the Lord's Table in and of themselves contain some special, spiritual power or grace! The worship of the wafer rather than the honouring of the Saviour comes first for such folk. For others, merely attending the worship gathering is thought to merit God's approval. Certainly they, like we, need forgiveness.

Now it's true, isn't it, that an important preparation before and aspect of our gathering for the Lord's Supper is to ask God's Spirit to search our hearts for evidence of genuine guilt because of conscious unconfessed sin? When we remember our Lord's purity and our own sinfulness well, guilt still remains! We ask that it might be revealed so we can repent of it and put things right with others if necessary and Spiritually grow by means of that humbling.

However, while it is true that "the sacrifices (God Delights in) are a humble and contrite spirit" (Psalm 51 v17) that's only the first of three aspects of today's message.

(2) The Redeeming Saviour - given to God's People v5-9, 12f.

Jesus is here shown as both the voluntary victim and the victorious viceroy of the Father's kingdom:

[A] the voluntary victim v5-9. At times of national conflict or emergency, many people gladly volunteer to serve their country in remarkable acts of courageous dedication. If this is true humanly, what can we

say about our Lord's unique heroism in offering to come from heaven, laying aside the privileges of Eternal comfort to serve as a suffering Servant?

Verse 5 tells us of His taking flesh and superceeding the system of offerings. Verse seven tells us it was predicted.

He willingly laid down His life in active obedience during those thirty-three years of His earthly life and passive suffering on the cross so that the sins of His People might be thoroughly cleansed!

Are you rejoicing in the experience of your felt sins being forgiven?

As we saw this was voluntarily agreed by Jesus in Eternity-past so that His People might be Rescued. But He Came as the triumphant One the Installed Commander.

[B] the victorious viceroy v12f. Though costly, the sacrifice of so many allied lives did achieve freedom for much of Europe after world war two; but, as we know, these achievements have come at a great cost. However, it was different with Jesus!

Verses twelve and thirteen explain this so clearly:

"when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool".

We meet together today because our Lord's sacrifice on the cross was accepted by the Father, and effective! Jesus was raised up on the third day and returned to glory to the place of authority as He said he would! He hasn't needed to suffer repeated crucifixions. He is victorious and that's why the symbol of the empty cross is most appropriate for us to champion as His followers.

In heaven, the reality of Jesus' triumph is acknowledged so how about its application to those who trust Him?

(3) The Resulting Status for Saved Sinners v10,14-18.

Those who come to the Father through the Lord Jesus now have:

[A] a status of acceptance by God v10:

*"we **have been made holy** through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**."* You see those words are perfect tense actions begun and completed in the past? When Jesus died, every true child of His was entirely set-apart, sanctified.

When we trust ourselves to Him, immediately our status changes from sinner destined for hell to saint destined for glory! We now have the status of acceptance by the Father even though we need to grow in our experience of holiness as v14 shows.

[B] a growing experience of holiness v14:

"by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy." There's no contradiction here. That one sacrifice secures Acceptance but provides growing holiness as well.

What Jesus has accomplished must be increasingly experienced by us in our own daily lives. There's this growing experience of Godliness v15f:

"The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

Yes, we still have God's Commandments telling us what He expects, but we now can have these *laws* written in our very beings so that we want to do what's right and please our loving Lord!

But with the growing experience there's also the gracious expunging of our sin

v17:

"Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

So you see, coming to the table we: first ask the Spirit to search us to discover any sin which needs dealing with Secondly, however, we come if we've committed ourselves to the Lord Jesus also to celebrate His Achievement of perfect Redemption for His People on the cross. Have we come with a focus of thanksgiving to Jesus this morning or is our gathering marked with an air of duty we need to carry out? Praise the Name of Jesus!

Finally, realising the status of accepted adopted children which we've received in Christ, are we pleading that God will give us greater grace so that we can make progress in our walk with Him in days to come? Such progress requires spiritual and personal effort and discipline.

How delightful to enlist to serve the Prince of eternal Peace!

"And where these (sins) have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin." v18